

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 31, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Siena Caterina Smith

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour Siena Caterina Smith, a young resident of Red River North, for her outstanding contributions to the community that helped save her life.

When Siena was 10 months old, she was diagnosed when ventricular septal defect, a hole in her heart. She would need open heart surgery. So Siena's—on Siena's first birthday 10 years ago, she underwent heart surgery at the children's hospital in Vancouver. While there, she received a teddy bear she named Luna who became her best friend. Ten years later and now a healthy grade 5 student, Luna is still Siena's closest ally.

Last year, upon discovering pediatric heart patients in Manitoba do not receive a teddy bear, Siena,

with the help of her mom Sabrina, decided to start their own fundraiser to offer children like Siena comfort while receiving care. That was the start of I-love-teddy-bear-hugs fundraiser.

The goal was 100 teddy bears, but Siena dreamed bigger. So, in December, they entered the children's heart network's BoostUp competition, where people across western Canada submit ideas on how to help cardiac kids and families in exchange for funding. The heart network loved the idea so much they took her out of the competition and actually gave her the funding.

Siena was then invited to launch I Love Bear Hugs fundraiser in Saskatchewan and participate in the Children's Healthy-Heart Activity Monitoring Program. While in Saskatchewan, they collected over 200 teddy bears in just one week. Siena also met other children who had or will have heart surgery.

In Manitoba, she collected over 300 teddy bears, and with every teddy bear Siena attaches a small card with a personalized message detailing her story.

The Smith family is grateful to have everyone who has donated to Siena's cause and notes that sometimes the simplest things, like a teddy bear, can make the biggest difference.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in acknowledging Siena Caterina Smith, who is here with her parents Mark and Sabrina—are joining us today here in the gallery.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Home-Care Services

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): There is home-care crisis in Manitoba.

Home care was once heralded as a true Manitoba accomplishment, established under an NDP government, a model quickly adopted by other provinces. Home care was implemented to allow all Manitobans the ability to age in place and to remain active members of their communities.

Over the past several years under the PC government, we've seen a significant rise in challenges in home care, driven by this government's lack of respect for workers, frozen wages and a refusal to recognize the impossible expectations placed on workers to

provide adequate care. I hear on a regular basis from those directly impacted by the decline in quality of home-care services.

Isabelle is a Union Station constituent whose home care, without notice, was deemed non-essential and abruptly cut off. Now she has to choose between cleaning her home or making meals, because she cannot physically manage to do both. Apparently, having a clean home—a safe and hygienic home—or eating nutritious food are non-essential.

A local physician who requires daily home care in order to maintain his practice and provide care to Manitobans who are dealing with ever-growing backlogs, has now gone over three weeks without home care due to an issue which has not been rectified despite his consistent and determined advocacy.

And Michael, another Union Station constituent, 54 years old and an active member of our community whose challenges with extremely inconsistent home care has resulted in him considering accessing medical assistance in dying as a future option.

They've all written the minister, and these are just a few of the many Manitobans who are facing similar challenges.

We've raised this many times here in this House, and while the Minister for Seniors tells us he's waiting for a report, people who cannot afford to wait are suffering due to his inaction. The inaction of this PC government is causing Manitobans undue stress, and this is unacceptable.

We, the NDP, will continue to fight for Manitobans so that real investments are made into public home care and once again Manitoba sets an example—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Community Safety and Wellness Initiatives

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, public safety is on the minds of Manitobans; so are homelessness, addictions and mental health. Manitobans expect their government to listen, to care and to take action.

That's why this morning I was so encouraged to hear our government announcing initiatives that will improve community safety and wellness across our province.

Our government will provide new funding to community-based organizations like Siloam Mission

and Main Street Project that work directly with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

At the announcement, Siloam Mission's CEO Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud, the daughter of late—the late and great Bill Blaikie, praised the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) for listening, caring and taking action. She said: It's so clear that you've been listening throughout this process and throughout this time in leading to today's announcement, and that is a blessing.

But today's announcement is only a part of the steps our government is taking to improve public safety: more annual funding for Bear Clan control, cracking down on illegal firearms, targeting cyber crime, reducing auto part theft and much, much more.

Madam Speaker, we must also recognize that some individuals are intent on harming Manitobans and preying on the vulnerable, and that's why our Justice Minister is pushing for stronger bail requirements for violent criminals. I believe it's government's duty to restrain evil and protect the innocent. I'd invite the members opposite to stand against violent offenders instead of with them while remaining shamefully silent.

Madam Speaker, we have also made it clear that it is not acceptable for individuals to be spending their nights in bus shelters. We're helping vulnerable individuals get connected with food, with shelter, with housing, with recovery from addiction, with training and with jobs.

* (13:40)

That is what compassion looks like. That is what caring looks like. I'm confident that Manitobans have a government that listens, and a government that takes action. That's what we are doing, that's what we have been doing and, by the grace of God, that is what we are going to keep on doing.

COVID-19 Vaccination

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Now that fairy-tale time is over, let's talk about something real. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: I want to talk about—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: I want to talk about the experience of having COVID. It's something that, you know—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —a lot of members opposite have pooh-poohed and said it's no big deal and refused to get vaccinated and all the rest of it.

I can tell you it is a big deal. I can tell you from my personal experience that laying flat on your back unable to open—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: —your eyes because the headache is so bad that the light hurts is a real experience.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that it's something I wouldn't wish on anyone. And yet, some of my own family now are also suffering the effects of COVID. They are also incapacitated while being the primary caregiver for a senior who's 99, going on 100 soon, that now my wife can't be around her.

I can't stress enough the importance of getting vaccines. Even if you don't think it's going to protect you, it may very well protect someone close to you. I would encourage each and every one of us to get the vaccines that we need, and I will fully admit that I have been remiss in not getting my most recent one. But trust me, I will now.

I would also encourage people to get the flu shot, because whether it's COVID or the flu, both of them can kill you. So I would encourage all Manitobans to look on the government website, protectmb.ca, find out where they can get their vaccine, and do the right thing to protect each other.

Thank you.

Mr. Wajih "Moe" Zeid

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): Today I'm honoured to rise to recognize the significant accomplishments of Mr. Wajih Zeid, better known as Moe in the community.

In Moe's youth, he lived in a refugee camp near Ramallah, Palestine. Moe spent five years in Germany, where he developed his trade as a skilled meat cutter. After chatting with some Canadian servicemen, Moe applied for a Canadian visa and was able to journey to Canada in February 1967, settling in Winnipeg.

Moe always had a strong work ethic and worked 18 hours a day, seven days a week at Manitoba Sausage and Chicken Delight. Moe bought his first grocery store 10 years later. Moe became the largest independent grocers in Manitoba, with five highly successful Food Fare stores, with son Munther managing.

Moe is the patriarch of a large family. He and his wife have seven children, 38 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Moe, you've been busy.

Moe assists newcomers from the Middle East coming to Canada. Moe, with his fellow businessmen—businessman Albert El Tassi, funded an Islamic school and together they started Winnipeg's first mosque.

The Zeid family have always been proud to give back to their community. The Zeid family raises money for hospital foundations such as Children's, Victoria and Grace Hospital. Moe was honoured recently at the Grace Hospital Foundation gala. He received the prestigious Pearl McGonigal lifetime achievement award for decades of community service.

Madam Speaker, I have provided a list of family members, and I would ask them to be incorporated into Hansard.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues rise to recognize Mr. Moe Zeid.

Wajih "Moe" Zeid, Suad Zeid, Hassan Zeid, Munther Zeid, Ramsey Zeid, Husni Zeid, Tarik Zeid, Maha Zeid, Fayka Zeid

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would like to draw everybody's attention to the public gallery, where we have seated from Collège Garden City 47 grade 9 students under the direction of Lia Baffour-Awuah. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Former Premier's Record

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Brian Pallister caused a lot of damage to our health-care system. Everyone in Manitoba knows that he closed emergency rooms, he fired

nurses, he cut CancerCare and he forced Manitobans to pay for health-care services.

Now, the problem that we have is that every member on that side of the House supported him every step along the way. The MLAs for Rossmere and Radisson and Assiniboia—they all helped him. Even the member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin), who is now going to have a new-found interest in reconnecting with his constituency after this weekend, supported Mr. Pallister every step of the way.

So, we all know that Brian Pallister was bad for health care.

But does the Premier agree? Does the Premier think that Brian Pallister hurt health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, once again, the Leader of the Opposition plays but gutter politics on the floor of the Chamber of the Legislature. It's unbecoming of someone that strives to be the Premier of our province, Madam Speaker.

But what I will say is that there have been almost \$1 billion—actually, more than \$1 billion more invested in health care in our province over the last seven years since the NDP was in power, mister—or, Madam Speaker.

And we will continue to make those investments in health care to ensure that Manitobans get the health care that they need, when they need it. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We have a lot of students in the gallery.

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

Mr. Kinew: The Premier doesn't want to answer the question. Everyone in Manitoba knows that Brian Pallister was bad for health care, and yet the Premier can't say so.

Instead, here's what she said—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —about Brian Pallister's approach, and I quote: It's neither good nor bad, nor here nor there. It's just the way it is. End quote.

Those are the words of the Premier over the weekend, when talking about the person who cut emergency rooms, who fired nurses, who forced Manitobans to pay for health-care services.

Perhaps it's because every MLA on the PC side of the House supported each and every one of those steps, which has now led to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —very bad patient care.

I'll note that the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) said, not me. So, of course, he doesn't support Brian Pallister or his colleagues. Perhaps they can discuss that later on today.

But the question remains: Does the Premier agree that Brian Pallister was bad for health care?

Madam Speaker: We have a lot of guests here today, and I think they would like to see a higher level of democracy in action.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I agree, Madam Speaker.

And I can tell you that the Leader of the Opposition—while he'll continue down this path of gutter, bottom-of-the-barrel politics on the floor of this Chamber, we will continue to listen to Manitobans, we will continue to take action and we will continue to get things done on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, it's an important question that would show whether or not the PC MLAs know the impact that their actions have had on the people of Manitoba.

* (13:50)

We know that Brian Pallister cut emergency rooms. He forced Manitobans to pay for health-care services and he fired nurses. And, of course, we know that every PC MLA supported him, except for the member for Fort Whyte, who is part of the island-of-me party, apparently. But everyone else in the province knows that their cuts have hurt health care. Anyone else in Manitoba would agree that Brian Pallister was bad for health care in this province.

Can the Premier say the same?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, once again, Madam Speaker, gutter politics prevails on the—behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite. We'll continue to take the high road and we will continue to take action on behalf of all Manitobans when it comes to health care.

We made a \$141-million investment, tripling the size of the St. Boniface ER; \$50 million to increase Health Sciences Centre surgical capacity by 25 per cent; \$30 million to increase ICU bed baseline from 72 to 108; \$4.9 million, a fifth operating room at Concordia Hospital to increase orthopedic surgery by 1,000 procedures a year, Madam Speaker.

And what did members opposite do? They voted against all of it. We will take no lessons from members opposite.

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

Highway Maintenance Staff Department Vacancy Rate

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Potholes, potholes, potholes, Madam Speaker. Everyone in Manitoba knows that our roads and highways are in bad condition. Even the high road has a pothole in it, thanks to the PCs this year.

I'll table FIPPA documents that show the vacancy rate for all highway maintenance in the province has gone from 20 per cent in 2018 to 36 per cent this year. That's a dramatic increase. We're talking about roads that are not being maintained because there are fewer people working, fewer people fixing potholes, fewer people doing the grading to maintain roads. That's putting money ahead of safety.

It's even worse in northern Manitoba. In northern Manitoba, the vacancy rate is 47 per cent.

Why is the government cutting highway maintenance in our province?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, once again, the Leader of the Opposition continues with a litany of false accusations on the floor of this Chamber. The facts of the matter are, Madam Speaker: \$1.5-billion investment into roads in Manitoba. I will remind the members—over the next three years.

Madam Speaker, I will remind the members opposite that we inherited a significant deficit in infrastructure on our roads in this province and we are still cleaning up their mess today. We will continue to put safety and more money into roads in our province on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, every Manitoban can see for themselves that the potholes are worse this

year than they have ever been. And I just tabled the facts for the minister.

The document that I just put in front of the First Minister there shows the truth. One in three highway maintenance positions right now are empty—one in three. In the Northern Health Region, half of all positions are empty.

When constituents come to you and they complain about the condition of your local highway, of your local road, this is the reason why. This government has cut the amount of people who are out there on the streets and highways fixing our roads.

It's not just a question of having a smoother ride home. This is also a question of safety.

When will the PCs stop cutting highway maintenance?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, once again, the litany of false accusations by the Leader of the Opposition.

The fact of the matter is, we invested \$15 million into potholes alone this year, Madam Speaker—four municipalities.

And I will remind Manitobans what the NDP did when we made that investment. What did they do? They voted against it. We will take no lessons from members opposite.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I shared the facts with the Premier.

The facts on the document, which the Premier's own government created, say that half of the positions in the North are empty when it comes to highway maintenance. The document that her government created says that one third of highway maintenance positions across the whole province is sitting empty right now.

The Premier wants to ignore these facts, so I'll table some more. Here is another document from the Premier's own government that says that, in spite of whatever press releases they want to put out, what they've actually done is that they've underspent the highway budget by 12 per cent. Again, Madam Speaker, this is not just about underspending in Brandon East and in Cornwallis. This is a question of safety.

So when will this government stop cutting highway maintenance?

Mrs. Stefanson: Once again, false accusations by the Leader of the Opposition. None of it factual whatsoever, Madam Speaker.

The fact of the matter is, every year that the NDP was in power except just before an election, they underspent their infrastructure budget. Every single year except just prior to the election.

We don't take a political approach when it comes to infrastructure. We are investing \$1.5 billion in our roads across this province to make them more safe for people to travel in Manitoba, so that goods can get to market, Madam Speaker, in a more quick and equitable fashion.

I will tell you, we will take no lessons from the members opposite, who left Manitobans with a very significant infrastructure deficit at the end of their last term. We're still cleaning up their mess.

Highway Maintenance Staff Department Vacancy Rate

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, a recent freedom of information request shows that there's a 36 per cent vacancy rate in our highway maintenance department right now. Well, winter is coming in Manitoba, and that is a crisis.

But what the reality is is that it's been getting worse every year under this government since 2018. We know our roads are in worse shape, and we know that they need to be in good repair and safe, especially during the winter.

Will the minister simply acknowledge that this crisis exists, and hire new highway maintenance staff today?

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): But the member from Concordia should have realized that over the dark days of the NDP, they have underspent over by \$1 billion.

We're actually—Madam Speaker, we're actually doing a catch-up right now for deferred maintenance when it comes to our highways. We're actually rebuilding the highways, when they actually did—they overspent in every department except for Infrastructure.

And it's raid, raid and parade just before election, Madam Speaker. We're not going to take any lessons from this NDP.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the situation is even worse in the North. This government's own documents show that the vacancy rate for the northern region is 47 per cent. That means less snow clearing and more dangerous roads.

And I don't need to tell members of this Chamber how important it is to have good highway maintenance in the North. Instead of addressing this issue as they should have long ago, the PCs make it worse by cutting each and every year.

Will the minister stop cutting those staff who keep our highways safe, especially in the North?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm not quite sure where the member is getting this information from. Our department has actually just hired 32 new snow-clearing people from—actually, that used to be our staff—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk:—that had retired, Madam Speaker. We got 32 new members coming back to our department for snow reclearing and—too.

When the member from Concordia says that we're not looking after the North, we just spent \$21 million doing 21 kilometres of stretches where we were actually adding on to shoulders and Highway 6. And we're going to be spending \$51 million on—towards Thompson, Highway 6.

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

* (14:00)

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, these are facts.

These are the minister's own documents that show that they've cut over \$8 million from the highway repair budget just last year. That means roads are more dangerous, and things like snow clearing are taking more time.

In a province like Manitoba, and especially with winter coming, we cannot be cutting this budget. But year after year, this PC government has cut these services, and that's wrong and it puts Manitobans at risk.

Will the PCs simply stop their cuts, address the road maintenance issues and get our roads safe for this winter coming up?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, we're spending \$1.5 billion on our highways. The—what the NDP acts—spent, but far less that.

When it comes to our equipment, for instance, Madam Speaker, we're actually—replaced it with great, efficient—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —equipment that are—is reliable, dependable and efficient. And that—this means that we're going to be able to grade more highways with less equipment, and we're going to get the job done, Madam Speaker.

Not like the NDP, when they actually had deferred maintenance when it comes to their trucks and equipment, just like the computer systems that they had.

We are going to get the—done, Madam Speaker. The—we're not going to listen to what they had do in the last 17 years.

Lions Place Seniors Residence Concern Over Potential Sale

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, as we know, Lions Place at 610 Portage Ave. is up for sale after a long-standing financial agreement with the Province came to an end. The deadline for bids on the building has closed.

The residents' association are desperately working to try and save Lions Place.

Will the minister intervene and keep Lions Place from being sold off?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I appreciate the question from the members opposite regarding Lions Place.

I can confirm for the House that we've had some productive meetings with the committee that is at Lions Place, as well as other levels of government.

But, as the member also knows, this is a private building and the government of Manitoba is not privy to offers that have come in on—under private—during a private sale.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the residents' association has written the minister asking for a 90-day reprieve from the sale of Lions Place to allow all levels of government to come to terms on an agreement to stop this sale.

This is the largest non-profit seniors housing block in the province. It is so important that this housing be preserved.

Will the minister listen to the residents and provide a reprieve so that everyone can come to an agreement and keep Lions Place from being sold?

Ms. Squires: Our government is committed to creating social and affordable housing in the province of Manitoba, and working with our non-profit partners in doing so, and we will continue to do that.

We've signed on to the National Housing Strategy, as well, to—and we've also created 745 net new units in the province of Manitoba since we took office.

We recognize that there are challenges out there, and we're grateful for many partners, including the Lions Place, to work with in assuring that all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, this is a really important question. I don't understand why ministers across from us are heckling me and acting as though this isn't incredibly important.

Residents know that other provinces are protecting social housing, even those held by non-profits, because they know once that housing is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —gone, it is incredibly hard to get back, if ever.

They know the time for action is now; they know that action can be taken by this minister to protect this affordable and social housing for these hundreds of seniors.

So, will the minister do the right thing, provide a reprieve and keep Lions Place from being sold today?

Ms. Squires: In addition to creating new social and affordable housing units, many of them with our non-profit housing providers, our government has also quadrupled the amount available through the Rent Assist program.

We've also created a residential renters' tax credit. We have also done enhanced initiatives to ensure that seniors have the supports that they need to stay at home and age in place, as well as maintain their housing.

So, our government knows that the challenges are real, but we're committed to working with all of our partners, including the non-profit housing sector, to ensure that the needs of seniors and those who are of–low-income Manitobans are having the benefits and the supports that they need.

Association for Community Living Worker Wages and Working Conditions

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): On Friday, Unifor launched their Respect Us, Protect Us, Pay Us campaign to improve working condition and wages for the Association of Community Living workers.

ACL workers provide essential care for Manitobans with developmental disabilities, such as helping them eat, bathe and much, much more, Madam Speaker. Yet, the PCs refuse to pay ACL workers a living wage and address their poor working conditions.

It's sad, Madam Speaker, that this is what it's come to. The minister could make things right today, though, by paying ACL workers a fair wage and improving their working conditions.

Will they do so today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government values the work of all of our funded service providers, and we recognize the challenges with the Community Living disABILITY Services sector. That is why our government put nearly \$26 million in new supports in the budget of 2022 for the CLDS sector.

If the member opposite is concerned about the wages for those individuals, she will vote in favour of the budget today.

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

Ms. Fontaine: ACL workers go above and beyond to protect–provide essential care for Manitobans with developmental disabilities, yet the PCs have failed to pay them a fair wage and address their stressful working conditions, which has resulted in many staff leaving for better paying work, Madam Speaker.

It's clear the PCs' cuts are leading to a decline–patient care, as Unifor has said, and I quote: High staff turnover results in poor quality of care for those clients. End quote, Madam Speaker.

This is unacceptable. The minister must pay ACL workers a fair wage and address their working conditions.

Will she do so today?

Ms. Squires: Our government gave \$5.8 million to ACL for the work that they do, as well as because we recognize that there were additional challenges throughout COVID, we gave them an extra \$41,000 for supports in their agency that they–to address some of the challenges that they faced, and our government put \$26 million of additional funding specifically for wages in the budget.

So, the question remains: Will members opposite do the right thing, support people working in the disability sector and vote in favour of that budget?

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

Ms. Fontaine: And yet, folks were here just on Friday protesting the acts of this government, Madam Speaker.

ACL workers provide essential care for Manitobans with developmental disabilities, yet the average ACL worker is only paid \$14.50 an hour for that critical, important work. Low wages and a stressful working environment has led to a high turnover, resulting in a poor quality of care for clients. ACL needs more provincial funding to offer the level of care community members deserve, Madam Speaker.

So, the minister could do the right thing today and increase ACL's funding. Will she do so?

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, the \$26.8 million in additional funding for Community Living disABILITY Services was called historic by advocates who came to the building and said that this was the biggest increase for Community Living disABILITY Services in 20 years. That is what the advocates are saying, is that it is a historic investment in funding for the disability sector.

* (14:10)

What is unacceptable is that the NDP refuse to vote in support of money for people in the disability sector. That is shameful and unacceptable. Will the member reverse course and vote in favour of the budget today?

Economic Review of Bipole III and Keeyask Request to Table Progress Report

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): The PCs have ordered Manitoba Hydro to implement all 51 recommendations from the Brad Wall report, the same Brad Wall report that called for the privatization and

breaking up of Manitoba Hydro. These recommendations will result in higher hydro rates for families.

We've asked the minister to update Manitobans on their progress by releasing a report. The minister agreed to do so, yet he still has not delivered.

I'll ask again: Will the minister provide us with a report before the House rises this week?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): That member gets up every day and peddles his disinformation campaign, and it gets no more believable for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans know the fact that that member is profoundly uncomfortable to know that there is an expert report on bipole and Keeyask that says that the NDP hid the costs of that dam and transmission line. They spent billions before they sought the PUP approval. They did not disclose the costs, even though they knew the costs were escalating and that the business case had eroded entirely in the time they built those assets.

Madam Speaker, we are standing up to protect Manitobans, keep rates low, and we will continue to do so while they peddle their disinformation.

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

Mr. Sala: The PCs are forcing Manitoba Hydro to implement the 51 recommendations from the Brad Wall report.

We asked the minister to table a report updating Manitobans on the progress of implementing these recommendations last week, yet he's failed to deliver despite promising he would. Manitobans deserve to know what the PCs' plans for Manitoba Hydro are.

Will the minister follow through on his promise and deliver the report today?

Mr. Friesen: While that member continues to meander through the wilderness, let me just remind him that what he's actually referring to is the 51 recommendations that our government clearly said we will respond to in full. There are three places in the press release that he misread that says respond fully—respond fully—indicating what actions have been taken or will be taken.

If that member is looking for assurances that our government is taking action, he can rest assured that our government will take action to protect Manitobans from future governments who would mislead the public and would do a—not disclose the costs.

We stand on the side of Manitobans who need low hydro rates and certainty whenever there are large capital assets that are being built.

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

Mr. Sala: The Brad Wall report outlined 51 recommendations, including breaking up and privatizing Manitoba Hydro, yet the minister hasn't provided Manitobans with an update on the progress of these recommendations despite promising he would.

Manitobans want a government that is transparent. They want to know what the PCs' plans are for Manitoba Hydro.

It's a simple question for the minister: Will he table a report on this progress before this House rises this week, or will we have to ask him yet again when we return?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it is just really disappointing to see that member deliberately misleading the public by trying to say that the government must recommend and must execute on all 51 of the recommendations.

We thank the expert report for the recommendations. We thank them for the recommendations to government to help protect Manitobans.

Our response is coming. What will that response say? We will implement. We're implementing. Maybe there'll be things we don't implement.

But pish posh; that member knows full well Manitoba Hydro is not for sale. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I would just indicate to the minister that he had made some comments in the House that are not allowed by the rules, and that is deliberately misleading.

So, I would just remind the House that those types of comments—*[interjection]* Order. Those types of comments do not—are not allowable in this House. So, remind all members.

Potential Sale of Lions Place Seniors Residence Request to Support Emergency Legislation

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Today, we received yet another plea from the residents of Lions Place, the largest non-profit seniors residence in the province, which is for sale because this government, in 2018, decided to let a 35-year funding agreement lapse.

Manitoba Liberals have routinely warned this government about keeping seniors safe, whether it was rapid response teams to cover care homes in event of outbreaks, infection prevention or a seniors advocate.

We are warning this government again: seniors fear being evicted unless this government does something to protect them.

I virtually table a letter from the Lions Place Residence Seniors Action Committee asking for emergency legislation so Lions Place can only be sold if the minister signs off on it. Manitoba Liberals will support it; we hope the NDP will support it.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the PC government support legislation to protect Lions Place?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Well, Madam Speaker, it's really challenging when the Liberal leader comes into this House and puts misinformation on the record about lapsing agreements when no such thing had occurred.

Our government is willing to work with all of our non-profit housing providers to ensure that all seniors and all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home, including the individuals at Lions Place.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, what's happening at Lions Place is a crisis caused by PC neglect. It's non-profit, affordable housing for seniors. They had an agreement with the Province of Manitoba.

I table virtually a 2020 document from the Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba that makes it clear, and I quote: for more than 50 years, appeals for operation—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —of infrastructure funding to upgrade and improve the physical care environment, especially for dementia care, infection prevention and control and safety have been submitted and largely ignored. That's 50 years of neglect. Lions Place residents should be able to sleep knowing they've got a secure place to live.

Will this government agree to emergency legislation to protect Lions Place?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Just a reminder to members that if they are talking about tabling something in the House and they are in the House, they must table hard copies in the House.

Ms. Squires: Well, Madam Speaker, in the absence of said tabled—or, untabled documents, I will just respond by saying this: Our government is looking at legislation. We have looked at legislation across the country and we'll be bringing forward significant measures to ensure that all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home.

The question is, is will the members opposite stop voting against legislation that will improve the lives of many Manitobans in the province?

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

Electric Vehicle Sales Need for Investment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, each year Manitobans send more than \$4 billion out of province when they buy gas or diesel. Converting to electric vehicles would dramatically reduce imports and increase purchases of made-in-Manitoba electricity.

Sadly, because we have a government without vision, when it comes to the purchase of electric vehicles, we are far behind the provinces of BC and Quebec, which also primarily use hydroelectric power, as I tabled.

When will the government act to stimulate electric vehicle sales in our province, which will increase sales of Manitoba-produced hydroelectric power and replace the billions of dollars currently being shoveled out of our province every year?

* (14:20)

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): I thank the member from River Heights for the question, and certainly our government is taking action when it comes to ensuring we reduce our carbon footprint, Madam Speaker.

We know that we're partnering with the City of Winnipeg with more electric buses, Madam Speaker. We know that electrifying the fleet is the way to go for future generations.

Madam Speaker, we'll continue to work with the federal government, work with our partners, work with stakeholders and work with industry to ensure that we can continue to grow electric vehicles here, right here in Manitoba.

Homelessness Prevention Initiatives Funding for Community Organization

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, today the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and the Minister of Families made a historic announcement on funding supports for unsheltered and vulnerable people.

Our government is continuing to help these people who, with winter around the corner, need a plan that works now, not just in eight years.

Can the minister tell this House about this morning's announcement and how it will bring real help to Manitoba's most vulnerable today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): It was with gratitude that I woke up this morning, along with all of my colleagues in this Chamber, in the warmth and safety of my own home. That is not what we can say for all Manitobans, as we know that there are many vulnerable Manitobans who are unsheltered or precariously housed.

That is why our government is taking action, and this morning, we were very proud to announce nearly \$35 million in supports to support those who are precariously housed or unsheltered find their way back home.

This morning's announcement that was made with Jamil Mahmood from Main Street Project and Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud from Siloam Mission—have called this a historic investment that will really go a long ways to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Drug Overdose Prevention Investments Needed

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Drug overdose affects us all. Unfortunately, in—Manitoba is on pace to beat last year's record of over 400 Manitobans that lost their lives.

We must do everything to save Manitobans' lives here in our province. That means timely reporting on the numbers of overdoses in Manitoba. It means providing safe drug testing. It means providing safe consumption sites and it means taking this as the public health crisis that it is.

Will the minister do so today?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite, and I know that we've had discussions multiple times over the various approaches to this very serious issue that Manitoba—and, indeed, all of Canada—is dealing with when it comes to addictions.

I do want to remind the member opposite that, in 17 years, her own government spent zero dollars on rapid access to addictions medicine. Madam Speaker, I'll also point out that her party invested the same amount of money in supervised consumption sites.

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

Mrs. Smith: Over 400 people lost their lives last year of an overdose. We know that that's an—even going to be larger this year. And this government does not want to invest in a safe consumption site, which we know saves lives, and every person that you talk to on the front lines will tell this minister this.

Sunshine House has put together a mobile site to go and support folks, asked this government to help them purchase a machine to check the supply of drugs to make sure that they're safe. Did this government do that? No.

This government can open up a safe consumption site, they can purchase drug testing machines and certainly, they can support Manitobans and help save lives in this province.

Will she do so today?

Mrs. Guillemard: Again, the member opposite and I have had multiple discussions, including during Estimates, where I reiterated that our government has been investing in a recovery-oriented system of care and making multiple investments in the true harm reduction—evidence-based investments. And to that, the member opposite said: I thank the minister and I don't disagree with investing in these areas.

Madam Speaker, the member also thanked our government for investing in the naloxone investments for people to access this important, life-saving treatment.

So I will say I don't know if the member opposite has changed her stance or if she's still willing to work collaboratively with our government.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Smith: It's unfortunate that this minister thinks that over 400 lives—that they're doing enough to help save Manitobans.

We're on track to surpass that, and this minister talks about harm reduction approach, but won't open a safe consumption site in this province, won't even help to purchase a machine to make sure that people who are using drugs, that they're safe.

There's a poisonous drug out there right now that's laced with fentanyl, and this minister won't do nothing. She'll sit there and say that they're doing everything they can to do that.

Will she open a safe consumption site today and help save Manitobans' lives?

Mrs. Guillemard: The member opposite is upset that we're not investing in their chosen organizations, but the plans that come from the NDP—we already know based on the article I had—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Guillemard: —previously tabled, that it contains the usual partisan swipes at government for not doing enough to 'comback' addictions. It offers up the kind of vague and largely useless rhetoric about the need to invest in more social housing to eliminate poverty, but it contains no substantial plans or dollar amounts.

Madam Speaker, we'll take no lessons from the NDP government. I hope that they will vote for the budget we put forward to invest in restoring the lives of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired. *[interjection]* The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just on a point of order, I present the—I table the documents in paper version, as they were intended.

Madam Speaker: And we thank the member.

* * *

Madam Speaker: So, the time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: Are there any petitions? If not, grievances? Oh—petition?

Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road No. 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

(2) The road has been in poor condition for years and—numerous potholes, uneven driving surfaces—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Lathlin: —and extremely narrow shoulders; and

(3) Recent—due to recent population growth in the area, there has been increased vehicle and pedestrian use of Provincial Road 224; and

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better and—when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

* (14:30)

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

Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, et cetera.

A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —of dementia, Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an otolaryngologist or audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population

are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults once every five years.

New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those for whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

Signed by Alyssa Hurd, Josh Bodner, Jordan Edge and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

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

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance, from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction at other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Jashanpreet Singh, Manpreet Singh, Manjot Singh and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Any further petitions?

If not, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call for this afternoon Committee of the Whole, concurrence and third reading on Bill 45 and then second readings on bills 43, 40, 46 and 38?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider—the Committee of the Whole to consider the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, to be followed by Committee of the Whole report, followed by concurrence and third

reading of Bill 45, to be followed by second reading of bills 43 and 40 and 46 and 38.

So I will now call—the House will be now resolved into Committee of the Whole to consider The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

* (14:40)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 45—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Will the Committee of the Whole House please come to order. As announced, this committee will now consider the following: Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 45 have an opening statement?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I do not.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I do not.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the member for that.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 through 5—pass; clauses 6 through 9—pass; clause 10—pass; clause 11—pass; clauses 12 and 13—pass; clause 14—pass; clause 15—pass; clauses 16 and 17—pass; clauses 18 through 20—pass; clauses 21 and 22—pass; clauses 23 and 24—pass; clauses 25 through 27—pass; clause 28—pass; clauses 29 through 30—pass; clause 31—pass; clause 32—pass; clauses 33 through 36—pass; clauses 37 through 39—pass; clauses 40 and 41—pass; clauses 42 through 46—pass; clauses 47 and 48—pass; clauses 49 and 50—pass; clauses 51 and 52—pass;

clause 53—pass; clauses 54 through 56—pass; clause 57—pass; clauses 58 and 59—pass; clauses 60 through 65—pass; clauses 66 through 70—pass; clause 71—pass; clauses 72 through 75—pass; clause 76—pass; clause 77—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

This concludes the business before the committee.

The hour being 2:49, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (14:50)

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Dennis Smook (Deputy Chairperson): The Committee of the Whole has considered the following: Bill 45, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 45—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022

Madam Speaker: I will now call concurrence and third reading of Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, that bill 48—no, that Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Friesen: I'll just make a few brief comments on the third reading stage of Bill 45, which is the budget implementation and tax statutes act.

We are proud to be making strategic and historic investments for all Manitobans at a very critical time, to build our province, to give certainty to families, to help those who are struggling with the very significant increase in the cost of goods and services, Madam Speaker.

It was just last week when the Bank of Canada again raised the prime lending rate, increasing by 50 basis points the cost to borrow and that, of course, has impact. It's the sixth increase in succession since early in this calendar year and it means that the prime rate is now at 3.75 per cent.

That means for every Manitoba household that is renewing a mortgage, that is servicing a line of credit, that has a vehicle, that is having amounts owing for it, any family that is buying groceries, buying clothing for their children, putting fuel in their vehicle—all of these costs are significantly escalated.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This—these, for a variety of reasons—we know that economists continue to debate what the exact reasons are but we know they are owing to the way, the shape and the form in which the world is emerging from the global pandemic.

We saw the ways people moved around in society and lived and went to work and went to school significantly disrupted by COVID. People changed their patterns of spending. People were in receipt of amounts through CERB. Some people did not have as much. Some families had more than they anticipated. It meant that there were distortions, as well, in the way people spent their after-tax income. We know that we continue to understand now better what has been that impact on goods and services because of consumer behaviour.

We know that supply chains globally have been significantly disrupted. We know that labour is in short supply in this province and across Canada, and beyond our own borders. We know that the conflict in Ukraine because of Russian aggression has changed the landscape in Europe but has also had impacts right here.

We are pleased and we are encouraged by our government's significant efforts to resettle Ukrainians here who are coming to Canada to take refuge. And just last week, we reported that the number of

Ukrainians in Manitoba now is going beyond 10,000. There are some reports that Manitoba has now welcomed 14 per cent of all Ukrainians who have come to Canada.

I shared that message last week with the federal Finance Minister, Chrystia Freeland, and encouraged her and the federal government to be very mindful of the impact in Manitoba and how our government is responding.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I know you are also of Ukrainian ancestry and very proud of it, and I know that one in seven Manitobans claims Ukrainian ancestry. So it is good and it is important and it is predictable that Manitoba would be there are the forefront. But by all estimations, Manitoba has the most significant apparatus and commitment to welcome Ukrainians here.

All of that means, though, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that things are very tough right now for Manitobans, and that is why BITSA is making historic commitments, historic investments—historic investments like the new affordability payment to families with children who are under 18. That payment was made in September and October, exactly aligning with the return to school. That payment is \$250 for those families who have one child and \$200 for every child thereafter.

And yet, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv)—and yet, the NDP opposition—says these affordability payments were not needed. They were asked for by no one, they said. And I defy that member to walk up any driveway of any constituent that he represents and tell them that they did not need that money. The member says he knows better how to distribute that money, but we know that Manitobans needs assistance right now, and we are bringing it.

The member criticized our seniors payment for seniors under \$40,000 of income who are made eligible under this BITSA bill. He, again, alleged that somehow it wasn't done right, he could have done better. But we know that, while that member in the past has dithered, it has been our government who has been there to deliver assistance for families in the pandemic, but now since the pandemic.

But Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not note that one cornerstone of our government's payments on affordability to families actually came far in advance of these measures, and those were in respect of the education property tax rebate that last year redistributed to households and

farmland families 25 per cent of the whole property tax that they've paid, but this year increased to 37.5 per cent for those classes, and also next year pointing forward to a 50 per cent recycling of that money back to those families and those individuals at a time when they need it badly, and at the same time, fully funding education.

No matter that the NDP will knowingly continue to try to mislead Manitobans and somehow say they're doing it on the backs of education, which is false, false, false, while the government provides historic increases—\$460 million more than the NDP ever funded education—[interjection]—even while the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare), even today, tries to shout me down and say, oh, I got it wrong, it's not the way it is—it is. We are both recycling that money back to Manitobans when they need it and funding education with historic increases.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, besides these measures, of course, in our affordability package, there are other measures: measures for food banks, there are measures that increase the EIA payment that's called that basic amount. This basic amount is a component piece of any payment received by someone on EIA. And the NDP, for all their years in government, never raised that amount. That amount hasn't been raised for years and years. It was our government who elevated that, and that is in addition to the very significant expansion of our EIA and our non-EIA Rent Assist programs under this government.

* (15:00)

All of these measures are pointed to in BITSA. These measures are activated through the passage of this budget implementation and tax statutes list. I can't talk about all the ways in which our government has supported families, but in this budget—or in this bill are other measures as well. Of course, we know that we continue to make progress on the health and post-secondary education tax levy for the third in a row. That is what we call the payroll tax. Groups asked for it and we have responded.

We know that, besides these measures, the government brought very, very significant rebates to anyone who has a Manitoba Public Insurance policy. Those rebates have now amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars for Manitobans.

But even take a look, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, in the moments left to me I would want to cite this: the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) went on ad

nauseam with a campaign of misinformation, of distortion, misrepresenting the measures of this budget.

But I actually recorded some of the statements that he made because they were so atrocious. And, you know, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we have a sector—and I really—we'll make sure that we distribute back to that sector, which is Manitoba's peat mining sector. We'll distribute to them.

The messages from the member for Fort Garry, who actually signalled that not only was this very modest exemption of fuel used for off-road operation of peat-harvesting equipment from Manitoba's fuel tax, not only was it not necessary, he actually said they would wind it back. He actually, in his comments, suggested that the NDP government, if ever re-elected, would wind back the exemptions on fuel, on agriculture, on mining, on forestry, on fishing.

Can you imagine when our MLAs have a chance to distribute what that member put in Hansard, the spectre of whole areas where he said you shouldn't have listened to the industry when we told him that the measures were specifically called on and advocated for, he called them heartless lobbyists and indicated that if elected, they would probably eliminate all of those provisions. So, Manitobans need to know what they get if they choose NDP.

And, you know, we know that it's been an old slogan around this building. I can't say names, but nothing new with the Leader for the Opposition. And it's true because we know what Manitobans will get. That member for Fort Garry made clear: there will be no tax concessions, there will be no way in which Manitoba families are assisted to get ahead.

There will be new tax measures because we know that the NDP's path is thusly: raise the taxes, overspend the planned budget, rinse and repeat.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we know that after 17 years, 16 separate and distinct tax increases, it has been our government that has made the progress.

We promised over \$2,000 per income earner in Manitoba of returned savings comprehensively and, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I have to confess, we didn't actually execute it as planned. We executed it ahead of schedule for all Manitobans.

So, Manitobans can believe us when we say—Manitobans know that they can believe us when we say that we are acting on behalf of Manitoba families, acting on behalf of Manitoba agriculture, acting on behalf of Manitoba small business.

But I thought, in the time remaining, I had to spend just a moment of my time to illustrate one other egregious example of distortion by that member for Fort Garry because he actually, in his comments, took a run at a company in Brandon that employs almost 500 people—well, I should say 500 when you factor in all the other ancillary businesses that support them—but a payroll of almost 300 people, a payroll tax, a corporate income tax, personal income taxes, fuel taxes, the post-secondary and health tax. This is a company that shipped 3,500 cars out of Brandon last year. It shipped almost 18,000 trucks out of Brandon last year. It built a new Canadian headquarters building in Brandon.

And that member had the audacity to suggest that somehow our government was writing a cheque to millionaires in New York, when he knew full well that that company that he maligned, that company that he tried to impugn their good name, they are paying millions of dollars among the years that they've operated in Manitoba to support education, to support health care, to support infrastructure, to support social services.

And I thought it would be important to say that, when it came to Koch Fertilizer or other companies, that member implied that somehow they're getting a free ride. If that company—which receives 10 per cent of a rebate on its education bill—if that company, if we understand them to be receiving 10 per cent, that means that that company continues to pay the 90 per cent freight each and every year.

Why? Because they are succeeding in the city of Brandon while they build business, while they fuel the Manitoba economy, while they build economic development capacity and deliver jobs to the people of Brandon and the surrounding communities.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it is clear: that member, it was like a Leap Manifesto, he made so clear what the NDP will do if elected. They will raise taxes; they will stand on the necks of Manitobans as they always have done in the past. I would fully suspect that they will run on a pledge to make new income tax measures for job creators.

Don't believe them when they say that they're somehow on the side of small business; we know their record when it came to small business.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I'll end with this: if that NDP party clearly believes that they want to support measures that are designed to make life more affordable for Manitobans, they have one choice and

that is to support BITSA 2022, to support the measures of this legislation that make life better, that build the Manitoba economy, that deliver on our province—on our promises. And Manitobans can be clear that we will continue to get better value and stand on the side of families.

Thanks, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): The amount of passion this minister shows standing up for international oil barons and billionaires is something else. I wish he would show that same sort of passion to Manitobans and that same sort of commitment to trying to make the lives of everyday Manitobans better, because it's just not there.

I hope somebody in the room can get him a glass of water, because he has to be exhausted after that much gaslighting.

But, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is becoming an annual event. We saw it first with the Pallister government using BITSA, this omnibus bill, and then now we're seeing it with the Stefanson government, that they try to hide nefarious and harmful changes in Manitoba legislation.

And the reason is simple, is they're trying to avoid accountability. They don't want to look Manitobans in the eye. And if we went through a normal process, there would have to be public committee hearings.

And those don't end well for this government, and we just recently saw that with Bill 36. I think there was over 40 speakers; each and every single one of them came to this building or virtually, and all of them were opposed to this government's changes to the Public Utilities Board. Every single one of them was opposed to the Stefanson government raising Manitoba Hydro rates unilaterally at the Cabinet table.

And with one voice, Manitobans came together and said no to this government, to—no to this Finance Minister, to the politicization of our hydro rates. They said no to this government, and absolutely no to this Finance Minister attempt to make life less affordable for Manitobans.

Now, the tax changes in this bill are concerning. And this minister doesn't see it and thinks that, you know, he's doing the billionaires' work and that's important to him.

But we have an affordability crisis. And the changes in this bill will make life less affordable for Manitobans. Not only that, it makes our tax system less fair. And of course, the minister sits back and

says, what's the problem, that's what we're trying to do, we are trying to make the tax system less fair.

But the disproportionate benefits of this bill will go to the already well off. And again, you know, we'll get a confused look from the minister going, well, what's the problem? But the problem is that it doesn't 'alleviate' the financial struggles that Manitobans are currently facing.

* (15:10)

And in order for them to sort of rig the financial system here, they're borrowing taxpayers' money to do it in order to make the wealthiest Manitobans pay less in taxes.

So, you know, let that sink in for a minute, the insult to injury. Not only does the government abandon you, not only does the government ignore your concerns and sends cheques off to oil barons and international billionaires, they're going to make you pay the bill. Because there will be a bill due; it's interest rate and hikes and interest payments that the Province of Manitoba will be paying for years. Some estimates, from the Winnipeg Free Press, is that this is actually going to cost billions of dollars in interest payments alone.

And so Manitobans and their children are getting stuck with the bill in order for a handful of Toronto billionaires and Fortune 500 companies to benefit. And the money that is going to be spent on these interest payments, that could have been invested in Manitoba. We have a collapsing health-care system which this government seems extremely disinterested in. We have a struggling education system that this government ignores. We have infrastructure deficits from one end of this province to the other that this government has routinely played games with and has not taken seriously. So we need to be investing in Manitoba students right now, not corporate handouts to oil barons and out-of-province billionaires.

And, of course, this government just didn't stop there with the corporate welfare. That would be bad enough. They've actually raised taxes year over year on the 40 per cent of Manitobans who rent. That's almost 600,000 people have gotten their taxes raised year over year by this government, with the plans to do it again in 2023.

So the hits just don't stop for Manitobans. And some of the most modest-income Manitobans are going to see their taxes go up while the government rewards their campaign donors and their friends with corporate welfare.

And, of course, now we also have, and what's really concerning about this bill, is the attack on the Public Utilities Board. It continues. We saw it with Manitoba Hydro, and it's a very fresh, new attack here. This is probably one of the most stealthy things that they're attempting to bring in in this bill. The Public Utilities Board, as you know, is independent, it's expert driven, it uses evidence. They have refused to raise the rates on Manitobans in the past when the facts didn't justify it, and that's why this government is opposed to it.

It's very hard to privatize Manitoba Hydro right now with its current debt levels. And that's something that this government's realized over the last six years. They certainly want to privatize Manitoba Hydro. They probably—well, they've made steps towards doing that, but I think they've run up to a barrier, knowing that at the current debt ratio that their friends, their campaign donors, won't buy it with that debt. And so in order to make it more attractive to their campaign donors to purchase, they need to rapidly pay down this debt even when it's not good practice, it's not in the public interest and it'll end up hurting not only Manitoba economy, but Manitobans. It'll actually hurt Manitoba Hydro as well.

So what do they do? They have this dilemma. They want to sell it off and they can't under its current situation, so they create a moral panic and start to claim that there's too much debt. There is no expert, no credible expert out there who hasn't received a paycheque from this government that says the debt level is dangerous. The only people who do it are those who are getting paid, who are self-serving politicians and, I mean, this is all in the service of privatizing Manitoba Hydro.

So Public Utilities Board gets in the way; they won't allow this to happen. They're the public's voice through all of this and, of course, this government now needs to take power away from the Public Utilities Board. And this is Pallister government's plan; like, nothing's changed here. The whole idea about marketing a new premier was that they were somehow different or going to change. If anything, they've doubled down on this approach and they're expanding it to other utilities, and we're seeing it now with Manitoba Public Insurance.

So we're hearing that this government obviously wants to politicize the setting of hydro rates. They want to create artificial targets not based on any evidence, and they want to gouge Manitoba con-

sumers. We're hearing—very concerning—large industrial users said this is crazy, that this is going to cause job losses, it's going to be a huge hit to our economy.

This is a government who could care less about the economy or creating jobs, and we've seen that over and over again. When they came into government in 2016, and they don't like to talk about this, we were the fastest growing non-oil-based economy in Canada. After six years of Pallister-Stefanson governments, we've now dropped to seventh in Canada.

This is another stat that we don't talk about enough. The rate of home ownership in Manitoba has dropped under their watch, meaning less Manitobans actually are homeowners now than they were in 2016 and before. And what's happened there is that they have made life so unaffordable for Manitobans with their policies that fewer and fewer Manitobans can actually afford to own a home.

Child poverty is back on the rise with this government. And we're seeing diseases like trench foot that haven't been present in our community for 100 years. They're now showing up in the streets of downtown Winnipeg, which is another example of the poverty that they've created with their policies.

So now they've set their sights on MPI and they want to eliminate the PUB's role in issuing rebates. Well, why is that? This is buried in an 'omnus' bill. They were hoping nobody would notice. This is a huge change. They didn't want any public scrutiny when it came to this.

And it's deeply troubling that they're trying to hide this change from Manitoba. But under BITSA, they will force MPI to maintain hundreds of millions of dollars in additional reserve accounts without having to seek the approval of the Public Utilities Board.

So they've set some artificial rate which isn't based on evidence, which isn't based on good practice, which isn't going to be allowed to review by the PUB. And just like them setting arbitrary debt-repayment schedules for Hydro, they're using the same sort of ham-fisted approach.

And the goal here is to prevent the PUB from ordering the Crown corporation to rebate money to vehicle owners. Because in the past, as it currently stands, that's what happened. When MPI had good years and they had a huge surplus, PUB would examine the books and say, you know what, you have way too much money in your reserves; you've got to

give back to Manitobans. And whether the PC government of the day didn't want to do it, they had no control over it and MPI was ordered to give back Manitobans' money to Manitobans. This bill puts an end to that practice.

So now MPI will have the sole authority to decide when or if any future rebates are issued. And given that the government of the day controls MPI, this government has shown its cards. They would not provide rebates to Manitoba. So despite healthy reserves at MPI, this government will increase rebates and will prevent them from even occurring, and so that no money will go back to MPI insurance users. And it'll be hoarded within the reserves of MPI, even if an expert panel like PUB says that they don't need to do that, that they're solvent and that that money should rightly go back to Manitobans.

So they're saying that, at the Cabinet table, they're going to have final say about rebates and reserve levels and this bill will end the ability of the PUB to make those decisions and will politicize something that hasn't been politicized in Manitoba in over a generation. So the protection of the PUB when it comes to MPI rebates is gone.

And, of course, this was absolutely hypocritical because we saw this rebate practice was used during COVID recession, and they obviously want to deny future governments that tool and policy ability to help. And it's concerning because this is a government that's quite certain they're not going to form the next government, and it appears that all their moves and the steps that they're taking seems to recognize that.

And, of course, they've been such a disaster and a train wreck when it comes to growing Manitoba's economy, they, I'm sure, have been told by the civil service that they have driven the Manitoba economy towards a recession, and that we will be in a recession in early 2023.

And I don't think it's going to be any surprise that we'll have an election in the spring and one of the reasons for that is because the full weight of the recession that's about to hit Manitoba won't be in place by the spring as it would be probably by the fall, and this government is going to try to use the timing of this election to avoid accountability for the economic harm that they've caused and the poor business climate that they've built here in Manitoba.

* (15:20)

When it comes to affordability issues, this government has ignored this issue for seven months. They

doubled down on using the education property tax rebate cheques but, of course, we saw that was a reward to campaign donors and out-of-province billionaires. We're told that it'll cost over \$40 million this year alone to give commercial rebate cheques to some of the largest railways, oil companies and richest people in the world.

And unlike the average \$400 cheque, like—some Manitoban families will receive, we hear that Cadillac Fairview, a Toronto-based multi-national corporation, is going to receive a million-dollar cheque. The Thomson family, the third, fourth, fifth richest people in Canada are going to receive a \$300 cheque. We've heard from CFIB. They tell us that these rebate cheques don't trickle down to small businesses, that they are forced to keep paying rent at elevated levels, and the landlords don't filter this money back down to the small businesses.

We've heard that it took forever for CFIB even to get a meeting with the minister. And when he finally relented to meeting with them, he passed off their concerns. And we've heard in this House that he engaged in even further gaslighting, as is his way, saying that these businesses are getting their rebates. They're not. That's just not true.

And it's deeply saddening and disappointing that the minister would do that. And I don't think how—he realizes how much damage to the Province's credibility he does when he makes these statements that so clearly are wrong. And the point to be made about all this is he could've fixed all this. He knew about all these problems for months, and he chose not to. These are policy choices. These are his decisions.

He thinks it's a good idea that international billionaire oil magnates should get cheques. He thinks it's a good idea that Toronto-based corporate landlords, you know, worth in the billions, should get cheques. He thinks that's a good idea, when so many Manitobans are struggling.

And what's crazy about all this is that he borrowed the money to do it. He didn't even have the money for this, and Manitobans are on the hook. And he skewed our tax system, meaning that the people who are doing very well in this economy, who have the ability to pay, well, they got a break.

But the people who aren't doing well, who are struggling, who pay a disproportionate amount of their income on taxes, they don't get a break. And by him pushing the tax burden onto them, it means their

children and then are going to pay for these mistakes. And they are mistakes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, let's talk about the affordability cheques. They are completely inadequate. They provide very little help. And they tend to give help to those who actually aren't asking for it. The threshold is \$170,000 in family income with children. That means that in order to—you qualify for this cheque, if you're a family and you're a high-income earner. The highest taxes—bracket earners get this benefit. They never asked for it.

Whereas singles who are low income, families without children, low income, students who are low income, renters who are low income will get no help at all. The average family income is \$98,000. There is absolutely no justification, the minister has not provided any justification why he set the threshold to double that. There is no evidence based here, there is nothing to show that this is somehow optimal or is going to stimulate the economy or create jobs; they've never once made that argument.

They've never ever, with any of these rebate cheques, ever said that this is going to help the economy or create any jobs. They've never once made that argument, and because that would be, you know, laughable. So there is no evidence that this will have the greatest impact on the greatest number of Manitobans. And again, this is borrowed money.

So people see through this cynical buying of votes, certainly when we're in Riel, when we're in Radisson, when we're in Rossmere, we hear from Manitobans who go, you know what, it's always great to get a cheque from the government, but, you know, maybe this could have gone to some better use, and maybe we didn't have to borrow against our children's future to literally buy votes with an election coming up.

So, again, the minister knew all the problems with all of these programs and he chose to move forward. And what does that tell you?

Well, it speaks volumes of the values of this government and the actual bad-faith nature of this government, that they have shown no interest in the public good and everything has to do with rewarding a political donor, trying to purchase a potential voter in a targeted seat or just good, old corporate welfare to an out-of-province friend. It's shameful, but it's on brand. This is who they are.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): This is yet another trickle-down economics-type bill that takes public money and, sort of, gives it to the wealthiest Manitobans. In fact, we're borrowing to do that.

There's an old saying that the idea around what—how trickle-down economics works, is the more you stuff a horse with oats at one end, the more the sparrows at the other will have left to eat. And this is a huge mistake because, fundamentally, we believe in bubble-up economics, not trickle-down economics.

If what this government had been doing was working on inflation and working on really helping the economy, we might have seen an argument about that; we might have seen what sort of benefits we would expect to see, what kind of return investment on this that we might expect to see.

But, as people have said before, you know, if somebody who owns a condo in Point Douglas will get \$6 back and somebody who owns a condo in Tuxedo, they get \$6,000. And that we're seeing huge cheques being written to commercial property owners, who, quite frankly, are doing extremely well in—and they're not—some of them are doing just fine in this crisis.

It's a deep concern because this, as a bill, is not actually dealing with the many multiple crises that are facing Manitobans. I had somebody with a disability point out that, as far as they know, that they're not going to be eligible for any of the inflation assistance. We are seeing minimal increases to EIA. Those increases to EIA for somebody on a disability is \$25 a month; for others, it's \$50 a month. And, you know, this has been hailed as being the greatest increase, but the fact is is that we're talking about EIA rates that have been frozen at the same rate for decades, so—as so much spending, actually, in Manitoba has been.

But I am particularly concerned; I just want to put it on the record. I think that I've spoken in the House on this a number of times, but the Bank of Canada—we're facing these challenges; we're facing massively—increases in interest rates, which are going to bankrupt businesses. They're going to bankrupt individuals. The Bank of Canada, I think, is making a mistake by hiking interest rates in ways that genuinely risk collapsing the economy. I've been warning about this for a number of years.

In July, I wrote a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland sharing a July 21, 2022, interview with an economic historian and financial advisor named Edward Chancellor,

where he was quoted as saying it will—quote: It will turn out to be largely impossible to normalize interest rates without collapsing the economy. End quote. As Chancellor argues, and as I agree, we're not just talking about inflation caused by a couple of years of pandemic or a couple of years of fiscal spending on the part of the government. We are looking at an—what he called, quote, an everything bubble: overpriced real estate, land, stocks, stock buybacks, all paid for by large, low-interest loans, not just in the last year or in the last 10, but for a generation.

Now, in 2008 there was a global financial crisis which sort of knocked the entire global economy off its axis. You will note that it had huge disturbances to government funds, to the economy. It had an enormous impact in Manitoba, though it wasn't always recognized, with—the CanWest Global, for example, was unable to get their financing and ended up becoming insolvent.

But it's important to understand what caused the crisis—the global financial crisis in 2008, and why it's a danger still in Canada today because the global financial crisis was fundamentally caused by mortgages. Most of those mortgages were in the US, some were in Canada, but bad mortgages were bundled up into bad investments. People were swindled into taking bad mortgages when they actually qualified for good ones because the bad ones made banks more money. And bad rating agencies then said, well, these investments are the highest quality investment; they're as good as buying a bond from the US government.

* (15:30)

So, banks around the world bought them and people sold bad insurance against them, and the reason it all blew up—because whether it was a mortgage, investors or insurers—no one actually had the money they thought they had to pay their bills, fairly often because of—actually, because of rampant corporate fraud—fraud and forgery.

When this house of cards collapsed, as it was bound to do, central banks did quantitative easing. They printed new money and used it to buy up stocks and bonds that were plummeting in value. This was called a liquidity problem. The same thing happened at the beginning of the pandemic, as if all these investors just didn't have enough cash on hand; for now, they just needed something to tide them over.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

The reality is, this was a bank bailout—to keep banks from going broke. And banks and people who

were buying bonds received free money for them and they could then use that money, especially if they were a bank, to increase their capital reserves and do even more lending.

So we're in a country and in a world that's completely awash with debt. And because investors, especially the banks, got cash, the Bank of Canada or CMHC bought their—bought debt, bought people's mortgages, bought Canadians' debt off the banks. That was happening in 2020; that was happening in 2008.

And people may have heard that Canada survived the 2008 financial crisis better than most because we were so sensible and we, apparently, allegedly, didn't get rid of our bank regulations the way other countries did. But the reality is that Canada's banks were technically bankrupt and received \$114 billion bailout from the then-Conservative government, the Bank of Canada and even the US Federal Reserve.

In fact, Canada's private banks were backstopped to a total of \$200 billion. By comparison, the federal stimulus plan, around the same time, was \$22.7 billion. It was one tenth the size of the support that was offered to banks, and provinces had to match up money.

And for a brief, highly publicized period of stimulus, the Harper Conservatives then embarked on austerity. The Province of Manitoba, which is the child and family poverty capital of Canada, had its total federal transfers frozen for six years straight.

Now, Canada is facing a major crisis with inflation, unaffordable housing, growing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, while people and businesses alike are struggling to cover the costs of overhead, groceries and the essentials of life.

And this is a debt crisis and an insolvency crisis, with prices driven up by investors who've been gambling largely on whether middle-class and working-class Canadians can afford to pay their mortgages.

Of all the countries in the world today, Canada is the most—is one of the most vulnerable. We have the highest debt; we have one of the largest real estate bubbles and that's because we never addressed the problem back in 2008.

And in 2014, a friend of mine who is an investment banker—former investment banker in New York and London—said there was likely to be an even bigger financial crisis coming than the one happened in 2008.

And his reasoning was simple: nothing was actually fixed after 2008.

There's too much debt in the world, and ultra-low interest rates have made things worse. If interest rates went up, people and businesses would start losing money and start going broke. If inflation goes up, lenders would start losing money and they would go broke.

And my friend's view is echoed by a truly great and sadly unrecognized Canadian economist named William White. White grew up in Kenora, Ontario. He became the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada and eventually an economist with the bank of international settlements, which is sort of a club of the world's central banks. He should be famous, not just for predicting the 2008 global financial crisis—which he did—but for warning Alan Greenspan to his face about it for several years in a row.

The global financial crisis bankrupted banks. It rocked the world economy. Millions of people lost their homes. Tens of 'maillon' were thrown out of work. Entire countries effectively declared bankruptcy or were driven into it.

The unfinished business of that crisis is at the root of global and domestic instability today, and the fact is—and the problem is—we're still using the same old ideas that are exemplified in this BITSA bill and the same old ideas that we've been using for 30 and 40 years, which don't work.

And I will quote, in December of 2003, Robert Lucas, who was one of the great—he was one of the people who came up with the macroeconomics we use today, began his presidential address to the American Economic Association with a triumphant claim: that economic crises, like the Great Depression, were now impossible. He said: The central problem of depression prevention has been solved throughout all practical purposes, and has, in fact, been solved for many decades. He basically thought that there was no possibility of a crisis, that we were going to be stable forever. Even as William White was warning Alan Greenspan that the US and the global economy was headed for trouble.

And these—and in Steve Keen's book in 2017, which is called *Can We Avoid Another Financial Crisis?*, he warned there's a specific formula that's a warning for when a country's about to get into trouble: it's when private debt—that is, people's mortgages and—especially people's mortgages, which is where most private debt is—if the debt—the private debt-to-GDP

ratio gets over 150 per cent, then it means that—and credit is 10 per cent more than GDP in the previous five years, you're in danger of a financial crisis. And Canada has been in that range for a long time. And it's because we keep pumping more and more debt, we keep trying to solve our problems with debt instead of solving it through fiscal measures and through a set of—trying to solve it through taxation measures.

We have created this crisis, and it's overwhelmingly a crisis created by—not even by elected governments, but by monetary policy at central banks. And it's something—the governments are not—the governments and politicians will pay the price for it, but they are not actually the ones who are making this decision. They are not the ones who are actually calling the shots.

And that's really unfortunate because, as in 2016, Paul Romer, who's another Nobel Prize-winning economist and a former economist for the head of the World Bank, wrote a paper called the problem with macroeconomics where he pointed out that the theories we use to run our economy—the theories backed by Robert Lucas—had totally and completely failed to predict the 2008 financial crisis. If you want a good predictive model, it should work to predict things. And it didn't. They didn't see it coming.

But somebody like William White did. And the reason I want to bring up William White again is that he's been warning the same thing. He says, look, he's been warning that we could be facing a global debt crisis simply because the conditions are worse. They're worse than they used to be.

And just—I'm surprised—in a sense I have to sort of defend this, but, I mean, my father was a—worked in finance, so I had the strange honour of talking about things like inflation and all these measures at home around with him. I have a friend who is a journalist who worked for Bloomberg in London, another friend who's an—so, these are things that we've talked about and have talked about it because the fundamental risk here to our economy is not government debt: it's private debt.

And it's—and the fact is, what the central bank is doing is playing incredibly dangerous risks that are going to deliberately engineer a recession, to say that we're going to—in the hope of reducing prices, we're going to raise interest rates to the point that people can't pay their mortgages anymore, that people won't be able to pay their bills anymore or they won't be able to access credit anymore.

So this is—and, again, Edward Chancellor, who said that we're not going to be able to normalize interest rates without a risking a recession or actually collapsing the economy, is the way he put it, should be taken very, very seriously. He's not—he's someone who ran a finance company. He's not somebody who's—he's not Yanis Varoufakis; he's not somebody who's on the left at all. He's warning about this because it's a mistake; mistake that we've been making for a very long time.

And it is, for all this doom. Sorry, I didn't mean that. So [*inaudible*] said, it—this—we have to accept the risk, but—and recognize this risk and be clear about it because there are ways that—to address this that are not being talked about in BITSA that could be put into place.

One is that there are measures that we should—can and should be taking. Again, William White has said what we need is some kind of structured debt relief. He says, nobody's ready for this. We're going to face either one or two problems. One is that we're either going to have a chaotic—either people are not going to be able to pray—pay their debts in a way that's chaotic, so you'll have a whole bunch of defaults and bankruptcies and foreclosures that it's just going to spiral out of control, which none of us want; or you could be organized about it. So let's—at least let's be organized about it.

So, there are positive programs and positive initiatives we can take. There are examples from history in Canada and in Manitoba where people have been allowed to renegotiate their debts, were allowed to say, look, this is a debt that's odious because it was—it might have been spent on somebody, if somebody's racked up their Visa bill spending money on insulin, if somebody has racked up their Visa bill because they're just trying to spend money on groceries—and there were enormous numbers of Manitobans—sorry, and Canadians who were facing this and who've been facing this issue since well before the pandemic.

It's the story of especially working class Canadians who've been—had no choice because they haven't had a raise in years. The only opportunity they have, the only access they have to actually cover their bills in the face of inflation or anything else has been debt. They're offered debt through mortgages; they're offered debt through reverse mortgages; they're offered debt through credit cards; and they're offered debt through payday lenders. And really what's hap-

pening is there's been an incredible and tragic exploitation of many Canadians by lenders and especially payday lenders and that includes seniors.

* (15:40)

So there is—what needs to be done is that partly, the Government of Canada and the central bank need to work together, but we need programs that are going to help people reduce their debt and negotiate their debt downwards so that they don't go broke because, ultimately, our interest rates have been going—have been too low for too long, and we're in a trap.

And we have to find a way out of this trap that isn't going to break the economy and break the working- and middle-class Canadians who, basically, took out a—may have taken out a mortgage because they had no—it was the only way they could possibly buy a house, and all of a sudden are worried they're going to lose their house, lose everything.

That shouldn't be happening. Because, ultimately, these are mistakes that we're—that the Bank of Canada and other central banks are responsible for.

But, again, there are positive things we can do but none of them are to do with austerity. We shouldn't be cutting; we should be doing what we can to make sure that people can pay their bills, that people are working as much as possible.

And we're—we have to recognize: we're at war. I mean, that there is a—one of the reasons why our prices are so high is because there's a war in Ukraine. And the price we are paying, this is—to acknowledge that this is the price we all have to pay because we are supporting Ukraine.

That's one of the prices to pay, is that we're going to have to deal with this inflation. But we have to find a way to deal with it that's good, so that it's not falling on people who will be most hurt by it. That we have to—it has to be—we have to rely on the people who are the strongest and it has to low—to rest on their shoulders, so we're not breaking people.

But the other is that we're coming out of a pandemic, and that it's been absolutely ruinous.

So, one of the things that happens after a disaster, what Canada really needs is a kind of Marshall Plan; is that we need a post-pandemic and as per—and, certainly, we can hope for a post-Ukrainian-war Marshall Plan, which actually helps people invest in businesses, which helps regrow businesses—Manitoba businesses—and puts people to work in Manitoba, but also helps

people find ways to reduce their debt. That is the one thing that is absolutely key.

And it can be student debt, because student debt has been absolutely terrible, especially for young women who are graduating.

We are in a debt trap, and the only way out is to reduce that debt. And we need to focus on that. And we can't cut our way out of it. You can't cut your way out of debt; the only thing you can do is to invest and work your way out of it.

So, with those few words, I thank Madam Speaker, and I yield the rest of my time.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2022.

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

The motion is carried.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 43—The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act

Madam Speaker: Moving now to second reading of Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the minister of education and early child learning, that Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act; Loi sur la communication de renseignements pour la protection contre la violence de la part d'un partenaire intime, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

And Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table that message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Families, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message was tabled.

Ms. Squires: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce the second reading of Bill 43.

In November 2019, the Speech from the Throne committed to implementing legislation in the spirit of Clare's Law to enable residents to access information about their partner's history of violence.

Clare's Law is named after Clare Wood, a British woman who was murdered by her partner in 2009. Clare Wood's family fought to put a disclosure protocol in place that would enable people to obtain information from police about a partner's documented history of violence, in hopes that they may safely leave relationships when a risk of violence was found to be present.

First implemented in the United Kingdom in 2014, other jurisdictions have followed suit, including Australia, and Saskatchewan and Alberta here in Canada. Manitoba's Bill 43 is the next generation of Clare's Law, co-designed to be trauma informed with input from police services, community organizations, provincial service providers and leading international researchers to identify and proactively address known gaps, risks and challenges experienced by other jurisdictions from around the world.

The purpose of Bill 43 is to support a person concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children from intimate partner violence, family violence or sexual violence in accessing information about their intimate partner's documented history of violence. In addition, this bill will facilitate access to public and community-based supports to promote safety and end the cycle of violence while ensuring information is disclosed and it is treated appropriately and confidentially.

Bill 43 puts safeguards in place to ensure disclosure information is treated with—respecting the right to privacy for whom the disclosure information is about. Privacy principles will be respected, ensuring that when collecting, using and disclosing information is necessary and limited to the minimum amount required to accomplish the purposes of this act.

Manitoba has some of the highest rates of intimate partner violence and family violence in Canada. These types of violence primarily affect women and girls, disproportionately affecting those living in rural, remote and northern communities, Indigenous people, people of colour and 2SLGBTQIA people.

It is important that Manitoba continue to address gender-based violence. Bill 43 empowers those concerned for their safety or the safety of their children with supports, safety planning and information to take the next steps that they determine are best for their families while ensuring privacy is respected.

Our goal is to continue addressing gender-based violence to make our province safer for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this important legislation.

I would just like to ask the Minister of Families, how is the government going to be able to get this information about this bill out to the general public?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Through the regular channels of when we introduce bills and when bills are hopefully proclaimed.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I really want to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I believe it's really, really critical that we do have it here in Manitoba and I sincerely mean it. Thank you for bringing it forward.

I'm hoping that the minister can shed just a little bit of light on how an applicant, and whether it's the person themselves or someone who is acting on behalf of the applicant, actually brings forward their application.

Is it through email, a phone call?

Ms. Squires: The Manitoba approach will be very unique in that we will have a disclosure support group that will actually determine and work with an applicant on a one-on-one basis.

Applications can be made online, they can be made through email or they can be made in person.

MLA Marcelino: The minister did mention in her opening comments that many women in rural and northern areas and many newcomer women disproportionately face intimate partner violence.

I was just wondering if this government is going to be able to offer any kind of accommodations for women who—for whom English is not their first language.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, we will, of course, be offering information to individuals in the language of French, which, of course, is another official language in the country, as well as the numerous other languages that are spoken in the province of Manitoba.

* (15:50)

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

MLA Marcelino: I was just wondering how the government is going to make sure that this service can be offered in a way that is safe for the person seeking it, and will not cause them more potential danger?

Ms. Squires: That's a very good point, and that is why the Manitoba approach has these disclosure support teams.

And we're also allowing that the individual who is accessing information can also have a person join them to be their support person, and that that person would also be subject to confidentiality requirements but be able to be privy to the same information to really support the individual after receiving this information.

We believe that this is very trauma-informed and a person-centred approach to delivering this service.

MLA Marcelino: Just to respond to the previous response from the minister regarding the ability for newcomer women to access the service in their different languages, I would just like to make a suggestion to perhaps, you know, provide funding for different types of groups that deal with these newcomers, that help with translation or to do the kind of service that was done during the COVID rollout for the Manitoba vaccine phone numbers in different languages; that was very helpful. And if you could probably do something similar to that, that would be great.

My question is: What kind of trauma-informed, culturally appropriate training on intimate partner and

gender-based violence will be provided to the director to help them provide these services?

Ms. Squires: I appreciate the member's feedback and certainly do agree with what she'd said about ensuring that we're offering these services to people in the language of their choice. That is very important.

This act is enabling legislation, and so a lot of those details will be rolled out in the regulations. But I do want to point that we do have a strong working group with representatives across this entire province and representing multiple community groups and organizations and individuals, so that we can have diversity in the way that this information is presented and rolled out and community accesses it.

MLA Marcelino: We would like to ask who was consulted in advance of introducing this bill?

Ms. Squires: We consulted with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the Sexual Assault Response Team, Clinic, Ka Ni Kanichihk, HSC SANE, Winnipeg Police Service, Brandon Women's Resource Centre, the Family Violence Consortium of Manitoba, Ma Mawi, Genesis House, IKWE, North End Women's Resource Centre, Parkland Crisis Centre, sexually-Sexuality Education Resource Centre and representatives from the departments of Families, Health, Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, as well as the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

MLA Marcelino: My final question for the minister is: How is the government going to be able to make this application process accessible and available, especially for newcomers?

Ms. Squires: That is a great question, because we know that there were challenges in other jurisdictions, where applications were being made and the wait time was long. And that is something that we find unacceptable. When an individual asks for information, we want to be working with them right away.

That is why we're going to have a disclosure response team which is made up of not just law enforcement, but law enforcement and an individual in the Department of Justice, who will be working with that applicant to ensure that they're receiving timely information, that they're getting their questions answered and getting the supports.

We are not going to be disclosing information without providing those critical supports and access to

information about supports in the community for the people that are requesting information.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, the floor is open for debate.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): It's my pleasure to put some words on the record for Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act.

The purpose of this bill is to establish the disclosure to protect against intimate partner violence. Under this act, a person who believes that they may—might be at risk of violence from a current or former intimate partner may apply to receive information about the risk that the partner poses to the person or to the person's child. If the director or the police reasonably believe that a person could benefit from an application being made about an intimate partner, they may provide the person with information about the application process.

Applications are jointly assessed by the director and the police and conducted in accordance with the regulations based on information in their possession or collected from other sources. Anyone who receives information as the result of an application is required to keep the information confidential unless another law permits its disclosure. A person involved in the process is given the opportunity to engage in a risk assessment and safety planning, and referred to appropriate supports and service.

Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we wholeheartedly support the passage of this bill. We believe that intimate partner violence, particularly gender-based violence, is an epidemic and that we need to address this, and this bill will do much to address that. Intimate partner violence is gender-based and racialized and even localized. The ability to access information about partners will be particularly important for women, gender-diverse people, Indigenous women and two-spirit people and for many women in rural and northern areas in our province.

While this service provided in this bill is important, it can only be safely accessed if there are networks of support and community for the people using it. Being in a relationship in which there is actual or potential intimate partner violence is an incredibly isolating experience, and those facing potential abuse need information about their partners, but they also

need continual support and resources afterwards, particularly if they decide to leave the relationship.

Intimate partner violence disproportionately impacts Indigenous women, as well, and the services provided by this bill need to take that into consideration.

Because of stigma and the fear of repercussions, many victims of intimate partner or gender-based violence do not report their abusers, leading to potentially harmful gaps in the available data. We need to end these problems in order for this service to be truly effective.

We also need to invest in women's health and safety in all areas so we can provide support to people experiencing dangerous situations at home. I can't really reiterate enough, Madam Speaker, the importance for increased supports for women in terms of women's resources: resource centres across the province, we have about nine of them; and for the different women's shelters that we have in the province, we have about 10 of them; and for the second-stage housing that we have here in the province, we have about four of those.

Last December—or, sorry, last November, we visited—our caucus visited Brandon together and some colleagues and I, we had a chance to visit the Women's Resource Centre in Brandon, on Princess Avenue, and got to know a little bit about the services that they provide for women there. It's a great little resource centre, a beautiful space, a very calming space at this place. There is counselling provided to women, there is sexual assault counselling provided to women, there is art therapy there, there is counselling provided to children and there is different types of advocacy that women can access here at the centre.

So, for example, women can get help filing—trying to apply for different types of housing and different kinds of social services. There is also a sexual assault advocate that can come with you when you need to make a police report, that can come with you to your medical appointments. And, you know, there's also wellness programs there like yoga, beading, crafting, cooking classes. There's a lot going on there. There's also breakfast programs and other kinds of snacks that women and their child can avail of there.

But, again, you know, we have something like—legislation like this that will move forward the rights of women in the right direction, but we need to make sure that those supports are in place so that women can take the next steps after that. And right now that's not

happening at enough of a pace that we really, really need.

Again, when we were there at the Women's Resource Centre in Brandon, we were told that they hadn't had an operational funding increase since this government was elected in 2016. They did get tens of thousands of dollars—about \$58,000 as a one-time grant that they used to, you know, put in a kitchen because before that they had a kitchen about the size of this notebook. It was literally the size of this notebook, their little sink. And that was what they were trying to, you know, make all the meals with and stuff like that. It wasn't even—I don't even think that would pass some kind of health standards, Madam Speaker. So they were able to use that money to put a kitchen in and a little bit of storage, but that was it.

* (16:00)

No operational funding 'increases'—increases at the Brandon Women's Resource Centre, and what did that lead to? That led to a lot of turnover in staff. And—very, very experienced, wonderful staff, you know. They had to just keep leaving because they weren't making enough money to make ends meet for their own families. That meant that, you know, the staff that were staying were feeling incredible strain because they were pretty short staffed as a result.

And that also meant that there were really, really long waiting lists for people, for women, who needed to access very crucial counseling and therapy. And the heartbreaking thing for me was seeing the space for the children's counsellor—they had, like, a play area for children that would also need counselling. They accept counselling for children as young as three years old at the Brandon Women's Resource Centre.

And, unfortunately, the waiting list for even the children—and for the rest of the women—because of the lack of increase in operational funding by this government, unfortunately led to waiting lists of several months for children and for women to access that super crucial counselling that we knew that they needed.

We also saw that—we also learned from the folks at that Brandon Women's Resource Centre that they needed extra funds to help with the legal advocacy that they so badly needed. There's also not very much housing supports that these women could access. And also this women's resource centre could really use a van. They could really use some kind of transportation to even help transport women and children to the different kinds of programming that they would need.

We know Brandon serves as a regional hub for the area. It's not just for the city of Brandon, this women's resource centre. It was servicing the region, and that even included, like, migrant women who work in agricultural sectors. So, sometimes the women—these entrepreneurial women at this resource centre would have to try to figure out: how are we going to get, you know, two hours away, three hours away and back? There are no buses. There are no buses in the middle of the night. They really, really need help with transportation and, again, with that very, very crucial operational funding increase.

So, I'm hoping that the minister is taking, you know, these important steps with this legislation today, but I am hoping that she and her department are also listening to the needs of these resource centres, the needs of these children, the needs of these women that need these after supports after they've already come in from the cold to try to access help.

I also wanted to discuss Sakeenah Homes today. This is another important type of support that we're seeing. There is a gap in our shelter system for newcomer women, especially women who practice the Muslim faith.

I guess it's been two years now that I've been getting phone calls and requests for meeting from women who practice the Muslim faith who have been telling me that they do not feel welcome in the current shelter system that we have here in Manitoba; that the type of food that was served there, you know, although welcome—food is food—but they would not be able to eat some of that food; that there are prayer times and, especially during their holy days or Ramadan, that they would not be able to do their prayers, especially in the early mornings.

There were even reports of Islamophobia, like ripping off their head coverings. There was reports of, you know, having to be forced to be in spaces with men without their head coverings. They also reported—there were other types of reports like that, like, they were being told that, you know, there was a choice between their religion or having to stay with, you know, an abuser. There was just a lot of that, because this was part of Islam—there was a lot that was going on that was a very negative space for these women and children who are already going through a lot.

In addition, there weren't a lot of after, kind of, care supports in place for women like this—Muslim women, especially newcomers. They would need

extra supports for learning English and for additional education and skills training to access jobs.

So, these were some of the concerns that we were hearing from this group of newcomer women: that the Manitoba—the current Manitoba shelter space that we have here was not a welcoming space for them, unfortunately, and many of them made the difficult choice to going back to their abusers because that was at least an environment that they had a little bit of comfort with, even more than the shelter system.

So, it just goes to show that, really, a lot more needs to be done because, again, we know from the statistics about gender-based violence that newcomer women is one of the groups that is disproportionately involved with this type of violence. So, I'd like to see the department focusing on that a little bit more than they have in the past.

So, Sakeenah Homes entered Manitoba in order to fit this need. We have their Sakeenah Homes founder, the CEO, Zena Chaudhry; she and a few of her colleagues visited us, our NDP caucus, I think it was in May of this year, to let us know that they were fundraising in order to build the first-ever shelter space that would accommodate women of Muslim faith as well as other newcomers, as well as other folks that needed to access this—the shelter space.

And, you know, at the time, I think they were also looking for maybe some assistance from the government; I don't think any of that was able to come through for them. But, in any case, they persevered, and on October 13th, they finally opened their doors to a home that could be used for a shelter space. So, you know, big congratulations to Ms. Chaudhry and to her team. I know that many of the Muslim women's organizations here are also very supportive, here in Manitoba, of their efforts. And Sakeenah comes from, I think, Mississauga or somewhere in Ontario. So, just very grateful that they chose to make their space here.

Just a little bit more about them. They were founded in 2018 in response to a gap to form—to respond to a gap for culturally and religiously sensitive services for women and children facing domestic violence and homelessness.

So, you know, speaking to the founders of Sakeenah Homes and their colleagues, speaking to women of Muslim faith that had these difficulties accessing our Manitoba shelters, you know, some of the things that they're talking about, in addition to having, like, a space that is more welcoming for them, is to have—make sure that we have more counselling

supports for them, making sure that we have more transitional housing, second-stage housing supports.

They were discussing the need to increase EIA rates. A lot of them are not able to work because they're caring for young children. They're not in a position to work yet because, maybe, their husbands didn't let them work when they were here; just trying to isolate them here at home.

So, there are a lot of issues there, and they just needed some time to be able to be with their children and transition through adult education, through English a second—English as additional language classes and more skills training. So, they needed that time in order to get them up and running and to be more independent on their own while raising their kids. But, currently, we don't have that kind of system that would enable women and their families to get to that point.

So, again, looking for some EIA increases as well as more access to legal services. Some of them would have to—some of these women would have to fight their husbands in court, or ex-husbands in court, to try to get custody. And, you know, it was a real fight to try to get even the resources to be able to mount a legal challenge for that.

Again, more resources for language, career skill development, adult education so that these women can equip themselves to work and take care of their children as best as they can.

So, some folks that have been very, very helpful, you know, with this path that I'd like to, you know, let the minister and her department know about, is this organization called Healthy Muslim Families.

I actually just had a meeting this morning with Eve Sotiriadou, who is one of the directors there and also to Sara Arnous, the financial empowerment co-ordinator. I met with her and a few of her colleagues from Healthy Muslim Families over the summer. And this is a wonderful organization that tries to support women through the—different counselling, trying to get even the programming in Urdu and in Arabic languages, which is really important to try to get those resources in more languages.

* (16:10)

This—and I just wanted to also reiterate that one of the main issues that a lot of newcomers—newcomer women—face when they're trying to leave these type of violent situations at home is this added stress of not knowing whether or not they're going to be able to

stay in the country because they might not have, you know, permanent resident status here.

So I would just like to say that if you are experiencing intimate partner abuse and you are—you know, you're just a newcomer to Canada and you don't know if you can stay in Canada, I'd just like to let you know that if you are experiencing intimate partner abuse, you can get a special residence permit called a TRP. This is a Temporary Residence Permit to stay in Canada, and it will give you legal immigration status in Canada. And you can also get this permit for your children if they are in Canada.

And in Canada, you do not have to testify against your abuser to get this temporary resident status. So, don't let that extra stress be weighing on your mind. You'll be able to access this temporary resident status, and there are organizations like Healthy Muslim Families and even MLAs like myself that would help you make sure that you know your rights when you are trying to leave an abusive situation.

And with those remarks, again, I'd just like to thank the minister and her department for the important work that they're doing on this legislation and I'd just like to say thanks and say that we are happy to support this—passage of this bill.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister and the department for bringing forward Bill 43, The Disclosure To Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act. It's a very important piece of legislation because it's a real issue all throughout the world—but Manitoba is actually one of the top two places in Canada where intimate partner violence is being experienced, so it's really, really critical that this legislation is, in fact, coming forward, and I hope to see it passed to committee and it will pass unanimously throughout the House.

This is a topic I've taken quite an interest in over the last year, very coincidentally, even before the legislation was introduced. I was actually meeting with Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan and the Manitoba association of police chiefs, all regarding Clare's Law specifically and what it could look like and how it could work here in the province of Manitoba.

Currently, Clare's Law is practised in Saskatchewan and in Alberta, and each province does it a little bit differently. Some of the small differences, for example, is the application process, and that's why

I was very curious about how that will actually work here in Manitoba—whether it will be only online, over the phone, making sure that it's accessible to anyone who may want to be able to utilize it—but it's also not taken for granted, because it's a very, very important program and we don't want to be using our resources unless they need to be used for those who desperately need it in those times.

A few points that I really appreciate in this legislation that is unique to Manitoba is the right to tell. So, the right to tell essentially means that a police officer, for example—or someone who is working, perhaps, in a women's shelter home—can talk about what Clare's Law is, talk about the idea behind the legislation, just so that individuals who one may suspect may be harassed in some way or abused in some way, or who may fall under the intimate partner violence act—it's just put on their radar, Madam Speaker.

A lot of people do not know that we have protective measures here in Manitoba for all here in Manitoba, and unless they're made available and people are made aware of them, they're not fully utilized.

Another piece—a point in this legislation that I really appreciate is including family violence so it extends beyond just intimate partner. So, it's not just the couple; it also extends to children. So, if a person has reason to believe or has witnessed a child, for example, being abused, they can also access Clare's Law for these purposes.

I know it had been over—it's been being debated in different provinces and it was debated here in Manitoba, too, so I'm really happy to see it be integrated into this piece of legislation: the importance of recognizing any sort of property damage as well as animal abuse or harm, unfortunately, like the killing of animals and the destruction of property. This is also reason to believe that there could be intimate partner violence.

We know that rage can come in strong, it can come in hard, it can be shown and demonstrated in many different ways. Madam Speaker, it is scary when you see someone pick up an inanimate object and throw it across the room and have something smash. And I'm really, really glad to see that this is, in fact, part of this piece of legislation.

So, the purpose of Bill 43 is to have a process for individuals who feel they may be at risk of experiencing intimate partner violence. Again, we know we need this, considering Manitoba is the second highest,

here in Canada, rate of intimate partner violence. We need to ensure the process—this bill ensures that the process has safety planning resources, risk assessment and referrals to supports and services.

It also keeps people safe by recognizing the importance of confidentiality. Madam Speaker, this is pretty self-explanatory, the importance of that confidentiality as well as the safety planning resources.

And I know—I reflect upon one of the practicums that I had the opportunity to do when I was doing my masters in marriage and family therapy where I got to work with a group of newcomer women here in Winnipeg. And every day, Madam Speaker, there are women who are coming forward who—and in my case, it was just working with newcomer women—but women who are coming forward because they are scared of being in their own home. They are scared of their partner. And they don't know their rights. They don't know how to navigate the system to make sure that they will be okay, that they are not left high and dry, that they do not have to flee or fear their own safety.

And I know a lot of the time, when I was working with these women, Madam Speaker, it was often coming up with safety plans. As far as—like there are many things we don't think about every day here in Manitoba, but on the minds of many, they are thinking about how can they strategically get out from their bedroom, out the front door without getting beaten by their partner. Legislation such as Clare's Law is going to help thousands of women here in Manitoba be able to navigate those scenarios.

I'm glad that the legislation is very clear and I just want to reiterate it here on record that intimate partner violence includes physical abuse and confinement, sexual abuse, threats to kill or cause bodily harm, harassment—and this includes stalking, Madam Speaker—psychological abuse, financial abuse, failure to provide the necessities of life and, as mentioned before, the threat or killing or harming animals or property damage.

I think that, when I reflect—or turn to page 3 and 4 of the legislation, it talks about those who can actually apply: the applicant in and of themselves, someone on behalf of another person—and this could be a committee appointed for the person under mental health—an attorney acting under a power of attorney granted by the person, a parent or a guardian.

For example, if you have a child who is maybe 16 and you have reason to believe that their partner is harming them in any context, a parent or a guardian

can actually submit under Clare's Law and have an inquiry. And a person prescribed in the regulations.

I hope that, as we continue to debate the legislation, it is made just a little more clear. I'm curious—like for example, can a psychologist—does this fall under, for example, the committee appointed for the person under the mental health or psychotherapist, Madam Speaker? Can a roommate of someone come forward on behalf of an applicant? I think just a little more discussion needs to be held around that, just to make sure that we all understand who it is that can come forward.

Madam Speaker, I'm very curious for this to go to committee, as I suspect there will be a lot of support for the legislation and I think that it will only make the legislation stronger by hearing from Manitobans and their experiences and things that we could be doing and potentially even adding to this legislation. I know I have one amendment idea that I'm going to be bringing forward to the minister and hoping to work together on, to make the legislation even stronger.

So, with that, I hope to see it pass to committee today.

* (16:20)

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this motion?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act.

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

**Bill 40—The Hospitality Sector
Customer Registry Act and Amendments to
The Child and Family Services Act and
The Child Sexual Exploitation and
Human Trafficking Act**

Madam Speaker: I will now call second reading of Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the Environment, Climate and Parks Minister, that Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector

Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table that message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Families, seconded by the honourable Minister of the Environment, Climate and Parks, that Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Ms. Squires: I'm pleased to rise in this House to introduce the second reading of Bill 40, a bill that is intended to support Manitoba's efforts to combat sexual exploitation and human trafficking, including sex trafficking, which is a serious social and public health problem that affects the well-being of individuals, families and communities across Manitoba.

Sexual exploitation is the actual or attempted abuse of a person by an individual who uses their powers or trust over their victims to obtain sexual favours or to perform non-consensual sex work. This form of violence often targets victims who are poor, vulnerable, living in unsafe situations and searching for a better life.

The consequences for victims are similar to sexual violence and can result in immediate and long-term effects such as physical and psychological harm, relationship problems and negative chronic health outcomes.

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to this crime. An estimated 400 children and youth are trafficked annually in Manitoba. This represents, unfortunately, just a fraction of the amount of the invisible sex trade that happens throughout the province. These young victims are lured into the sex trade, sometimes as early as 12 and 13 years old and even younger, for reasons such as money, food and shelter.

Bill 40 is part of our continuing efforts under Tracia's Trust by providing legislation that will improve the abilities of the authorities to identify and respond to suspected instances of sex trafficking, to

assist victims and protect children and youth from individuals who pose a risk to them and to require reporting to police on suspected human trafficking.

Bill 40 introduces new legislation, the hospitality sector customer registry act, to make sex trafficking more visible by providing police with the ability to access registry information so that they can identify or locate persons who are being trafficked or at the imminent risk of being trafficked.

Police currently have the ability to generate a production order based on a chain of evidence to collect that information; however, this is a time-consuming process that can delay a timely response, especially when police need to move quickly to prevent a victim from being harmed.

The new legislation removes that barrier by requiring hotels and temporary accommodations, including online platforms such as Airbnb, to keep a register of their guests and to make the registers available to law enforcement to support investigations into suspected human trafficking.

It also requires any person who rents and checks into a room or suite to provide their name and primary address for that registry. Bill 40 requires police services to prepare annual reports on their use of urgent demands and to make the annual reports available to the public.

These provisions are not new in Manitoba. They're modelled on similar provisions under The Missing Persons Act, that give the police the authority to issue emergency demands for records, such as the electronic communication devices, GPS records, video and closed-circuit television, employment information and financial information. The Missing Persons Act also requires police to publicly report their use of these emergency demands.

I would like to add that during the development of this bill, the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police told us that they were supportive of these proposals, because it aligns with their current efforts to address human trafficking.

Because children and youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and human trafficking, Bill 40 amends The Child and Family Services Act to improve the ability of the Province to protect children from harmful individuals with no-contact orders.

Under the current act, child and family services agencies can apply for a court order to keep a person away from a child in care if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the person has or is

likely to be subject to child abuse. However, the current provisions for orders not to contact a child are limited to children in care and are reactive in nature by requiring that the harm to a child must have already occurred. This unfortunately presents a very high threshold that offers limited protection to those who are most vulnerable to sex trafficking.

Bill 40 enhances the safety and well-being of children by amending The Child and Family Services Act to lower the threshold of abuse that is likely to cause the child to need protection. In addition, the amendments broaden the circumstances in which an agency can apply for a no-contact order, such as prohibiting a person from entering a place that the child attends or boarding a vehicle that transports that child.

The amendments also expand protection to children who are not in care of the child and family services agency and who need protection from contact with a person who is likely to cause them harm. In these cases, a judge would issue that no-contact order.

And finally, Madam Speaker, Bill 40 amends The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act to require staff in hotels and other temporary accommodations and operators of taxis and other vehicles for hire, such as Uber, to report suspected human trafficking and that that—and the information that belief is based on immediately to the police.

This requirement is similar to current provisions in The Child and Family Services Act, where a person who believes that a child's health, life or emotional well-being is in danger, must report that information to a CFS agency or to a parent or guardian of the child.

Sex traffickers often use taxis and other vehicles for hire to transport their victims to hotels and temporary accommodations. Taxi companies and vehicles-for-hire industry have told us that they are well aware of this problem, and that they provide training for their drivers that include reporting on human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Hotels are also currently working within the city of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Police Services in reporting suspicious activities. As a result, initiatives and practices are largely in place to enable reporting as required by these new amendments.

But while we welcome these initiatives from hotels and vehicles-for-hire industry, a more systematic reporting approach is needed to support their efforts. The duty to report provisions in Bill 40 provide such an approach, and it would take for an—and all it would take for an employee or a driver to make

a report would be a phone call. A phone call that could save someone's life.

The Manitoba Hotel Association and the taxi and ride-sharing industry have told us that they support this proposed legislation.

Therefore, for all of these reasons, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 40, which will strengthen Manitoba's efforts under Tracia's Trust in locating and assisting victims of sex trafficking and charging perpetrators and ensuring vulnerable children and youth are protected from harmful individuals.

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): How long will hotels and online accommodation platforms be required to record a customer's name and primary residence, and how will this information be secured?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Of course, this is enabling legislation, and a lot of those details, including the registry that the hotels must keep, the information and the length of time that they have to keep that information on hand will be determined in regulation.

* (16:30)

But we are ensuring that this is information that is normally collected in the process of doing regular business, and we are not intending it to place an onerous burden on the industries.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I was just wondering if the minister—this does look very positive. I was wondering if the minister could just explain the sort of—the financial commitments from Tracia's Trust or other programs that go into the actual pursuit of child offenders, as opposed—I know that there's prevention work and other work—is that—how much of this—how many financial resources are being dedicated to actually pursuing and arresting child sex offenders?

Ms. Squires: I'm not exactly certain what the member specifically is asking for, but I would be more than

happy to provide him with detailed information about our approach to addressing child sexual exploitation through Tracia's Trust, which includes millions of dollars to helping those most vulnerable.

I can share with the member that I just returned from Thompson where our government provided additional money to StreetReach North, which gets its—which we developed through—in Tracia's Trust to support children who are vulnerable, and the work that they do is incredible in helping keep vulnerable children from harm's way.

Ms. Fontaine: I actually echo my colleague, the minister. I don't know what the leader of the independent caucus is trying to say, as well. When we use language of child sex offenders, that literally is incongruent with one another. You can't be a child and be at risk for sexual exploitation and simultaneously be an offender; that makes absolutely no sense.

I would ask the minister how this piece of legislation or how the government will help facilitate doing training on what to look for in respect of human child sex trafficking. Not everybody is in—is trained on that; not everybody is trained on picking up on the red flags.

So, how will they do so?

Ms. Squires: That is an excellent question. Our government has proactively been working with the Hotel Association—

Madam Speaker: The—

Ms. Squires: —developing a campaign so that all individuals who work in that industry could spot and also report child sexual exploitation, and we're also working with the taxi and ride-sharing industry to develop an awareness initiative to ensure that they're all trained so that they can spot and identify child sexual exploitation.

Currently, they already have a duty to report child abuse and child pornography, so we believe adding child sexual exploitation to that list certainly will not be an onerous burden.

Madam Speaker: There any further questions?

Ms. Fontaine: On my final question, I would ask the minister if she could elaborate on what specific circumstances can police issue—and, again, in quotations—an urgent demand to access personal information of customers without a warrant.

I imagine what some of those might be, but I would like to hear from the minister.

Ms. Squires: Police believe that if they act immediately when a victim is in imminent danger, particularly a youth who is vulnerable, they are able to make a significant difference in acting before harm occurs. And in many cases, this registry would help them do that.

They do indicate that they would rarely need to resort to this measure, that a lot of the work that they would do would happen before. But if there's imminent risk to a child and they believe that accessing those hotel records would give them the ability to take action to prevent injury or harm to that child, then this is a tool that will be of use in that regard.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Oh, sorry, I—just like to ask the minister what factors put a person at risk of being trafficked in Manitoba?

Ms. Squires: Sexual exploitation and human trafficking is a very complex situation. We're dealing with children who are incredibly vulnerable, and we think that one of the most important things that we're doing with this legislation is also allowing people to get a no-contact order from a vulnerable child against a harmful individual before anything negative occurs.

Currently, the way the act is written, it is very challenging to get a no-contact order between a vulnerable child and a harmful individual when we know that that person is preying on this harmful—or, on this individual. Now we can get that no-contact order easier and before the harm is done.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, the floor is open for debate.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record in respect of Bill 40. Certainly, I think that anything, any bill, that strengthens the protections of the most vulnerable and the most at risk within Manitoba is something that we should all support, and clearly, we will be supporting Bill 40 to strengthen those protection infrastructures in respect of child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

So, I do thank the minister for bringing forward Bill 40. I'm pleased that we're able to find some time and debate it today and hopefully allow it to go to second reading before 5 p.m.

You know, the minister talked about Tracia's Trust, and I just want to put on the record, you know, most folks won't know that Tracia's Trust comes from the death of Tracia Owens [*phonetic*]. And Tracia

Owens [*phonetic*] died by suicide in August of 2005, and just a young, vulnerable Indigenous—northern Indigenous young girl, just a baby.

And at the time, the NDP sought to address some of the gaps in respect of dealing with addressing and mitigating child sexual exploitation. Of course, I was a part of those early discussions in the sense that I was the director of justice for the Southern Chiefs Organization.

When I was the director of justice for the Southern Chiefs Organization, I worked on MMIWG2S; I've been doing that work since 1997. And we had so many families, First Nation families, that would come to our office. And, actually, not only southern First Nations because, of course, Southern Chiefs Organization at the time represented, I think—I believe it was 36 southern First Nations, but, in fact, we had First Nation families from across Manitoba that would call my office looking for support and advocacy and—in helping to protect their children who were at risk.

And what's interesting, if you go back to the early days of these discussions and exploring and trying to put protective measures in place, when you look back at the language—which is why I was—again, I don't know what the leader for the independents was talking about—when you look at the language that for many, many, many, many years, that was used in respect of children who were sexually exploited, often you would hear grown adults talk about child prostitutes or they would say child sex workers.

And those of us that were involved at that time, and there were many, many community organizations that were involved in that time—Sage House, Ma Mawi, Ka Ni Kanichihk, Southern Chiefs Organization, MKO, AMC, different—we had the—at the time, it was the WPS's—a morales unit, that's what it was called back then—and everybody was kind of coming together to try and start tackling the issue of child sexual exploitation.

* (16:40)

And there was a huge push, including from myself, to ensure that we're using language that acts adequately and authentically, and clearly describes the situation as it exists. You cannot be, you know, a child prostitute. You cannot be a child sex worker. If you are a child, you are being sexually exploited. Full stop.

And so, it's a little bit concerning to hear language like that being used in this Chamber by—you know, in 2022. Again, I don't think both my colleague, the

Minister for Status of Women, or myself understood what he was trying to get at, but I would just put it on the record to be very careful with the language that we're using because we're talking about children.

And when we're talking about Tracia's Trust and we're talking about building on Tracia's Trust and building on those protective measures, it's important to remember that that work was born in the death of Tracia Owens [*phonetic*], of which we had an inquest. Tracia had died by suicide—again, like I said, in 2005. In 2007, Fonassa Bruyere, who was also sexually exploited, her—in August of 2007, she went missing. Her body was found early September of 2007.

And, again, that—the death of Fonassa Bruyere, who's from my home community of Saugeen Anishinabe First Nation, brought together about 40 stakeholders. And I remember it, like I said, it was the first week in September, and the—I lost my train of thought there, Jesus.

So, the first couple of weeks in September, we brought together about 40 stakeholders. It was actually still really hot out. I remember that. And we were all—I cannot even tell you how many folks there were. Of course, this was pre-COVID, obviously. But we were all stuffed in Sage House, all of these different stakeholders.

And, again, everybody was there. Ma Mawi, police, everybody, the RCMP. And it was that moment where everybody came together to try and create a coalition that would identify all of the gaps that exist for youth, for children who are being sexually exploited.

And we built on that work. And I remember we did, like, a PATH session. And it—from every perspective, and came on—and we were able to—came up with the vision for StreetReach.

And, in fact, in that PATH session we also—and that was actually Elder Mae Louise Campbell who envisioned a place where children who were being sexually exploited could leave the city to be safe and deal with some of the issues that, unfortunately, some of our young ones deal with.

And I remember, it was—I think we were on a—it was, like, a weekend PATH session where we all gave our ideas and everything was written down. And it was in that meeting that Elder Mae Louise Campbell talked about this place, which ended up becoming the acronym HOME, so—Hands of Mother Earth.

And one of the things that was discussed at that time was that, often, when you have young children

who are being sexually exploited on the streets of Winnipeg, there's no escape for these young ones. And so her vision was to take—to have a safe place, a beautiful place, a home where these young ones could go outside the city to find that healing and rebuild that strength.

And so, you know, I share all of that because it's an important history to know about Tracia's Trust. And what I will say about Tracia's Trust, and whether or not people realize this, is that Manitoba was actually one of the first provinces and territories across the country to actually start a bona fide provincial strategy on dealing with child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

And I remember Gord Mackintosh, my predecessor, was the minister of Justice at the time—was he—or, maybe he was the minister for Child and Family Services, I can't remember, but Tracia's Trust fell under his authority. And in 2008, there were community meetings that took place all across the province, and it was this huge exercise to ensure that we have an infrastructure—a provincial infrastructure—that deals with child sexual exploitation.

So, I remember many of us went up to Thompson. I remember that there were—a huge community meeting at the University of Winnipeg. I remember speaking on—speaking to those that were gathered on the historical context of Indigenous women and girls here in Manitoba.

And so, you know, all of that to say that that's an important piece of our history in Manitoba. And I would venture and I would submit to the Chamber at this juncture that, you know, building on Tracia's Trust, building on that work is a good thing. And that's what we're seeing today in respect of Bill 40.

That PATH session that I was talking about that we all participated on—in on that weekend, we spoke about the role of hotels or the hospitality sector in trying to protect children who are sexually—are being sexually exploited and human trafficked, so we did talk about the importance of hotels. And the minister will know that we did—Tracia's Trust does have some of that.

And we did talk about, at the time, the role of taxis. And I know that I've spoken about this in the House before, that, you know, vehicle for hires all across the globe—it's not only here in Manitoba, it's not only here in Winnipeg, but all across the globe—they are a huge component of human trafficking. I cannot stress the role that vehicle for hires play in the human

trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls, no matter where you go in the world.

And so, we have had many, many, you know, community meetings and consultations and visioning in respect of how to create an infrastructure where vehicles-for-hire have a role in protection, not a role in exploitation. And so, we've had those discussions. We know in the past that there has been, certainly from several taxi companies, a desire to participate in the protections of children against child sexual exploitation.

And so, I will just put all of that history on the record, but I will also say that, while, you know, we support Bill 40, there's still a lot of work to be done. Right? It's not enough for the government to enact a bill and say here's what you've got to do if you're in the hospitality section, here's what you've got to do if you're, you know, vehicle for hire.

You have to be able to put those measures in place that people know what's out there. Like, this is the law, this is your role and responsibility, this is legally what you need to be doing. We're going to give you the training. Here's what we're trying to combat. Not everybody has that training. Not everybody understands what child sexual exploitation and human trafficking is.

And so, my hope is that the government will put real resources behind Bill 40 to ensure that all the hotels in Manitoba and all the vehicle for hires know what their role and responsibility is in respect of Bill 40.

But as I said at the top of my very, very short time putting words on the record here, is we do support Bill 40. And any time we can come together in this Chamber and support added protections for the most vulnerable, I would submit, is a good day.

* (16:50)

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could we just have a two-minute recess of the House?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a two-minute recess? Two-minute recess?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

The House recessed at 4:51 p.m.

The House resumed at 4:53 p.m.

Madam Speaker: The House will now resume, as the recess is now over.

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Acting Government House Leader): Yes, Madam Speaker, on House business, and I thank the direction of the Clerk on this one, I thank the—all members of the House for this.

Madam Speaker, can you please canvass the House to see if there is leave for the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development to meet on Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. to hear presentations to legislation?

Leave is required because rule 92(4) requires that such meetings should start at 6 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development to meet on Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. to hear presentations to legislation? Leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you to the Chamber for that.

I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday November 2nd, 2022, at 7 p.m., to consider the following: Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act; as well as Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday November 2nd, 2022, at 7 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 40, The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act; and Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act.

Honourable Deputy Premier—*[interjection]*—oh.

Bill 46—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Johnson), that Bill 46, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House today on Bill 46, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. This bill will be—make Manitoba's roads safer by creating a new offence under the Highway Traffic Act for driving on closed highways.

After last winter's unprecedented number of weather-related road closures, Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure heard from the RCMP that some drivers were ignoring road closure signs and driving around barricades to access the highway. This is dangerous behaviour, Madam Speaker.

The RCMP makes the decision to close the highway because it's not safe to travel on due to limited visibility, snow cover and other reasons. Drivers that come—continue to—down the closed highways may end up stranded or worse, get into a collision, which requires emergency responders to risk their own lives to assist them.

In addition, an incidental occurred last winter where a motorist on a closed highway was involved with a collision with a snowplow that was working in clearing the highway to make it safe for other motorists to access. And that actually happened just west of Virden, Madam Speaker, close to my own home town.

We also know that it's unsafe for motorists to drive on roads closed due to construction. This was demonstrated by a recent 'tragedy' in Barrie, Ontario, where six young people lost their lives in a collision on a road closed for construction, Madam Speaker.

This bill, it will make it clear that motorists in Manitoba that driving on the highway or other roads

closed due to severe weather, flooding, construction and other safety-related reasons is not permitted by creating a new offence 'sinificantly' targeted to this behaviour.

The bill will also make it an offence to direct someone else to drive on a closed road.

For example, if a dispatcher tells a commercial driver to go around a barricade or continue on a road closed, it is not fair for the employer to put up worker in this type of unsafe situation. And the department wants to make sure—clear that there will be consequences for them if they do so.

The bill sets a maximum fine for new offence for driving in a closed highway at \$2,000 for individuals and at \$5,000 for drivers or operators of heavy vehicles. This is a significant dollar amount, recognizing that this is a serious offence that puts lives at risk, Madam Speaker.

Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure is oppose—proposing higher maximum fines on heavy vehicles because of large size and weight of these vehicles increase the risk of serious collisions or other significant incidences when driving on a closed highway.

The department does anticipate, however, that these maximum fines will only be used for the most serious incidences and will be developing regulations to allow the RCMP and other law enforcement officers to issue lower value fines on roadsides with enforcing this offence.

In addition, it is the regulation change related to the fines, government is planning other regulation changes to set a standard for the enforcement of new offence.

These will include the establishing of specific road-closed signs that must be used to identify a highway closure, Madam Speaker, and allowing Manitoba Public Insurance to issue demerit points against an individual driver's licence if they are convicted of driving on a closed highway.

The goal is to have the regulations changed completely—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have unlimited time remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 31, 2022

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