

**Fifth 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**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 239—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Application Fees and Deposits)

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), that Bill 239, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Application Fees and Deposits), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Micklefield:** This amendment ensures that landlords cannot charge unfair and unnecessary fees to prospective tenants before documentation is suitably signed.

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

Committee reports?

#### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Kevin E. Klein (Minister of Environment and Climate):** I am pleased to table the Manitoba Watershed Districts Program 2021-2022 Annual Report for the Department of Environment and Climate.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

#### Holocaust Remembrance Day

**Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** Madam Speaker, I rise today in observance of Yom HaShoah, which is also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Ninety years ago, the Nazi Party came into power in Germany, initiating a campaign of terror that targeted political opponents, marginalized groups and ultimately the entire Jewish population. Between 1939 and 1945, the Nazis and the collaborators were responsible for the deaths of over 6 million Jewish people, who were targeted based solely on their ethnicity and faith.

This targeted ethnic cleansing is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of almost two thirds of Europe's entire Jewish population. This horrific chapter in history came to be known as the Holocaust or the Shoah, in Hebrew. The Holocaust impacted generations of families and communities around the world.

Following the liberation of survivors, communities across Canada worked to sponsor and resettle approximately 35,000 Jewish families and their dependents. Among those working to resettle these families were members of the Manitoba Jewish community, who alongside this 'diaspora' built the strongly rooted Jewish community evident in our province today.

Madam Speaker, the legacy of the Holocaust includes the tremendous tragedy, but it also includes triumphant acts of resilience, resistance and perseverance.

Manitobans can learn about these individuals, families and communities through the stories they have generously shared at the newly reopened Holocaust Education Centre in the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada. We are honoured that despite their own trauma, many survivors bravely shared their experiences.

Madam Speaker, the Holocaust and its aftermath are evidence of the fragility of our democracy—of all democracy—but also a testament to the power of resistance, open dialogue and action to ensure that history is never repeated. We must continue to seek learning opportunities and document the stories of survivors, victims and their descendants.

As members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, we remain committed to using legislation and education to protect Manitobans from violence, racism and hate.

Sadly, Madam Speaker, anti-Semitism and other acts of hatred are on the rise. We must all work

together towards ending anti-Semitism and all acts of hatred.

Madam Speaker, we are stronger together. And today within this Chamber and throughout this entire province, that is seen.

In observance of Yom HaShoah, I encourage all Manitobans to learn more about the Holocaust. Please consider visiting a monument here on the Legislature grounds, a local museum or a Jewish cultural centre. We each have a role to play in making Manitoba a welcoming place for all. In doing so, we demonstrate our commitments to the values, multiculturalism and the protection of all human rights. Through a diverse and respectful society, we support connections between people of all cultures, faith and ethnicities, and shepherd our collective success.

That is why I am proud and honoured to be wearing the yarmulke today in show of love and respect to my Jewish brothers and sisters.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, a lot of the Jewish community couldn't be here today as they were invited to the Lieutenant Governor general's house after the ceremony outside. I would ask that the six currently living Holocaust survivors, which I'm going to table today, be included in Hansard.

Madam Speaker, on this solemn occasion, I would also ask those present to stand and join me in a moment of silent reflection and remembrance to the many lives lost in the Holocaust.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, today is Yom HaShoah. It is a day to say, never again, while we also say, never forget.

Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, is marked on the 27th day in the month of Nisan—a week after the seventh day of Passover.

Today we read the names of 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust and honour their memory. We repeat the truth of what happened to Jewish people and listen to the stories of survivors so their memories can live on.

The horror of Nazi genocide is something that all of us as human beings have a responsibility to carry. The Nazi concentration camps tried to take away the humanity of all Jewish and many others: Roma, Sinti, Slavic people, political opponents and LGBTQ+ people—but for all their terror, the Nazis did not succeed.

Today, we also remember and honour all the descendants of Holocaust victims and survivors who now call Manitoba home. Their identity as Jewish people and their contributions to our province are acts of defiance against the Nazi project and anti-Semitism.

Sadly, we know that even now, many decades after the Holocaust, Canada is not immune to this form of hatred. Anti-Semitism in Canada has reached record levels in the past few years, and it is up to all of us to call out this form of discrimination in our communities, online and everywhere else it occurs. I hope all Manitobans will take the opportunity to commemorate this important day and to recommit to standing up against all forms of anti-Semitism.

Today, on Yom HaShoah, we say the names of the 6 million. We remember their lives. We remember their contributions to their communities, their families. And we say, never again.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I seek leave to speak to the ministerial statement.

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

The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—sorry.

The honourable member for St. Boniface. My apologies.

**Mr. Lamont:** I had the honour this morning of attending a ceremony of Holocaust remembrance in the Legislature. It was sombre and moving and it marked the horrors of the Holocaust in naming the individuals who were murdered, and where their lives were lost.

In attendance were survivors who read names. They were the descendants of Holocaust survivors who lost grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, cousins, children. Some had lost dozens of members of their families.

Jews, Roma, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ were all rounded up, murdered, and everything they owned was stolen, sometimes to pay for their own execution as part of the Holocaust.

In a world where governments still and have built prison and labour camps and engineered famines and genocide, it is important to understand the unique evil of the Nazi Holocaust, designing and building infrastructure for the deliberate, planned slaughter of millions of humans on an industrial scale, with the purpose of eradicating every last Jewish man, woman

and child. The crimes of the Holocaust plumbed the greatest depths of deliberate human evil.

\* (13:40)

And as the philosopher Emil Fackenheim wrote, the extermination of the Jews had no political or economic justification. It was not a means to any end; it was an end in itself.

I would like to thank my colleague, the MLA for River Heights, for his leadership in working with B'nai Brith and bringing forward a resolution to combat anti-Semitism, that was supported by every member of this House. As Dr. Ruth Ashrafi wrote, we fully realize that an opposition MLA can only submit one private member's resolution per year, and you decided to use your one slot to fight anti-Semitism.

As Manitobans and as Canadians, we must recognize that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. We must remember our history. We must remember and value each human life that was ended.

There is also a vital lesson that we can draw from Judaism, the idea of tikkun olam: we all have a role to play in repairing and bettering the world. This is our Jewish—our commitment to the Jewish community and the community of Manitoba today and every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mr. Khan) had asked to have those names included of the survivors in Hansard.

Is there leave to have those names included? *[Agreed]*  
*Sol Fink, Rachel Fink, Regine Frankel, Edith Kimelman, Judy Lavitt, Anne Novak*

Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Super-Spike Volleyball

**Hon. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness):** Maple Grove park in the constituency of Seine River is a versatile sports park, which is home to many sport venues and hosts hundreds of athletes throughout the year.

Football, Frisbee, rugby and volleyball are of the—few of the sports which call Maple Grove home.

This year, Maple Grove will host many tournaments, one of them being Super-Spike volleyball.

Super-Spike is a not-for-profit charitable event which fundraises money for local non-profit organizations and Volleyball Manitoba and the programs that Volleyball Manitoba supports. To date, the event has raised over \$1.3 million.

This year, Super-Spike volleyball will be celebrating its 20th anniversary on the July 21st, 22nd weekend. For the past 20 years, Super-Spike volleyball has grown into one of western Canada's largest outdoor beach volleyball tournaments.

Teams of all levels, beginners to veteran players, from across Canada and the regions in the United States gather together to compete in the weekend-long tournament. Spectators and participants enjoy meeting other players, listening to various performers throughout the weekend and sampling food from the many food vendors which are set up throughout the area.

Last year, the rugby tournament hosted 280 teams.

This year, the tournament includes many local performers, with the headliner being Shawn Desman. Registration for this event is now available online through the Super-Spike website.

Madam Speaker, I invite all my colleagues to come out and celebrate the 20th anniversary of Super-Spike at the Maple Grove Rugby Park on July 21st and 22nd.

Thank you.

### Klinic Community Health Centre

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I am thrilled to stand today to mark the 50-year anniversary of Klinic Community Health Centre.

Klinic was founded in 1970 through the grassroots efforts of volunteer physicians and medical students who saw the need for substance-related services and medical care for youth.

Over the next few years, through grants and volunteer efforts, they began to offer basic services and a 24-hour crisis line was born. Klinic provided birth control information and operated a Crisis Bus that patrolled areas where drug intervention was needed.

In April 1973, Klinic was incorporated and this is the anniversary we celebrate today.

In the '70s, rape crisis services began, and in the '80s, Klinic initiated the Evolve Program for families affected by domestic violence. In the '90s, Klinic created the flood stress phone line, which is now the Manitoba farm, rural and northern phone line,

providing specialized services for Kosovo refugees, and launched the school-based Teen Talk program.

A decade later, they started the Manitoba Suicide Line and began providing services on campus at the University of Winnipeg and Tec Voc High School. In 2009, they launched the first Manitoba Transgender Clinic.

During the pandemic, Klinik partnered with other services to provide drop-in health care to vulnerable community members.

Today, Klinik provides primary medical care, a trans health clinic, trauma counselling, phone lines for sexual assault, suicide prevention, gambling addiction, supports for seniors experiencing abuse and more. Their support groups include Dream Catchers for those transitioning out of sex work and Project Choices for those navigating substance use and reproductive decisions.

Many of us cannot imagine this city without Klinik at the heart of it.

Please join me in thanking and congratulating Klinik staff and board members for 50 years of mitigating the social determinants of health while providing innovative, inclusive and justice-oriented care for everyone.

#### **Team Terrick**

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Like most small towns in my constituency of Dauphin, the village of McCreary hosts a local curling club. McCreary also holds the proud distinction of being home to one of the best junior curling teams in Canada, and Manitoba provincial champions, Team Terrick.

Team Terrick has a unique story, as this season marked the first time that three sisters—Jaycee, Zoey, and Tessa Terrick—were able to curl together on the same team. The sisters have been curling for years, sometimes in opposition, and they were excited to play as a team while they were still all under the age of 21. The team found their fourth member, Jensen Letham, out of the Heather Curling Club in Winnipeg.

While these athletes continued to study at both university and high school, they excelled and clinched the under-21 Manitoba junior women's title in January. Then, in an intense 10-day competition at nationals, Team Terrick earned themselves the bronze in a challenging 18-team tournament.

I'd like to thank Team Terrick for representing Manitoba so well, and encourage them in their ongoing

commitment and dedication. I also say thank you to the hosts, ice crews, families, volunteers and coaches who supported them, and the community of McCreary for assisting, celebrating and fundraising for the team.

I offer my sincere congratulations to Team Terrick on their 2022-23 season, provincial championship and national bronze medal achievement, and I wish them many more successes in the years to come.

Thank you.

#### **Twila Richards**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, today I honour Twila Richards, a Manitoba educator and parent with a child with a learning disability, and another with autism. She joins us in the gallery today.

As vice-president of Manitoba Teachers for Students with Learning Disabilities, vice-president of Dyslexia Champions of Manitoba and an Orton-Gillingham practitioner, she's been an extraordinary advocate for children with learning disabilities, or LDs.

In their first school division, the school psychologists never assessed her children. She had no option but to have one of her children privately evaluated, a big financial hardship for a single, full-time parent.

Even after diagnosis, there was little support in school. Her children's IQs were above 70. They couldn't have an individual education plan. She was told: you're a teacher; you can teach your children at home. Twila did, but it wasn't easy. She was drained after a day at work and her children were tired and stressed because school for them was tough.

The Supreme Court of Canada has said children with dyslexia have the right to receive intensive supports and interventions to learn to read, affirming the basic human right to read. You cannot expect a person to learn to read when they have yet—you can't expect a person to read to learn when they have yet to learn to read.

Too often students with LDs in Manitoba are only given adaptations, like read less and answer fewer questions. And why are so many Manitoba educators not trained to understand LDs and to know what to do?

\* (13:50)

Teaching students with LDs with methods designed for them can enable these intelligent individuals to be literate members of society and to thrive. Too many children are being—in Manitoba are being left behind. We must do better.

After years of NDP and PC governments missing the mark, it's time for a Liberal government to make the improvements that are needed for kids with learning disabilities.

### **Renters Town Hall in St. James**

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** On March 20th, I hosted a renters town hall with St. James constituents at the Deer Lodge community centre.

There is a high density of renters in St. James, many of whom are seniors and people on fixed incomes.

Having had the opportunity to speak with renters at the town hall, what I heard over and over again is that renters in Manitoba are struggling. Whether it's above-guideline rent increases, the PCs' tax increase on renters or the rolling back of eligibility for Rent Assist, this government has made life much harder for renters in Manitoba.

Many who rent who attended the town hall expressed their deep frustration with the fact that the PCs raised taxes on renters by \$175 in 2022, when they reduced the renters tax credit from \$700 per year to \$525 per year.

They also made it clear that they want to see our provincial government take action on the issue of above-guideline rent increases. This has been going on for years and it's out of control. In St. James, we've heard from many residents whose rents have gone up by hundreds of dollars a month because this PC government has continued to fail to take action to protect renters from above-guideline rent increases.

We know how much this is hurting Manitobans, who are already struggling with an affordability crisis, a broken health-care system and so much more. And yet once again, the PC government has decided to not take action to help people who are struggling in our province. This shows just how out of touch they are from the needs of regular Manitobans.

Renters all across Manitoba deserve a government that will listen to their concerns. But after making life harder for many years, the PCs have broken Manitobans' trust.

The Manitoba NDP believes in making life more affordable, not less, and we will continue to fight for renters in Manitoba.

### **Speaker's Statement**

**Madam Speaker:** I just have a short statement for the House.

The—apparently a number of MLAs have been asking about their ability to wear Jets gear or Jets jerseys during playoff days and I'm going to let you know that I will agree to that, that on the days they are playing, that you will be welcome to wear jerseys or Jets gear so that we can cheer on our home team.

So go, Jets, go.

### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Misericordia Sleep Clinic Public/Private Sector Funding**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, on that happy note, go, Jets, go.

There are thousands of Manitobans waiting for medical care right now, but the Stefanson government is putting politics ahead of patients.

The sleep clinic at Misericordia is a leader across the country. And they submitted a proposal to the government to care for the thousands of patients on their waiting list.

Now, the PCs refused to act on it for months and then they rejected that proposal because, I quote, it had only minimal private sector involvement. End quote. Those are the government's words and I'll table the letter that the government sent to these doctors.

Why is the Premier refusing to fund proposals that give care in our public health-care system?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, once again the Leader of the Opposition is just wrong, continues to put false information on the record in this Chamber.

We are making historic investments in our health-care system, Madam Speaker; \$668 million more this year than last year, a 9.2 per cent increase. Those are significant investments to ensure that in—and part of that is in our surgical and diagnostic task force, a task force that was set up to ensure that Manitobans who are waiting for things like sleep apnea, that they can get those procedures when they need them. That's exactly why we set it up.

And the Leader of the Opposition, all those members opposite, had a chance to support that initiative, Manitoba—Madam Speaker, but they chose not to. Shame on them.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Once again the Premier is desperate to try and run away from the damage she's caused to our health-care system.

The letter that I tabled is from her own task force, and it rejected the advice of these local sleep docs, the experts in their field, renowned across the country. Now, what was the reason provided in that letter? It said that there was only minimal private sector involvement. It's a terrible reason.

We should be focused on patients first, not privatization like the PCs. It's clear that the Premier and her Cabinet always put ideology ahead of getting things done here in Manitoba.

The question remains for them: Why would they refuse to fund care for patients in our public health system?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, we continue to make historic investments in our public health-care system. That's why we increased the budget of Health by \$668 million in this recent budget.

I will remind Manitobans that the Leader of the Opposition and all of the NDP voted against that increase for those investments in health care, Madam Speaker.

But certainly when it comes to surgical and diagnostic procedures, I want to thank our surgical and diagnostic task force for the incredible work that they do. Their focus is putting patients first, Madam Speaker, to ensure that those patients get the health care that they need.

They are contracting out some of those services; that gets patients the health care that they need sooner. It's not taking an ideological approach like the NDP, which is the wrong way, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, the wrong approach is this PC Stefanson government and their task force. We'll side with the doctors on this side of the House. These physicians quit their task force because they're saying it's the wrong approach.

Regardless of where these tests are provided, they still need—patients, I'm talking about here—still need to get a prescription from doctors in the public system. That's the public system that this PC government is starving.

They rejected the proposal to add more physicians at the Sleep Disorder Centre, which would be the real

solution to the backlog, getting more patients a prescription more quickly. And instead, they rejected this proposal because it had, quote, only minimal private sector involvement.

Why is this PC government so focused on privatization, and why do they refuse to fund solutions in our public health-care system that are advocated for by local experts?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, what we're focused on is making sure that patients get the health care that they need when they need it, and that's why we are not taking an ideological approach. That's why we are looking at all avenues to ensure—within a publicly funded system—that we're getting patients the health care that they need when they need it.

But the Leader of the Opposition referred to a letter that he was going to table in the House. What he tabled today is not a letter, Madam Speaker. It has nothing to do with what he just said it was.

So I'm wondering: Would he agree to then table the letter that he referred to?

**Madam Speaker:** Just a reminder to members that, when referring to the government, the member can say Stefanson government and PC government, but not PC Stefanson government. That is not allowed by the rules.

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

### **Grace Hospital Surgical Capacity Concerns**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, doctors are speaking out in more areas about this government's failure to get patients the care that they need.

Experts in orthopedic surgery from hospitals like the Grace are rejecting this Premier and her task force. They've written many letters to this government. Their stance is clear; they've been trying to get action for five years from this government.

As a result of this government ignoring these surgeons, and I quote here, the Grace Hospital is struggling to offer a basic standard of care that is acceptable. End quote.

They know the problem is with the Premier, and they're calling on her government to, quote, reverse our present course. This letter, from a separate group of surgeons at the Grace, which I will now table, was written last November.



Why has the Premier ignored the doctors at the Grace Hospital for five years?

\* (14:00)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable First Minister. *[interjection]*

Order. *[interjection]* Order. *[interjection]* Order. Order.

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, I don't even know where to begin with this. The Leader of the Opposition got up. In his previous set of questions, he talked about a letter that he tabled—which there is no letter that he tabled today, so I asked him to table it again in the Chamber.

He's refused to do that. He's now tabled another letter that isn't signed by anybody, Madam Speaker. Again, we're supposed to take this Leader of the Opposition seriously.

I will say that we, on this side of the House, take the health care of Manitobans very seriously, and that's why we're investing more than \$668 million more in health care in Manitoba today: a 9.2 per cent increase, when members opposite voted against that.

We are investing in Manitobans. We're making sure that the patients get the health care that they need when they need it, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, Madam Speaker, the letter that I tabled is signed by surgeons who work at the Grace Hospital. We are protecting their identity—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —but, quite rightly, they fear reprisal at the hands of the Stefanson government. We've seen it time and time again, whether it was the former failed Health ministers who attacked doctors, or whether it was former failed Health ministers who attacked other front-line professionals.

And you can hear the glee in their voices right now, as they look to visit their revenge on more front-line staff who are speaking out. Here's a fact: the Grace surgeons tell us that the government is demanding that they cut joint replacements by 20 per cent.

Why is the Premier telling surgeons at the Grace to cut surgeries by one fifth?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, once again the Leader of the Opposition continues to put false information on the record in this Chamber. When it comes to the Grace Hospital, of course, Manitobans recall the previous NDP government.

When, in 2015, under the previous premier Selinger, Madam Speaker, where the Grace Hospital had among the longest wait times for emergency rooms in the country, according to the CIHI report, at that time.

Manitobans don't want to go back to those dark days of the previous NDP government that denied them the health-care access in those ERs at the time. They went across rural Manitoba and shut down ERs in rural Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

Manitobans don't want to go back to that. They want us to continue to make those investments in our health-care system, Madam Speaker, and that's exactly what we're doing.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, it's really something to see a Premier so desperate to try and distract from the damage she herself has caused to the Grace Hospital, first as a failed Health minister, and now as the Premier. That's what's happening right now.

And now surgeons are speaking out as a result. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Just like the docs at the Misericordia, these surgeons at the Grace are tired of being ignored by this Stefanson government. They write, and I quote, the proposal to increase surgical capacity at the Grace Hospital within its current footprint has been rejected. Unquote.

That's shocking. We should be investing in the Grace Hospital, not making more cuts.

Why did the Premier's government say no to more surgeries for hips and knees at the Grace Hospital?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Look, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues with these accusations where he has nothing to prove what he is talking about, once again.

And I will tell you that we are continuing to make those investments in our health-care system, including for orthopedic and surgical procedures, including hips and knees, Madam Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition, members opposite will know and Manitobans should know as well, that we recently announced a further ER at the Concordia Hospital, Madam Speaker, that will perform more than 1,000 more surgical procedures at the Concordia Hospital. That is 1,000 more procedures for surgical—*for—[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —knee replacements, Madam—*[interjection]*

I know they want to laugh, Madam Speaker. We don't call this a laughing matter—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —because those are surgeries that will be provided to Manitobans who are waiting in pain.

And what did the members opposite do, Madam Speaker? When they were given the opportunity to vote in favour of this, they voted against it.

We'll take no lessons from the member opposite.

### **Grace Hospital Surgical Capacity Concerns**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** For years, we've been calling on this government to address issues at the Grace Hospital, and for years, this government has failed to do anything.

The Premier's incompetence is putting patients and hospital staff at risk. Surgeons at the Grace Hospital signed a letter which says, and I quote: the Grace Hospital is struggling to offer a basic standard of care that is acceptable. End quote. This letter, Madam Speaker, was from November.

Will the Premier stand in her place and tell Manitobans why she's failed to provide adequate support for the Grace Hospital?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Under the Greg Selinger NDP government, all their failed Health ministers were searching for a magic wand, Madam Speaker.

When they couldn't find it, they made sure to tell the current NDP opposition members that they should be tabling blank pieces of paper with no signatures, Madam Speaker; no proof that it has, in fact, come from who they say it's come from, because they have run out of ideas.

Yesterday's NDP looks exactly the same as today's NDP.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for—*[interjection]*

Order.

A reminder to the member, too, that saying Greg Selinger NDP government is this—is, again, one of the statements that is not allowed in the House. Can say Selinger government or NDP government, but can't put the two together.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, the minister would do well to actually take a look at that tabled document, because the surgeons actually sent it to her many, many months ago. And she knows that.

Surgeons at the Grace Hospital says they have—say they have a moral and ethical responsibility to speak out. They're concerned that this Premier and her government's incompetence is putting patient safety at risk and the quality of care at risk.

Rather than help, the PCs are demanding Grace doctors cut, and I quote, joint replacement appointments by 20 per cent, end quote, and to tell patients that their surgeries are likely going to be cancelled. These issues have been going on since last November.

Can the Premier explain why she's failed to address concerns from the doctors at the Grace?

**Ms. Gordon:** Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to thank all the health professionals at the Grace Hospital at all levels of that hospital: administration, doctors, nurses, allied health professional, support staff for your service to Manitobans.

I appreciated the opportunity to be able to sit down with the nurses in the ER around the table of solutions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we have been working with physicians and site leaders at the Grace for some time now. Shared Health and the WRHA have been working very closely with them. They've approved additional physician resources for the site, as well as a hospital medical officer. Those are solutions.

We will continue to move forward on Manitobans' behalf.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, you'll notice that in the minister's response, she made no mention of the surgeons at the Grace.

\* (14:10)

Yet, last November, those very surgeons signed a letter addressed to this Minister of Health. They outlined how the Grace was struggling to offer a basic standard of care that is acceptable, and they spoke out against these PC government's directives to cut joint appointments by 20 per cent and to cancel surgeries that Manitobans are depending on.

In this same letter, Grace doctors put forward a solution to clear the backlog but, shockingly, it was rejected by this—these PCs and by this Minister of Health.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain why she's ignoring these surgeons at the Grace Hospital?

**Ms. Gordon:** Again, we ask the opposition to table the letter that shows the letterhead from Grace Hospital, as well as the signatures of these surgeons that they are referring to, Madam Speaker. Until they do, I request that they discontinue making statements that are not factual and is not based on any evidence.

We continue to work with the surgeons and administration at Grace Hospital to ensure they have all the resources they need to provide exceptional care to Manitobans.

#### **Allied Health Professionals Strike Action Vote**

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Madam Speaker, thousands of front-line health-care professionals across 190 different health-care professions have voted in favour of a strike.

This is an unprecedented mandate and it's a clear sign that they've had enough of this PC government. They've had enough of a five-year wage freeze, enough of disrespect from Brian Pallister and now the Stefanson government.

Why has this government forced allied health-care workers to vote in favour of a strike?

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** Madam Speaker, few people believe the Leader of the Opposition when he says things. Turns out nobody really should and the same goes for questions on this and questions from the member, too, when they seem to think that these valued health-care workers won't be getting the raises. They will.

We are active at the negotiating table through Shared Health. Shared Health is taking the lead, as they should, as the employer. Every single collective bargaining agreement that's been reached within Health has included compounding increases. Every single collective bargaining agreement that's been reached within Health includes retroactive pay. I have every reason to believe that this one will, too.

Shame on the members opposite for attempting to mislead Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a supplementary question.

**MLA Marcelino:** The PCs are always trying to change the channel from their failure on our health-care system.

If you live in rural Manitoba, paramedics had to vote in favour of a strike because they've had their wages frozen for five years. A wage freeze for five years during a cost-of-living crisis; that's the policy of this shameful PC government.

On this side of the House, we respect allied health-care professionals.

Why has the PC government failed to give them a fair deal?

**Mr. Teitsma:** Madam Speaker, if the opposition really respects Manitobans and really respects Manitoba health-care workers, they would be more honest with them, but, sadly, they aren't being honest with them.

Now, I'll just remind the member on the issue at hand with regards to rural paramedics. For years, those paramedics, as well as Winnipeg paramedics, Brandon, asked the previous—Greg Selinger and his previous NDP government to regulate their profession, to create a administrative body for them. And they refused; they refused year after year.

Which government showed respect for paramedics? This government did.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a final supplementary.

**MLA Marcelino:** Everyone in Manitoba knows that this PC government does not respect collective bargaining, and everyone in Manitoba knows that they have made a mess of our provincial health-care system.

Paramedics in rural Manitoba, lab techs and X-ray techs, respiratory therapists and other allied health professionals have had their wages frozen for five

years. That's during a cost-of-living crisis and that's why 99 per cent of these health-care workers have voted to strike.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) give allied health-care workers a fair deal today?

**Mr. Teitsma:** Madam Speaker, it is out of respect for Manitoba's health-care professionals, it's out of respect for our labour laws, it's out of respect for the bargaining process that we're allowing the bargaining process to proceed and to do so without interference.

Now, what the implication of what the members are saying opposite is that they would be happy to interfere in those negotiations. Shame on them for saying that.

And I will once again start where I—or, finish where I started, which is to say that, when the Leader of the Opposition and this member claim that these members are somehow not going to receive retro-active pay, that they're somehow not going to receive compounding increases.

Shame on them for misleading those union members. Shame on them for misleading all Manitobans.

#### **Manitoba's Crown Prosecutors Bargaining Contract Negotiations**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, Manitoba's Crown prosecutors are yet another group of provincial employees that are currently without a contract with this PC government.

On top of that, they're underpaid relative to their colleagues in other provinces and they're overworked and understaffed, oftentimes with huge caseloads. Meanwhile, there are prosecutors languishing in temporary positions and others are off on stress leave.

When will this government stop disrespecting our Crown prosecutors and bargain a fair contract with competitive wages?

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** It's sad to see that it's not just the Leader of the Opposition and one of his NDP colleagues, but now a second that has joined their call for what they're attempting to ask us to do: to meddle and to interfere in collective bargaining and to somehow disrupt that process, that well-established process.

Now, that process is under way and—as it should be—and it continues. And I'm—I've been hearing from both sides that progress has been being made, and I'm

optimistic that they'll be able to come to a resolution soon.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** While this member is optimistic, violent crime is going up across the province, communities feel less safe and this government has continued to disrespect our Crown prosecutors.

Meanwhile, next door in Saskatchewan, Crown attorneys are paid as much as 19 per cent more than in Manitoba, and provinces like Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia are actively and successfully recruiting away Manitoba's senior Crown attorneys. For all the minister's talk, they haven't made a dent in filling these vacancies.

When will the PC government realize that competitive wages are integral to recruitment and retention initiatives?

**Mr. Teitsma:** Well, I suppose it is a little bit of a unique day in the House here where finally members of the—members opposite are caring about public safety.

Public safety has been a priority of our government—*[interjection]*—public safety has been a priority of our government. We defend the police, not like the members opposite, who would seek to defund them. We support our Crown attorneys.

We want to ensure that violent offenders are behind bars and that violent offenders face the consequences of their actions instead of making excuses for their own behaviour.

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Just words again from the minister while our justice system is in crisis because this PC government continually disrespects our Crown attorneys, keeping them without a competitive contract and a higher than normal vacancy rate.

Erik *[phonetic]* Dolcetti, the president of the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys, has said, quote: It's a vicious cycle, and we're going to keep losing people at this rate if the Province doesn't do something to address the underlying issue, which is us being without a contract.

\* (14:20)

Why should anyone trust this PC government when they show such a disrespect for the Crown attorneys by failing to negotiate a fair contract?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Of course, we won't interfere in the contract negotiations, but I think the question that has to be asked is: Why would any Manitoban trust the NDP when it comes to violent crime?

Not speaking about their own members and the challenges they have with the justice system, but even talking about how they refer to the justice system: the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), who speaks about police in a derogatory way and says that they're wrong to call for bail reform; the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), who says that the police shouldn't receive an additional penny to do their hard work.

And contrast that with our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), who's leading the COF and leading all premiers across Canada and meeting this Friday virtually with police across the–Canada to address violent crime.

Why would they trust them when it is our government actually taking action?

#### **Five-Year Review of Accessibility for Manitobans Act Request to Release Review Prior to Election**

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** The Accessibility for Manitobans Act was established in 2013 to remove, reduce and prevent barriers to ensure Manitoba is accessible for everyone. The act is required by law to be reviewed every five years, which is also this year, Madam Speaker.

And we know what this year's review will tell us, and that is that this PC government has taken us down the wrong direction when it comes to supports for Manitobans living with disabilities.

Will the minister do the right thing and commit to releasing the review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act before the election?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** Our government has always stood up for ensuring that Manitoba's accessible for everyone.

And that is why we've committed to implementing the standards and why we've committed to doing the review. Our government also instituted the Manitoba Accessibility Fund, which is a source of funding for all businesses and municipalities to ensure that they can make their place of business accessible to everybody in Manitoba.

Unlike members opposite—when they had the chance to vote in favour, in support of additional dollars for people with disabilities, what did they do? They voted against it.

Shame on her.

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

**MLA Fontaine:** Madam Speaker, it's important that the minister releases the findings of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act before this coming election.

Voters deserve to be fully informed on the PC government's track record on Manitobans living with disabilities. And we already know what this report will find, and that is that the PCs have simply just not done enough for Manitobans living with disabilities. They cut funding for day programming services while undermining important standards.

Will the minister commit to releasing the review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act before this coming election?

**Ms. Squires:** I'm very happy to update the House about our \$104 million in additional monies this year alone into the CLDS program to ensure that people living with disabilities in our communities receive the utmost care and have a stable working sector.

I would also like to inform the House that we are advancing \$640 million towards the disability services programs in the province of Manitoba.

In previous years when we have brought forward additional monies for people with—individuals with disabilities, what did they do? They voted against it. They have no credibility when it comes to supporting people with disabilities.

Our government listened and took action.

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

**MLA Fontaine:** The PC government's track record on supports for Manitobans living with disabilities speaks for itself.

They've cut—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Fontaine:** —supports, they've removed important standards. High support-worker turnover negatively impacts Manitobans living with disabilities and their quality of life. That's what this year's accessibility for Manitobans review act will find.

And that's why it's important that the minister should commit to releasing the findings before this election, so that Manitobans can be fully informed when they go to the voting polls.

Will she commit to doing so today?

**Ms. Squires:** This is incredibly shameful coming from this member.

That member supported a government that had a \$12-an-hour wage for people working in disabilities—\$12 an hour. And every year—every year—for the 17 years that they were in government, the community—the sector came to them and asked them for an additional increase to their wages; they did nothing.

Madam Speaker, our government took those employees from \$12—that's what the NDP was paying them—to \$19 as of April 1st this year.

We'll take no lessons from members opposite.

#### **Family Physician Shortage Recruitment and Retention**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Yesterday we received an email from a member of the Manitoba Medical Group Management Association in Brandon who says the shortage of family physicians has reached crisis levels and that Shared Health's offshore physician recruitment project has serious shortcomings. He said that Manitoba needs to step up because he's lost 12 doctors in the last three months and areas like Morden-Winkler are in big trouble.

According to Prairie Mountain Health, there are over 90 vacant positions for family physicians just in that RHA and Manitoba is lagging behind the initiatives put forward by other provinces while paperwork is delaying certification for years.

Will this government remove the red tape of the labour market survey, since we all Manitoba is hundreds of doctors short?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the member for St. Boniface and to share that last Friday, our government, through Shared Health, posted a request for proposal to recruit 150 new family physicians to this province: 50 for northern Manitoba, 50 for rural Manitoba and 50 for Winnipeg.

This is in addition to 46 new physicians that have been hired and are practising since announcing the health human resource action plan on November 10th. This includes 30 family physicians, a cardiac surgeon,

a neurologist and a neurosurgeon amongst many others, Madam Speaker.

We are taking the steps necessary to address the physician shortage.

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

**Mr. Lamont:** I table the letter in which the individual says that very program will not work. He says, without immediate support there will be further clinic closures and reduction in primary-care services, which will inevitably lead to more strain on our hospitals. I can provide the signature if they want.

Our physicians have completed our—their own recruitment and we currently have four qualified physicians willing—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** —to come to Brandon and begin practising immediately for overseas. They are all held up in various levels of college and physicians and surgeons'—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** —approval.

We've been talking about doing a better job of recognizing foreign credentials for a generation in this province, but qualified doctors who want to work in Manitoba are tied up in red tape.

What is the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) going to do to put—to make sure that the College of Physicians and Surgeons changes course? Because it's only going to get better with a change in policy.

**Ms. Gordon:** I want to recognize the work our government and my department has been doing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. We have worked with them to streamline and remove an exam that was required of many individuals who wanted to practise here in the province.

And what the registrar said when this was announced is that the exam was holding back many qualified internationally trained physicians from coming to the province, and this will pave the way for more internationally educated physicians to practise in Manitoba. I want to thank the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

More work to do, but we are committed to working together to get the job done.

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

### **Children with Learning Disabilities Funding for Reading Programs**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, learning disabilities have been forgotten by the current government, yet they are incredibly important.

A Supreme Court of Canada ruled in 2012 that children with learning disabilities have a right to learn to read, using intensive methods if necessary.

The Supreme Court said learning to read is a right, not a privilege, in the case of *Moore v. British Columbia*. Yet, Manitoba is systematically failing many students with 'reasing'—reading disabilities.

When will the government act to provide the funding and the approach so that children with learning disabilities are not missed and so they are diagnosed early and given adequate help to be able to learn to read?

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** It gives me great pleasure to rise today to put a few words on the record in regards to students with disabilities.

I listened 'intently' to the member's private members' statement earlier today in regards to students with disabilities and concur with the member that the former NDP government absolutely had no plan. We on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, are definitely working with our education partners.

\* (14:30)

We know that there is no one-size-fits-all in regards to teaching for instruction for reading and that. We are working with our classroom teachers; we're working with our education partners to make sure that we're receiving success for all students in this great province of ours, Madam Speaker.

### **Sale and Purchase of Bear Spray New Identification Requirements**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Manitobans are rightfully worried about the dramatic increase of the unlawful use of bear spray in criminal activity. It's a regular occurrence to hear about it used either as a weapon in a robbery or thugs spraying individuals just for the sake of it. This is horrendous misuse of an important tool designed to keep folks safe while they explore amazing wilderness areas.

Can the Minister of Agriculture explain how we are cracking down on this criminal misuse of bear spray?

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture):** I want to thank my colleague from Swan River for that question.

Our team on this side of the House, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) and myself, take the misuse of bear spray very seriously, Madam Speaker.

Along with showing government-issued ID, last week we also announced the changes will add the canister's serial number to the required data collected when the bear spray is purchased. This will not inconvenience legitimate purchasers, but will mean we can link each can sold to whomever purchased it.

We are focusing on how to crack down on those individuals that use this product criminally without impacting legitimate users for Manitoba. On this side of the House, we're making Manitoba safer, Madam Speaker.

### **Conservation Officers Recruitment and Wages**

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Conservation officers are 'integral' to ensuring Manitobans are able to safely hunt, fish and other outdoor things like that.

Previously we've shown FIPPA documents that the PCs still have not filled the conservation officer vacancies. The minister may claim that they want to add new positions, but sadly they have not.

When will this minister actually commit to hiring new conservation officers and getting them in the field?

**Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** On this side of the House, we're—very, very much support our conservation officers. That's why we've recently recruited nine officers. They're away for training now, and we expect them to be in the service later this fall.

Our conservation officer service was decimated under the NDP. We've taken steps to rebuild it. We'll look after our conservation officers moving forward now and into the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I think there's probably—there was one minute—or one second still showing. So, I'm going to allow the member for Flin Flon to ask his supplementary question.

**MLA Lindsey:** Manitobans don't trust this PC government when it comes to protecting our environment or our natural resources. The Natural Resources Minister has said that, quote, we'll certainly be close to Saskatchewan in the end and comparative with Alberta, as well, when it comes to the salaries for COs.

Well, we all know that this is not actually the case. For all the minister's talk, the miniscule increases that they've given won't come close to getting them anywhere close to the salary of Saskatchewan or Alberta. How can anyone believe this PC government when they ignore the fact that conservation officers are paid so much less?

Will the minister commit to actually paying them competitive salaries to attract more officers?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** As the member will know, the conservation officers are represented by a union. My understanding is that the contract ended March 31st and they're currently in negotiations, so I'm not going to comment on that.

What I will say, though, is that we've invested \$1.7 million for protective clothing, safety equipment, tactical tools and communications technology so the service can carry out its duties effectively. We've also committed \$300,000 to a helicopter contract to catch poachers with infrared technology.

We're—we've got much more to come. Stay tuned.

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

## PETITIONS

### Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

The background to 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 therefore 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 in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Prabhjot Singh, Chandeeep Kaur and Rajdeep Kaur as well as many other Manitobans.

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

### Afghan Refugees in Manitoba

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2021, Afghan citizens and their families have been subjected to persecution and human rights atrocities because of their faith, gender and former associations with organizations thought to be friendly with the previous government and its allies. This abuse has taken the form of public assaults, kidnappings and killings.

Many Afghans have left or are attempting to leave Afghanistan to find safe refuge in neighbouring countries. This undertaking is difficult due to the Taliban's activities and their presence in countries like Pakistan.

Many Afghans who are looking to leave Afghanistan and come to Canada are educated and experienced and, as such, would prove to be a—valuable assets to Manitoba, considering its current labour shortages and challenges to its economy.



Educated Afghans have usually studied for four to six years in a specific field of study and spent a significant amount of time and money for that education. However, these people still face barriers to obtaining employment in their field of expertise, as Canada has very strict rules regarding the use of that education and experience.

Many Afghans are refugees in other countries and are currently jobless, which is an added barrier for them under the current criteria of the Provincial Nominee Program.

Some Afghan newcomers who face literacy issues because they came from a non-developed country would benefit from an in-depth informational course to assist them with acclimation into Canadian lifestyles.

The Interim Federal Health Program provides limited, temporary coverage of health-care benefits to refugees who aren't eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance. However, the refugee must apply for discretionary coverage and provide a list of compelling personal circumstances in order to qualify, but for urgent medical circumstances, such as root canals, unanticipated life-threatening and emergency medical conditions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to work with the federal government to prioritize the evacuation of the immediate and extended family of Afghans who now call Canada home, and to facilitate their coming to Manitoba, including helping Afghan refugees in other countries such as Pakistan.

To urge the provincial government to expand the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program and re-evaluate the accreditation of education and jobs to assure—ensure all immigrants and refugees can utilize their skills more easily and readily in work for—in Manitoba for work.

To urge the provincial government to have fewer rigid criteria for Afghans under the Provincial Nominee Program, and having a connection to Manitoba, family members or friends should be a key criteria.

To urge the provincial government to enhance adequate acclimation services for newcomers through community-based support programs and increase their health-care coverage to meet their urgent health-care necessities.

Signed by Nigar Irandost, Qatawesh [*phonetic*], Fazel Irandost and many others.

### **Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools**

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

The background—sorry, to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba—the background to 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—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:**—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 to take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Lori Brar, Manveer Kaur, Fateh Singh and many other Manitobans.

### Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) Concerned Manitobans are requesting that Provincial Road 224 be assessed 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.

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

Ekosi.

### Security System Incentive Program

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Home security surveillance systems protect homes and businesses by potentially deterring burglaries.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Grievances?

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On a couple of matters of House business.

Pursuant to rule 34(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Dauphin. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, April 24th, 2023, at 12 p.m. to review The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, as required by section 40 of that act.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Monday, April 24th, 2023, at 12 p.m. to review The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, as required by section 40 of that act.

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**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, for this afternoon, and any further time there needs, could we please continue with second reading debate and votes on specified bills 10, 23, 26, 29, 2 and 24.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of the following specified bills: 10, 23, 26, 29, 2 and 24.

## SECOND READINGS

### **Bill 10—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed)**

**Madam Speaker:** So, I will therefore call second reading of Bill 10, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed).

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 10, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed), 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 the message.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, that Bill 10, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed), 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 is tabled.

**Mr. Cullen:** Madam Speaker, this bill amends The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act in order to repeal the social responsibility fee on cannabis retailers operating here in Manitoba.

\* (14:50)

The social responsibility fee ensured that cannabis retailers contributed to the social cost associated with cannabis legalization, including increased health costs, public education and addiction services.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

After a few years, the cannabis market has matured considerably. The regulatory and social cost to the province have now stabilized, opening up the possibility of repealing the social responsibility fee. Repealing the social responsibility fee will continue to reduce legal cannabis costs to consumers looking to switch from the illegal market. And once the social responsibility fee is repealed, Manitoba will have one of the lowest cannabis taxation regimes in Canada.

This initiative is another step towards our government's goal of supporting legal cannabis operators as they compete with and displace the illicit cannabis market in Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

## Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I'd like to ask the minister if he'll disclose to Manitobans how much revenue was generated through the social responsibility fee over the last fiscal year.

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance):** We anticipate the revenue generated on an annual basis over the past year will be approximately \$10 million.

**Mr. Sala:** I'd like to ask the minister if he can share how much of that \$10 million that was collected was actually spent on social responsibility-related items.

**Mr. Cullen:** Obviously, when we got into the discussion about legalizing cannabis, we recognized there was going to be regulatory costs. There was going to be health-care costs and the potential of policing costs as well, and, quite frankly, education costs.

So we did put a lot of money into all of those areas upfront and over the last few years. We—recognizing some of those costs are actually going down. The regulatory costs associated with the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority have remained relatively constant in the million-dollars area, and part of that budget includes education as well.

It's a detailed answer to the question. May seem like a simple question, but it is a detailed—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Sala:** I'd like to, again, give the minister an opportunity to share with this House how much of those \$10 million were actually invested in social responsibility-related items.

**Mr. Cullen:** I think maybe the member should also recognize that there's a fee assessed by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries in terms of the wholesale component. And Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, in terms of their net income, have to invest 2 per cent of that back into social responsibility fees. So we would have to have a discussion with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries in terms of some of the revenue that was gleaned through the cannabis sales. And the exact programs that went into the—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Sala:** I do appreciate that the minister is sort of sharing information more broadly about L-G-C and some of the funds they're collecting for this, but the question specifically was about funds collected as part of the social responsibility fee, which is what we're here to discuss today.

So, could the minister please offer information—I've asked him about this year, related to the \$10 million that were collected. We know \$8 million was collected in the last fiscal.

Can he share how much of those \$8 million were invested in social responsibility-related items?

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't have the exact figures at my fingertips, but I will certainly will undertake to get that information that the member is asking about.

**Mr. Sala:** I have to say it's—given we're here discussing a bill which proposes to repeal the social responsibility fee, which I think the average Manitoban would presume or assume that that means that we're not spending those dollars or that there isn't another good use for those dollars, that the minister would come today prepared to share with the House how much was

actually spent. So I have to say that's quite concerning that the minister is not prepared.

We are here to discuss a bill that proposes to repeal a fee. I think Manitobans would expect that a minister would come to that discussion prepared to discuss how much money his government has spent on that.

So I'd like to, maybe, I guess, given it's clear that they haven't spent those dollars, we'll move on to another area of questioning.

Will cannabis sales now—

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

**Mr. Cullen:** I guess that's why we're here today, quite frankly, is this legislation is actually repealing the social responsibility fee.

Clearly, we didn't know what we were getting into when we—the federal government asked us to come up with a framework to legalize cannabis; we didn't know what those costs were going to be. And we set up a framework here in Manitoba.

Again, revenue that's generated by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, 2 per cent of the net income from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is used in terms of social responsibility programming. We have set aside about a million dollars on the regulatory front through the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority. Certainly, that's the regulatory piece of it.

There's also an education component to that—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Sala:** So we know the minister and his government have been collecting revenues from small businesses that they apparently haven't been using and have no idea how much they've been spending.

I'd like to ask, in relation to the federal excise tax, we do know that the government has been collecting 25 cents on every gram of marijuana sold in this province and holding those dollars back for many years.

I'd like to ask the minister, what has happened to those dollars, and what does his government intend to do with those revenues that were collected?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, so the 25 cents that the member's alluding to is actually a federal excise tax. That's the federal government is collecting that tax, so you could ask the NDP-Liberal coalition what they're doing with that 25 cents.

**Mr. Sala:** The minister just stated that they're collecting that tax.

Can the minister state on record whether or not the federal government is currently collecting an excise tax on marijuana sales in Manitoba?

**Mr. Cullen:** That's, in fact, true. The federal government are collecting a 25 cents—sorry—25-cents-per-gram excise tax to the federal government.

A lot of other jurisdictions are moving into agreements with the federal government. That is where we're proposing to go as well. Then there would be—once we get to sign that agreement, there would be probably 75 cents coming back to the Province of Manitoba.

So we're having discussions with the federal government on the excise tax component. The federal government is currently tweaking the rules around that, so we're allowing them to go through their process before we sign an agreement with them.

**Mr. Sala:** It's extremely confusing. At the beginning he confirmed that they were collecting the excise tax, and then at the end of the response, he said that they're actually in discussions with the federal government to determine how that tax would be collected.

So I'll just go to the—we do know that there is no excise tax which is currently being applied or collected by the federal government. This current government is collecting those funds and keeping them in an account somewhere, maybe applying those towards other expenses, as they can sometimes be known to do.

I'll give the minister an opportunity to share: what's the total value of the excise taxes that they've collected and put away in an account?

\* (15:00)

**Mr. Cullen:** The Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries are collecting a 75-cents-per-gram tax currently that goes to Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. And if the minister wants to come back in the Estimates process or during a period, we can have a discussion with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries in terms of what that particular dollar figure is.

I don't mind having that same discussion with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries and see what—in terms of what that value is.

**Mr. Sala:** I think the important question here is that, just like with the social responsibility fee, which we've seen this government has been collecting lots of dollars through that but hasn't been spending, it's the

same thing that we're seeing here with the excise tax. We know they've been collecting these funds; we have no idea how much that is.

We have no idea how much they're planning on sending to the federal government, if and when that agreement is signed with them. That's a concern—more secrecy, more lack of transparency, more of the same with the PCs.

What measures are being taken to use revenues from the social responsibility fee to address the addictions crisis in Manitoba?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I think we have to make sure we 'differentiation' between the social responsibility fee, which we are eliminating to Manitobans and Manitoba retailers.

We're hoping that Manitobans will respond by purchasing more of the legal cannabis as opposed to the illegal. That is why we're making changes, now that we fully understand some of the extra costs that Manitobans are—Manitoba, as a government, are facing.

I will say, revenue, again, goes through the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation. They are collecting a 9 per cent surcharge on that, also collecting 75 cents per gram.

They are mandated to provide 2 per cent of their net income—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Sala:** I'd like to offer the minister an opportunity to clarify. So, the funds that have been collected over the last year, we know last fiscal, \$8 million; this year, \$10 million.

The minister has failed to be able to offer up even a single example of how those funds are being spent.

So I would like the minister, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), to clarify for the House: What happens to the remainder of those funds that were collected from small Manitoban businesses? Have they gone back and have been applied toward general revenue? Where have those dollars gone?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, that money goes back to general revenue so that we can make a record and historic investments in health care.

I reflect on the \$668 million in health care to deal with some of the challenges we're facing in the health-care front.

I also point to record investments in mental health and addictions, and increased programming that we've brought forward in this year's budget. That money can be used for those goods and services as well.

So that money is going back into general revenue that can be used for programming for Manitobans facing addictions and other mental health challenges.

**Mr. Sala:** I appreciate that the minister's clarifying that he's using revenues from that fee towards purposes that they weren't intended for, and it's good to see them come clean on that.

I would like to give the minister an opportunity, although he wasn't able to talk about it at a higher level, to offer the House one single example of how they invested those social responsibility fees in anything that helped to make Manitobans safer from—safe from addictions or make Manitobans safer, as it relates to cannabis sales.

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, I can point to a number of undertakings that our government had since back in 2019 when cannabis was legalized here in Manitoba.

And, clearly, our Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority did tremendous amount of advertising to warn about the dangers of cannabis use, especially among youth, especially among those that were driving.

Liquor and gaming and cannabis authority had an advertising campaign. Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries also had an advertising campaign warning about the dangers of consuming cannabis. The Government of Manitoba itself undertook advertising campaigns to warn against the issues around cannabis use—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Are there any further questions?

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** It's my understanding that the social responsibility fee was to address major problems, which the government expected in the social structure of Manitoba as a result of the introduction of cannabis.

Can the minister tell us whether there were significant social problems as a result of the introduction of cannabis and what did the government do about them?

**Mr. Cullen:** Yes, the premise behind the question and the premise behind establishing the social responsibility fee was that we were getting into an area that we

really didn't know anything about. Cannabis hadn't been legalized in this country.

So we did set aside a fee to undertake, to mitigate some of the damages that could occur. I would say, luckily, hopefully, some of our advertising investments had paid off. We didn't see as many broad repercussions of cannabis once it was legalized as we thought might occur.

So I would think our campaigns had been relatively successful in that regard. We've come to a stabilization in the market—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I'm glad that the minister admitted that the government had no idea what it was doing when it started. But I'm also pleased to hear that there weren't the massive social upheavals and problems that the government had wondered and figured might happen.

And it is, you know, many people at this point review this social responsibility fee as a tax and as a problem, that the government has attacked small businesses. So I'll give the minister a chance to talk more about the problems which didn't occur and what, in fact—

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

**Mr. Cullen:** I thank the member; I think he approves of our eliminating the social responsibility fee.

Obviously, our goal now is to make sure that we—those Manitobans that wish to consume cannabis use the legal stream as opposed to the illegal stream, which we think will be more safer for them.

So we're excited about bringing in this reduction and elimination in the social responsibility fee, which we think will make—will help retailers as well and make it more competitive for them. So I know some of them are struggling, and then they certainly were strong proponents of eliminating the social responsibility fee.

Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

Are there any—is there anybody who wishes to speak to this bill?

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** It's great to have an opportunity to put some words on the record about Bill 10, which, of course, proposes to repeal the

requirement that a social responsibility fee be collected from cannabis store operators.

I do want to start by just saying upfront a thank you to my colleague, Lisa Naylor, who recently has done a great job engaging with—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Just a correction to the member: you cannot refer to another member of the House by their first or full or surname, only by their constituency or portfolio.

**Mr. Sala:** I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank my colleague, the MLA for Wolseley, for their work in engaging with cannabis retailers. I know, as of late, she's had a lot of meetings with retailers throughout the sector to learn about their perspective on the social responsibility fee, to learn about their concerns about some of the things that are happening right now within our cannabis sector.

And many of the problems that they're facing right now as a result of some of the decisions that this government has made in terms of how they've gone about setting up cannabis sales in Manitoba. So I do want to thank her for her work.

And I do also want to thank those retailers myself. I've had that opportunity to have many discussions, along with some of my colleagues, to learn about the challenges and the ways that this social responsibility fee has impacted them.

So I do want to state upfront that this bill does take us in the right direction, but there are some very important concerns that need to be mentioned when talking about the repeal of the social responsibility fee on cannabis.

The first question that we really need to focus on here and raise—and which of course we didn't really hear the minister take any accountability on—is a question of why government has waited so long to remove a fee which they weren't using for the purposes for which it was intended.

\* (15:10)

And we know that in 2019, which was the first year that these funds began to be collected, from 2019, 2020, 2021 and now 2022, the amount of funds that were collected through this fee have continued to grow and grow and grow, of course, as cannabis sales have continued to grow in Manitoba.

And we know in the 2021 fiscal year, as was mentioned during questioning, the government collected

\$8 million total through this fee, and we did hear the minister today share that they are expecting to collect over \$10 million in relation of this social responsibility fee for 2022.

Now, we did hear again, clearly, the minister state he was not able to offer any examples of how this government has been spending those dollars. So it's clear the minister, on record today, outlined that, for years now, the government has been taking these revenues and has not made a decision, ultimately, to spend those dollars on things related to social responsibility.

So there's a very real question here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about this form of taxation without any relation to a particular expenditure. And we've seen this government do this for years, and that's certainly been a concern. And the reason it's been such a concern is because there's been a complete and total lack of transparency around how they've managed this file, and specifically how they've managed questions related to this social responsibility fee.

We know that for years the retailers, and, of course, others have been forced to resort to freedom of information requests to get clarity over dollars collected, to get—to attempt to get clarity over how those dollars were spent. And, unfortunately, not a lot of clarity was gained. We still don't really have any understanding about how much of that money was actually spent.

And today—and I would again say that it's quite concerning that the minister responsible for this file didn't come today to the House prepared to share with members and to share with Manitobans just how much money they've actually spent on social responsibility given their government is proposing to repeal that fee.

So it does appear that they have been just simply absorbing those fees to pad their bottom line. The minister said some nice things about what they were investing it on. We, of course, know that this government has been busy making cuts to health care, unlike what the minister suggested they were doing with these fees.

So we've seen, again, just years and years of continued secrecy about what they've done with these fees, and that's created no shortage of challenges for retailers, and a lot of confusion for Manitobans.

So this is really part of a pattern, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This failure to be transparent, this pattern of secrecy. This is something that Manitobans have unfortunately become accustomed to when it comes to this Conservative government.

And we know that, you know, not only are we seeing—have we seen secrecy as it relates to the way that these dollars were spent, but we've seen the same pattern of a lack of transparency and secrecy in a number of other instances. I can think of two right off the top of my head.

One was when the federal government sent \$40 million to support improvements to efficiency, home efficiency, for Manitobans to help them save some dollars and to reduce their energy bills, and we know that that \$40 million was sent to the Province of Manitoba and mysteriously went into a black box.

It was supposed to go towards adding to the programs that were offered by—in our case, Efficiency Manitoba, to help Manitobans, again, save money and to improve efficiencies in their home by supporting home retrofits. But, instead, those dollars were never spent in that way. They disappeared into a black box. Again, as with many things, we asked the government about those dollars, the way that they were spent.

We asked for some record about—records to prove that they spent them in a way that the federal government had expected them to spend those dollars.

And, unfortunately, they weren't able to provide that, and that's because they know that the government didn't use those dollars as they were supposed to. They did what they often do, and they shroud everything in secrecy, and they absorb those dollars, and, again, just did what they've always done, which is continue to make cuts to programs across the province.

Another example off the top of my head: everyone in this House will remember that the federal government sent approximately \$85 million to Manitoba to support the improvement of safety in our schools throughout COVID—to make our schools safer, to improve ventilation, \$85 million that was supposed to go towards supporting the improvement of safety in our schools.

Unfortunately, again, this is another example where this government was in receipt of a significant amount of funds, and Manitobans unfortunately have no clarity as to how those funds were spent. We certainly know that they were not spent in improving safety in our schools. We haven't seen any evidence of that. We haven't seen this government speak to any of those investments or given—give us any evidence to suggest that they have made those investments.

And so, again, yet another example of dollars coming to the province and then disappearing in a black box and then no accountability on the part of

this government as to what they've done with those funds.

So, there's a pattern here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pattern of collecting funds for a specific purpose and then misusing those funds in secret, behind the curtain where Manitobans, unfortunately, have no visibility. That's what they've come to expect when it comes to this PC government, this concerning pattern.

And, look, that's what Manitobans have ultimately become accustomed to. It's very sad to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when we're out in communities and we speak with people, that's what we hear from people. They have become trained to think that this government will do things in secret, that they're behaving in a way that's non-transparent. And that's where Manitobans are at.

And, ultimately, Manitobans deserve a lot of better. They deserve to be able to know that they can trust in their government. They deserve to have a government that they can believe in and that they know will do what they say they're going to do, and that they know when they make an announcement will actually follow through on an announcement, or they know when they collect funds for a specific purpose that they'll actually use those funds for that purpose. And, if not, they'll pivot and maybe make a better decision.

So today, you know, I—we know the government is trying to position this as a gift to those in the cannabis sector. The reality is those in this sector have been burdened with this fee for many years that, apparently, was not being used at all for the purposes for which it was intended.

Lack of transparency. No ability to trust this government. That's a shame.

This takes us steps in the right direction. Unfortunately, this bill is being brought forward under a pall of a huge lack of trust and confidence in this government.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to offer words here.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few comments on this bill, which removes the social responsibility fee from cannabis—from the sale of cannabis.

Now, a number of years ago, quite a number of years ago, the government introduced the social responsibility fee on cannabis sales, and this was at the time that cannabis sales were legalized in Canada. The social responsibility fee, as we were told at the



time, was put on the sale of cannabis in order to have dollars to address the expected widespread social problems that the Conservative government expected to be rampant when cannabis was legalized.

In fact, as the minister indicated in his comments today, he acknowledged that the government didn't really know what it was doing. Further, following the introduction of cannabis, there wasn't the widespread social disruption that the government had initially expected. And so, over time, the small businesses who were selling cannabis saw that there wasn't the widespread social disruption that the government, in its approach, had expected. And, of course, they began to question what the government is doing in collecting this money.

It was seen, increasingly, as a tax. There was no evidence that the government was using the money to address social issues as they had promised. In fact, as—we have seen in the last few years that many of the social issues in Manitoba have got worse and not better. And certainly, where we are now, the small businesses—and I think rightly so—see this law as an attack on the small businesses and there's clearly a conflict between this government and legitimate Manitoba businesses.

\* (15:20)

And the government was sending this message: we just want to collect money from you. We're not going to tell you where we're going to spend it on. We're not telling you that this is a legitimate addressing social responsibility as we—as the government had tried to claim.

And so, here we are today, and the government is confessing that it made a mistake in putting this fee on in the first place and is now taking it away, and so we will watch with interest. We're going to support this legislation because the government still hasn't provided any evidence that the money is going to address these social issues that they said that it was going to address.

Indeed, although there are plenty of social issues in Manitoba, they don't seem to have dramatically increased with cannabis, although some of them have increased because we don't have a government which knows what it's doing in a number of areas, including addressing and helping—trying to help those who are experiencing homelessness, as an example.

The government, instead of trying to help people as soon as they become homeless, is only spending money

to address the situation once they are chronically homeless for at least six months. And this is an odd way to go, but it means that we've got a lot of people who are homeless for quite some time in Manitoba.

In any event, enough said about this bill. We're going to support it and we look forward to it moving forward. We look forward to comments that may be said at the committee stage, and we'll move on and I expect move on to the next bill shortly.

Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 10, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (Social Responsibility Fee Repealed).

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Bill 23—The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** As previously announced, we will now move to Bill 23, The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act.

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 23, The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les personnes vulnérables ayant une déficience mentale, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

**Motion presented.**

**Ms. Squires:** Bill 23 addresses several recommendations made by the Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Task Force. The task force was appointed in September of 2020 by the minister of Families to review policies and practices related to services for adults living with intellectual disabilities in Manitoba.

The undertaking of such a serious task was accomplished, thanks to the dedication, efforts and expertise of a nine-member team of community experts who researched, studied and consulted widely on significant issues affecting adults living with an intellectual disability.

In December of '21, a final report titled Pathways to Dignity: Rights, Safeguards, Planning and Decision Making was released alongside a series of recommendations and a two-year implementation plan. Several aspects of the task force recommendations touched on legislation. The proposed amendments before you are a reflection of changes to the act that were recommended by these community experts.

The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act came into force in 1996 as a way to meet the needs of a distinct population of adults living with an intellectual disability who were previously covered by the Manitoba Mental Health Act.

At that time, the act brought in a regime that was considered progressive for its time and is still, in some respects, unique across Canada. Despite the act's focus on best practices, it has not been updated in the past 26 years. Elements of the act are out of date and we recognize that the government must evolve as the understanding of disability changes.

The amendments recognize that adults living with an intellectual disability are people first, and are entitled to the same rights as all other adults. This is reflected in two new principles at the beginning of the act. New references to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms have been added to the act, and will play a strong role in aligning our legislation with international standards.

Bill 23 also introduces a people-first statement that ensures an adult's wishes, values and beliefs will guide all forms of decision making relevant to their well-being. Whether these decisions are made independently or with assistance from others, we recognize that an adult's right to be treated the same as any other adult should always be the primary focus.

We heard from the task force that some of the language within the act is outdated, and that some terms, such as vulnerable persons and mental disability, hold negative connotations for the disability community. The proposed amendments will modernize the act's language to address these concerns, including the new titles for the Vulnerable Persons' Commissioner and the act itself, which will now be referred to as adults living with an intellectual disability act.

A major component of the task force recommendations concern the protection for adults living with intellectual disabilities. The act determines how we define abuse and neglect, and sets out procedures for mandatory reporting, investigation and emergency

intervention. In order to clarify and expand on these protections, certain aspects of the act's protection mandate have been updated to best-reflect best practices in other jurisdictions.

New definitions of abuse and neglect, modelled after Nova Scotia's protection of persons in care act, will acknowledge concerns from the task force that the act creates an overly strict test to prove that an adult has been abused. Under the current definition, for example, a slap across the face would not meet the legal threshold, since it does not lead to serious or lasting physical consequences. The new definition reduces the threshold from serious harm to harm, so instances such as these are now captured. The department will be able to proceed with more cases, and include those previously considered as unsubstantiated or inconclusive.

Bill 23 also includes consequential amendments to definitions of abuse and neglect in the protection of persons in care act, as both acts contain protection mandates and refer cases to the adult registry—Adult Abuse Registry Committee. After consulting with the Department of Health, we felt that these amendments were necessary to ensure consistent reporting across departments, and that all adults receive equal treatment regardless of capacity or setting.

We also heard from the task force about a lack of information on what happens during and upon conclusion of an investigation. The task force noted that victims and their families are often left without important details or follow-up regarding their cases, and so this act addresses that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to present this bill for the House's consideration.

### Questions

**Mr. Deputy 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.

The floor is open for questions.

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Could the minister tell us what else her department and herself have heard from disability advocates on how to promote

acceptance in respect of disability, and really move towards ending ableism?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** That is a really good question, and I think ending all forms of discrimination is certainly something that everybody on the task force and in the department are working towards addressing.

And I—we do believe that updating the language to be more reflective of the community's wishes goes a long way. We also believe that including language from the declaration—the United Nations declaration on people with—living with an intellectual disability—be reflected as well as moving to ensure a better substitute and assisted decision-making efforts and initiatives are in place, so that people can fully realize their potential in Manitoba.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask the minister: This is an act which covers people—persons with a mental disability; would it cover people who have a learning disability?

\* (15:30)

**Ms. Squires:** So, it is specifically for people living with an intellectual disability and the definition of an intellectual disability.

But certainly, this act provides protocols and the threshold for investigations by the departmental branch whenever there is an abuse that would occur against a person living with a disability in the province of Manitoba and certainly does provide a framework for all individuals in Manitoba to achieve their highest destiny regardless—or irrespective of a disability.

**MLA Fontaine:** Could the minister share with the House whether or not Manitobans with disabilities were consulted on in respect to Bill 23, and overall, what was the consensus whether or not that they were supportive of the changes in the bill, and did they have any other additional recommendations?

**Ms. Squires:** Indeed, there were several consultations that had occurred with families and self advocates from the Family Advocacy Network, Community Living Manitoba, Continuity Care, Inclusion Winnipeg, Winnipegosis and District Residential Support Services, Community Venture, Life's Journey, epic smile St. Malo, Westman Parkland Network and Abilities Manitoba.

They were all supportive of these proposed amendments and we will be following up with these groups when we develop the related regulations and policies for this bill.

And there are also other measures that will be taken to address the comprehensive task force report that we've received earlier last year.

**Mr. Gerrard:** So, it's clear that, from the minister's statement, that most people with a learning disability, at least who don't have an IQ below—what is the 'i-cloo' level that is considered under this act? Is it 70 or 75 or 80? Because we've heard a lot of different conditions.

And why is the minister specifically excluding people with learning disabilities? Because these are clearly brain disabilities, and some people would classify them as mental disabilities.

**Ms. Squires:** So, this—we are not looking to expand the eligibility criteria for CLDS programming. That is not what this legislation is attempting to do. And we recognize that there are broader questions that need to be asked and answered in regards to who the act should serve.

And we recognize that that would involve a comprehensive analysis and consultation, which we will certainly be endeavouring to do, but in this specific bill, that is not covered and that is not what we'd consulted on, and that was not what the task force had recommended at this particular juncture.

**MLA Fontaine:** Could the minister share with the House what else she heard from disability advocates about how to promote acceptance of disability and ableism? So, by that I mean, like, what other recommendations have come forward in respect to that?

**Ms. Squires:** So, there are numerous things that we can all work towards to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to achieve their full destiny in Manitoba.

We heard very loud and clear that everybody who is living with a disability wanted to see the CLDS sector fortified. And that is why we enhanced those wages to \$19 effective on April 1st of this year, a significant increase in the CLDS budget for enhancing and stabilizing that sector.

We also know that there was a need for ongoing funding for businesses and municipalities and others to apply to so that they can receive funding to make sure that their place of business, their websites, their physical—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** In the—this act, it's my understanding that the mental disability, so-called or defined, has to

be manifested before the age of 18 years. And so it's leaving out people who are identified after 18 years, and in my experience, that the government is interpreting this as diagnosed before 18 years. Because I've had examples of people who were over 18 but had a history of having the mental disability before 18—

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

**Ms. Squires:** So, I do want to remind the member that this bill is specific about modernizing the act when it comes to the language that we use when talking about people with disabilities, as well as providing more tools to deal with allegations of abuse.

Under the former act, something that would be, like, for example, a slap that would not cause serious harm, did not meet the threshold to be investigated by the Department of Families' protection unit.

And also, under the former act, caregivers and the person with a disability themselves were not able to get information about an ongoing investigation. We thought that that was—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** There are some positive things in this bill, that I'm really astounded that the government has left so much unattended to.

I brought up earlier today the fact that the government is currently not concerned about people with learning disabilities. And, in fact, this is proof positive, because the government has completely omitted people with learning disabilities who don't have a low IQ, and that is the majority of people with learning disabilities.

I ask: How could the government have not paid any attention to people with learning disabilities?

**Ms. Squires:** You know, I ask the member how he can politicize such an important bill and put such comments that he just made on the record.

This bill was a direct response to the 18 recommendations that were put forward by the vulnerable persons task force, nine of which are being fully addressed through these proposed amendments; six were addressed through changes to the CLDS policy; and two will be addressed in an upcoming legislative proposal.

Now, I wish that this member opposite really put his money where his mouth is and voted in favour of the many substantive changes that we've brought forward as a government, including increases in budget

to enhance people's lives who are living with disabilities in the province of Manitoba. If he—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** The—you know, we don't have a problem with what's in the bill; we'll support it. But what we are very concerned about is the government is leaving out so much that needs to be addressed.

And as I have, you know, illustrated in numerous petitions and in questions and in various other ways, there is a significant problem in the way that this government is failing to address people with learning disabilities, with dyslexia, with dysgraphia, with a nonverbal learning disability, with dyscalculia and so on, and—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

**Ms. Squires:** The member opposite talks about a failure. Let me you about a failure.

This government put forward a pilot project to support adolescent kids with high intellectual and developmental disabilities—a pilot project so that they could receive those services and not have to go into CFS care to receive those enhanced respite services. It was an \$8-million pilot project.

And what did that member do? He voted against it. He voted against getting supports for children with disabilities. Shame on him.

**Mr. Gerrard:** All right, let's be clear: I voted against the budget. It didn't mean that I don't agree with every tiny item in the budget.

This is—*[interjection]* Yes, and it was so small that some people who tried to apply quickly were—it was already totally used up. I mean, it really is a problem when this government can't get their act together when they're dealing with people with learning disabilities, with executive function disabilities.

You know, it's a real problem. This government just can't do what needs to be done.

Why is this government falling so far short?  
*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

\* (15:40)

**Ms. Squires:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the member for River Heights to stand up and say that an \$8-million commitment to helping children and adolescents with extreme developmental and intellectual disabilities,

an \$8-million pilot to support those families is a small, inconsequential item, is shameful.

And I would like to get—ask him to get up and apologize for putting those reprehensible comments on the record, and I'd like him to apologize to those families who are being supported by that \$8-million bridge program pilot.

**Mr. Gerrard:** When we're talking about \$8 million in an eight—more than \$8-billion budget—\$16-billion budget, it's small, it's not inconsequential; that's a different word. Let's put it—let's make it clear.

But there is a big problem if this government is not doing its job when it comes to helping people with learning disabilities, and we have a bill here which, sadly, although it has some good, positive things in it, is not addressing some of the major issues that we're facing in Manitoba today with children with learning disabilities; they're not being properly screened.

When will the government, if it's interested in—

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

**Ms. Squires:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put on the record that our government will always stand up for people with disabilities.

We enhanced our budget this year—\$640 million in the budget this year alone—to supporting families and individuals with disabilities. We also included \$104-million-item increase to stabilize the sector for enhancing people who are living in community with disabilities.

These are not inconsequential initiatives; these are substantive changes that our government has made in the funding for people with disabilities and the programming that people with disabilities can receive.

What did the member do when it came time to—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I'm going to ask the minister—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —when is she going to do something that's going to make a difference for all the kids in Manitoba with learning disabilities? When is the minister going to take the broader view that's necessary when we're looking at children and adults with disabilities?

**Ms. Squires:** Of course our government is taking a broader view. That is why we did come—have the

\$8-million bridge pilot program that we had implemented over a year and a half ago. That is why we formed the task force on these issues, and the report, the 18 recommendations that they had reported back to us are being implemented.

That is why we have grown the Families budget by 25 per cent since we took office. And the member opposite has continuously voted against a 25 per cent increase in the budget for social initiatives and for supporting people with disabilities.

I say—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The minister's time has expired.

And the time for questions has expired.

### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The floor is open for debate. *[interjection]* Order.

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I'm just going to put a couple of words on the record in respect to Bill 23.

However, and I don't do this very often, but I will back up the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in respect of some of the concerns that he's raising with children with learning disabilities.

I want to remind Manitobans and, certainly, members opposite that it was under Brian Pallister that this government and each and every one of those members, save for maybe a couple, actually celebrated and supported cutting supports in school for children with learning disabilities. And I think that that's really important to put on the record today, that that is actually the legacy of this government in the work that they've done for children with learning disabilities.

In respect of this particular bill, I think it is really important that—and I think it's reflected in the bill—that as we learn more about using inclusive language and terminology that is disrespectful and disparaging and socially constructs Manitobans with disabilities as less than and contributes to ableism, when we learn that we can do better. And I would suggest that this is what this bill is aiming to do, and I fully support that.

I have said many, many times that there is power in the language that we use. The discourse and the language that we use informs the way that we see and feel and experience the—in the world. And so, I think that this is a good bill in that sense, that we're going to be changing language, and on this side of the House we will certainly support that.

I think it's important to put on the record in respect of Manitobans with disabilities will often face higher rates of abuse than Manitobans with no—that are not disabled. And I want to put on the record here that women with disabilities experience higher rates of intimate partner violence than non-disabled women. And that's from—a statistic from 2018.

As well, in 2014, it showed that women with disabilities were twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime than non-disabled women. The report also found that women with disabilities were nearly twice as likely as women without disabilities to have been sexually assaulted in the last 12 months, and women with disabilities were also more likely to have been victimized multiple times.

And then, as well, that abuse against Manitobans with disabilities can take many forms, and does not always result in physical harm. So, expanding the definitions of abuse and neglect is an important part of recognizing the prevalence of all forms of abuse, and certainly fighting and working to end it here in Manitoba.

Again, I also—this bill looks at the term vulnerable, and how we have shifted away from that language as well. It—the terminology vulnerable portrays persons with disabilities as being produced by external circumstances and is not innate or intrinsic to the person themselves. So, moreover, everyone can be vulnerable in a given situation or over a period of time.

So, to that end, some persons with disabilities may be more vulnerable than the rest of the Manitoban—Manitoba in certain times, such as gender-based violence, but less vulnerable to others, such as identity theft. And because there—the lack of—there is a lack of societal supports and systemic ableism that makes persons with disabilities vulnerable when the specific barriers and circumstances causing vulnerability are addressed, they are no longer vulnerable.

So, we know that the United Nations has put forward the disability inclusive language guidelines as part of their efforts to implement the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, which was launched in 2019. And the United Nations suggested as general principles to use people-first language.

And some examples of that is that people-first language is the most widely accepted language for referring to persons with disabilities. People-first language emphasizes the person, not the disability, by placing a reference to the person or group before the reference to disability. For example, Deputy Speaker,

we can use expressions such as children with dyslexia, women with intellectual disabilities and, of course, persons with disabilities.

However, the person-first rule does not necessarily apply to all types of disabilities. So, if in doubt, you should ask the person or group how they choose to identify. Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group, and they may self-identify in a variety of different ways. These identities should be respected and recognized.

\* (15:50)

And then, I think something that is very important, and there's been a lot of movement in the last many years, is, you know, avoiding labels and stereotypes and, as well, do—not using condescending euphemisms. And I think that that's really important because I do note that there has been a couple of incidents over the last many years, and including myself in a tweet that I had said, and somebody actually corrected me and I apologized and promised to do better in respect of that.

And that is really the bare minimum that we can do in steps to ending ableism, is to be very self-conscious—or to be very conscious of the language that we use and to not use these condescending euphemisms.

So, I'm not going to repeat any of them in this House, but I think it is incumbent on each and every one of us to ensure that we're reaching out to folks if we don't know if a certain thing is okay to say or if we shouldn't be saying it, and to get that information from folks with disabilities, who are more than willing and able to share those teachings and that knowledge and that information.

So, to that end, Deputy Speaker, I—we will, on this side of the House, be supporting Bill 23.

Miigwech.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by thanking those members of the Family Advocacy Network and others who put a lot of effort into providing a report and to providing comment and ideas, in terms of this bill.

It is a step forward in many respects, even though I have been and continue to be critical about it omitting so many children with learning disabilities. At least the change to—of the title to vulnerable persons living with a—the adults living with an intellectual disability act is more consistent with the population that we're dealing with; that is, those with an intellectual disability.

I'm curious as to why the children are not included but, be that as it may, the effort that has been made to help individuals with 'intellectual' disability must be acknowledged and must be supported; and individuals who are involved must be thanked for their effort.

I believe one of the major problems was that the government started with a narrower mandate than they should have because they have completely omitted recognition of the importance of the individuals with learning disabilities, which is, in fact, one of the most common disabilities. And so, it is sad that there has not been the attention to individuals with learning disabilities who have an IQ above 70 or 75 or 80, depending on who's assessing it, it appears.

So, I look forward and we look forward, as Liberals, to this bill moving forward, but we are noting that there is a large amount of work that has not been done in the last two decades dealing with and helping children and adults with learning disabilities. I have advocated for those with learning disabilities on many occasions, including many occasions in this Chamber, and I have noted, as the minister has acknowledged, the importance of addressing individuals who have learning disabilities who are adults and providing a way for helping them.

Interestingly, the government in Newfoundland and Labrador has decided that is it not a strict IQ-based criteria that should be used, but that it should be based on what the needs of individuals actually are. And that would certainly be a recognition which is long overdue.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

When I have been helping individuals who have had learning disabilities and—what is interesting is that they may be very low on some aspects of the IQ test and very high on other aspects of it; and it's generally agreed that when you get this kind of variation, that you really shouldn't be relying on IQ and the IQ test as the determining factor. Because, as indeed some of the reports that I have seen for such individuals, they say, well, you have a caution here that you should be very careful about applying the mean IQ determined in this way as a single number to a person in this circumstance.

I have been helping an individual who has an executive-function disability, who in many respects has done—and is an incredible individual with amazing talents—but he's not able to—doesn't have the adaptive functioning to be able to do well as an adult without some help. And it may be that, over time, he can learn

that and do very well, but at this point, he's certainly struggling and, without help, could very easily end up homeless.

I refer members of this Chamber to a study that was done by Linda Siegel of individuals who are experiencing homelessness in Toronto. And what she found was that 83 per cent had some sort of a learning disability. And the point that she made is that they were homeless—experiencing homelessness—not because they were raised in a home that was poor, not because of the many other things that could explain this, but they were there because they had a learning disability and that they had not been adequately helped.

We clearly need to make major changes in this province to help those with learning disabilities who are falling through the cracks. I spoke earlier today in—to recognize the work that Twila Richards has done in advocating for those with learning disabilities. She has lived experience in this respect; she has a child with a learning disability and another child with autism. And it has been a struggle: a struggle to get a proper diagnosis, a struggle to get assessed by a school psychologist in the school, a struggle even when there was a diagnosis, to get the help that is needed.

And there are certainly reams of work and good studies that have been done showing the kind of teaching, the kind of help that is necessary for a child with a—dyslexia, as an example—and I am told that in too many places in Manitoba that the schools are not really providing the kind of help that these kids really need. There are considerable variations from school division to school division, with some school divisions doing pretty well and quite a number of school divisions not doing the job that's needed in screening and in making the diagnosis, and in helping these kids to succeed.

What is remarkable is how well kids with dyslexia can do—kids with learning disabilities. Winston Churchill had dyscalculia, and he certainly did pretty well. Picasso had a learning disability. And—go on and on, and Malcolm Gladwell talks about the many entrepreneurs who have dyslexia, and how well people with dyslexia can do, if given half a chance.

\* (16:00)

It's time for us as Manitobans to give people with—children and adults with dyslexia half a chance, so that they can do well and be important contributors to our

society. It's time that we made that shift from where we are now.

So, with those comments, we look forward to this going to committee stage, and we look forward to the next steps for this legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci. Miigwech.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 23, The Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

### **Bill 26—The Limitations Amendment and Public Officers Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** I will now call second reading of Bill 26, The Limitations Amendment and Public Officers Amendment Act.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), that Bill 26, The Limitations Amendment and Public Officers Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Goertzen:** The Limitations Act received royal assent on May 20th, 2021, and came into force on September 30th, 2022. The act replaced the existing Limitation of Actions Act, and modernized the law pertaining to the limitations of actions in Manitoba.

Members, I'm sure, will recall that the new act brought Manitoba in line with other provinces' legislation on limitation periods and was informed by recommendations made by the Manitoba Law Reform Commission, an entity we spoke about this morning during private members' business.

Among other changes, the new act replaced a range of different limitation periods with a uniform two-year limitation period for most claims, making it more understandable and uniform. Importantly, this general two-year limitation period under the act begins to run from the day the claim is discovered, not when the cause of action arose, as was the case for most claims under the old act.

The amendments in this bill serve to enhance and clarify the legislation. These amendments address two issues that I'm pleased to provide a brief explanation regarding.

Claims against public officers are governed by The Public Officers Act. Currently, this includes a two-year limitation period that commences when the event giving rise to the claim occurs, not when the individual is—comes into knowledge of the event.

Under the former limitations regime, a court had a limited ability to extend this limitation period where the claimant was delayed in discovering material facts about their claim. This bill repeals the limitation period in The Public Officers Act, and brings these claims under the new Limitations Act, where they will be subject to the general two-year limitation period that commences from the date the claim is discovered.

This creates further uniformity and consistency among the law of limitations in Manitoba and responds to recent judicial comments concerning the need to modernize this particular limitation period.

This bill includes transitional provisions that are intended to ensure that no potential claimants under The Public Officers Act are prejudiced by the transition to the new regime. Excuse me.

The amendments provide potential claimants an extension period to file a claim that is equal to the balance of the 12-month period that they lost, if any, when the section 14 of the former act was repealed.

For consistency, these transitional provisions are also extended to 14 other acts that contain similar statute-specific and strict limitation periods that were previously repealed by The Limitations Act.

Another clarification is provided about the effect of the transition to the new legal regime of previously issued judgment orders for the payment of money. Under the 'forement' act—former act, claims to enforce a judgment were subject to a 10-year limitation period. Under the new Limitations Act, judgments are no longer subject to any limitation period.

The amendments in this bill are intended to clarify that judgments that remain enforceable on September 30th, 2022, are no longer subject to a limitation period. They will be treated in a manner 'consistense' with how judgments issued after the coming into force of The Limitations Act are treated.

I now conclude my comments and look forward to speedy passage of this bill at second reading.

### **Questions**

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions will be addressed to the minister by the official opposition critic and an



independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic and the next question by the independent member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Madam Speaker, who was consulted on this bill and do they support the changes that it makes?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** As indicated in my comments, this was recommended through judicial rulings and I imagine that the judges who ruled such would support it.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Can the minister explain what types of specified claims would benefit from an extended period of limitations under this act?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Those individuals who are public officers who might have a claim made against them, this changes the limitation period such that the individual who's making the claim has two years from the time of the incident of which they want to make a claim about, when they become aware of the incident, not when it happened, because sometimes people don't know of it until some time later.

So, it makes a general two-year limitation period from the time a person becomes aware of it.

**Mr. Wiebe:** We know that the PC government here failed to consult with First Nations for Bill 51, The Limitations Act.

Did it consult with First Nations communities with regards to Bill 26?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Again, this is filling a gap that exists because it didn't include from the previous bill public officers or limitations against public officers.

There was judicial comment made about it, and we are following that advice.

**Mr. Wiebe:** So, did the government consult with First Nations with regards to Bill 26?

**Mr. Goertzen:** As I've indicated, it is filling a gap that existed from the previous amendment and there was judicial advice that was given. If the member has a problem with following judicial rulings, he could put that on the record.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, in 2021, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs raised serious concerns about how The Limitations Act would affect claims made by Indigenous peoples regarding historical abuse.

So, again, the question for the minister is: Did he consult with First Nation communities with regards to Bill 26?

**Mr. Goertzen:** This bill fills gaps that exist because it didn't include actions against public officers. This follows judicial advice that was provided.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, this is concerning, Mr.—or, Madam Speaker. As we know, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs raised serious concerns about this back in 2021, and I'm not hearing from the minister that there's been any consultation.

Will the changes in this bill address the concerns of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I take the point that the member does not believe in following judicial rulings and I would note that for future comments.

**Mr. Wiebe:** So, I mean, what I'm hearing from the minister is he wasn't willing to consult with First Nations; he wasn't willing to address these issues.

Is the government considering further amendments or other measures that would address those concerns?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm hearing from the member that he doesn't believe in following judicial rulings. I wonder if he wants to get rid of the judiciary.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Was there any consultation, any conversation whatsoever with the Manitoba chiefs? Was he aware of the concerns that they had and that they raised in 2021?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I answered that previously.

**Mr. Wiebe:** I must have missed the minister answering my question, unless his answer is that there were no consultations.

Can I confirm with the minister that there were no consultations with First Nations with regards to Bill 26?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I answered it five times previously; he may wish to consult with Hansard when it's published.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Can the minister clarify if environmental cases are subject to these limitations?

**Mr. Goertzen:** This is specific to The Public Officers Act, amendments under that.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Sorry, I couldn't hear the minister, if he could repeat it?

**Mr. Goertzen:** These are amendments to The Public Officers Act.

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Wiebe:** Okay so, I'll ask again: Can the minister clarify if environmental cases are subject to the limitations?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Perhaps he wants to give a specific example so that we can provide that advice.

**Mr. Wiebe:** I think the question is quite clear. I'm asking if environmental cases are subject to this—to the limitations as outlined in Bill 26.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Environmental case is a pretty broad breadth. Perhaps he wants to provide an example.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Once again, you know, this is quite a precedent for a minister to come before the House at second reading, not have the information in front of him. I think the—Manitobans would certainly be, you know, quite interested to know that the minister doesn't have his information.

Will he at least commit to be bringing some of these answers to committee so that the public can hear what this minister has to say with regards to the questions that are asked?

**Mr. Goertzen:** He actually has to pose the question.

I've already indicated to him, if he wants to give an example of a particular type of environmental case, we can provide that information. If he doesn't want to ask the question, then he can't provide—be provided an answer.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, this is embarrassing, Madam Speaker. I'm assuming that the minister is saying that he's not going to bring this information forward at committee.

It's a simple—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —answer—it's a simple way that he could possibly give some Manitobans some kind of confidence that he knows what he's doing with regards to this and that he doesn't actually just want to sweep these issues under the rug.

So I'll ask once again: Can the minister clarify if environmental cases are subject to the limitations as outlined in this bill?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I have no idea why the member doesn't want to provide an example. Maybe he didn't come prepared with one.

If he hasn't come prepared with one, he can come to committee and prepare properly for committee.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I mean, this is a—you know, usually the minister's—you know, maybe I'm being generous here—but quite reasonable and someone who I think, you know, Manitobans would expect would be prepared and come to this debate with some information.

So, I'll—just for this—to the record, I'm going to say once again. Did he—I'd like an answer at committee, if he could bring, on these two questions: Did he consult with First Nations communities with regards to Bill 26, and can he clarify if environmental cases would be subject to these limitations?

**Mr. Goertzen:** If he provides an example at committee, I'm happy to provide an answer for him.

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further questions?

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** If not, debate is open.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** You know, I think we had—in the minister's opening statements, I heard him say, you know, he was looking forward to swift passage of this bill. And certainly, that's the posture with which we came to these—this debate, to see this bill move forward and to have it come to committee. And I do hope that we have some further discussion there.

My concern here is that the questions that I asked, I didn't expect that they were controversial, that they would be difficult for the minister to grasp or to be able to answer. These are pretty straightforward questions; these are pretty straightforward items that we had asked the minister to undertake getting an answer to.

I guess what happened here, Madam Speaker, is that the minister got his back up when we asked about how this would impact First Nations communities.

And, again, while we're happy to move this bill forward and we were excited to actually get this moving along here this afternoon—I know there's a Jets game on later, and many members want to make sure that we're out there—what I'm concerned about now is that because the consultation hasn't been done, because the minister isn't being forthright about the information that we're asking for, not even just committing to bringing that forward to the public hearing so that Manitobans can hear for—it—he doesn't have to answer me in this House. He certainly hasn't ever done it before, so why would he start now? But maybe he could come to committee and maybe he could actually answer questions there.

And giving him that opportunity—you know, it's very simple for the minister to just say, well, I don't have that in front of me; I will go back; I'll consult with real lawyers to find out exactly how this will impact. You know, I think there would certainly be a way that the minister could do that, but he certainly didn't do that here today.

So, I'm shocked and, you know, I guess after the performance of other ministers here in this place, you know, yesterday sort of moving through the bill debate and wondering, you know, how we're going to get everybody in place to make that happen and wondering where people are.

You know, that's, I think, a good example of where this government is at. They're tired; they're out of gas; and they have no grasp on what Manitobans are really asking for.

So, it's very concerning to hear that with regards to Bill 26 and—The Limitations Amendment and Public Officers Amendment Act. We do think that this bill is a good act and a good bill in order to allow Manitobans to give access to the justice system for all Manitobans.

Limitation periods create a maximum length of time that can be brought forward against somebody. It's important that enough time, of course, is allowed for a claim to be brought forward, especially when the effects may not be noticed for some time. It's also critical that consultation is done to ensure limitation periods are not preventing legitimate claims from being brought forward.

We've all heard stories; we've all seen situations in news coverage, or heard anecdotally, where a victim comes forward years or even decades after being abused, disclosing what's happened, and then wanting to start a claim. Sometimes criminal charges are laid; sometimes civil claims are filed, and sometimes both actions are needed and do occur.

People often ask if there is a limitations period that would apply in these cases and, you know, wonder why the victims are then entitled to bring forward and proceed so long after the alleged abuse took place.

We know that in the United States, for instance, there is a statute of limitations on criminal proceedings, but in Canada there is no such thing. This means that serious criminal charges can be investigated anytime after the crime occurs. Anyone can contact the police in Canada to report a crime that took place,

even if it is years ago. The police can investigate such crimes and lay charges if the perpetrator is still living.

In simplest terms, a limitation period sets out a time limit as to when legal proceedings can be 'commended' by filing a claim. It defines the time in which an aggravated person can initiate a claim arising from any injury, loss or damage that occurred as a result of the act or omission. Limitation periods do apply in Canada to civil suits. Each province has its own rules, but the rules are similar across the country.

So, as I said, I—we came to this debate really in a spirit of bipartisanship and not expecting any kind of fireworks here this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker—sorry—Madam Speaker. But, what we've in fact seen is, is a minister who refuses to answer various basic questions about how this will impact environmental cases and how it will impact First Nations communities.

And I would expect—I would imagine that most Manitobans would think that important concerns being brought forward by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs back in 2021 would be something that, if the minister didn't—wasn't able to capture that in this bill, in Bill 26, that he, at the very least, would give some assurances that he's aware of the problem, that he's done the consultations and that it is something that is, you know, his department would like to bring forward in the future.

But we haven't heard that here once again, Madam Speaker. It's concerning. Maybe—again, I'm being way too optimistic again about this minister and about this government—but there is a chance at committee; I do hope that that information would be shared there.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Happy to rise and just put a few words on record this afternoon.

The new limitations amendment act allows claimants to start a claim two years after discovery, rather than at the occurrence of the event. This act is fairly straightforward. I think it is a positive change and it brings Manitoba up to speed with respect to other provinces, Madam Speaker. It is also very important, though, that all members of the House are aware of who was consulted in the process of this legislation.

Madam Speaker, it allows for individuals to have time to be on their sides more and not to be forced to make decisions about disclosure so quickly after an incident may occur. This is extremely important. Everyone processes experiences differently. Some are

able to talk about an experience immediately—this might even be a form of coping—while others may need some time to process or cope in other ways before being able to talk about certain things.

And, Madam Speaker, this legislation creates more respect towards this process. We know that many people do not wish to revisit traumatic incidents in the past, or perhaps might feel unsafe or uncomfortable to speak about incidents of the past. And that often—triggering events can occur much later on in a person's life. And again, that's why this expansion of time to be able to bring a claim forward is very important.

This is also a very good reason as to why we need to work on regulating therapy here in the province of Manitoba, Madam Speaker. And whenever I have the opportunity, I do like to raise this idea: the importance of regulating therapy, not only to make sure that all Manitobans have access to it and that it's affordable, but it would also ensure that those who are practicing and providing therapeutic services to individuals in the province are properly trained to do so for incidents such as these.

\* (16:20)

I do appreciate the opportunity to share a few words, and I look forward to this bill going to committee.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 26, The Limitations Amendment and Public Officers Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

#### **Bill 29—The Life Leases Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** I will now call second reading of Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act.

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I move, seconded by the honourable Minister for Families, that Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les baux viagers, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Teitsma:** I'm honoured to present this bill today. It will address recommendations from stakeholders, as well as advance some more efficient and effective

ways to administer The Life Leases Act and life lease regulation.

This bill will ensure the tenants' interests in a rental unit during a change in ownership by increasing a new owner's obligations as a landlord of a life lease complex. Specifically, the amendment will ensure that a new owner, due to mortgage sale tax, sale or foreclosure, is responsible to refund the life lease tenants their entrance fees if the existing life lease tenancy is terminated.

This bill will also require landlords to conduct regular reserve fund studies to ensure that a reserve fund can maintain and replace assets of the complex at all times. Furthermore, this bill will also add requirements surrounding the preparation of audited—annual audited financial statements so that they are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Madam Speaker, our government is proposing these changes so they align with the priorities of improving consumer protection, addressing stakeholder feedback and promoting greater understanding and transparency.

I look forward to a brief debate and moving this legislation along to committee.

Thank you.

#### **Questions**

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions will be addressed to the minister by the official opposition critic and an independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic and the subsequent question asked by an independent member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** I would like to ask the minister: How many Manitobans are currently part of the life lease agreement?

**Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I thank the member for the question and will also compliment the member on his choice of clothing. Go, Jets, go. I'm glad he took your instructions so quickly to heart and showed up in this Chamber already with a Whiteout jersey on.

But, in any case, difficult question to answer because life—these organizations are not necessarily required to register or to say how many members they

have, but I think it's safe to say that there's at least several hundred and possibly over 1,000 people in these situations.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Could the minister just describe a recent situation to which this act may have been applicable?

**Mr. Teitsma:** I cannot.

So, the members that were—the matters that were brought forward to me and, I think, to the minister prior to me was by the life lease association. I guess they came forward with some suggestions.

We also met with some other stakeholders in terms of the landlords, I guess, and the property managers as well, to understand some of the interactions that were there.

I'm not aware of a specific case that this may apply to—perhaps the member is—but in any case, the recommendations that we're putting forward, we think, are common sense. They certainly, I think, will help on a go-forward basis and ensure the tenants' rights are protected and that tenants have access to the access to the information they need.

**Mr. Sandhu:** Maybe can the minister provide some information—probably some people don't know what is the difference between life lease and the condos.

Can he provide the information to the House?

**Mr. Teitsma:** I thank the member.

Yes, it's interesting that the member would ask, what's the difference between a life lease and a condo when, actually, life leases are more similar to rental units than they are to condos.

So, a condo is owned by the individual who lives there, typically, right? So they're purchasing the condo; they have ownership rights and they have ownership obligations.

With a life lease, that ownership capacity is not there. They're essentially giving a deposit to a landlord. That landlord is using that deposit to, you know, reduce the amount of rent that they have to charge and to help fund the cost of the building. Often, it's done by non-profits and it can be quite an effective living situation.

But it is more like renting and less like owning.

**Mr. Sandhu:** As the minister said, this was more like apartment blocks or renters.

I have a question: Does the minister think his government is doing enough to help renters who are struggling with above-guideline increases, increasing hydro rates and inflation?

**Mr. Teitsma:** I believe the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) is calling for a penalty for roughing or interference, perhaps.

And I would—I could question the relevancy of the question, but at the same time, I do appreciate the member's engagement and he seems to be chuckling along with me, so I'll just say that our government has indeed offered plenty of support for renters, freezing rent for two years straight and making permanent the renters tax credit.

**Mr. Lamont:** Can the minister just explain how this act might help facilitate a request for an audit by tenants?

**Mr. Teitsma:** Certainly, yes, I appreciate the question.

I think the tenants don't necessarily have the right to request such an audit, but they do have the right to receive audited financial statements. And they do have the right to ensure that there is a reserve fund study done, and that the rents that are being charged and the amount of money that's going into the reserve fund is appropriate.

So, those are all things that are going to enhance tenants' rights.

**Mr. Sandhu:** Why did the minister and his government raise taxes on the renters?

**Mr. Teitsma:** Madam Speaker, I would certainly ask the—question the efficacy and the honesty of that initial assertion. What we have done is lowered the PST. We did that many years ago; that saved renters and all other Manitobans hundreds of dollars on an annual basis.

We've also, this year, increased the basic personal exemption. That is putting hundreds of dollars in the pockets of all Manitobans, and as part of our education property tax benefit—which of course does not directly benefit renters because they don't own the property or pay the property taxes—but we did ensure that some of the benefits of those education property tax benefits went into tenants' pockets.

And we did that by freezing rents in years where, if we had allowed the—

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

Yes, I just—[interjection]

Order. I do want to just caution members about throwing around the word honesty in this House. It tends to get going in the wrong direction, so I just ask for everybody to be cautious, please.

**Mr. Sandhu:** I just want to remind the minister that renters used to get \$700 tax credit. Now they are getting \$525. They are losing \$175.

So, isn't—if this is not a tax on the renters, then what it is?

**Mr. Teitsma:** I, you know, I had hoped to have that question from the Finance critic. I am happy to accept it from this member. Either way, they both don't seem to be capable of doing math because, fundamentally, freezing rents for an average apartment building, and for an average tenancy agreement in this city and in this province, is going to save renters a whole lot more than what the item that these members are referring to.

So, when we introduced the Education Property Tax Credit, we ensured that renters would benefit by freezing their rents, by ensuring that they would not have an increase from year to year.

\* (16:30)

That is way, way more impactful to the average 'landlord'—or, average tenant that it is—than what they're referring to.

**Mr. Sandhu:** I also want to remind the minister there were, like, 100 per cent above-guideline rent increases. There were 310 applications, all 100 per cent they were gone up. And the rent was gone up 30 to 50 per cent.

Can the minister explain how that went up?

**Mr. Teitsma:** Well, Madam Speaker, I—it probably would be wise to question the relevancy, but I'm not sure I caught all that.

I do recall a question by the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) a few weeks back, where he said that under our watch, rents had gone up by about 10 per cent.

I believe that's what he had said but—and then he claimed that was somehow more than inflation, but inflation was actually 20. So, again, I question the ability of the Finance critic and the member opposite with their mathematics; it's not quite up to snuff.

We've gone now for probably almost a month with a budget in front of this House, and we've had almost no questions about the budget. It's a great budget, it does a wonderful job for Manitobans. I could see why they'd have nothing to say about it.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further questions?

## Debate

**Madam Speaker:** If not, debate is open.

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** It is an honour to rise in the House to put a few comments on Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is, this bill amends The Life Leases Act to enhance the rights of tenants under life leases.

Under this—under the existing act, when a person acquires a landlord's interest in a life lease complex on a mortgage sale, tax sale or foreclosure, the subsisting leases are terminated and the person has no obligation regarding the tenant's entrance fee, which it is—sometimes it is a—quite a large amount, Madam Speaker; I think it's around \$50,000. I was searching a few of those buildings.

Bill 29 ensures that the person acquiring that interest in—treated as a new landlord under the subsisting life leases, but automatically terminates those leases unless the person agrees otherwise. Such a termination no longer relieves the person of the landlord's obligation to refund on entrance fees.

Currently, a non-profit landlord of a life lease complex is required to maintain a reserve for maintaining, and replacing when necessary, the assets of the complex. Under the—under Bill 29, the landlord must ensure that the reserve fund study to determine the amount of money to be maintained in the fund is conducted and updated from time to time in accordance with the regulations.

If requested by a majority of the tenants of the life lease complex, the landlord is required to provide audited financial statements for the complex for each year until the request is withdrawn by the majority of the tenants. The bill requires these financial statements to be prepared in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles.

Madam Speaker, the Manitoba NDP is in support of this bill. As I think the minister mentioned, there was lots of consultations and Manitoba Life Lease Occupants Association was also written a letter, probably to—every member has seen this letter.

And there are a few requests from the association, and probably like to put it on the record. I hope the minister can maybe provide a bit more information if he's going to be amending the bill or bringing some amendment at the committee level.

Those are: failure to meet quorum, transparency of action, tenant representation, security for tenant financial interest, good governance.

So, those are the few requests from Manitoba Life Lease Occupants Association, but I'm sure the minister also said he's also been consulting with the landlords, too.

And again, Madam Speaker, when it comes to the PC government, they recently—not recently, actually—this is the second year in a row that—where Manitobans are paying \$175 tax credit. What used to be \$700 now is \$525; \$525 is a \$175—a tax on those people who are living in apartment blocks. And who are those people, Madam Speaker, those are living in those apartment blocks? Those are people on low income, seniors, newcomers.

Those are the few comments I would like to put on the record. I'm sure we—as I said earlier—we are in support of this bill and looking forward to the committee and to see if the minister will be bringing any more amendments to this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** This bill ensures that the person acquiring a landlord's interest in a life-lease complex is treated as the new landlord under the subsisting life lease. Often, when we think about housing, we often think about either homeownership or rental; life leases are something of an in-between between the two.

Sponsors of life-lease projects, in many cases, are non-profit, so the prices of units generally reflect the cost of development. With life leases, residents typically pay a refundable entrance fee, which helps cover costs associated with upkeep and affair—and repairs. This legislation would require owners to refund entrance fees to their tenants if their leases are terminated due to mortgage sales, tax sales or foreclosures.

One potential concern is the requirement for the landlords to maintain a reserve fund for maintaining and replacing the assets of the complex. The details of this reserve fund will invariably be different from complex to complex, but how much will the maintenance to this fund cost if it is passed along to tenants in addition to other property costs such as condominium fees.

Many of these life-lease complexes' residents are seniors—or, 55-plus housing units in Manitoba. Getting out of the housing market—of ownership—can be a major financial relief for many people, and we want to avoid adding financial burdens, especially to seniors.

While the requirement to provide audited financial statements is important to ensure the transparency of a landlord's property operations, it is also positive that this measure can be requested through a vote by tenants of the complex. The only concern here is the ability to request an audit be accessible to tenants, and that they are continually made aware during their residency of their right to do so should any issues arise.

We look forward to supporting this bill, and in—seeing feedback in committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 29, The Life Leases Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

### Bill 2—The Official Time Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** I will now call Bill 2, The Official Time Amendment Act.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation, that Bill 2, The Official Time Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Goertzen:** This bill will amend the—[*interjection*—speaking of a time delay, that was a time delay right there.

This bill will amend The Official Time Act to allow Manitoba to consider adopting permanent daylight savings time. Manitoba has historically maintained a consistent-time-zone approach with our United States neighbours, easing business relations, travel and trade. And this bill will ensure Manitoba is in a position to maintain that approach should the United States choose to observe daylight savings time year-round.

Other Canadian jurisdictions, including Ontario and British Columbia, have also prepared for this possibility, tabling legislation preparing for a potential shift to permanent daylight savings time. And I know some jurisdictions have matched that with the states that are immediately south of them; so, British Columbia to Washington state, as an example.

Like Ontario and BC's legislation, Manitoba's legislation will only take effect if neighbouring jurisdictions adopt permanent daylight savings time and a majority of Manitobans agree to the change. Until that time, Manitoba will continue to observe daylight savings time from March to November, and standard time throughout the winter.

\* (16:40)

Currently, in the United States—and I know that the US House of Representatives, Congress have considered a bill called the protection of daylight—the sunshine protection act—only the Americans come up with an act called the sunshine protection act—that would have permanent daylight savings time throughout the United States. It's been introduced a few different times, made it to 'devarious'—different places within their legislative framework, but it's never been passed. But if it were to pass, then this would allow us to follow the United States on that.

Previously planned public engagement on the proposed shift to permanent daylight savings time would begin when the neighbouring 'jurisdiction' takes meaningful action to ensure the perspectives gathered for Manitobans are timely and relevant.

So we wouldn't undertake public consultations now, because we don't know when or if the Americans will actually pass that legislation moving to daylight savings times in the US, and we wouldn't want to have the consultations now if it's not going to happen in the US for five years, but there'd be too much of a time gap between the consultation and whenever it is that the Americans take action.

So when we know that there's meaningful action being taken in the United States, that is progressing through their legislative scheme, then we would undertake to get the views of Manitobans. In the interim, Municipal Relations—and I am tabling this, or, doing second reading on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith)—will continue to monitor developments and evaluate the best possible options for Manitoba.

Pleased to present this bill today, and I look forward to seeing Manitobans engaged in this issue when and if the time comes.

### Questions

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions will be addressed to the minister by the official opposition critic and an independent member in the following sequence: first

question by the official opposition critic and the subsequent question to be asked by an independent member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Why did the government decide that now is the right time to put forward this bill?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, if not now, then when?

But the Americans, as the member may know, have brought forward a bill called the sunshine protection act. It has been introduced in their House of Representatives or Congress several times, so it made sense to prepare.

And we're seeing what's happening in other jurisdictions. So Ontario has done this—something similar; British Columbia has; Alberta's had a debate on this. So other provinces are preparing, and it seemed right for Manitoba to prepare, as well.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Just, in addition to the—and I know that the minister has named a number of other changes, are there any further legislative changes that actually would trigger—that he expects might trigger this, other than the—say, in Saskatchewan or in Ontario?

**Mr. Goertzen:** The bill is specific to changes in the United States. And so we know that, for example, Saskatchewan has stayed on one particular time; I believe Arizona has done that, as well. But we really want to ensure we're aligned with our neighbours to the south to ensure that the borders are matched up in terms of time, trade, travel; I know it's important for the airlines, as an example. So this is really only triggered by changes in the United States.

**Ms. Naylor:** Why has the government decided to only change to permanent daylight time if the US does so? Why not just commit and make the change, as other jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan have already done?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I mean, this is—been debated a few different times, both in Manitoba and in this House. What we've seen is that other jurisdictions, like Ontario and like British Columbia, want to align for trade and travel reasons, particularly with the United States. We don't want sort of a bingo card and a hodgepodge of different time zones throughout North America. So it seems like all of the provinces largely are aligning with this particular process and this procedure and aligning with the American side of the border.



**Ms. Naylor:** Have Manitobans been consulted on whether they want to make the change to permanent daylight time? If so, what was the response? And if not, what is the government's plan to consult the public about this issue?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So, the bill does contemplate consultation with Manitobans before a change would happen.

So if, for example, the sunshine protection act in the United States were to pass all of their legislative hoops or look like it was going to, it got substantially along the path, then we would engage Manitobans in a way that would be deemed appropriate at that time to get their feedback on whether or not they want to go to a permanent daylight saving time.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further questions?

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** If not, debate is open.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding this bill that amends The Official Time Act to discontinue the seasonal time change for daylight saving time.

We know that daylight saving time is a divisive issue in Manitoba. I have to admit I didn't actually know that until I became an MLA and started getting the emails on that issue. They come pretty regularly when we spring ahead and when we fall back from a variety of constituents.

But even this bill is conflicted over whether we should move away from daylight saving time. It doesn't fully commit to ending time changes and establishing a permanent daylight saving time, instead leaving the decision up to the US where the bill is currently stalled in Congress.

And we know that, as I already indicated, that thoughts on what should happen to daylight saving time in Manitoba are very mixed. Some Manitobans prefer permanent daylight time, which is what the government is sort of proposing, and this would keep the time, as it does, during the summer after the clocks are switched for daylight saving time, meaning that sunsets and sunrises would be later in winter and stay as they currently are in summer. Longer nights in winter is an obvious benefit of this system. One negative result of permanent daylight time, however, would be that some children and workers would have to make their morning commute in the dark during part of winter.

However, others prefer permanent standard time. This would mean that the sunrises and sunsets in summer would be earlier and remain as they currently are in winter. Some sleep experts favour this, claiming it's healthier for people and it's more in line with the body's 'circadian' rhythm.

In Canada, daylight saving time is the practice of turning clocks ahead one hour on the second Sunday of March and back one hour on the first Sunday of November. And, as we know, Canada has six standard time zones. The boundaries of the standard time zones are not necessarily as—the same as those of the corresponding daylight saving time zones. For example, the Mountain Time zone includes a portion of north-eastern British Columbia [*inaudi*]-Columbia in the summer but not in the winter, and boundaries shift because some municipalities chose not to participate in daylight saving time.

So, it's up to each province to decide whether to use daylight time, and not all do. Most, but not all, jurisdictions in Canada and the US have been moving their clocks ahead by one hour on the second Sunday in March and back by one hour on the first Sunday in November.

The majority of Saskatchewan has followed Central Standard Time year-round since 1966. However, some towns along the Manitoba and Alberta border have chosen to follow the time scheme of the province beside them rather than staying with the rest of Saskatchewan.

In 2020, Yukon Territory switched to observing Yukon Standard Time year-round, and in Canada, areas of Quebec do not change to daylight time and remain on Atlantic Standard Time year-round. Pockets of Ontario and British Columbia do not use daylight time.

The bill in the US Congress to make daylight saving time permanent, which would trigger Manitoba doing the same if Bill 2 is passed, has been stalled in the representative—House of Representatives since November 2022, although the US Senate passed the bill in March. Supporters of the bill in the US claim that the change will lead to brighter afternoons and increased economic activity.

Because it's now a new year, supporters of the bill in the Senate will need to reintroduce it if they want the bill to eventually be passed. Supporters argue that, if approved, the so-called sunshine protection act would allow children to play outdoors later and would reduce

seasonal depression. Critics, including the National Association of Convenience Stores, say it will force many children to walk to school in darkness during the winter since the measure would delay sunrise by an hour in some places.

In US, President Biden has not said if he supports the bill to making daylight saving time permanent in the US. While this bill is currently stalled since 2015, about 30 states have introduced or passed legislation to end the twice-yearly changing of clocks, with some states proposing to do it only if neighbouring states do the same. So that sounds like what the government's doing here, only wanting to make this change if our neighbouring country makes this change.

So, I just wanted to kind of summarize how we understood the bill and to reiterate again that this is clearly a very conflicted, controversial issue among Manitobans, and I—on this side of the House, we think it's very critical that good, solid consultation is done with Manitobans before the change is made.

\* (16:50)

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** We've also received pleading and passionate letters, people begging us to change daylight saving, and other people who are not quite so ardent, I will say.

This has been a long-standing debate. Certainly, the one challenge that we face in Manitoba, as we are, relatively speaking, somewhat of a northern province and the difference between our shortest days and our longest days is about—is extremely extensive.

But not only that; you know, it's also affected by how early the sun rises and how late the sun rises, which also sort of moves up and down during the year, as you—just because of the way the time works.

So we do actually see this as being a positive measure. We do have to be synchronized with our fellow—with our fellows in—our trading neighbours in the United States. That's extremely important; but of course, even just simply the size of the provinces that we have, the size of our province is significant enough that there's a large difference within Manitoba from one border to the other, from the Ontario to the Saskatchewan border, of when the sun rises and when the sun sets, which also impacts—obviously it impacts everyone.

So, we do have to acknowledge that, you know, it could—we have to make sure that it's not—we're not making life more difficult when we're doing this as well. I know that there's lots of times I—when it comes

to daylight saving I don't—the one where I lose sleep, I don't like; the one where I gain sleep, I always appreciate.

But it's something, basically, that we support, but we'll have to see whether anyone else to the south is interested as well.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 2, The Official Time Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

#### **Bill 24—The Wildfires Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** I will now call Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment Act.

**Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care (Mr. Johnston), that Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment 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 the message.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development, seconded by the honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care, that Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment 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 is tabled.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I'm pleased to stand up today for the second reading of Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment Act. Proposed amendments to The Wildfires Act will strengthen officer powers to mitigate human-caused wildfire risks and toughen wildfire risk-mitigation requirements.

Every wildfire season our Manitoba Wildfire Service protects lives, property and our abundant resources from natural and human-caused wildfires. Our Manitoba Wildfire Service is responsible for controlling active fires, wildfire prevention and mitigation activities. The service investigates all wildfire causes and leads

wildfire-suppression operations throughout Manitoba, including within our beautiful provincial parks.

Enacted in 1988, The Wildfires Act sets out the provincial responsibilities, authorities and requirements regarding wildfire protection within Manitoba, including the requirement for certain activities to follow prescribed conditions that reduce fire hazards and protect people, buildings and timber resources.

With increasing landscape pressures and conflicts, there are growing concerns that the current officer authority set under The Wildfire Act are outdated, vague and open to interpretation. It is of provincial interest to ensure that legislation governing wildfire-prevention and -suppression operations is modernized and consistent with neighbouring jurisdictions.

Wildfires can cause devastating social and economic disruptions, displacing families, threatening lives, along with the loss of property and destroying valuable natural resources. It is estimated that almost half of all wildfires in Manitoba are human caused, and can cause up to \$10 million per fire to suppress. Education on mitigation measures and the enforcement of travel restrictions and conditions on required wildfire work permits are the main measures currently available to officers to reduce human-caused wildfire events.

To ensure officers have the right tools and authorities for wildfire prevention, mitigation and investigation, the department is proposing amendments that will update the designation and appointment of officers and fire guardians, add separate officer inspection and investigation provisions to provide clear officer authorities to enter or cross lands, use equipment, conduct tests and take samples and records, and update existing prohibitions and add the ability for an officer to issue stop-work orders for activities that contravene mitigation requirements that will be set in regulation.

The department is also proposing increased maximum summary conviction penalty amounts to \$100,000 for individuals and \$1 million for corporations. The maximum penalties have not been updated since 1998. These increases align our penalties with other provincial jurisdictions and better reflect the social, environmental and economic costs of human-caused wildfires.

The Manitoba Wildfire Service works in close co-operation with other forest-fighting agencies and jurisdictions. The service also supports municipalities

and other local authorities who are generally responsible for wildfire suppression operations within their municipal boundaries.

Enhancing enforcement and investigative powers, along with increased penalties, is an important fire prevention and public safety mechanism to reduce the threat of human-caused wildfires.

Finally, the proposed amendments will replace the wildfire work permit with a new regulation that prescribes fire safety requirements for industry and individuals. All provinces west of Quebec, except Manitoba, prescribe wildfire safety requirements in a regulation that are easily accessible for industry and individuals to find and follow.

In Manitoba, we use an outdated wildfire work permit system to manage activities in wildfire-prone areas. This can lead to inconsistencies between permits and industries, despite the applicants conducting similar activities. This change will remove that uncertainty and provide consistent standards for industry, Manitoba Hydro and municipalities. Existing burn permits and travel permits are not impacted and will still be required within the burn permit area to ensure activities are monitored throughout the wildfire season.

In summary, Bill 24 aligns Manitoba with other provinces, such as Saskatchewan and Alberta, by modernizing officer appointments, clearly identifying inspection and investigation powers and moving all fire safety requirements set under the current work permit system directly in a new regulation that applies to all industries and individuals. This will ensure regulatory tools are available under The Wildfires Act for officers and fire guardians to mitigate human-caused wildfires that could lead to the loss of property, natural resources and, potentially, life.

I want to end my comments by commending the work of the Manitoba Wildfire Service, our officers and department staff who put their lives at risk to protect our communities and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfires.

This bill is important and shows this government's commitment to keeping Manitobans safe.

Thank you.

### Questions

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions will be addressed to the minister by the official opposition critic and an independent member in the following sequence: first

question by the official opposition critic and the subsequent question asked by an independent member. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** So, the first question we always ask is who did the minister consult with prior to writing this bill, and were there some voices that were against the changes that the minister has proposed?

**Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development):** We talked to industry on this bill—mining, forestry, all types of industry up north, Manitoba Hydro—and we wanted to align with the other provinces and eliminate the need for the permits and just put it under regulation.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** To the minister: this is an example of a bill where the government is trying to hide what it's doing in regulations. If you could at least give us some idea of what the regulations might be saying, then that would be helpful. Now—for example, the—there's a number of activities which are not permitted within a burning permit area, such as the construction of a dam, a bridge or a camp.

\* (17:00)

What sort of regulations would be put in place that the individual or the company would have to comply with?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** This bill requires the establishment of regulations that clearly describe what wildfire suppression equipment and efforts are required by prescribed industries.

Previously, these requirements were only listed as a condition on a permit. If the client did not obtain a permit, there would not be any conditions to follow and not make enforcement much more difficult.

Amendments also clarify officer powers to inspect and investigate, like I said.

**MLA Lindsey:** So, the minister talks about the changing the permit system so that people are left to their own desires, needs, to make sure that they've got the requirements in place because there's nobody going to be left anymore to tell them what they have to do.

So, we know that we're so short of conservation officers already, adding more duties on, because now, will conservation officers have to go to these sites and do inspections to ensure that the proper things are in place prior to the incident happening, or will we simply be left to investigate after the fire takes place?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** The industry sector in mining and forestry has felt that the existing permitting requirements are overly 'time-consuming' and redundant. Repealing the wildfire work permit requirement will help with these concerns by reducing red tape and time spent waiting to obtain a wildfire work permit.

Since the equipment requirements will be regulated, the requirements to operate within the burn permit area will be known in advance. This will help with proper planning before operating.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The minister mentioned the power to investigate. What sort of changes are envisioned in the regulations related to the power to investigate the fires?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Inspection powers: clean and—clear inspection powers were added to ensure officers have the authority is needed to ensure the operations comply with fire safety equipment and other requirements as described in the act and regulation.

The officer inspection powers are similar to what is currently found under The Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act and to those in other provinces.

**MLA Lindsey:** So, the minister talks about the officers now having duties similar to what other jurisdictions give their officers.

Does the member agree that we probably need more officers to make sure they're doing those inspections investigations? And does he believe that, seeing as we're copying what other jurisdictions are doing as far as duties, that perhaps maybe we should copy them when it comes to remuneration?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** We also—besides conservation officers, there's other officers that can enforce the regulations here. For example, fire guardians, fire commissioners, deputy fire commissioners, assistant fire commissioners, park wardens of a national park, police officers or any other persons designated under the act by the minister.

**Mr. Gerrard:** In a follow-up question, I'm just trying to understand the current policy or approach of the government toward fires in the North.

It seemed a number of years ago that the policy was if it wasn't close to a community, that there wasn't any rush to get in there and do something about it.

And there was a good example, I think it was near Wasagamack, it was east of the community. And it was a very small fire initially and it could have been put out fairly easily had there been quick action taken.

But it—there wasn't quick action taken. As a result, the fire spread; there had to be a huge evacuation.

I wonder if the policy has changed to get in very quickly with such fires, rather than to have—

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

**Mr. Nesbitt:** This really has no relation to the bill, but I'd be happy to try to explain what's going on.

We have rapid response crews in the North that we're hoping to put into most communities up there. They can get to the fire scene quickly if they can, if it's going to threaten a community before our response unit from our bases can get there.

**MLA Lindsey:** Thank you. That's an interesting answer that the minister just gave, because we've been trying to convince his department that they need to have more initial-attack workers available in more communities so that the fires don't get as big and as carried away before somebody actually gets there.

So, did the minister just indicate that they are actually going to hire and train more of those initial workers, and station them in more communities?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I'm proud to be part of a listening government. I've listened to the people of the North. And, like I said, we're planning to get back to establishing crews in communities that can do the initial response before our primary attack crews can come in from our bases, bring our water bombers and things like that.

So, we're certainly moving that way.

**Mr. Gerrard:** So, to continue this line of questioning, concerned—which communities would have this local, rapid-response team, and would one of these communities be in the Island Lake area?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I can't give you specifics today, but by the time we get to Estimates, I certainly will have some answers for you folks on that.

I can't name communities, but we're working with a number of communities in the North, and we want to ensure they're properly trained before they're, you know, set in the communities for the response.

So, stay tuned on that one.

**MLA Lindsey:** So, I look forward to seeing this list of communities that are going to have these initial-attack workers in them.

And I'm left to wonder, the minister talks about all this stuff that's going to happen somewhere in the future, that he's had ample time to put some of that

stuff in place already, and to make those announcements. Is this just another case of, there's an election coming, so they're saying the right thing? Or will they actually do it?

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Well, Madam Speaker, the Wildfire Service—much like our conservation officer service—was neglected for 17 years. We've been busy picking up the pieces, re-establishing our services under the great Natural Resources department.

And I want to assure the member across the road, we're taking the action for the North.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I—in a further question to the minister in terms of policy, I wonder what the minister's policy is with respect to fire boats.

I was, a number of years ago, in an area of Saskatchewan, and there was an extremely effective use of fire boats on a northern lake. And it was not there to start with, but it was brought in and it was extremely infective in protecting cabins and preventing spread of—from one island or shore to another.

**Mr. Nesbitt:** That's the first I've heard of that, but I'd certainly be willing to take that back to the department and see what the experience has been in other provinces.

We're always willing to take good ideas from our neighbours and implement them in Manitoba, if they're going to work here.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further questions?

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just to update the minister a little bit: there is a fire boat in the Whiteshell, which has been used quite a bit locally and been very helpful in addressing fires there.

It is, I believe, permanently stationed right in the Whiteshell—I think it's not far from West Hawk Lake, if I'm not mistaken—and they're able to move it quickly to Falcon Lake, or to lakes nearby.

But to my knowledge there hasn't been any attempt to have a fire boat that could, you know, be dropped in or—

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

**Mr. Nesbitt:** The member makes a good point, and some of this is new to me.

I'll certainly check with my department, check on that. I appreciate the information from him, and I promise I'll get back to him.

**Madam Speaker:** Further questions?

\* (17:10)

**Mr. Gerrard:** I'll just finish what I was about to say, and that is that having a fire boat that would be in pieces that could be flown in and taken into a lake in the North where's there's concerns or where there's ability to use that to stop spread.

The fire boat that was assembled quickly in northern Saskatchewan was able to send water about 300 feet, as I recall, and it was extremely effective in protecting cabins and human dwellings as well as in protecting the spread of the fire from one across—

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

**Mr. Nesbitt:** I certainly appreciate the cross-party co-operation today, and thank my honourable friend for the information. And I will get back to him.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further questions?

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** If not, debate is open.

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** I—my questions have kind of summed up where I'm going with this, is that this minister has proposed some changes, some of which we obviously agree with, some of which we have too many questions about, particularly the doing-away-with-the-permit part is somewhat troubling.

I came from industry where not having the right inspection processes in place prior to cause problems, so I'm just concerned that not having someone checking before the burning takes place could be a problem. And I get the point that they're going to raise the fines after the fact, but after the forest burns is probably too late. So it—those are some of the concerns I have around the whole self-regulation aspect of it.

The other problems I have, of course, are in relation to the number of extra duties that are going to be given, potentially, to conservation officers, while we know that we're already so short of people to do those jobs and the minister's failing to actually employ and get those numbers up where they need to be. And now we're adding more duties onto the officers that are already stretched too thin.

So those are some of the concerns I have. I mean, at the end of the day, we're probably going to let this bill pass, but I really wish that the minister, in the spirit of co-operation that he's talking about, would have taken some of those concerns and really focused on addressing them with the conservation officers, addressing them with the people that are actually going to do the work.

I get that he's consulted a lot with industry, but he really needed to consult with some of the Indigenous

groups in the North to get their thoughts on some of these changes. He needed to focus on talking to some of the front-line staff that will be in charge of trying to carry out some of these changes.

So, hopefully, before he gets into regulation, which we're supposed to trust him to make sure he does the right thing with the regulations, hopefully he has the proper conversations with the right people to come up with the right regulations. I'm very concerned about that.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, just a few comments on this bill. The minister, as I interpreted his comments, was suggesting that the moving away from a permit to presumably what will be an online standardized system, minister's suggesting that this gives greater flexibility.

What concerns me is that we've got very different circumstances in different parts of the province as it applies to having, you know, industries or building of bridges or what have you, the kind of precautions that would be needed. And one advantage, potentially, of a permit is that it would allow greater flexibility to individualize situations.

So, I think it's going to be rather important to, in making this change, to, you know, review it very early on to make sure that it is actually effective and working, because if you have a standard or a permit by regulation and you may end up with situations where it doesn't work as effectively as you want, and that you may need to have some more individual consideration just because of the tremendous variability in the terrain that we're dealing with in different parts of Manitoba and the different kinds of protection that you need depending on whether it's a—you know, a grass fire in southern Manitoba or a forest fire in northern Manitoba, et cetera.

I think the move that the minister is talking about to have individual communities able to have the capacity to respond quickly, I think that can be an important advantage and it could potentially, in the circumstance that I was talking about, have prevented evacuation of several thousand people. And, you know, that's saving a lot of cost by acting quickly and being prepared.

And although it may be possible to get, you know, 90 per cent of that cost recovered from the federal government for emergency preparedness, you know, that's not really the best way to do this if we can improve the lives of people by not having to evacuate

them to begin with. And there should be—and maybe the minister, when he's talking with his federal counterparts, there should be better funding for prevention opportunities when we're talking about wildfires because that can save a lot of dollars, and many of those dollars would be federal and not just provincial.

I did—had the opportunity, with my colleague from Tyndall Park a number of years ago, to visit with several Cabinet ministers. And I think at that point it was Ralph Goodale who was responsible for emergency measures, and talked to him about the need for fire-safety plans and fire-safety training for all the communities in the North because, as we saw with the Fort McMurray fire, that—it can—fires can move very quickly and they can do a lot of damage.

And there are, you know, safety measures that can be taken—the establishment of firebreaks, for example. Many of the areas in northern Manitoba which haven't been burned for some time build up a lot of understorey that can burn very quickly.

But, you know, actually sometimes in the North, quite simple measures can have quite an impact. In other words, that it's the area immediately around a cabin, for example, or a home, if that—if there is dry material which is susceptible to getting light by a spark right adjacent to a home, then you've got a situation where you may have—are more likely to have problems.

And so, one of the first things to do is to, you know, clear the area around a home and then to wet it down. And it's interesting that, even with quite big fires, a modest amount of wetting the area around a home like this and protecting it can actually be remarkably effective in having the fire move away, because many of these fires are moving along the ground as well as going in the trees. And—but if you can protect and get the ground wet, it can make a big difference.

One of the interesting things that I learned, as an example, is that—one of the people that I was with at the time, that there was fire where I was in northern Saskatchewan, told me that the first thing that he does is, when the—a fire near a home is to rip off the eaves-troughs, because the eaves-troughs tend to accumulate dead leaves and things like that that are burning. And the moment you get a fire in those eaves-troughs, it has a chance to get right into the roof.

\* (17:20)

And, of course, putting metal roofs on can help, but if you wet down the roof and you take away the eaves-troughs or completely clear them out, and you can make a, you know, a small thing like that can actually make quite a big difference.

So, there is lots that can be done by people locally, not just making sure that you've got a rapid response for the community when the fire is small, but also in the community itself, to protect homes and people from damage to the fire.

It's interesting, I watched—in the Fort McMurray example, I watched some video footage, and it was really interesting the way that, you know, sparks got into an area right beside a home and—where there was dead—deadwood and dead trees, dead shrub. And, you know, immediately—because it, you know, was sort of like setting a match—I mean, it got burning and it got into the home. And where homes were prepared, had cleared the area around the home, where they had wet them down, those homes were protected. And so, even with a fire the size of Fort McMurray, doing some sensible but modest things can make a big difference in terms of protecting homes and communities.

I pass that on, just by way of comment and some experience. I just happened to be in northern Saskatchewan at time that they had some very extensive fires and was there, you know, watching to see what people were doing.

Anyway, with those comments, I will—we should move on. I look forward to this bill being passed and into law, but I do believe—as I said—that it needs to be looked at closely in case that some issues come up.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 24, The Wildfires Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**Madam Speaker:** The—that concludes the business of the House.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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