

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXIV No. 17 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 4, 2020

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I would like to draw members' attention to an important anniversary that occurred six weeks ago.

January 22nd, 2020, marked the 100th anniversary of the first session of the Manitoba Legislature held in this Chamber. The announcement for the opening read in part as follows: A cordial invitation is extended to all citizens to take advantage of this opportunity to inspect the new Parliament Building and the civil service of the province are especially invited to attend in the evening and bring their friends. An orchestra will attend on both occasions and light refreshments will be served during the evening. The premier and executive council are desirous that the citizens should take advantage of the invitation issued on this occasion.

Copies of the Votes and Proceedings from that first sitting day in this Chamber on January 22, 1920, have been provided to members, allowing us all to see what issues members were considering in this place 100 years ago.

As we reflect on the history of our province this year, I thought it would be appropriate for me to share with the House some interesting figures related to the history of this room and all that it signifies.

Since January 1920, this Chamber has experienced 121 Legislative sessions, for a total of 6,709 sitting days; six Clerks of the House, along with many deputy clerks and clerk assistants, expertly managed each of these sessions; 17 Sergeants-at-Arms

have carried this same mace and placed it on that same table you see before you now.

Further, in the last century, 548 citizens, including only 65 women and one non-binary person, have served in this room as Members of the Legislative Assembly. Of those 548 MLAs, 17 have served as Speaker of the House and 12 as Premier.

As your Speaker I have the privilege to serve members and ensure the proper functioning of the proceedings of this House.

What happens in this Chamber matters to every citizen of this province. I would encourage all members to reflect on the solemn responsibility we all share to serve our constituents and recall that whatever heated debates we have here are part of a long legacy of service to the citizens of this province.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 23—The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Crown Services, that Bill 23, The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 23, The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended), which honours our government's commitment to bring forward legislative amendments to allow the safe testing of automated vehicles on Manitoba roads.

This bill is a first step to prepare Manitoba for introduction of vehicle technology on roads while ensuring alignment with other jurisdictions and supports an investment-friendly climate for new technology in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Second Report

Mr. James Teitsma (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- *January 16, 2019 (4th Session – 41st Legislature)*
- *January 20, 2020 (2nd Session – 42nd Legislature)*

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018*
- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, including the summary of the 2018-2019 Child Death Review Roll-up*

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the January 16, 2019 meeting:

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *Hon. Mrs. COX*
- *Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON (St. James)*
- *Mr. LAMONT*
- *Mr. MICKLEFIELD*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. REYES*
- *Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. SWAN*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

Your Committee elected Mr. MICKLEFIELD as the Vice-Chairperson at the January 16, 2019 meeting.

Committee membership for the January 20, 2020 meeting:

- *Mr. BRAR*
- *Ms. GORDON*
- *Ms. LATHLIN*
- *Ms. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MICKLEFIELD*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. REYES*
- *Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)*
- *Hon. Ms. SQUIRES*
- *Hon. Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. TEITSMA (Chairperson)*

Your Committee elected Mr. MICKLEFIELD as the Vice-Chairperson at the January 20, 2020 meeting

Substitutions received during committee proceedings on January 20, 2020:

- *Hon. Mr. HELWER for Hon. Ms. SQUIRES*
- *Hon. Mr. WHARTON for Hon. Mr. HELWER*

Official speaking on the record at the January 16, 2019 meeting:

- *Ms. Daphne Penrose, Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth*

Official speaking on the record at the January 20, 2020 meeting:

- *Ms. Daphne Penrose, Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth*

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record at the January 20, 2020 meeting:

- *Mr. LAMONT*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018*
- *Annual Report of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, including the summary of the 2018-2019 Child Death Review Roll-up*

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

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

COVID-19 Virus Update

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to provide an update to my colleagues in the Legislature and to all Manitobans on the preparations that our government is making for coronavirus.

First, I want to note that, as of today, Manitoba has no laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the overall risk to Manitobans remains low. While cases continue to rise outside of China and within our own federal borders, I can assure all Manitobans that the provincial government is taking all the necessary steps to formulate a response to the virus, should it appear here in Manitoba.

I can assure everyone that we are working with all government departments and with all service delivery organizations to ensure that plans are in place, should an outbreak occur here in our province.

Madam Speaker, despite the risk remaining low to Manitobans, we recognize that coronavirus is creating a lot of anxiety, and that is a natural reaction when facing something about which so little is known. Manitobans should have the assurance that we have an excellent team that is leading our response. I am in daily contact with Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer and am confident that the government, through its principal agents, is taking all necessary measures to protect public health. I am also in frequent communication with my federal-provincial-territorial colleagues on regularly scheduled calls.

* (13:40)

People across the health-care system, from public health and from our health-care facilities, are connecting with other organizations to find the best ways to safeguard the public. These public health and health-care professionals are working closely together on how to protect Manitobans.

We are working with the Winnipeg Airports Authority, with Shared Health, with the regional health authorities, with the Public Health Agency of Canada to share information and best practices. We are looking to the needs of our hospitals, of our health-care providers and our workforce to ensure that we have the space, the equipment, the resources that we need to ensure that we could provide quality care in a safe place. And we are, of course, continuing to provide advice and to test for COVID-19 as required in our jurisdiction.

Suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 are required to be reported to Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer. This will allow us to undertake appropriate follow-up actions as required, and if and when a case is found in Manitoba, the public will be notified promptly.

Madam Speaker, let me assure all Manitobans that our government is ensuring that municipalities across the province have the most up-to-date information. Earlier this week, I was able to provide an update to mayors and reeves regarding the measures we are putting in place to prepare for COVID-19.

I would additionally suggest that the health of Manitobans in this issue is a non-partisan issue. And just this morning, our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer and Health Department officials briefed both the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) on the issue. I have and will continue to provide Cabinet with updates as well.

Let me end by providing Manitobans with some important information. Manitoba's Health, Seniors and Active Living website will continue to have the most up-to-date information. Manitobans should also call Health Links-Info Santé, should they believe they are experiencing symptoms, as well as to get accurate information. The numbers there are 204-788-8200, or toll-free 1-888-315-9257.

Let me be clear: this is a difficult situation that is emerging and changing by the day. This situation requires our focus, our concern and our efforts, and Manitobans should know that processes and

procedures are in place to protect the public. I remind Manitobans to wash their hands, cover their coughs, to stay home if they are sick and to avoid unnecessary contact with people whose immune systems are depressed or insufficient to fight this illness.

Madam Speaker, we will keep Manitobans informed in the days and weeks ahead. We will provide clear information on any emerging health risks, and we will explain to people what they can clearly do to reduce that risk. We will continue to work together to plan for the steps that will be needed if and when there is a case in Manitoba.

Thank you.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, although as of today there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our province, Manitobans want to know that our hospitals are ready if infections arise.

We have concerns whether the health-care system is prepared to deal with the virus if and when it gets here. We're worried about how ongoing—an ongoing shortage of front-line staff in our hospitals will have an impact on treating patients.

There is a shortage of ICU beds in Winnipeg, which has led to patients being transferred to rural facilities. Transferring patients around the province who are infected with COVID-19 is a serious risk. We know that emergency rooms in Manitoba are having a hard time dealing with the convergence of two flu strains. We have a very real concern about whether our system will be able to handle a potential surge in patients presenting to the ER due to COVID-19.

We also know that communication has been a barrier for preparing for the virus. Communication with health-care staff hasn't always been clear. Darlene Jackson, president of the Manitoba Nurses Union, has said that health-care staff don't know what the plan is, nor had they been informed of the protocol.

We don't want any more incidents like what happened over the weekend at the Children's Hospital emergency department, when a suspected COVID-19 patient was left to sit in a waiting room full of other patients because of a lack of protocol communication.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans are concerned about whether or not our health-care system is ready for COVID-19 if cases spread around our province.

We encourage the government to continue working on communication with front-line staff.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to first thank the minister for briefing—

Madam Speaker: The member needs leave in order to speak to the ministerial statement.

Mr. Gerrard: I ask for leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: First, I thank the minister for arranging the briefing this morning.

With COVID-19 outbreaks in South Korea, Italy and Iran, and recent new cases and deaths in the United States, Manitobans need to know we are ready with a plan to ensure Manitobans stay as safe as possible in the likely case that the virus reaches and spreads in Manitoba.

We don't want to alarm anybody, but we do want to make sure that this government actually has a plan in place for areas where COVID-19 could hit hard, for example, First Nations communities, personal-care homes, shelters like Siloam Mission and Main Street Project.

With past experience with the H1N1 flu, the government must have a plan in place for northern communities and other places where people are living in close quarters and with less direct access to health-care facilities and hospitals. Having a detailed public plan will reduce the need for people to panic.

It is also important to have special procedures to protect residents in personal-care homes. The mortality rate for coronavirus COVID-19 is 3.6 per cent for those aged 60 to 69, 8 per cent for ages 70 to 79 and 15 per cent for those aged 80 and over.

Current evidence suggests that this higher mortality in older people is related, in part, to many having an underlying chronic disease, but we are hearing from health professionals and the public that any plans that have been made in these areas have either not been made or have not been adequately communicated. This has to change, and there also needs to be greater attention to assuring people in Manitoba that there is the needed surge capacity, if we have a widespread outbreak.

We also want to know the government's plans to keep the Legislature operational should MLAs be under quarantine. We heard this morning it is important to make it easy for people to work from home. Will the government have video links to the Chamber available so that, if necessary, MLAs who are quarantined can continue to participate in the legislative sessions from home?

These are all questions which need to be answered, and I look forward for an improved response from the government.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Lymphedema Awareness Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Madam Speaker, the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, LAM, was founded in 2011 and their mission was to increase public awareness of lymphedema through education and support of those who are at risk, as well as family members who are affected by lymphedema.

I was first contacted in 2012 by my constituent Kim Avanthay, who at the time was the president of LAM, with a proclamation proposal to recognize March 6th as Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba. Having Kim share her family's personal experience with lymphedema, I recognized the importance of increasing awareness about lymphedema and the impact that education can have on creating valuable resources and support services within the lymphedema community, including health-care providers.

In 2014, I made a private member's statement—no, sorry, in 2014, I introduced a private member's bill officially declaring March 6th as Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba. Since then, I have made a private member's statement every year on the topic of Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba with the hopes of continuing to raise public awareness of lymphedema and I encourage all members to carry the message forward to the constituencies they represent.

This year, LAM is hosting Symposium 2020 on March 6th and 7th at the Basic Medical Sciences Building, Theatre B, in Winnipeg. There are also a growing number of municipalities across Manitoba that host events in order to raise community awareness about lymphedema.

Madam Speaker, lymphedema can affect anyone at any age and therefore we are all likely to know someone that has or is at risk of developing

lymphedema. The treatments for lymphedema can be costly and can have a major impact on people's livelihoods and the well-being of their families. That is why I want to have my colleagues join me in thanking LAM and my guests in the gallery, Kim Avanthay, Sherry Normandeau, Susan Tole, Edith Mulhall and Claire Ann Deighton-Lamy, for their continuing efforts to raise awareness, provide resources and offer support to all Manitobans who are affected by lymphedema.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (13:50)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, I ask leave for also the names of the board of directors of the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba to be entered into Hansard as well.

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

Lymphedema Association of Manitoba Board of Directors: Cherida Olson, Rupal Purohit, Isabelle Thorvardson, Ron Wersch, Ace Zhao, Susan Zwarich; Claire Ann Deighton-Lamy, treasurer; Linda Menzies, vice president; Susan Stratford, president.

Emergency Service Providers

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of emergency service providers. When tragedy strikes, we can count on them to provide assistance and relief.

Thompson Fire and Emergency Services did a great job in containing the Forest View Suites, known as Thompson—in Thompson as the Princeton Towers.

Thompson Fire and Emergency Services deals with the most calls outside of Winnipeg. They are the hard-working people and are always there for our community. I believe each time they show up to a situation, they fulfill their vision, which aims to serve, protect our citizens and to make Thompson a safe place to live and work. And to you, I say thank you for putting your lives at risk for our community every day.

The Red Cross also provides assistance when the need occurs in the North. They stepped up and helped evacuees from both north and south tower on multiple occasions. Without the hard work of the volunteers there would be no Red Cross, and without—and to the Red Cross, I say thank you.

The Red Cross goes a—extra mile in responding to emergencies and providing personal disaster assistance. They work—the work they have done and are still working to provide essential normalcies for people who are experiencing emergencies.

In 2017, they took evacuees to Pisew Falls for a picnic, and in 2018 they provided evacuees with entertainment-filled evenings. Their—they serve to community during non-emergency situations. They serve at the community Christmas dinner and at the humane society.

The City of Thompson ensures individuals affected by the Princeton Tower fires were taken care of and given temporary housing. They made sure community members were transported safely and food was provided. The City also liaised with other organizations to serve—to ensure everybody received the supports needed. These organizations co-ordinated systematically to arrange, assess the damage and provide various forms of relief within their capacity.

To all emergency services, and your endless, unselfish work and the positive impacts, on behalf of northern communities, I want to express my sincere gratitude.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Junior Men's Curling Team World Champions

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Manitoba is home to many talented athletes. This past February, local Seine River curling star Jacques Gauthier and his Manitoba team won the 2020 world junior men's curling championships which took place in Krasnoyarsk, Russia.

Jacques is no stranger to the world of curling. His family has been involved in the sport for many years. At just six years old, Jacques would go to the curling rink with his mom, Cathy Gauthier, while she taught kids curling in the Little Rocks program. He was a natural on the ice and began curling as soon as he had all the necessary equipment.

Jacques was a member of the St. Vital Curling Club's junior program for many years before he joined the advanced group of curlers. By the age of 12, Jacques had fully committed himself to the sport.

This commitment paid off, and in 2017 Jacques won his first Manitoba title, playing third with J.T. Ryan. The two went on to win two more provincial championships together and were part of the only team of Manitobans to ever win three

consecutive provincial curling championships in the province.

After J.T. Ryan aged out of juniors, Jacques became the skip. Jacques and his team beat Newfoundland to win the Canadian championship and earned the privilege of representing Canada at the Worlds, where they went 7-2 in round robin play. They beat Germany 7-4 in the semi-finals and defeated Switzerland with a score of 7-2 to claim the gold medal.

I would like to congratulate Jacques Gauthier, his team members Jordan Peters, Brayden Payette and Zachary Bilawka on their junior men's gold medal win in Russia.

Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, I'm honoured to share that during the final weekend of Black History Month, I, as well as the members for St. Vital (Mr. Moses) and Southdale (Ms. Gordon), were in Halifax, Nova Scotia, attending the Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians.

For the first time since its inaugural year in 2015, Manitoba was able to send delegates.

This conference was not only educational, inspiring and affirming, but drove home the significance of black representatives as elected officials. I saw first-hand the transformative impact on legislation and entire communities.

It was especially humbling to hear from youth about their efforts to advance the needs of our black communities and their calls to actions for us as their elected leaders.

I think that most people understand the importance of representation in political leadership. However, we must collectively act on that understanding in order to effect meaningful change.

As legislators we must commit to ensuring that the centuries of black history in Canada that has been erased by white supremacy becomes a foundational part of our education systems. We must name and dismantle the systemic racism that drives ongoing inequities that black people face every single day. We must ensure that all Manitobans understand the meaning of anti-black racism and wholly reject it, and we must recognize it is not good enough to be non-racist, but that we must be anti-racist in our efforts.

Madam Speaker, black history, celebration, education and rights advancements are not only important during the month of February; it is critical 24-7, 365 days of the year.

To end, I'd like to quote Shakira, a young black Ghanaian leader who presented to us at the conference and left us, a room full of black parliamentarians from across this country, with a call to action, and I quote: As leaders, you must speak blackness into every space and into every room. End quote.

I intend to do just that.

Thank you.

I Love to Read Month

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I love to read, and I hope you do too.

February was I Love to Read Month, not just in Manitoba, but other parts of Canada and throughout the United States as well.

It was great to see MLAs from all sides of this House participated in I Love to Read Month, getting out to their schools, out in their constituencies. And it was the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux) regaling her constituents with a story of The Bad Seed, or even the member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino) trying to describe how to unearth an enormous potato, or even the member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon), who went all in and showed up for reading duty dressed head to toe in a chicken suit.

As for me, I managed to read to over 800 students in all—usually books by the renowned author who would have turned 116 the day before yesterday, Dr. Seuss.

Yes, in Radisson, I visited every school / And told all the students about the Jungle of Nool.

Where Horton the elephant faced a mean kangaroo, / Mean Wickersham Brothers, and a mean eagle too,

Who tried very hard to destroy Whoville town square / And all the Who folks that lived there and even the mayor.

So Whos tooted their trumpets—dah-dah-dah-da, dogs barked—arf, arf, arf, cats meowed—meow / But their voices weren't heard, though they tried to be loud,

'Til young, little Jojo and his 'yop' put it over, / And their voices rang clear from that speck on a clover,

And made everyone there who lived in that jungle, / Realize that they'd made a terrible bungle.

'Cause, whether it's summer or spring or winter or fall, / A person's a person, no matter how small.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to encourage all MLAs to keep up the great work: get out and read in your schools. Students from every family in our community, no matter if they are rich or poor, should have the opportunity to get a good education and build better lives for themselves, and reading and literacy are so important in doing that.

So I would encourage, also, all Manitoba students, teachers and parents to keep reading, keep reading together, not just in February, but all year round. That way every Manitoban will be able to truthfully say: I love to read.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have a guest that I would like to introduce to you.

Sitting to my right in the loge we have Gerry McAlpine, the former MLA for Sturgeon Creek.

We welcome him back to the Legislative Building.

* (14:00)

ORAL QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Virus Preparation Impact on ER Services

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd also like to just take a second to acknowledge a constituent: James Beddome of the Green Party is here with us today.

Manitobans are growing concerned about the possible spread of the novel coronavirus, and they deserve to know what the government is doing to prepare for that eventuality.

We know already that emergency rooms are over capacity and that they're under strain. Over the last month on record, we saw that ER wait times increased by some 14 per cent. So, clearly, the system is already strained. Now, Manitobans are wondering, as a result of this, if ERs are ready to handle a surge in capacity as a result of the novel coronavirus.

Which specific steps have been taken to deal with a surge in capacity at emergency rooms across our province if the novel coronavirus does arrive?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'd like to welcome everyone back and also say hello to James in the gallery there, Madam Speaker, and welcome back to you and the staff here as well.

At this present time there are no 'conavirus' cases confirmed here in the province, but the risk—though it remains low—is one that we must address. And so public health officials are continuing to assure us of their ability to monitor and to address any situation that may evolve, however rapidly, and we are co-managing an incident management structure to ensure that there is co-ordination, that there is preparation and there is the mitigation and response capability that we all deserve to have here in the province.

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

Equipment for Health Workers

Mr. Kinew: I do encourage the Premier to make the necessary investments in nurses and health-care aides and in the human resources at emergency rooms in advance of the possible arrival of the coronavirus. Without such steps it does seem that the only measure that this government has to deal with potential staffing issues is the continued use of mandatory overtime, and we all know that that could be very harmful.

Another concern we've heard from Manitobans and from front-line workers is whether there is enough personal protective equipment on hand to protect them. We have seen in many other jurisdictions that have dealt with this virus that it is the front-line health-care workers themselves who are often first hit or at least first exposed to this virus.

Has the Premier and his government making—made the necessary investments to ensure that there are enough masks, gowns, gloves and personal protective equipment to protect all of our front-line health-care workers?

Mr. Pallister: The member is, of course, wrong if he is attempting to invoke fear in the population as a consequence of previously held biases, but he is quite right in terms of asserting concern about the safety of front-line workers, and that concern is, of course, being addressed.

We have months of back supply of necessary protective gear of various kinds, some easy to describe, some not. Even thermometer covers, Madam Speaker, are there. And we are in the process of ordering more. So we have absolute security around

our ability to protect the health and well-being of all front-line staff, who dedicate themselves so much to the protection of all of us.

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

Government Plan to Address

Mr. Kinew: I would encourage the Premier and his government to communicate more effectively with the front-line health-care workers themselves because there are still serious concerns among their ranks not only about the procedure, but even about the availability around such equipment.

Now, we know that this communication is certainly one concern. We have seen other jurisdictions in Canada move in different directions. Ontario, as an example, has started sentinel surveillance, meaning that they are doing more testing than just those patients who immediately present with symptoms, hoping to catch the disease before it reaches outbreak proportions. Programs like this can help contain, potentially, or at least manage the spread of the coronavirus.

Will the Premier clearly communicate their plan with the front-line health-care workers and will he commit today to investing in the human resources necessary to respond if the novel coronavirus arrives in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: It is tremendously important, Madam Speaker, for all Manitobans to know to take simple precautions to protect themselves, but also to avoid hearsay or speculation such as the member has just put on display here—not to spread misinformation but rather accurate information.

And it—certainly I would urge the member not to try to discredit in this Chamber the work of provincial health officials, who are dedicated to the task of ensuring, on a very, very regular basis, all information is available to all our front-line workers and others throughout the system who deserve to have such information. We trust in these officials and respect for them is important.

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

Education System Universal Breakfast Program

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, our team on this side of the House knows that every child succeeds to their

greatest potential when they start the day with a healthy, nutritious breakfast. That's why I took advantage of the opportunity to speak with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) just a few days ago and shared with him, in advance of his budget deliberations, our proposal to have a universal breakfast program in Manitoba which would guarantee that every child who needs it does not have to go through their school day hungry. Seems to be a no-brainer, an idea that every Manitoban is in—on side with, of course, except for the spokesperson that the government elected to send out—I will table his remarks—who called feeding children a #BadIdea.

I would ask the Premier: Does he stand with us in our plan to feed children, or is he against feeding hungry kids?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, there would be a number of root causes to the lack of the availability of breakfast for children in our province and we are dedicated to addressing those root causes. Most certainly we would understand that addressing the needs of those who are poor and have need for greater resources would be at the forefront, and that is what we've effectively been able to do through a number of programs to move ourselves from a legacy of leading the country in child poverty, under the NDP, to now moving up to middle of the pack.

We have more to do, Madam Speaker, but I would urge the member, in the dog-whistle frame of mind he has adopted, to understand that it is also critical for children to enjoy some time at mealtime with parents, with caregivers, and so it is important to monitor in any public policy, not just intended consequences of doing good, but also the unintended consequences of doing bad for a family.

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

New School in Brandon Construction Contract Problems

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It is a simple question that any Manitoban should be able to answer. Do you want to feed the hungry children? Yes or no? We're still waiting for the official government response, I would add, to that very obvious question.

We have a number of other questions when it comes to the education system, Madam Speaker. This government likes to call themselves smart shoppers, but apparently they have not done a very good job when it comes—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: They're going to want to hear this part, though. They have done a terrible job when it comes to securing the contractor to build the new school in south-side Brandon. In fact, the plans for many students, families and even their teachers are now on hold because this Fresh Projects contractor has filed for bankruptcy. The project has come to a complete halt.

Will the Premier tell this House if the school will be open this fall?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I remind the member he's referring to a school the NDP promised to build for a decade and never did.

I will revert back, though, Madam Speaker, because it is important to understand: of course we want every child to be well nourished and well fed, but it is also important to understand that we are striving to make sure that we support Manitoba families right at home at the kitchen table where children and parents can eat together. It is also important to understand—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —the unintended consequence of the member's simplistic and simple-minded recommendation would be in direct contrast to what the findings of a systematic review on the effects of family meal frequency on psychosocial outcomes in youth has found, Madam Speaker—a Canadian study of studies—which said that there are inverse—a systematic review of the effects of family meal frequency on psychosocial outcomes—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —in youth found—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —that frequent family meals are inversely associated with disordered eating, substance abuse, feelings of depression. It also found that a positive relationship between frequent family meals together—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (14:10)

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

Mr. Kinew: The—you know, the Premier's right about one thing: it is very simple. When the children are

hungry you should feed them. That is something that every Manitoban agrees on, except for this bunch right here, Madam Speaker. And, again, it boggles the mind that a young child who goes to school hungry—through no fault of their own—would not be fed by this government. That is completely inexcusable and it is, in fact, shameful. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Returning to the issue at hand, which is—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—the construction of the school in south-side Brandon, we know that Fresh Projects was the lowest of 10 bids for the construction of this school, but, apparently, the government is now paying the cost of being cheap.

Was the Premier aware of the financial problems with the contract when it was awarded to Fresh Projects?

Mr. Pallister: Again, the member's overly simplistic solutions ignore the unintended consequences, which could well lead to increased dysfunction among Manitoba's children: a loss of self esteem, reduced school attendance and reduced school success, Madam Speaker.

Over the last two years—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—this government has participated in support and in funding of programs that have distributed 4.8 million food items to Manitoba children, more than double what the NDP ever did while they were leading the country in child poverty.

Madam Speaker, we need no lessons from the member opposite about how to care for children.

But if children are going to school hungry, then parents aren't fulfilling their responsibilities, and so on root causes, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—we also need to assist parents in developing the skills they need—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—to look after their children. When the member says—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—we should feed your children, the member should not ignore the unfulfilled responsibilities of Manitoba parents. Families first, Madam Speaker, not state-funded cafeteria meals.

Pembina Trails School Division Travel Times and Child Care

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, parents and students in Pembina Trails School Division are facing disruption to their education. I table correspondence from a local parent who tells us that their children have had to move schools not once but twice.

In 2017, some elementary students had to move midway through their school year. Now they are being told that they must move again. These parents tell us about their concern for the potential of upwards to two hours of travel time per day for small children.

Will the minister reconsider his approach and meet the current needs of students in Pembina Trails?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): There is no question that we are dealing with the legacy of a former government, the NDP, for many years who didn't build enough schools, both in the city of Winnipeg and other parts of Manitoba. That has been a problem, but it's also been a key priority for this government.

That is why, in our first term of government, we announced that there would be seven new schools. Many of those are already under way or already completed. We also announced, during the election campaign, there would be 13 more additional schools. That is a record number of schools over that time period: more than any other government has ever committed to and done, Madam Speaker.

We recognized there was a need. That's why we're working to fulfill the need and to correct the path that the NDP put us on, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, parents in Pembina Trails are looking for solutions today, not at some distant date. This is causing real disruption to children's education and parents aren't even sure that they can get the child care that they need to continue working.

The minister is not respecting local communities and he's certainly not meeting their current needs.

Parents have written the minister, inviting him to the upcoming parent advisory meeting.

Will the minister go there and explain his decisions directly to the families he is hurting?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, there is no question that the legacy of the NDP of not building enough spaces or in the right place that those schools should have been—and I wouldn't want to suggest that maybe they were building schools for political purposes or putting them in places—that wouldn't be for me to say, but there's no question that there are many places that there needed to be schools that weren't done by the NDP.

We've committed to schools in the exact places that the member opposite is referencing. Plans are well under way for those schools. They would have been done a lot sooner had it not been ignored by the NDP for many, many years.

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

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, from his answer I take it the minister will be a no-show at tonight's parent meeting.

Children in Pembina Trails can't wait for the minister. Children need support now, not at some distant date. That's what parents in Pembina Trails are telling us. They are concerned with the continued disruption to their children and the long daily drive, and they are also unsure about child care before and after school. One parent already wrote to us explaining that they are struggling to figure out how both parents will be able to maintain their jobs.

Will the minister address this issue to ensure parents don't face these kinds of choices?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, the party that the member opposite purports to represent was a no-show for 17 years when it came to ensuring that there was adequate spaces for students in our public education system. We've been taking significant steps to address that, more than it's ever been done in the history of Manitoba, and I wish that you could build a school by just simply, you know, adding water and stirring. But it does actually take time to construct schools.

Now, the best time to have constructed those schools was—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —17 years ago, Madam Speaker, when they were in government. The next best time was when we came into government and started that work. We've been doing that at a record pace. That area is going to get significant new classroom spaces.

We look forward to addressing the need that the NDP simply didn't address.

Restorative Justice Centre and Healing Lodge Request for Construction in Dauphin

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, the Minister of Justice and his crew showed up unannounced in Dauphin, blindsiding everyone with the closure of the Dauphin correctional facility, Madam Speaker, laying off nearly 100 people and shipping off Manitobans in conflict with the law further away from their loved ones and supports that they need and to facilities that we know already are over capacity. It is simply unacceptable.

The minister has the ability right now to change the justice system and commit to building a restorative justice and healing centre, and so: Will the minister commit today to a restorative justice and healing lodge in the city of Dauphin?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I can certainly tell the House today that this decision in respect of Dauphin correction facility was not made lightly, and certainly our government and our priority is with the employees and the affected families.

Madam Speaker, I do want to inform the House that our government has finalized an agreement with the employees' union to offer employment to all Dauphin correctional facility staff who wish to remain working for the Manitoba government and assistance for those who wish to explore other employment opportunities. We have also agreed on a plan to support staff who may choose to relocate and those who want to stay in Dauphin.

I do want to thank the employees for their patience at this time.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The minister and his crew didn't even let the staff know what was coming down when they just showed up in Dauphin.

The minister is choosing to make things worse so—for so many Manitobans. Rather than investing in a new restorative justice approach to justice, ensuring

good, innovative and fair jobs in the community and respecting the Truth and Reconciliation's 35th call to action which calls for more healing lodges to 'indress' the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples, the minister instead is choosing to do the complete, absolute opposite.

Will the minister today commit to building a restorative justice and healing lodge centre in the city of Dauphin?

Mr. Cullen: I will inform the House that we are working with the indigenous people. We're working with the MKO and the Southern Chiefs Organization and certainly with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, who made a nice announcement in Thompson today in—or yesterday in terms of restorative justice—enhancing capacity for restorative justice in northern Manitoba. We will continue to build on that work that's under way and certainly working with the local communities to that end.

* (14:20)

We know there are some healing houses in and throughout Manitoba in many indigenous communities, and we will certainly be working with those communities to enhance that capacity. So we look forward to working with our indigenous partners as we move forward on this very important file.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Clearly the minister doesn't know what we're asking for because he's not talking and using the right terminology. Don't know what a healing house is, but I will share that healing lodges, Madam Speaker, and restorative justice regimes have been proven effective in lowering recidivism—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —rates, increasing cultural awareness and healing, and will ultimately improve Manitobans' reintegration into our communities here in Manitoba. We need to focus on a new restorative justice regime in Manitoba that deals with the root causes of poverty, addictions and trauma, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister commit today to developing and moving towards a new model of justice that includes a restorative justice centre and a healing lodge in Dauphin?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I'm quite sure that the NDP Justice critic needs to review her

understanding of the rule of law and demonstrate respect for it, Madam Speaker.

I also would remind her that she has just taken a new position today entirely not in congress with the previous NDP guarantee to the people of Dauphin that they'd be building a new jail: a guarantee they offered year after year after year after year after year without ever acting on it, Madam Speaker. Despite knowing the jail needed repairs, they didn't repair it adequately. Despite knowing it was not a great place to work, not safe, not safe for the inmates, they did nothing to address it.

Madam Speaker, now they have all the expert opinions and promises that they make again, but the people of Dauphin know, because they've seen it before, who keeps their word and who does not.

St. Boniface Hospital ER Vacancies Hiring and Training of Nurses

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, our front-line health-care workers continue to work hard, day in and day out, to provide quality health care to Manitobans, but they have reached their breaking point from being overworked and understaffed.

More than a quarter of nursing positions—28 per cent—in St. Boniface emergency room are vacant, and in an open letter written to the Minister of Health a few weeks ago nurses explained that, and I quote, the current state of the emergency department at St. Boniface Hospital is in a crisis and unsustainable. As a result, St. Boniface has continued to rely on mandatory overtime to fill vacancies.

Will the minister commit to hiring and training more nurses today to address these vacancies?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I welcome that member and all members back to the House on this first day. It gives me the opportunity to provide the update and indicate to all Manitobans that we have been successful in the commitment we made to hire nurses, and since June the 1st we have hired 336 nurses in the Winnipeg regional health—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

MLA Asagwara: Just like to remind the minister that his government fired almost 500 nurses. So, more accurately—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: –they've maybe hired back–
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: –some of those nurses–
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: Our nurses are committed to maintaining safe, quality patient care, but it has been difficult for them to do so since this government consolidated ERs and increased vacancy rates and patient volumes. A doctor from the St. Boniface Hospital even attributed the heavy-handed approach from the government as the cause for the current staff shortage, urging that we need to hire and train more nurses and treat them in a better way.

The minister is forcing nurses into this difficult and dangerous–

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, three things. First: 336 new nurses working in Winnipeg. Second thing: they're probably doing a freedom of information request to the wrong province. Here, there are more nurses, not less. Third thing: in response to the member's statement about the number of nurses in emergency departments and urgent care, I am pleased to all members that the vacancy rate there continues to drop since February. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: I'd like to thank the minister for confirming that the vacancy rates and the capacity continues to be an issue at St. Boniface.

As I said, there is a capacity issue. The closure of two ERs alone led to an increase in patient volumes at the three remaining ERs. The flu season has made a bad situation worse. Wait times at St. Boniface ER experienced a dramatic increase of 29 per cent from December to January of this year. All three remaining ERs have continued to see increases both month over month and year over year.

Will the minister end the crisis in our hospitals by training and hiring more nurses?

Mr. Friesen: So, Madam Speaker, again, we are hiring nurses. We were actually working at a table

with the Manitoba Nurses Union where we are examining the ways that we can make the hiring of nursing go faster. Those efforts have borne fruit. We have hired 336 new nurses.

However, a recent pilot project there also found a way to truncate the hiring of nurses from the typical 50 days down to less than 10 days, adding more nurses to the system. And, Madam Speaker, our wait times are still shorter than they were under the NDP.

Manitoba Hydro Review Consultant Compensation

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, yesterday we learned that the Pallister government paid \$600,000 to Gordon Campbell for a few months' work. I'll remind the minister that Mr. Campbell is a politician, not an expert in hydro, and yet he was given this outrageous amount of money with no evidence that any work was actually completed. It's unacceptable and an affront to everyday working Manitobans. Manitobans shouldn't have to foot the bill for this political exercise.

Will the minister reverse these charges to Manitoba ratepayers and ensure that Mr. Campbell's bill is paid for by the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): Again, I'd like to welcome our colleagues back for the spring session, and I'd also like to thank Mr. Campbell for the work that he undertook to lay the groundwork for this great review.

Madam Speaker, I don't know what the members opposite have to hide, but obviously it's a lot.

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

Mr. Sala: Neither Gordon Campbell or Brad Wall are experts in hydro, and yet the Pallister government is–
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: –trying to use former Conservative–
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: –politicians to find a way to privatize Hydro. Why else would they pay someone \$600,000 for a few months' work? It should be the PC Party and not the people of Manitoba who should be paying for this political exercise. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: Will the minister do the right thing and ensure that his party foots the bill for this sham review?

Mr. Wharton: Again, we'll take no lessons from the members opposite on operating Manitoba Hydro or a review, for that matter, Madam Speaker.

I'll just give the member a little bit of the history. In 2007, Bipole III was announced at \$2.2 billion; 2011, \$3.8 billion; and, lo and behold, Madam Speaker, in 2018, \$5.4 billion. Wow. Is that not a lesson in doing things right? I think not.

Where they failed Manitoba Hydro, we'll get it right.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government already spent \$4.5 million to hire an American consulting firm to review Keeyask and Bipole. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I don't know a lot of smart shoppers who pay for the same thing twice.

* (14:30)

Making this review even more questionable, Hydro's development plan has already been reviewed in detail by the Public Utilities Board. But, as we know, the Pallister government wants to undermine and privatize Crown assets. There's no other way to explain why they're writing their friends big cheques, including \$600,000 for a few months' work. Neither Gordon Campbell nor Brad Wall know anything about hydro, and it's incomprehensible to regular Manitobans. The minister should give the money back.

Will the PC Party of Manitoba foot the bill for this political exercise?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I would put the accomplished records of the two gentlemen the member tries to denigrate today in the Chamber ahead of, say, David Chartrand, who the NDP offered to give \$70 million to to buy off his objections to Hydro, to buy off the rights of indigenous children. There's \$70 million thrown away. There's a giant sucking sound happening as a consequence of that kind of approach.

How about the \$20-plus million that they tried to give to their donors to buy orange garbage bags that didn't work to prevent flooding?

Madam Speaker, they don't want—the NDP does not want us to learn from the mistakes they made, but we will. They made billions of dollars of mistakes and errors in respect of their Hydro strategies. They haven't owned up to them. But we will investigate, we will find out and we will protect the future interests of Manitobans as a consequence of our willingness to take a look at the mistakes—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —of the past, not run from them, as the member is proposing to do today.

City of Winnipeg Contracts Request for Inquiry

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Gordon Campbell was paid \$120,000 a month for five work—five months' work and yet another Hydro study. One would think the NDP's appalling mismanagement of Hydro has already been thoroughly documented, but there does seem to be a pattern on the part of this government, Madam Speaker, spending millions on consultants who may embarrass the NDP while turning a blind eye to serious problems that might be awkward for people connected to the PCs.

Case in point: the Premier said so long as there was a criminal investigation into the police headquarters in the city of Winnipeg, there'd be no inquiry.

Will the Premier finally call an inquiry into the audits, fire halls, land swaps and police headquarters of the city of Winnipeg, or does he seriously think nothing wrong happened there? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: The honourable—*[interjection]* Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Another in a series of nonsensical suggestions by the leader of the diminishing Liberal Party of Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

The member is suggesting we ignore billions of dollars that went away and are never coming back in Hydro while we pursue something about one-thousandth the size. This makes no sense. It's not logical, any more logical than trying to forgive every dollar owed by everybody in Canada is logical, Madam Speaker, and undoing the entire monetary system of our country.

The member continues to defy logic in his theories which he continues to advance in this place, much to his own detriment as much as to anyone else's.

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

Mr. Lamont: I've always paid my debts in full; I'm not sure the Premier can say the same.

This goes to the question of what the Premier calls two-tier justice, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont:—that we have one law for the Premier's political opponents and another for his donors. Sam Katz, with whom the Premier shares a lawyer, was a donor in 2016, and Andrew Marquess, the developer who was the subject of a controversial audit, donated \$2,500 to the Minister for Municipal Affairs. I table the documents.

Will the Premier follow in the footsteps of Gary Filmon and call an inquiry, or will he continue the NDP tradition of sweeping problems under the rug?

Mr. Pallister: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I couldn't—I didn't ascertain the—some of the preamble of the member. I expect it was quite important.

But that being said, I do want to say to the member, I did catch his interview in the Brandon Sun a few weeks ago, where he blamed his showing in the last provincial election on Justin Trudeau and claimed that Manitobans took it out on him. It wasn't Justin Trudeau impersonating him over the last three years, it was he impersonating Justin Trudeau, Madam Speaker.

COVID-19 Virus Preparation Personal-Care Home Residents

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, under this government personal-care homes have been neglected, but adequate preparedness for the 'crovona' virus, COVID-19, is essential in terms of personal-care homes. Deaths from COVID-19 in the United States are already occurring among personal-care home residents.

Will the Minister of Health continue to neglect personal-care homes, or will he table today the directives he's provided to personal-care homes to ensure the safety of residents and also to ensure that sufficient video links are available so that family and friends can stay in touch with loved ones in the case where residents or family or friends have to be quarantined?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker,

the assertion made by the member for River Heights is just wrong.

Personal-care homes are not neglected, as that member would have known if he was listening during the complementary briefing that Public Health and department officials gave him earlier today, he would have known that personal-care homes form part of the strategy of public health when it comes to preparedness in respect of corona. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: And the member could learn more by listening now than—rather than chirping over the answer I'm providing.

Madam Speaker, we are preparing, we are collaborating with officials in jurisdictions across the country and internationally. If that member knows of things that he would like to add into that preparedness, I would be happy to receive his thoughts, because this is not a partisan issue.

Provincial Finances Third Quarter Report

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, it boggles the mind. For 17 years the previous NDP government failed to meet its budget targets and mismanaged the finances of this province. This resulted in a decade of debt and decline for Manitoba. Thankfully, our PC government was elected, and our PC government was re-elected with a strong mandate to clean up the NDP's mess.

Can the Minister of Finance please update the House on the recent quarter 3 report of our government's plan to meet its fiscal responsibilities?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Thank you to the member of Assiniboia—the great new member from Assiniboine, for his fantastic question.

The previous NDP government failed to meet its budget targets year after year after year, leading to unsustainable spending and higher taxes, Madam Speaker. The third-quarter report provides a clear picture of a resilient Manitoba economy and a pathway to get ourselves back into balance after 17 years of mismanagement under the NDP.

After a decade of debt and declining of credit rating agencies, we have gotten some positive news from S&P, where they updated our credit rating from stable to positive for the outlooks. That's the type of finances that Manitobans respect, and that's why we got re-elected for a second term, Madam Speaker.

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Request for Provincial Funding

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, the North End treatment plant is out of compliance with the Environment Act licence. Last year the Pallister government urged the City of Winnipeg to deplete its accounts of funds that were dedicated to upgrade the facility. As usual, the Pallister government is unwilling to put forward the necessary resources to pay for the essentials, and protecting our waterways is about as essential as it gets.

Will the minister commit to funding its share of the North End treatment plant this year?

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

I do want to point out that the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba have actually worked collaboratively over the last couple of months to expedite the plans to address the growing number of phosphorus going into our waterways and affecting Lake Winnipeg.

We have done far more in the last couple of months than the NDP did in 17 years to address the problem.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Naylor: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government now says it's looking at a private-public partnership to build the North End treatment plant. We know that this means more consultations and more delays. That's what the proposal actually means. It's not a commitment today in this year's budget. It's just another stalling tactic, and for no good reason. Using a P3 financing scheme on core government 'infrastructure' makes no sense.

Will the Pallister government commit to this project with actual dollars this year?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm very pleased to provide the House an update with our collaborative communications that we've been having with the City of Winnipeg about reducing the phosphorous and the nitrogen that's coming out of the North End Water Pollution Control Centre.

* (14:40)

Unlike the NDP, who were told in 2003 to work collaboratively with municipalities to reduce phosphorus, they failed to act. Where they failed, we are going to move forward with working together collaboratively with our municipalities to get real action on phosphorus reduction for Lake Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Crown Land Leases

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Many farmers, specifically cattle ranchers, will be negatively impacted by the changes to leased Crown lands announced by the provincial government on September 27, 2019.

Farmers previously had the ability to strategically plan out the way in which they utilized their leased Crown land.

The announcement reduced leaseholds by 35 years to 15 years, and these changes will create great uncertainty, having the potential to impact an entire farm's operation and even existence.

This uncertainty will take away the incentive for farmers to safely invest in their Crown land leases.

The potential of losing these leases without the afforded time to plan ahead will create additional stress for the current farming generation and the ones to follow.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Agriculture to reconsider the changes to Crown land leases and instead create an agreeable strategy that satisfies all parties, specifically ranchers;

To urge the Minister of Agriculture to recognize the value of agriculture in the province of Manitoba and the value Crown land holds to farmers in sustaining their livelihood;

To urge the Minister of Agriculture and all honourable members to understand the important role farmers play in the Manitoba economy, and to allow them to take part in discussions that directly impact their livelihood.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call for a debate this afternoon, Bill 2, The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed), and following that passage, Bill 11, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second readings of Bill 2, The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed), followed by second reading of Bill 11, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed)

Madam Speaker: I will now call bill—second reading of Bill 2, The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed).

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Relations (Ms. Squires), that Bill 2, the Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed), now be read a second time and referred to the committee of the House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: And I'm pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 2.

This bill repeals The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act and The Shops Regulation Act to eliminate the province-wide restrictions on holiday and Sunday shopping hours.

Many Manitobans support allowing businesses to set their own hours and we want to give Manitobans more freedom and flexibility on where and when they shop. Manitoba is the only western province which still restricts retail businesses from operating on holidays and Sundays. Having more restrictive rules that neighbouring jurisdictions put Manitoba retail

businesses at a disadvantage compared to things like online shoppers, which is very popular now, Madam Speaker.

The bill also ensures the municipalities will continue to have the authority under The Municipal Act to regulate retail business hours within their jurisdiction as they see fit. The Province will work with municipalities to help develop these bylaws, if needed.

The proposed bill will maintain provisions respecting retail employees' right to refuse work on Sundays and Remembrance Day. We continue—or we consider this to be a fair accommodation of consumer preferences while maintaining a reasonable work-life balance for retail employees.

These changes will include a part of the government's 100-day action plan commitment to bring forward legislation to eliminate Sunday and holiday shopping restrictions, while preserving the right of municipalities to create local retail holiday restrictions within their communities.

The Labour Management Review Committee, which is an advisory body on labour legislation, and that includes representatives from major employers and labour organizations, was consulted on this legislation. We carefully consider the committee's advice in drafting this legislation, and I'd like to thank the committee members for their consideration of the bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Could the minister please clarify whether workers would have the right to refuse work on a holiday Monday or Friday, such as Good Friday, Easter Monday and Louis Riel Day?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Course, The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act currently gives—currently gave most retail workers the right to

refuse work on Sundays, providing they give their employee 14 days of notice.

The right does not apply to workers who work for the following types of businesses; there's a number that was a part of it. Part of the new legislation going forward, the Retail Business Holiday Closing Act is being repealed as part of the Bill 2, The Retail Hours of Operation Act. This will eliminate the province-wide restrictions on the ability of retail businesses to open on holidays and Sundays. However, provisions respecting the right to refuse work on Sundays is being maintained and will now be contained within The Employment Standards Code.

Mr. Wasyliw: Can the minister explain why Good Friday, Easter Monday and Louis Riel were not included as holidays that a Manitoban can refuse to work on?

Mr. Fielding: Well, the code itself will not specify what business types exemptions will be a part of this to refuse. Just further to my first part of the question to finish it off, the department will be consulting with labour management community-committee in near future on whether or not the current list of business exemptions will be a part of it. We're going to consult with them in terms of that regulations, regulations specifying types of business of work of the exemption of the right to refuse cannot be passed in Bill 2 until we receive royal assent.

We think this is important legislation that needs to move forward that has the support of many Manitobans.

Mr. Wasyliw: Could the minister please clarify that the bill only allows for an employee to refuse work on Sundays and the only other day would be Remembrance Day?

Mr. Fielding: That is true.

Mr. Wasyliw: How did the minister reach the decision to only include Remembrance Day, in addition to Sundays for a right to refuse work?

Mr. Fielding: I-it's determined that obviously that people need a day of rest, that's a part of it. We will be consulting labour management committee in terms of the exemptions that will be part of it. There was some exemptions part of bill in previous destinations. Once the bill does have royal assent, that's a part of it, we will be making some regulatory abilities, that's a part of it. So we want to listen to labour management. That's a part of it. It was part of the

existing legislation, so we think that makes sense to incorporate that, as well.

* (14:50)

Mr. Wasyliw: When drafting this legislation, did the government take the religious diversity of Manitoba into consideration?

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely, we did. We consulted with, I believe, the labour management committee, employers and employees, we consulted with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, that's a part of it. This is something that is widely supported with, I think, the residents of Manitoba.

We also thought it's important to provide some parameters in terms of municipalities that may, for a whole bunch of reasons, want to restrict some hours. This provides choice. It allows municipalities to make these important decisions. That's a part of it.

And, of course, we respect different ethnic backgrounds or religions. This—but this is not about religion at all, Madam Speaker. This is about ensuring people have a day of rest.

Mr. Wasyliw: Can the minister indicate what ethnocultural or religious communities were consulted in drafting this legislation?

Mr. Fielding: The major consultation groups that we consulted were labour management. We also consulted Association of Manitoba Municipalities. That's a part of it.

Those were the major consulting stakeholder groups that were a part of that, a part of the legislation. We want their advice and so we provided some advice. In fact, we got some advice from the labour and management committee in terms of a review letter that's a part of it, and we made sure we incorporated elements of what they had suggested in the legislation.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why weren't ethnocultural and religious groups consulted in relation to this bill?

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, as I mentioned, this bill isn't about religion. This bill is about providing some choice, some flexibilities in terms of shopping on Sundays—which, by the way, most jurisdictions in western Canada—in fact, Manitoba's currently the only western province which still restricts businesses from operating on holidays and Sundays through the retail business holiday act.

Retail business organizations have lobbied for this as well as—for a long period of time. And the retail

business exempts some businesses from the restrictions that will be a part of it.

We know that the nature of shopping has changed quite substantially, even over the last four or five years, where you're competing more with online businesses.

So this is not a religious bill; this is about providing a day of rest.

Mr. Wasyliw: Will the government consider giving workers the right to refuse to work on other religious holidays?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I'd like to say to the member that all employees have obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to workers' religious practice under The Human Rights Code, so, of course, we will follow that.

Mr. Wasyliw: To clarify, is the minister prepared to say in the House right now what other days he is prepared to grant a worker the right to refuse on a religious basis?

Mr. Fielding: What I would let—what I would say is that all employees have obligations to provide reasonable accommodations to workers' religious practices under The Human Rights Code. It's clear as day, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wasyliw: Was the Retail Council of Canada and their local Manitoba branch consulted in relation to this legislation?

Mr. Fielding: We consulted at the Labour Management Review Committee, which is made up of retailers as well as labour organizations.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why wasn't the organization that actually represents retailers in Manitoba consulted in relation to this legislation?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I've met with Mr. John Graham, that represents retailers in Manitoba—who's part of the labour management group, who is supportive of this legislation. In fact, they've been calling for this legislation for many years.

Mr. Wasyliw: Does the minister anticipate any repercussions from Sunday shopping hours potentially being extended?

Mr. Fielding: We've given municipalities the right to restrict some of those hours. We appreciate the fact that one-size-fits-all does not work for every jurisdiction in Manitoba.

What this legislation does, it provides choice for municipalities if they do want to offer that. I would suggest to you, even over the last five to seven years, the patterns of shopping and the way people shop has dramatically changed, and I would suggest to you that Manitoba, again, is the only current province in western Canada which still restricts businesses from operating on holidays and Sundays. So we think, with the explosion of online shopping, this allows businesses to grow and prosper. We've taken advice from the labour management committee made up of employers and employees, and we think this is strong legislation.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Would the government be open to expanding the bill, to allow individuals to refuse other days, individuals of non-Christian religions, for example?

Mr. Fielding: Well, again, as I already had suggested to you, this is nothing to do—religion. This is a day of rest; that's a part of it. And under, again—all employees have obligations—all employers, rather, have obligations to provide reasonable accommodations for workers' religious practices under The Human Rights Code.

I'm going to repeat this one more time. In addition, all employers have obligations to provide reasonable accommodations to workers' religious practices under The Human Rights Code.

So, if employers want to be in violation of The Human Rights Code in some respect, that—it's clearly laid out that's here, and there's obligations that we would anticipate, that we would expect employers to follow.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can tell the Legislature what category of employees will be excluded under regulations from having the right to refuse work.

Mr. Fielding: Well, again, we obviously repealed The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act. A part of that—some of the workers that had the right to refuse were a retail business establishment where the number of persons including the owner employed for the sale of goods and services cannot exceed four persons at any one time.

The retail sales of liquor and cannabis under the authority of licence or permit issues, under liquor, gaming, cannabis; things like pharmacies that are dispensing drugs, retail businesses where gasoline, motor oil-related goods, things like nursery stock, flower gardens, flower garden supplies, fresh fruit,

these are areas, there's many more, Madam Speaker, that were initially exempt. That's a part of it. That's not part of the legislation 'reowl' exemption, but we will be looking at this in terms of regulation, once we—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: How will it be determined who will lose the right to refuse under regulations?

Mr. Fielding: There was current—as I mentioned, I won't go through the list again, Madam Speaker. There was a current number of exemptions that were part of the existing legislation that now has been repealed. Part of the new legislation, we will be reviewing this list one more time. We 'ruinged' that with labour and management—the labour management committee. We'll also be consulting all other jurisdictions.

Again, Manitoba is the only jurisdiction in western Canada that doesn't allow this to happen, so we want to make sure the list is very consistent with other jurisdictions. We'll be consulting with that, and we'll be able to make some regulations in respect to that once the bill is passed and proclaimed.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'd like to ask the minister, with respect to the ability for people to attend their religious services or make their religious commitments, does that extend to nurses who are given mandatory overtime?

Mr. Fielding: Part of the new legislation—the original legislation was repealed.

I can tell you that there was some exemptions that were part of the existing bill. As mentioned to the minister—or mentioned to the—mentioned to members of the opposition, so many different ways, that the legislation, once it is passed—proclaimed, there will be an ability to make regulation to exempt certain people, to allow them to, in fact, refuse work. That's part of it, and so—or not to refuse work, rather; that's a part of it.

We're going to be reviewing that with the labour management committee, things like Kevin Rebeck, things like John Graham, that's a part of it. We're going to be looking at what other jurisdictions do to make sure we're very consistent with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why won't the minister include in the body of this legislation the groups and categories of employees who will not have the right to refuse work in Manitoba, and why will he hide that in regulations?

* (15:00)

Mr. Fielding: I don't expect the member of the opposition to understand this, but we want to consult with the labour management committee. Consulting—we think it's important to consult with labour and management to make sure we're getting it right. That's what's—going to review the current list that's in place.

We're going to also take a look what other jurisdictions are doing. Things have changed in terms of people's shopping habits with online that's coming online, so we want to make—to take the time to make sure we get this right. It is our intent to provide some sort of list that's there, but we need to consult with labour and we need to consult with management.

Labour has also proposed some sort of a clause that suggests that potentially we should grandfather this that's there. So we want to consult and hear and make sure we get this right.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, I do want to ask, in relation to the part about refusing work on Sunday, what effect this might have on the labour market. If there are additional hours from certain employees refusing to work on one day of the week, does that mean that there will be an economic impact to the labour market?

And I want to know whether the minister's done any studies into the effects of this bill would have on the Manitoba labour market.

Mr. Fielding: Sometimes we like to talk to experts and people know this. The expert that I'm referring to, of course, is Kevin Rebeck, who—a part of the letter when he sent to me suggested that they would support this legislation. They wanted some sort of an important clause where you could grandfather things in, but the labour council supported this.

Kevin Rebeck—in fact, Kevin Rebeck didn't go as far as we're going in this legislation, but we're going to meet with Kevin Rebeck; we're going to listen to what he has to say in terms of labour. That's why he supports this bill and that's why we, as a government, have introduced this.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I think it would be difficult to suggest, Madam Speaker, that anyone could support this legislation without knowing more information.

Now, once again, the minister has given, I think, a two-minute speech and expects every member of this House to just go along with it and trust him that he's going to talk to the labour management

commission at some point in the future and develop regulations behind closed doors.

Well, I think what we're saying, Madam Speaker, is that's not good enough, so I would suggest that this minister should give this House more information. I hope the debate will be fulsome this afternoon and we'll hear lots of additional information from his colleagues, but so far, the minister is lacking in the information that he has provided.

Mr. Fielding: Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the member opposite doesn't do his homework, because if he did do his homework, he'd know that any regulations that come on in Manitoba get passed through an OIC. It has to stand for 45 days where people have an opportunity to review this. That wasn't in place before. That's something that our government has done because we support consultation.

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

Debate

Madam Speaker: The floor is open for debate. Any members wishing to speak on debate?

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I'm old enough to remember in Manitoba when we didn't actually have Sunday shopping and I also remember when it came in and how controversial this law was, and the issue, if many of the members recall, was workers having the right to a quality of life.

They are now being asked to work on weekends when before they were just working during the weekday, and weekends was when their children are not in school and they're around, and they can actually spend time together as a family.

And that was the issue back then, was that workers were being now forced to give up their family time to work even more hours. And it was about community; it was about quality of life; it was about building a strong Manitoba.

So I suspect that what happened in the politics of the day was a compromise, and that compromise was The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act, and this act allowed workers the right to refuse, but only on Sunday.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And it set aside certain common holidays where there couldn't be any shopping, and that included Remembrance Day, New Year's Day,

Louis Riel Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

And the problem with the previous legislation was filled with exceptions. There was numerous categories of workers that, despite having the right to refuse, it was taken away through the back door through exceptions, and it made that legislation quite hollow.

So we heard recently that there was one of these small grocery store chains in Winnipeg that sort of fell through the cracks of this law, and was certainly adversely affected by it. And the argument that was being made is that things had changed in Manitoba.

We have evolved as a province. We are no longer the province that we were when the initial legislation came in. It no longer spoke to the needs of consumers. It no longer spoke to the needs of employers, and it certainly didn't speak to the needs of workers.

But the problem we have with this legislation was that it feels, and I think I'm right on this, that it was very much a knee-jerk reaction by the government, that the government saw a public relations problem.

They saw a sympathetic small-business owner that the public seemed to agree with, and for political expediency reasons, they react and they jump on this issue and they spit out this legislation without actual thought to how Manitoba has changed, how we are different now as a society, and how this legislation should look.

Make no mistake, we have changed as a province, and I believe we, on this side of the House, agree that this legislation needs to be changed, that we agree that it needs to be updated, as does the employment standards act of Manitoba. That no longer works for modern day Manitoba, and given that this act amends it, I think we need to have that discussion and that debate.

This ought not to have been a government public relations effort which is what we're seeing today it is. This legislation is shallow and without substance and lacking with any sort of idea of where Manitobans should and how they should work. This was sort of slapped together and it shows.

So it doesn't meaningfully address the issues that this government wanted to do. What this government wanted to do was expand the rights of small businesses to open on Sunday.

Well, then, they obviously heard from the management labour committee that there are concerns

about the right of workers to be forced into employment on these days, and so they attempted to appease by leaving the right to refuse exemption into this piece of legislation.

So I have met with the Manitoba Federation of Labour about this issue, and their No. 1 concern was preserving the quality of life for their workers and keeping a work-life balance in our laws. And we can respect that, and that's obviously a noble goal that everyone in this Legislature should be helping to enforce.

I have, unlike the government, met with the Retail Council of Canada, which is shocking that, given this is their issue, these are the employers that this government feels that they weren't important enough or interested enough in this legislation to be consulted, and it just shows you how sort of slapdash and haphazard this legislation was put together, and how shallow the actual consultation was.

They raised several issues with me that they had concerns of: What happens if you have a collective agreement that supersedes this legislation? Does this legislation govern or does the collective agreement govern?

Well, it's silent on that. They were wondering that, if you had an employer that absolutely needed persons to work on Sunday, would they be allowed to contract with an employee for that specific clause, and would that contract be legal with this legislation.

They don't know. They have questions. None of their concerns have been addressed.

So the only holiday in this act is you have the right to refuse Remembrance Day. Only day of the week that you have in this legislation is the right to refuse Sunday.

* (15:10)

So, getting back to Manitoba and how much it's changed over the last 30 years, we have had wonderful strength of our province, massive immigration, and the face and nature of Manitoba is—been changed for the better. We are a much more diverse and vibrant community because of that.

But we are no longer just a community of European immigrants and indigenous First Nations; we have communities here that don't celebrate religious days on Sunday, that their day of rest, to use the minister's language, is something other than a Sunday. We have large Muslim populations that

celebrate on Fridays. We have our Jewish population, amongst others, that celebrate on Saturdays.

Why does this legislation only privilege Sunday? Why does it leave out a growing number of Manitobans who don't have their day of rest on Sundays?

Likewise, if we are saying that you can refuse a holiday, why is Remembrance Day the only one that you can refuse? It is an exceptionally important holiday. I know everybody in this Chamber or in their constituency, at their local Legion—but you also know that out of all those holidays that I've listed in the other—previous act, Remembrance Day probably is the one that has the smallest participation from Manitobans. And why is that one chosen over all other holidays that Manitobans recognize and observe?

So modern Manitoba no longer looks like it did when we first had this debate 30 years ago, when these compromises were made. And we need to update this act, but how this act has been done is the wrong way to do it.

So why are we saying that you have the right to refuse Sunday, but no other day of the week? This government needs to explain why they are privileging certain communities' day of rest over other communities' day of rest.

Why do some communities get to have their cultural and religious days of rest recognized and others do not? So we haven't heard from this government why, in a modern multicultural Manitoba, some citizens are treated as second-class and do not get to have their cultural or religious rights recognized in our law.

Likewise, why is Remembrance Day the only holiday that's recognized? Why cannot you say, I refuse as a devout Christian to work on Christmas Day?

Now, my background—I'm Ukrainian—Ukrainian Orthodox heritage, and so I grew up very much experiencing what this government is now trying to entrench into law. I don't celebrate on December 24th and 25th; my family celebrates on January 6th and 7th and we have always, since I was a little child. I would be spending December 24th in a downtown pool hall with my Muslim friends because that holiday didn't have any sort of meaning to us.

So I've experienced, as a Manitoban, first-hand what it's like when the laws of your province doesn't

acknowledge or value your culture, your way of doing things, and sees the world very differently.

And, of course, as Manitobans we had to change how we lived, oftentimes on January 6th or 7th I would be in school or I'd have to work—and this is my—one of our high holy days, and we would be, you know, required to work or in school during that period of time because we did not have a right to refuse under those laws.

So now, we're basically saying to a whole other generation, whole new categories of Manitobans that we are going to extend this, that we are going to make this the law of Manitoba, and lord knows how long this is going to stay on the books.

We heard a little bit today in question period about structural racism, and this bill is an example of structural racism. This is a way where you have, without thinking, a group of lawmakers who have a world view and a culture that they subscribe to, and they are entrenching a law that suits them without being sensitive to the fact that many Manitobans don't live like they do, don't recognize certain days of rest as they do.

And, by doing that, we send the signal to that growing population of Manitobans that, somehow, their culture, their way of life isn't worthy enough to recognize in law, that they don't get their day of rest. They have to work, and there's no acknowledgement in the law as to how incredibly unfair that does.

Leaving aside, in a modern Manitoba, how uncomfortably troubling that message this government wants to send to Manitobans, it is generally about fairness and equality. It is about breathing life into multiculturalism. Do we actually believe in multiculturalism or is it just something that we pay lip service to?

This law pays lip service to multiculturalism, because a truly multicultural Manitoba would not have one-size-fits-all laws when it comes to cultural communities. It would be nuanced enough, it would be sophisticated enough to recognize that we have many days of rest and that all days of rest are equal and all days of rest are worthy of support in our laws, and one person's day of rest shouldn't be risen above, in a legal status, than somebody else's.

And, when we do that, we are entrenching systemic racism in our laws. And I appreciate this government was not intending to do that, but that is the result. That is the effect of what this law is going to do.

We don't have to do that. We can amend this law. We can make it a better law. We can make this a law that's actually inclusive, that all Manitobans see themselves represented in this law.

So—but it comes down to political will, and it comes down to this government wanting to do the right thing. And this government has not explained why they are prepared to privilege Sunday as a day of rest, as opposed to any other day.

And there's a simple solution here: we just simply write in the law that every worker has the right to refuse work for a designated cultural or religious day of rest. And, in that sense, everybody is treated equal under our law. Nobody is discriminated against. Everybody feels included and heard in Manitoba.

In this day and age, we just can't have this sort of bull-in-a-china-shop legislation, where the government just barrels in without thinking and says, yes, we really don't care about this legislation. We haven't really thought this through. We haven't really talked to anybody.

I mean, we heard that no cultural groups have been consulted, not one. No religious groups have been consulted, not one. So this government likes to chest-pound, say that they love consultation—of course, until they don't do it. And this is a good example that they have, you know, been asleep at the switch and they simply haven't been consulting Manitobans.

This will have a serious long-lasting cultural impact. I mean, we don't think of that in Manitoba, but the laws that we pass actually change the culture of this province. We are not like the Americans because we have universal health care. It changes the culture of a community. We are more communitarian in our beliefs and we treat each other better because we have these collective institutions.

So these laws matter and how we structure them matter, and it will change how we as Manitobans relate to one another, how we see each other and whether or not we feel part of the larger Manitoban community.

* (15:20)

The second concern I have with this bill is under section 81(1). It reads—the heading is: Retail employees may refuse to work on Sunday. And says, 81(1): Subject to regulations, an employee in a retail business establishment may refuse work on a Sunday if the employee gives the employer at least

14 days' notice before the Sunday, or, as much notice is as reasonably and predictable in the circumstances if the employee is scheduled to work less than 14 days before that Sunday.

What the key section of this act is, it says subject to regulations. So this is one of those trust-me provisions. We'll pass the law, then we're going to pass regulations, but, of course, we know what's going to be in those regulations. The regulations are going to take away this right from workers. The regulations are going to list category after category of jobs that will be exempted; that these workers will not have the right to refuse.

So this is a bit of political sleight of hand. This government says they're going to give workers the right to refuse, and then it's going to take away that right in the regulations.

So can we trust this government who has been so hostile to Manitoba workers, that has done whatever it can to diminish working Manitobans' ability to provide for their families and to support one another? Can we trust this government that has been so hostile to the labour movement to turn around and say, yes, we will give you this right, but don't worry on the regulations, trust us?

And then let's look at who they are going to consult because that's what they say is going to happen. They're going to consult. Who? We don't know. The people who would be obviously consulted about this haven't, so we don't know who is going to be consulted afterwards, after they get this law passed.

Well, I can tell you who is going to be consulted. Every single industry lobbyist is going to be knocking on the Minister's door, and you are going to see category after category after category of jobs that are going to be excluded to the point where this right to refuse will be so riddled with holes that it will be a meaningless, empty right that most Manitobans will not enjoy.

Now, the government, again, simple solution, be straight with Manitobans. Be transparent, be accountable, tell us right now who you don't think should have this right. Let them come to the Legislature and make the case that they should. Be upfront, be honest.

If most Manitobans knew that they had a right to refuse work and then it's going to be taken away from them six months later, they will be down here. They'll let you know what you think, unless, of course, this government doesn't want to hear what they have to

say, which I think is probably the real reason that they've structured it this way.

There's absolutely no reason why this government could not include in the body of the legislation the categories of Manitobans who they are going to take away the right to refuse.

And the fact that this government can't even answer simple questions as to who is on their list—they know who is on the list. And this government perhaps could tell this Chamber which lobbyist they're going to speak to and who is going to ask them to take people off the list, and let Manitobans know ahead of time before there's a vote on this about just how empty and meaningless this right to refuse is going to be.

So we know under the old regime, if you worked in the tourism industry, you weren't on there. If you were on the hospitality industry, you weren't on there. It doesn't take many exemptions, basically, to get rid of most people who could actually benefit this.

So, now, why won't the government list what workers will be excluded? And where is the list? Why do we have to have that discussion later at some unknown time? Why not have it now? Why not have it part of whether or not this legislation actually should go forward? That is a huge piece of context that's missing to the Manitoban people. They have no idea what this legislation means when you haven't created the list of exemptions. How can anyone vote on a bill when they don't know who has been excluded from the bill?

It is magical thinking to think that's somehow an appropriate, accountable way to move ahead with the government's business. So this isn't a law about workers' rights. This is a law expanding the businesses' ability to stay open on Sundays. And we shouldn't confuse that.

Now, this law did need to update, but there's a way to do it. And workers' rights need to be protected, and their work-life balance can't just be an afterthought. That has to be one of the principal reasons for this bill.

Now, we can turn, for an example, to Ontario. They were the last province to have a significant revamp of employment standards legislation. But, of course, the minute the conservatives took power in Ontario, they went back to their old Wreck-It Ralph ways and they got rid of groundbreaking employment standards legislation there.

An Honourable Member: Cut, cut, cut.

Mr. Wasyliw: Cut, cut, cut. That's right. That's what Ontario, that's what this Pallister government does. That's what all Conservative governments know how to do.

But here's what was in their law before the conservatives jumped on it and hollowed it out. In Ontario, you would have as an employee—you're not unionized—you would have sick leave for up to three days a year. Now, that sounds modest, but we don't have that. That's a significant reform in Manitoba.

Another reform that they had is they had family responsibility leave. And you had up to three days a year on that. So, if you were injured, if you were ill, if you had a medical emergency, if somebody in your family had those things happen to you, you could support your family. Of course, we don't have that in our legislation and, unfortunately, Ontario because of the conservatives no longer has that anymore.

They also had bereavement leave. If somebody in your immediate family had died in Ontario, you would be allowed to take off work and had the right to refuse work there to go to a funeral. It is mind-boggling here in Manitoba, in this day and age, that we do not have the right to go to a funeral.

And, of course, you know, this government certainly could do those changes—it could do it in this legislation, but you've got to be motivated. You have to have—be focused on making the life of Manitoba workers better, not simply trying to expand hours for a select number of small businesses.

And then the key reform that they had in Ontario was the right to refuse work on a day you weren't scheduled. And that's key. What happens, and I'm not sure if anybody on the opposite side has ever had a real job, but if you did and you worked retail, what would happen is every once in a while you're on your day off and your employer would call you in to work on your day off—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —and on threat of firing, you would have to come in and you would lose your day off—you would lose your time with your kids.

So what Ontario did is you had a right to refuse—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —work under those circumstances.

So there are many different avenues that we can make this terrible piece of legislation better—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —something even more palatable, but the real issue here—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: The real issue here is we need 'predictative' scheduling in Manitoba. And I'm seeing a lot of blank faces over there, but that's not unusual.

But I will explain. What that is, is the legal requirement for employers to post schedules well in advance—several weeks in time. And if you have a religious or cultural day of rest, you can schedule it off—you can shape your schedule to make it work with your family life, right? It gets away from all these problems that we're seeing here.

And you cannot do last-minute scheduling changes under that law. So you can't do sort of just-in-time scheduling, where you're constantly at the beck and call of your employer, where you can be at home with your children and having a family day and get the call, oh, you got to drop that and you got to come in. Well, I don't have daycare. Well, too bad; come in or you lose your job. That can no longer happen under that type of scheme.

* (15:30)

And so it is fair to both the employer, because the employer knows what their labour requirements will be for the next two weeks and who's available and can structure it accordingly; it's fair to the employee, because they have their life mapped out and they're not at the beck and call of an employer and they can plan and have some work-life balance.

And, obviously, the public is well-served when employers and employees have balance, when they have respectful, professional relationships where we work together as a community to make sure that not only the needs of business are addressed but the needs of Manitoba families are also addressed.

So this legislation doesn't do that. This legislation has all kinds of unintended consequences. This legislation is going to entrench structural racism in our laws, and we need to make sure that, as a Legislature, whatever laws we pass do not have those unintended consequences.

And, you know, our party is not against this bill. We are against this bill the way it is written, and if the

government is prepared to be serious about it, we will sit down, work with you for a bill that is fair, that treats all Manitobans with dignity and includes all Manitobans in our laws. And I'm hoping that this government will take us up on that.

The minister had mentioned many, many times that this was somehow an initiative to combat the phenomena of e-commerce. Well, there's a simple way to do that which doesn't pick between, you know, Sunday and other days of rest. Let's have an e-commerce tax like Saskatchewan, like Quebec, where we make sure—

An Honourable Member: Another tax.

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, and this is supported by the Retail Council of Canada, those socialists—you know them—they want to see this tax because it creates a level playing field. Why do Conservatives not like level playing fields? Why do they believe in inequality so much?

So this is about fairness. This is not about tapping somebody on the shoulder and say, we like your religion. We're going to give you a day of rest. We don't like your religion. We're not going to give you a day of rest. So—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: I appreciate the time to speak on this bill. I hope that the government will not take a partisan approach here and work with us to draft a bill that everybody in this Legislature can be very, very proud of, something that's ground-baking that we can show off to the rest of this country.

So I want to thank you very much for your non-attention.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers on the bill?

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Well, thank you, Mr.—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Here we go. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is truly a 'privilège' to rise in the House today and be given the opportunity to put some words on the record regarding Bill 2, The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act, but before I start, I'd like to welcome everyone back to the Chamber. I trust you took the opportunity to reconnect here with your constituents while the House was not sitting and are ready for the

spring session, which will prove to be an action-packed and filled House in the next few days.

Here we go. Mr. Deputy Speaker, currently Manitoba has some of the most complex and convoluted retail business holiday closing legislation in all of the Canadian provinces. We inherited Sunday and holiday shopping laws that were outdated and unnecessarily complicated that do not align with retail business and Manitoba consumer expectations in the Manitoba we live in today.

The current Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act was ascended in 1987. The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Act currently prohibits certain retail businesses from opening on statutory holidays. This act applies to all businesses with certain exceptions, including restaurants, pharmacies, laundromats and businesses that operate with four or fewer employees.

As for Sunday shopping, under the current law retail businesses can only be open between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the municipalities that have passed the bylaw allowing them to be open, which includes such centres as Winnipeg, Thompson, Brandon and Portage la Prairie. The legislation is extremely outdated and contains loopholes that favour some businesses over others. Manitoba residents and businesses have lobbied for many years to get rid of this outdated and complicated legislation.

Manitobans support allowing businesses to set their own hours. We are supporting Manitobans by making this change to give Manitobans more freedom and flexibility on when they want to provide their products and services when they buy their groceries while protecting workers' rights to time off.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in early 2019 the owner of a Food Fare in Winnipeg was fined \$10,000 after he opened his store on Good Friday. The owner again opened his store on Canada Day. This ignited a flurry of media attention and online comments around Sunday and statutory holiday shopping hours and just who could and could not be open.

Online supporters for change stated since the introduction of this act, our culture and values have changed over time. Laws and regulations in theory represent the common beliefs of the population in a democratic society. Supporters believe that society believes that it changed over time and therefore the laws and regulations must be adapted to reflect this.

Supporters were quick to point out the inconsistencies in the current legislation, noting Food Fare, where groceries are bought, received a

\$10,000 fine for opening on a statutory holiday, yet on the same day, liquor stores, casinos, cannabis retailers, restaurants and pharmacies—that I might add also sell groceries—were permitted to be open. It is clear to see the current act is one of the most convoluted and unnecessary laws regulating retail trade in our province.

This legislation was apparently enacted to ensure all Manitoba workers have a day off on Sundays and statutory holidays to spend time with family and friends. As worded and enforced, the current law is unnecessarily complicated. It contains entangled and unnecessary rules and exemptions that for some unknown arbitrary reasoning dictate which retail outlets may be open while similar, competing retail outlets must remain closed.

The list of who can and cannot be open on Sundays and statutory holidays is extremely long and lacks consistency. The sheer number of exemptions and restrictions in the legislation defeats the intent of the legislation by allowing many retail outlets right now, such as gas stations, Liquor Marts, corner stores, pharmacies and restaurants to remain open. This results in their employees not being guaranteed the same day of rest as other employees are guaranteed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time to fix this problem. Our government promised to lift the restrictions on Sunday and holiday shopping. We promised during the 2019 election and reiterated as part of our 100-Day Action Plan, we will eliminate provincial Sunday and holiday shopping restrictions.

I have had the opportunity to speak to store owners throughout Manitoba regarding their thoughts surrounding this new approach to Sunday and holiday shopping. Most had the same comments, welcoming the idea of lifting the restrictions. Many stated they thought it was currently unfair to have to be closed when others had the opportunity to be open. Most felt the decision to be open or closed in these time periods should be left to the business owners and their employees. Many pointed out to the inconsistencies on statutory holidays that allowed stores to be open on Louis Riel Day and Thanksgiving Day with limited hours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also spoke to Manitoba shoppers who are also workers in Manitoba. The majority of those I spoke to thought they should have the opportunity to shop for goods and services on Sundays and statutory holidays. Some stated that this was their only opportunity to shop. They found it confusing that stores were open on some statutory

holidays but closed on others. Shoppers also found the different stores' opening hours confusing on these days.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, currently, retail business hours and days of operation are subject to provincial legislation. Passage of this bill will give local governments authority over these matters. In short, once these amendments are passed, it will be up to each municipality to determine the rules for retail store hours in their municipalities.

* (15:40)

With the passing of this bill, the time period within which a municipality may allow retail businesses with more than four workers to be open on Sundays and holidays will be expanded.

We recognize that some municipalities might want to keep shopping restrictions. That's why we will give municipalities authority to regulate retail businesses within their jurisdiction through a bylaw. A municipality will have the power to pass a bylaw that will allow their retailers to be open for up to nine hours between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays and statutory holidays.

Even if a municipality has a bylaw in place, each business owner will still be able to decide if they will be open or closed. And it's important to point out that this new bill continues to protect the rights of the employees.

Workers will continue to have the right to refuse to work on those days. We continue to support workers' rights by allowing workers to maintain family time on Sundays and statutory holidays. Workers cannot be terminated nor discriminated against for refusing to work on those days and, if an employee is terminated or discriminated against, in order—an order of compensation or reinstatement may be granted as per the Manitoba labour standards board. In short, once these amendments are passed, it will be up to each municipality to determine the rules for retail store hours.

Manitoba residents and businesses have lobbied for many years to get rid of this outdated, complicated legislation. We recognize the current legislation is extremely outdated and contains loopholes that favour some businesses over others. Manitobans support allowing businesses to set their own hours. The current complex rules create a two-tiered and unfair system in Manitoba.

For example, restaurants, casinos, liquor and cannabis stores are not subject to the same restrictions as other retail businesses in Manitoba. Pharmacies are allowed to sell groceries on holidays, but grocery stores are not. You can purchase milk, bread, chips and fruit in a pharmacy or convenience store, but not from your local grocery store. Gardening supplies can be sold on holidays, but power tools cannot.

It is long past time to get rid of this outdated system. It is time we leveled the playing field for our local retailers so they have the opportunity to compete against 24-7 online retailers and retailers in other provinces with less restrictive rules. Passage of Bill 2 fits with our government's promise of reducing red tape by removing approximately 40 regulatory requirements and approximately \$42 million in administrative burden.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, currently Manitoba is the only western province that restricts retail business from operating on Sundays and holidays. Repealing the RHBCA will eliminate the restrictions on holiday and Sunday shopping hours, thus providing a level playing field among retail businesses, and will align Manitoba with the western provinces. Additionally, this bill will repeal The Shops Regulation Act, which sets out a variety of antiquated rules allowing municipalities to pass bylaws to restrict shopping hours where no bylaw exists under the authority of this act.

Municipalities will continue to have authority under The Municipal Act to regulate retail business hours within their jurisdictions as they see fit, and this authority will be expanded to include liquor and cannabis sales. The right for retailer-workers to refuse to work on Sundays is maintained, and will now be enshrined in the Employment Standards Code.

With the passage of Bill 2, we are eliminating outdated rules surrounding shopping in Manitoba. Municipalities will be able to pass bylaws regulating business hours in their jurisdictions. Retail business owners will be permitted to decide if they will remain open or closed on statutory holidays. Employees within these businesses will have the choice to work or observe the holiday. And, finally, Manitobans will have the freedom to choose when and where they wish to shop.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Thanks for this opportunity to speak about this bill.

You know, Manitoba business owners have asked for flexibility to be able to decide their work and

holiday hours. But it's important, and—that there needs to be a balance so we can ensure that we respect workers' rights and protect workers here in Manitoba.

When we work towards expanding rights for the businesses here in this province which, in this case, I think our party here agrees with the spirit of the bill. We agree with the spirit of allowing businesses in Manitoba to be able to be open on Sundays and be open longer, should they wish to, but it's equally important that we match that expansion and those rights with an expansion in workers' rights and protections for workers from being forced to work on days when they do not want to be working.

So we know Manitobans want the ability and flexibility to shop on weekends and holidays. I know myself included in that and my family, but we also understand that those employees deserve to have time off with their families, time off which is increasingly threatened in our modern environment where we just seem to be working more and more.

So it's important that businesses be allowed to extend their hours on Sunday because it is not a religious day for all Manitobans. It might be the only day during the week when they can do their shopping, and it's also beneficial for workers who want to be able to get in a full day of work on Sundays.

But, again, the really critical point here is we need to ensure that in doing so, we offer protections to workers to allow them to be able to refuse work on those days which they would like to avoid working on.

So, say employees in various sectors want the freedom to refuse to work on other holidays—statutory, religious, and not only on Sundays or Remembrance Day, and that's why it's—and that is why though we are support of the premise of the bill and the spirit of the bill here, we are concerned about the lack of consideration taken for other religious holidays.

We're proud to live in a Manitoba that is a culturally diverse province, that continues to welcome newcomers, and I'm very proud to see that our party, on this side of the House, is reflective of that increased diversity in this province and that we're genuinely a reflection of the Manitobans who live here.

So we're incredibly proud of that, and that's why it's so important to us here on this side of the House that we go beyond thinking through the lens only of holidays that pertain to members of the Christian community and we expand consideration for those communities that are increasingly reflected here in Manitoba: our Muslim brother and sisters, our new

family members from across the world who are coming here with their own religious views and beliefs, all of which come with a variety of holidays and cultural days and dates which need to be equally respected and considered in the development of any legislation of this sort which seeks to give workers the ability to refuse work on certain days of the year.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some statistics which suggest that this province is set to explode with new Canadians over the next 20 years. Right now I believe new Canadians constitute about 25 per cent of the Manitoban population, and that is slated to grow significantly by 2040. It's estimated—middle-of-the-road estimates suggest approximately 40 per cent of Manitobans will be new Canadians.

Now that is a future that I know that myself and my colleagues here on this side of the House are excited about. That's a future that is a richer future here in Manitoba. That's a future that is exciting for a number of reasons.

However, this bill fails to account for the fact that this province, with the high levels of new Canadians we're going to be seeing join us here in this province, and when we account for the high levels of out-migration, which we know have been at record levels under this government and under this Premier (Mr. Pallister), record levels of out-migration from the province—people are leaving here in numbers we've never, ever seen before, and that's only exaggerating and growing that percentage of new Canadians as a percentage of our total population here in the province.

That's not the reason, of course, we need to be looking at ensuring protections for those populations. That should be a given and we should be doing that without that consideration. However, when we start to consider that such a significant percentage of our population in the next 20 years is going to be made up of new Canadians, it is only increasing the level of importance that we ensure that bills of this nature—bills focused on changing the way we work—are accounting for the rights of those communities.

* (15:50)

Though—it's paramount that the government consider Manitoba's diversity and all the religions and beliefs practiced when we draft this type of legislation, and it's clear that that did not take place. It's clear that this government failed in designing legislation that concerned or considered community members outside of the Christian faith or Manitobans

or Canadians who have a particular attachment to, of course—as my colleague mentioned—a very important holiday, Remembrance Day.

But, as we know, and we can all acknowledge here, there are many incredibly important holidays that are already in place here in this province—holidays that offer Manitobans an ability to take time away with their families, where that right will not be extended, where they're not given the privilege to do that.

And so Bill 2 fails on that question, and that's concerning to us. That's concerning that we're not ensuring that we extend that acknowledgement and we extend that compassion and that understanding and that willingness to welcome those new Canadians and those with different perspectives here in our province.

So we want to ensure here on this side of the House that this government institutes legislation that reflects the interests of all Manitobans and encompasses all Manitobans because Manitobans deserve fair and equal treatment. We deserve fair and equal treatment, and all Manitobans—especially our new Canadians and those that are joining the Manitoban family over the next 20 years and those that are here now—are treated fairly and are treated equally.

And we know that that's something that may be novel to our friends on the other side of the House, but here for us as an NDP caucus I can confirm that that is something that is incredibly important and of paramount importance to us here as we contribute to drafting any type of legislation.

We support Manitobans working in retail. We know that our friends across the House here are not as supportive of people who work in retail. We know that they're not supportive of increasing minimum wage. We know that that's not something that they're interested in, that they don't understand that we have a lot of Manitobans—working Manitobans living in poverty because they're living with poverty wages—a minimum wage that doesn't allow them or their families to be able to meet the basic costs of living.

And that's why we on this side of the House support a \$15 minimum wage and support a minimum wage that allows those families to be able to meet those basic costs of living.

So we support Manitobans working in retail, and we support a better wage because we recognize that people working in these retail-type positions, which this legislation purports to somehow protect, need

further support. They need support not only in giving them the right to refuse holidays and days beyond Sunday, the religious holiday that aligns with the Christian faith and beyond, but they also need support in helping them to be able to meet those basic costs of living.

We know that, as we said, Manitobans deserve fair and equal treatment, but we know that across the House this government doesn't agree. We know that when we look at the way that this government behaved relative to what took place with—here with—as demonstrated with bill 28 that there was minimal respect for Manitoban workers and government workers within the Manitoba government, and that there was a willingness by this government to flagrantly violate an agreement that was in place—a collective agreement and to renege on promises to Manitobans who are working in support of government programs, government services.

And yet their rights were flagrantly violated with bill 28 and the spirit of both bill 28 and now Bill 9, that has conveniently switched names, as though we won't remember what bill that is originally connected to.

You know, Manitobans are proud to call this diverse province their home and, again, we're really concerned that this bill is simply lacking consideration for religious and cultural holidays. I'm thinking of our friends in the Muslim religion that celebrate holidays often on Fridays. We're thinking of any of our friends who are participants or part of other religions or cultural practices that require the ability to be off on days other than Sundays and really deserve to be represented here.

You know, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission Board of Commissioners' policy—developed a policy outlining the definition of religion or creed. And their site, it states that under The Human Rights Code, religion or creed encompass beliefs are freely, deeply and sincerely held, integrally linked to a person's identity, based in a comprehensive and particular system of beliefs that addresses questions of human existence or the divine, consisting of a set of practices and activities that govern a person's conduct, and including an association to an organization or community that shares the belief system.

So that's from the Manitoba Human Rights Commission Board of Commissioners' policy. So given these definitions, Bill 2 does not take into account the third point under the description of religion and creed, that is: religion encompasses

beliefs that consist of a set of practices and activities that govern a person's conduct.

So if an individual has a day set apart to practice their religious beliefs, they should be awarded the right to refuse work on days other than Sunday or Remembrance Day alone. Why is it that the Conservative Party refuses to acknowledge that there are religions other than Christian religions operating in the province of Manitoba?

Why is it that they refuse to acknowledge that we have brothers and sisters from around this planet that have made Manitoba their home that deserve to be represented in legislation that's passed in this House? Why is it that this government has failed to account for their interests?

Muslims observe Friday as a holy day, and Christians who observe Saturday as a holy day aren't protected with this legislation. What's going to happen for that worker who is coming from a Muslim background who is seeking to take a Friday as a holy day, and they go to their employer and they ask, very rightfully, for the ability to take that day to be able to observe that holiday, to spend that with their family, to engage in religious practices that allow them to be participant in their belief system?

What happens to them when they're refused? Are they going to be without employment as a result of that—the unfortunate fact that they are not members of the Christian faith? Are they going to be asked to potentially take that holiday next year?

Are—it's clear that the spirit of this legislation ignores members of other religions, members of other faiths. It is not accounting for those individuals and those families who are not members of the Christian faith.

So, in effect, the legislation limits employees the right to freely refuse work on days that fall in line with their religious practices or holy days. Manitobans want this government to respect the religious diversity here in the province, and they deserve to be treated with the highest level of respect.

You know, this provincial government has a track record of offloading responsibilities onto municipalities, so we know that this bill passes off responsibility to our municipalities for governing aspects of this legislation, and we want a Manitoba government that, of course, co-ordinates well with all levels of government, including local governments.

However, it seems that we have a government that does not know how to work with municipalities. We think, in one obvious example about the relationship that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has cultivated with our own mayor here in the city of Winnipeg.

Famously, not exactly the most well-functioning relationship, and it's probably predicated on the fact that our government—or, this government took away \$50 million that had been committed to the municipality of Winnipeg after the City had budgeted for it. So not exactly a super great track record from this Premier (Mr. Pallister) or this government in fostering good relationships with municipalities here in Manitoba.

That's to say nothing about this Premier's inability to foster positive relationships with stakeholders at all levels. Let's talk about relationships with the Manitoba Metis. Let's talk about relationships with our own Prime Minister.

* (16:00)

So we've got a Premier here and a government that doesn't seem entirely capable of fostering good relationships with our municipalities, and we have concern about the fact that this responsibility for many aspects of this legislation is being downloaded to municipalities with no clarity on increases in funding or any increase in capacity that would allow them to be able to meet that additional burden that we are off-loading onto them.

So again, there's no clarity that this government is providing adequate resources to help municipalities faithfully serve our communities or to be able to enact or work through the spirit of this legislation. You know, they've avoided all responsibility vis-à-vis the ride-sharing industry and placed it on the shoulders of our municipalities.

You know, going further to reduce funding towards the taxi cab board by \$500,000. Last year, they forced the City to come up with a provisional solution to reduce phosphorus levels at the North End sewage plant by February 1st, 2020, a totally unrealistic proposal given this government has offered no clarity on their willingness to provide any type of funding to allow that project to proceed or for the City to be able to meet those reductions in phosphorus levels.

So that's not the behaviour of a government that acts as a partner. That's not the behaviour of a government that's willing to sit down at the table—at the negotiating table with partners to figure out how

to resolve problems or how to work towards solutions for Manitobans. That's a government that acts unilaterally, and we know that we have a Premier that likes to act unilaterally. I know—we know that many members on the opposite side of the House are reminded that, probably on a routine basis, and are not always brought to the table to participate in decision making, and that's a problem. That's a big problem, not just for our friends in the House, but that's a big problem for our municipalities and their ability to work in partnership with a government, and they deserve that. They deserve to be working in partnership. They deserve to have a government and a premier that listens to them, and I'd be very curious to know about the extent of consultation with our municipalities throughout Manitoba on this particular bill.

Pallister Conservative government decided to let the City of Winnipeg off the hook by not forcing them to use an interim measure to reduce phosphorus outputs, as we know. Funding for Winnipeg Transit and—let's talk about challenges in relation to further partnerships with the City—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. I just want to remind the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) that when you—you can say—when you—when refer to a Pallister government, you can use that, but not Pallister Conservative government. It's much like the previous government too, and the NDP, you know. Selinger NDP government, so, very similar. So if I—the honourable member for St. James to continue.

Mr. Sala: I apologize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thanks for that clarification. We'll get there. We'll get there soon.

Going back to the thrust of my point there, we've got a government that is not willing to sit at the table with our municipalities and to help them find solutions to their problems. So I would argue that, relation to Bill 2 here, this is much the same. We're downloading responsibilities onto municipalities. We're downloading that without adequate resources, just like we downloaded increased responsibility to the City of Winnipeg in managing transit by cutting funding—the 50/50 funding agreement, and now in a period where we're facing the climate crisis and we need more people out of their cars than ever before and into our transit buses, we've got city services that have been threatened, like transit, that are preventing us from being able to work towards the kinds of solutions we need to be working towards in this environment that we're currently in, and that is an

especially important point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given the climate crisis and given the state of the environment as it stands.

So this government's also failed to provide their portion of funding to follow through on a number of other projects, and—you know, I'd like to highlight these issues to show how this government is disadvantaging Manitoba communities by placing hefty responsibilities on municipalities that need to be shared among both and at all levels of government.

The overseeing retail business hours and days of operation are just another responsibility being downloaded by this government. But not only have they off-loaded responsibility, they've frozen funding for municipalities, forcing them to cut key investments—some of which I've already alluded to—programming and services. The government cut \$40 million in funding for roads from the City of Winnipeg, failing to fulfill a previous agreement.

Again, going back on agreements, going back on promises; that's a pattern from this government. Because of the cuts, the City was forced to cancel all residential road work. That's established and was written about in March 2019 in a Free Press article.

And while facing a public safety crisis, the Winnipeg Police Service was forced to spend time fighting with the City about funding because of Pallister's freeze, as reported in 2019 in November by CBC.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the member to—it's Pallister government, not Pallister, okay?

The honourable member for St. James.

Mr. Sala: So, you know, this government's 2017 bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act, imposed a two-year wage freeze, followed by a two-year wage cap on public sector workers. We want to talk about this government's desire here to enact legislation that's going to allow our businesses to expand their business hours.

And in this legislation they're purporting to protect Manitoban workers, to protect employees throughout the province, but Manitoban workers have a lot of reasons to doubt the sincerity of whether or not this government is actually working in their interest, or whether or not this government actually behaves or will make decisions in a way that will protect them.

It's pretty clear, when we look at the substance of the bill, as my colleague really did a great job

outlining here, that there is simply a complete failure on the part of this government to account for other religions and other cultures in its design.

So in thinking about whether or not this government is going to be willing to protect the interests of Manitoban workers, it's worthwhile thinking about and reflecting on what happened with bill 28, and now Bill 9. Of course, it's been given a brand new name in the hopes that we'll all forget about bill 28. So, you know, that bill was clearly unfair and unconstitutional.

Collective agreements are achieved by meeting with bargaining units face-to-face, and negotiating in good faith. Like bill 28, Bill 9 is still a very heavy-handed and unfair and one-sided approach that violates workers' rights because it doesn't solve the problem of unconstitutionality, and Bill 9 undermines the role of arbitrators and gives the minister the authority to determine wages for public sector workers.

So it's disappointing that this government's tactic is not to negotiate or collaborate with Manitoba's public sector workers. Changes to the collective bargaining process should always be done in good faith with negotiators. Again, more reason to distrust this government and their commitment to protecting the interests of workers here in Manitoba.

And we know when confronted with a court challenge, rather than abolishing bill 28, the government chose to tinker around the edges, give it a new name, and attempt to delay court proceedings. And Bill 2, although good in principle, does not—and it simply does not—consider the labour rights of all Manitobans. And we know that this government didn't consult with labour prior to authoring bill 28.

So we've heard the minister discuss or reference a desire to connect with labour here in the province, but in reflecting on what took place and what transpired in relation to bill 28, we know that this government came to labour with a bill that was largely formulated in advance of any discussions, even though they approached that conversation, and they approached that meeting on the premise that they were looking for input from labour, they were looking for the insights that labour might provide into how that bill could be improved.

We know that that bill was already developed and that cake was baked, and that ultimately that was not a genuine meeting or a genuine attempt to obtain the insights or perspective of labour.

So why should we believe that this government is going to do the same thing, or that they're going to proceed with engaging labour to understand how this bill could be improved, and how we can ensure that Manitoban workers and their interests are protected?

So this government's previous attack on labour and their ruthless cuts to the important front-line services that Manitobans rely on is concerning. It's very concerning to us on this side of the House, and it's concerning to Manitobans and Manitoban families.

* (16:10)

Premier (Mr. Pallister) is focused only on cuts, and he does not understand the consequences of cutting health care and education, and that's clear. We've seen that. We see it every day when we're here in the House. We understand that there just a disconnectedness between this government and Manitobans.

His vision for Manitoba is hurting Manitobans and it's hurting Manitoban families. Pallister's government has—this government has always had the wrong priorities. They aren't concerned about protecting workers. They're not concerned with protecting people from religious minorities. They are only concerned with protecting themselves.

And so, you know, thinking about the scope of this bill and some of the concerns with it, I'd say that we also have concerns with the fact that this bill doesn't provide any further protections to workers in getting—giving them or offering them guarantees of scheduling, in giving them the ability to know weeks in advance when they're going to be working.

So, in addition to concerns about not protecting workers and their ability to refuse work on cultural or religious holidays that aren't reflected within the Christian religion, there's also serious concerns about the failure of this bill to address certainty for workers. So it's nice for us to be able to talk about offering some protection around allowing workers to refuse work on Sundays, even though they're required to give a full two weeks in advance of that, but it's also clear that this bill doesn't go far enough. It doesn't go far enough in protecting the rights of workers to ensure that they can plan with their families, that they can know with certain when they're going to be working weeks in advance.

And many of us know, and again we maybe have reason to doubt, that many folks on the other side of

the House have had retail jobs, or have worked real jobs throughout the course of their lives.

But, over here, many of us have had those regular jobs and we know that within retail, within a lot of sectors—especially within sales here in this province, it's difficult. It's difficult to work to be able to know with certainty what your life will look like. And that's an important consideration that has definitely not been reflected here in this bill.

And so I would argue that it's important that in thinking about how we craft a bill and how we consider protections that are offered to employees through a bill such as Bill 2, that we account for that concern and that we think about how we can go further in protecting the rights of workers and ensuring that they can have more clarity on when they'll be working for a period of at least two weeks in advance. And that's important because that helps Manitobans be able to strike a better work-life balance. And, again, that's something that's very important to us on this side of the House.

And, you know, finally, I'd like to just close by saying I think that at the end of the day the most important thing that we need to emphasize here is that we need to be crafting legislation that reflects all Manitobans, that doesn't just reflect a few of us, that doesn't just reflect one particular cultural group, but that reflects the backgrounds, the beliefs, the religions of all Manitobans.

And we cannot emphasize the importance of that enough. This bill fails on that account. It's a travesty that that has not been considered in the development of this bill, and we have serious concerns about the potential impact of regulations beyond those concerns and how those—the ability to just enact regulations may further undercut some of the proposed protections that are in this bill for workers. And that's a real concern.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers on the bill?

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll be brief.

This is a—this is clearly a bill that's designed to deal with some problematic issues that have risen—that were clearly unfair, especially when it came to the owners of Food Fare, but many other stores as well, where you were in a bizarre position where

independent, locally owned stores were unable to sell milk or eggs or bread on a particular holiday, but it was actually still possible to go to the casino or buy cannabis or buy alcohol or, for that matter, go to a major chain like Shoppers Drug Mart, because it had a pharmacy and also had a grocery attached to it.

So it was—the existing law was clearly unfair. We are—we as Manitoba Liberals are in tentative support of this bill. We have—we want to see what happens as far as comments at committee.

I know that there are concerns. Our concerns mostly revolve around workers being able to have a holiday and spend time with their families when it's appropriate, and that this isn't something—because ultimately that is incredibly important for—to balance work and life and family in our province, and we don't want to see that lost. That there still should be time that's dedicated that people can spend time together, which is a growing challenge in an economy where it's very difficult for people to—almost impossible for people to make a living with only a single income-earner. So that if you have two parents, both working, it's—it can be a real challenge for people to all to be able to get together at the same time.

And I understand that—the arguments that have been made, so it's extremely important to us that the bill is consistent, that it's fair, that it applies to businesses so we don't have unfair competition.

And one of the most important things we've often focused on is the principle of local ownership, and we've been very consistent about saying that local ownership and local businesses are incredibly important to Manitoba's economy—independently owned businesses, because when we spend at those businesses, it means that much more of that money stays in our community, which is, again, another reason why it's very important to be able to have laws that don't—that essentially don't discriminate, which—as the current law has done, against independent, local business owners in favour of large chains.

And there have been some very important studies out of the US—but—showing that when it comes to spending local dollars, that if somebody spends money at a locally owned and operated business, that 40—if they spend \$100, 45 of it will stay in the community. If it's spent at a chain, that only about \$13, and if it's spent—will stay in the community. And if it's a dollar, then only about—sorry, if it's \$100 spent online, only about a dollar of that \$100 will stay in the community, and that's only if there's a delivery driver living there.

So it is extremely important that we have legislation that doesn't discriminate against or punish or set up obstacles for locally owned businesses. I do wish that there had been greater commitments from this government in separate areas in ensuring that we have local investment. There's been some shortfalls in that there have been continual demands when it comes to access for capital, for example, for entrepreneurs and small businesses that have yet to be addressed. That's incredibly important for start-ups and for entrepreneurs, and that hasn't been seen.

And, in fact, there needs to be a greater focus on local procurement, but that had also seems to be something that this government has not been interested in, which is really unfortunate because many other provinces have procurement policies that are designed to—not to—to make sure that local companies are on a level playing field in being able to compete for government business.

So, again, we are—the—one other thing that we're concerned about this, on the one hand we recognize that there is a—that this bill seeks flexibility. But the other—the flip side of that is that it could lead to a patchwork of regulation, and—which means that a company that owns one business in Winnipeg and another business somewhere else has completely different rules, depending on what that—the municipality has come up with.

So there are challenges. I hope that in terms of—and I hope that doesn't add to the regulatory burden or challenges for independent businesses, but we are looking forward to hearing from witnesses at committee and seeing what Manitobans have to say about this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Yes, I'm proud to be speaking here as the member for St. Vital, and I will say that, you know, this bill, Bill 2 introduced here, that we're speaking on today, is important. And I wanted to bring some issues to the Chamber here.

First, I do want to talk about the consultation piece—consultation aspect that, quite frankly, I think has left a lot of us in this room, especially on this side of the House, wanting more.

* (16:20)

First, I'll start off with one perspective of it, is the aspect of young people who are often working in retail—in the retail sector. The minister described in his opening remarks about the purpose of the bill, the—

some of the impacts that it would have, but he failed to really talk about the impacts that it has on young people. The ability to—whether it's refusing work, whether the impact of the change to refusing work on Sundays and holidays might actually have an increase on whether the change in full time versus part-time working hours that retailers might be offering. And oftentimes, it's the people with the least seniority who get the shift and feel the worst effect of this. This might have a negative effect on our young people who are entering the labour market, working retail, trying to work their way up, trying to get some experience.

Now, these young people—were they consulted for this when this bill was drafted? We asked the minister about the consultation plan. I don't—didn't think he mentioned any young people at all. And I think that goes to show the perspective that this bill was actually created with—not thinking about all the impacts, not thinking about all Manitobans.

I think about back when I was a young person—a younger person than I am today—and when I started entering into the labour market and the types of jobs that I had. I was fortunate to have a job that had regular hours of work. I knew exactly my schedule for the next week, the next month. I could plan my life, have my—plan my work-life balance around it. That helped me go to school while I worked, get educated while I worked, have a family life and volunteer, give back to my community, all while I was working and as a young person, because the employer that I worked for actually thought about having a schedule that allowed me to have more than just the work as the primary focus of my life. School, volunteerism, family life, religion were all important aspects of me.

And this bill, Bill 2, tries to take—make an attempt to allow workers to take the time off that they need on Sundays. But it doesn't go far enough. You know, young people have requirements in their lives that are not considered in Bill 2. And, frankly, I think that it's a disservice to them to have not even been consulted by this government when this bill was considered.

Now, I did start with young people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that is not the only group that I think had a lack of consultation when this bill was written. It's—has been mentioned before, but I do think it is worth mentioning again, specifically, you know, talking about my own experience as a black person. I think that it is often black people, people from ethnocultural groups, racialized communities, who are often working in retail sectors where they feel the pressure

to come to work from their employees on certain days and on certain times.

Now, this bill does give—says that it's giving them the right to refuse work on holidays, and the first aspect of that, I'll say, is that I want to make sure that minority groups were actually consulted to see how this would personally affect them, to—whether they would want to see this like this, or written a little bit differently so that it has—gives them the flexibility to actually maybe choose the day off that would allow them—as the—in the minister's words, give them a day of rest, as the minister chooses to put it.

Were they consulted in which day of rest they would want? I mean, there's seven days of the week. Did he pick Sunday out of the hat, or was this just based on previous legislation and—without consulting what would be the best for the current modern society that we're living in in 2020.

The other aspect of this that I want to touch on is the actual religious aspect of the various groups and races and—of peoples that are living here in Manitoba.

Again, as been—has been said by other members speaking for this bill, Sunday is not always the day that people need for rest, right? If it is for rest and observing religious events and ceremonies, services, Sunday is the day that only a certain group of people are looking for their day of rest, as the minister says. Some groups it's Saturday, some groups it's Fridays, and perhaps others it's other days of the week.

But, again, there was a complete lack of consultation with anyone who might be representing any of those other groups that the minister has failed to consider, and I think that is not just something that we've seen with this Bill 2, but it has been a pattern with this government—this failure to consult with other groups, especially groups that might have different perspectives on the way our world and our province of Manitoba should work. These varying perspectives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are, in my opinion, what make Manitoba such a special place to live. And I'd like to say that, you know, these varying positions are all—are what make Manitoba strong.

This bill is so isolated that it really does alienate so many groups and make them feel that not only is their way of life less important—'infactly' that it is not important and that it is not respected by this government, and it is not equal to the other people of this province.

Now I know that people in this Chamber believe in equality. I know that people on this House—on our

side of the House not only believe in equality but take action to put actionable items to live equality, and I've seen so many times, again and again, that there are systemic bills and laws that will 'propragate' inequality in our society.

And this is an example of a time where a bill with a good idea, a good purpose, is only looked at through one lens, through one way of thinking, one perspective, one historical background. And as a result, what comes out of it on the other side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a bill that is not representative of the greater and the larger Manitoban community, right?

We've heard this time and time again. And we've seen legislation like this, not only in this jurisdiction, but in several jurisdictions right across the country. Bills come up. Hey, that'll be a great idea. This'll help so many people in my community. But did we ask any minority groups how that bill would affect their lives? Did we ask any newcomers to Canada how the bill would affect their lives? Women—did we ask them how it would affect their lives? Did we ask the LGBT community how it would affect their lives?

There are so many groups, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that were—had—that this government has had the failure of consultation with to really improve and enhance this bill.

Now I do want to address one of the specifics in the bill was that it specifically mentioned Remembrance Day as the day that would be given off, the holiday, that workers would have the right to refuse. And, while we all acknowledge that Remembrance Day is a very important day for us to acknowledge and remember the events, I do think that it is also important that we take a broader scope and really determine whether that is the only day for—which this bill should recognize as a holiday where workers would have the right to refuse to work.

There are numerous days, such as Louis Riel Day, Good Friday, that just come to mind right now, where workers may have just—should—perhaps should have a—just an equal of right to refuse work. Now those days when brought up in question by the minister, the minister skillfully avoided answering the specifics around whether those days should also be included in this bill—

An Honourable Member: Was it skillful?

Mr. Moses: Was it skillful is the question. And you know, I think that it was maybe a purposeful 'invoicance' of that, because I don't think that that—

those other days and various other holidays, whether they're statutory right now, or whether they're religious days observed by some religions, or are even in the purview of the minister when this bill was drafted. They weren't considerations.

Again, it goes to this theme of not considering aspects and not considering the way of life of other people of Manitoba that might be a slightly different, or vastly different, than what the minister sees and lives every day in his own life.

The next aspect I would like to talk about in regards to Bill 2 is the portion of giving local governments—RMs, municipalities—the authority over retail business hours of the day.

* (16:30)

Now, the issue with this—again, I'll touch back on a couple of lenses. First, I'll go back to the consultation, as I was previously speaking about, the consultation with our local municipalities, and were they consulted with this bill and the impacts that it directly would have on their jurisdictions?

Now, we live—I live here in the city of Winnipeg and this Chamber's in Winnipeg, but the various municipalities across our province will be affected by this. Now, did the minister consult with Selkirk? Did the minister consult with Steinbach? Did the minister consult with Brandon?

When asked about the municipalities—

An Honourable Member: Do you want a map?

Mr. Moses: Yes, when the minister asked about municipalities, did he name any of them? Maybe he needs the map to see some of the municipalities that he should consult with—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —because, quite frankly, the municipalities are the ones who are affected by this bill, and I think that they should have had their opportunity to have the same.

An Honourable Member: Thompson.

Mr. Moses: Thompson's a great place to consult with. Did the minister travel to Thompson to consult with them, quite frankly? And I think that would be a novel approach, a quite novel approach to see how the bill—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I enjoy a lively, lively time here to speak, and I thank you for the opportunity to continue speaking on Bill 2.

Back to my point about consultation, municipalities do have a large portion of—bear a large portion of the responsibility on this bill. Now—and like I said, they should be responsible, the government should be responsible, for consulting with municipalities, but, you know, this also goes to—a little bit to the thought of, you know, why the government is really looking at putting this down on municipalities, passing the buck to allow municipalities to go and do this on their own?

And if they think—if they know, you know, what's best, as the minister was describing earlier, then why pass on the buck? Why pass the buck? I mean, they've passed the buck on so many items, on so many topics. When it comes to climate change, you know, they've passed the buck, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When it comes to education, they've passed the buck. When it comes to health care, they've passed the buck, and this is just another trend of the government looking at other jurisdictions to do their work for them instead of taking on an issue and tackling it themselves.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at this issue, we look at this from a variety of lenses, and I think on so many of them, we've seen the government fail when it comes to this bill. You know, they don't have the right track record of actually delivering on these things and actually working with labour.

The minister has claimed that he's consulted with labour groups, but when it comes to working with labour, they really have quite a terrible record. You know, this Pallister government's track record on labour is extremely important when we're discussing these future changes, because we don't always want to be looking at bills or legislation of the past to determine how we should be talking about the future.

We need to be looking and having a forward-thinking approach as we—as it comes to discussing this bill. And when it comes to labour rights, we know that past legislation that has been introduced has had workers negatively impacted and they've been compromised, when it comes to their worker rights, as a result of previous bills that this government has put forward.

I suggest that they shouldn't be looking to previous—their previous legislation to come up with—to guide themselves on Bill 2. They should be looking

at forward-thinking, positive ways to not only help the businesses in our community, but to help workers' rights and ensure that all workers—all workers—regardless of their race, regardless of their age, all workers—or gender—have the ability to work safely and have that opportunity, as the minister says, to have a day of rest.

Now, the aspect I do want to talk about regards to Bill 2 is the scope of Bill 2. Now he is—this bill's been introduced as a way to give workers in the retail sector a, you know, a day off on Sundays or on holidays. Now, I suggest that if this is the approach that the minister wants to take, that he says is beneficial in the retail sector, why is it only limited to the retail sector, right? And the way we're looking at it, don't other industries deserve the same day of rest, as the minister has stated? So why is it limited here? The minister has failed to answer this question as to its limitations in this bill, and why this bill was drafted to have such a limited scope, to affect such a limited industry, and a limited people who might want Sundays as their day of rest.

The other aspect is, as I mentioned, having a forward-thinking approach to this bill, is that if we're going to be looking at controlling the way employers can, you know, schedule their employees on Sundays or on holidays, then why not actually give the Manitoban workers a more forward-thinking, a more progressive way that they can control their work and life balance? And what that would be is to have, as our—you know, some of our members on our side have mentioned, is to have that ability for employers to tell their employees well in advance the dates and times that they should be working.

Give—why not have a legislation as part of this Bill 2 could spell out that employers would have to give three weeks' notice so their employees, their workers, can plan events around their working schedule? Not only would this allow employers to adequately schedule their work time and so that work can be completed and our economy can move along, but it would also allow employees and workers to balance the various tasks that they have to do outside of their working hours; spend time with their family, and balance the time at home, to help volunteerism and work that they're doing around our community that benefits so many other peoples, get educated and go back to school.

As we know, many people who work within the retail sector are doing so with a—as a means to end, to go on to other career paths later in their life. Having a

schedule that would be set out in front of them for employees to know when they would be scheduled would allow them to better factor in things like education into their life.

Now this has an impact, like I said on education and their life. This makes it harder for people working retail and going to post-secondary institutions. If you are trying to juggle classes at the university here in Winnipeg while working a retail sector job, and your employer tells you that you have to work on a day, out of—you know, two days—with two days' notice, how does that affect you trying to make it to class at the end of the week?

Now this bill doesn't address that because I think they've taken such a small and narrow scope and focus with this, it's completely left sections of our economy, sections of people in our community out. And again, it's because of the lack of consultation, the singular view of how this bill should operate, without taking a larger look and a larger scope, and having a larger lens on the impact that not only this would have, but the impact of not introducing a bill that would help more workers.

And again, I've been working as the critic for post-secondary education, I've been looking a lot at the impacts of our economy on the universities and on these institutions in our province. I've heard students, first-hand students—first-hand stories from students in our post-secondary who are looking to get scholarships from their grades at university.

The challenge they face, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the challenge is that they spend the time in class and studying to try to get that higher grade so that they can get the scholarship, so that they can afford to pay for their next year of tuition. But in order to afford this year's tuition, they're forced to work retail jobs. And because they're forced to work those retail jobs—unpredictable many times with their scheduling—they don't have the additional time needed to spend in classroom studying and being able to achieve the grades to earn that scholarship in the first place that they were shooting for.

* (16:40)

This is the cyclical cycle that your—that students are facing every day, every month, every year because of the challenges that are out there with not only higher tuition costs in education, but also perilous work environments and the increasing flexibility and instability of work and, we're seeing, in the instability and irregularity of the retail sector scheduling hours.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many challenges that a comprehensive bill could address within our retail market that would have positive ripple effects not only throughout our economy in Manitoba, but throughout our education—our post-secondary education system. And, most importantly, it would have positive effects in so many individual workers' lives and allow them to not only have time to do other important things in their life, but also give them the peace of mind where they could accomplish so much more in their lives without the stress of being called in to work suddenly without forenotice.

So I've been looking at this again from the post-secondary lens, which is—I think is an important a—important way to—framework to look at this bill. And I do want to shift now to the economic development lens and economic growth lens.

Earlier, I did ask the minister if he had done any research or studies to see whether—what economic impact this bill would actually have. Now, as it is described here, it gives workers rights to refuse work on Sundays or holidays. Now, if you can imagine workers on Sundays not—refusing to work. Now the employer has a responsibility to backfill in those hours. Now, who's going to be backfilling in those hours? Is this going to cause a shift in the way some people are scheduled where they'll always have to be working Sundays because of some peoples' choice to refuse to work on Sundays?

Now, is this a consequence that the minister has considered? Well, he hasn't addressed it. Again, another gap in this bill that the government has presented for Manitoba.

In addition to that, is it going to increase the part-time workers in our province who might only be required to work on Sundays and fill in the gap for some of the people who would refuse to work? That part-time work, is it going to be creating another 'instable' job situation for an individual in our economy? And I would argue that it's quite possible it could. And I think that that's not the approach that any economic development plan should be promoting.

We should be promoting high-paying, full-time jobs for people in our economy so that they can get ahead through the work that they're doing, and not just, you know, a part-time shift here for one retail employee who's also doubling as a retail employee covering another part-time shift over here. Meanwhile, they're—they all have to go to school. Meanwhile, they've got a family that they're trying to keep.

These are the sorts of concerns that real Manitobans have—everyday Manitobans have. And I think those concerns are actually amplified and are actually exaggerated in minority groups in our province. If you look at many minority groups—again, those minority groups were not consulted for this bill—they see more likelihood of working in the retail sector than in non-minority groups. They see a higher likelihood of working in jobs with precarious work hours. Perhaps they might even see themselves working as private contractors instead of actual employees, and therefore they wouldn't even qualify for this bill, which, you know, as I'm describing and many of my colleagues are describing, needs to be improved.

But those workers are often at the bottom rung of the totem pole when it comes to work and will be the most negatively affected by a bill that doesn't even address them from the start and will have, at the end, on the backside of it, the most negative repercussions on those workers. And so there's so many times—so many aspects of this, quite frankly, that I would want to see it be improved.

The other side of it that I do want to acknowledge is that, you know, many of us speak from this from our lens of people who are living here in Winnipeg or southern Manitoba. I do want to shout out the people who live in some of the northern communities who might have different perspectives on retail work, where there might only be one retail store in a fly community that has a large control over the workforce in that community and the food supply or the clothing supply in that company. That—in that community. That company, in that situation, might have so much control over their workers the workers may not have the, you know, may be afraid to actually say I want to have that Sunday off because of so much control over—only one or two employers in their community, whether it be a fly-in community or a northern community or a community that is isolated or has a limited number of places to get jobs.

So, if you get one of those few jobs in your community and you tell your employer, oh, I'm going to refuse to work on Sunday, I don't want that employee, that worker, to face repercussions, and the minister, again, hasn't addressed that aspect of it, but I do want to put out that there may be many workers who are afraid to take advantage of even the limitedness of what is being put forward in Bill 2.

Now, there are so many aspects in our economy that could have ripple effects, and the minister hasn't addressed—has not addressed those ripple effects.

Will this bill change any of our unemployment rates that we're seeing in our economy, right? Will it change the ratio between our full-time or part-time employees in our economy, right? Like, if these are aspects where, you know, you might want to do a little bit of due diligence and work and show—show your work. You know, if you're doing a math problem in your school, you just write the answer down, you know, the teacher's going to ask you to show your work, and I'd like the government to show the work on this as well so that they can actually show Manitobans whether this bill will actually have a positive or a negative effect on their lives.

Now, just in the brief time that I have left—I see I've got a few minutes left—I would like to talk a little bit about just how the larger economic sense of some of the aspects that, you know, we're seeing in Bill 2. You know, I think we've seen in the past some—you know, we've probably all heard the headlines about certain grocers and retailers that were—showed some confusion around being open or not open on holidays, and I do want to address the fact that, you know, legislation shouldn't be brought up because of one headline or just two headlines or things that happen, you know. That might spark the idea, and that's fine if, when there's a problem, we should look at ways to address it.

However, if you're drafting a bill that's going to go into law for, you know, over a million people in the province of Manitoba, it would be the best way to actually find the best solutions to help the most amount of people.

Now, we spend time debating issues in this House, and I think that it is great that we have a democratic system where we can debate issues. But, if the issues put in front of us haven't had the scope to look at how it will benefit all Manitobans, then I would really wish the authors and the people introducing this bill would go back and write a bill that would help the most impact and—impact the most people in Manitoba positively.

I do want to just close by saying that, you know, the principles of this bill are, you know, I can see that they're in good spirit. They want to help workers in our province, but there's just simply so much left out there to be done that this bill could have addressed but it simply doesn't and, you know, for that reason it is just—it's just taken me so much time just to even

articulate some of the areas where this bill could be improved, and I hope that the minister hears these words and looks at ways to amend and improve this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers?

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I'd like to say welcome back to the House, and I hope that you had a wonderful January and a fabulous February.

* (16:50)

Talking about Bill 2, a lot has been said recently by honourable members in this House. It talks about retail businesses and retail workers, and it gives retail workers the right to refuse to work on holidays and on Sundays.

Basically, when you look at the businesses—basically, businesses build our community, businesses build our province, and the workers build the businesses. So when we talk about Manitobans, Manitobans means businesses owners, retail business owners, small businesses owners, workers of every kind, part-time workers, full-time workers, student workers, especially international student workers.

So all these categories have different priorities and different problems. Whenever we put forward a bill, that impacts a diverse kind of people, then we need to understand what diversity means. So this bill is very important and I'm thankful to the minister all the contributors who have debated on this bill.

Whenever we talk about the retail workers, majority of the retail workers consist of students and the people who started their life, the young people and new Canadians. So they are already struggling to establish their lives and they need a lot of support from the system, from the government, from the businesses, from the employers. So we need to look at them and look at the system through a lens that is very important and that looks at everyone equally. We cannot afford to exclude a particular segment of the society just because we failed to understand what diversity means.

When we just talk about diversity, diversity is not about just learning how to spell this word. It's about actually learning what diversity means. And we need to empathize, we need to think about those people who have just started their careers and they are facing so many challenges. They are facing economic challenges, financial challenges.

Some of the new Canadians, they are facing cultural shocks, homesickness, and all that. So whenever we talk about their problems, we need to understand actually all the diverse cultures, their values, their religions, their ethnicity, and their language, their food, and so on.

So let's talk about Manitoba. Manitoba is not a single-coloured province. It's a multi-coloured province and we know that Manitoba is home to so many people from various parts of the world. And there is gender diversity in Manitoba. There is language diversity in Manitoba. There is food diversity in Manitoba. There is ethnic diversity in Manitoba. And when we look at the policymakers, or when we look at the institutions who impact how this province should be run, we need to look at how diverse they are.

When we look at the Legislature, we need to look at how diverse our Legislature is. When we look at our schools and school staff, we need to realize that, does that school represent or reflect the diversity in the population of that area? And the same applies with the businesses. When you talk about banks, when you talk about any small businesses, or shopping outlets and shopping malls, we need to think, does the staff and business ownership reflect the actual diversity that Manitoba has?

When we talk about this Bill 2, it unfortunately does not consider the diversity that Manitoba has. It talks about Sundays and Remembrance Day, but not all Manitobans take Sundays and Remembrance Day as important as it could be to some other Manitobans. That doesn't mean that Sundays and Remembrance Day is not important. That means that there are other days which are important to other people in this province.

For example, it has been already said that our Muslim brothers—Fridays are important to them. Similarly for Christians, Saturdays are important to them. If we talk about people from East India in this province, there are so many religions that people belong to from East India, particularly Punjab. They could be Sikhs, they could be Hindus, they could be even Christians.

And there are some important occasions in different cultures that are celebrate across the religions. For example, Diwali is a festival that is celebrated by more than one religion.

Similarly, there are some other festivals. For example, Vaisakhi, April 13, is very important—that is

known as—known for its culture and religious importance in the Sikh community. It's known as birth of Khalsa, and that day people go to the religious places and they worship. So there could be some retail employees who could prefer to take that day off instead of a Sunday or Remembrance Day, but Bill 2 does not talk about Vaisakhi or Diwali or Fridays or other ethnically important days.

So what I want to say here is that when you plan something, when you work on the policies, you need to understand the diversity with a deeper sense.

But I don't know what the reason is. Everything has root causes. If you were a diverse caucus, you would be able to think differently about diversity. If you're not, you will not be able to empathize.

So what I need to say is we need to bridge the gap between different communities. We need to work in ways that we understand the priorities and values of different cultures, so that we can include the important points and important aspects that those communities and those retail workers who retail businesses wanted us to include.

I got a chance to speak to so many international students and, sometimes, when you look at them, sometimes you get so emotional about them because

they're away from their parents, and they are under debt. They're paying their fee. They're working hours and hours and hours to earn and pay their fee. But their problems are totally different.

We need to understand that whether these international students, young students, are being respected and accommodated the way they should be. Sometimes they fear to ask for a particular holiday or sometimes they even fear to ask for a day off, even if they're not feeling good, their health is not good—what to talk about their preferences and their celebrations and their important days.

So we as a government, we as elected representatives, need to go to these students and new Canadians to understand actually what their problems are.

It has been discussed recently that while preparing this bill or working on—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When the member of—before the House—the honourable member has—from Burrows has 20 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

CONTENTS

Speaker's Statement		Restorative Justice Centre and Healing Lodge	
Driedger	471	Fontaine	481
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Cullen	481
		Pallister	482
Introduction of Bills		St. Boniface Hospital ER Vacancies	
Bill 23—The Vehicle Technology Testing Act (Various Acts Amended)		Asagwara	482
Schuler	471	Friesen	482
Committee Reports		Manitoba Hydro Review	
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Second Report		Sala	483
Teitsma	472	Wharton	483
		Pallister	484
Ministerial Statements		City of Winnipeg Contracts	
COVID-19 Virus Update		Lamont	484
Friesen	473	Pallister	484
Asagwara	474	COVID-19 Virus Preparation	
Gerrard	474	Gerrard	485
		Friesen	485
Members' Statements		Provincial Finances	
Lymphedema Awareness Day		Johnston	485
Ewasko	475	Fielding	485
Emergency Service Providers		North End Sewage Treatment Plant	
Adams	475	Naylor	486
Junior Men's Curling Team World Champions		Guillemard	486
Morley-Lecomte	476	Squires	486
Canadian Congress of Black Parliamentarians		Petitions	
Asagwara	476	Crown Land Leases	
I Love to Read Month		Brar	486
Teitsma	477		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
COVID-19 Virus Preparation		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Kinew	477	Second Readings	
Pallister	478	Bill 2—The Retail Business Hours of Operation Act (Various Acts Amended or Repealed)	
Education System		Fielding	487
Kinew	478	Questions	
Pallister	479	Wasyliw	487
New School in Brandon		Fielding	487
Kinew	479	Lamont	489
Pallister	479	Gerrard	490
Pembina Trails School Division		Moses	490
Marcelino	480	Wiebe	490
Goertzen	480		

Debate	
Wasyliw	491
Lagimodiere	496
Sala	498
Lamont	503
Moses	504
Brar	510

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

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