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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
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SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
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WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

The House met at 10 a.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.

Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Deputy Government House Leader): I would call Bill 222, The Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, for debate.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 222—The Lobbyists Registration
Amendment Act**

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume debate on second reading of Bill 222, The Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for River Heights, who has nine minutes remaining.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes. Good morning, Madam Speaker. And I want to finish my comments on this bill.

One of the major problems with this bill is that when it comes to unions, there's not an adequate differentiation between what is bargaining and what is lobbying. The result is that it would be very easy for things which are bargaining to get caught up in and be called lobbying.

The—it has been pointed out that the Manitoba Teachers' Society is registered as lobbyists, but they don't bargain with—provincially, at least not at this point. They may be in the not-too-distant future.

But for the moment, because there's not an adequate distinction between what is lobbying and bargaining, this bill is not one what we would be able

to support because it doesn't adequately address the situation, and, therefore, I hope that the bill does not move forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): It is always a pleasure and an honour to get a chance to speak in the esteemed Chamber here, and I wanted to take some time this morning to speak about the bill that has been brought forward by the members opposite.

You know, I think it's really telling about this government's priorities, particularly during a pandemic in which working people have borne a disproportionate burden of the impacts of COVID-19, that the government would bring forward this bill. Because again, if you were to actually talk to people who have to go to work through the pandemic, who have to be on the front lines, people who fall into that essential-worker category, the things that they're asking for are starkly different from what the government backbench is trying to legislate with this bill before us today.

The priorities the working people have outlined during the pandemic are things like paid sick leave, being able to stay home when you're sick so that you can do your part to slow down on community spread. It's things like being able to ensure that you receive your vaccination in a timely fashion, which seems to be the latest failure of this government in responding to the pandemic.

It's things like having a living wage. Again, to me, it makes no sense, certainly not from a progressive perspective, but I would argue from a conservative perspective also, why should anyone who works full time have to live in poverty? Doesn't make any sense to me. Again, even if you're a conservative, it seems like the whole idea behind, you know, economic motivation and economic incentive is to provide people some sort of, like, stimulus so that they take part in the workforce. And so why would you want to pay people a wage that condemns them, even if they work full time, to living in poverty?

And what we've seen highlighted time and time again in the pandemic is that many of those folks who are earning a poverty wage unfortunately—a minimum

wage that's been kept artificially low by this government—are those people who are essential workers: grocery store workers, people who work in the logistic supply chain, people who work in meat processing plants, people who work in warehouses. It's also those people who work in the care economy: child care, early childhood educators, people who care for our seniors, those people who were on the front lines of those facilities most deeply impacted by the pandemic, those who work in long-term care.

Those folks have been asking, justifiably so, for a living wage. And we've all seen within the past year the rationale for why they should be paid: they provide some of the most important, unreplaceable work in our society, and certainly they should get a living wage.

And so these are the sort of priorities that working people in the province are asking for and so rightly deserve. And yet, this government misses the mark again by empowering one of their backbenchers to bring forward a piece of legislation that doesn't even really live up to the title when we're talking about lobbyists. Because in the five years that I've been here there's been a few issues around lobbying, improper lobbying, but they've all been on that side of the House, Madam Speaker.

And it's all involved corporations having undue influence to the levers of government. And yet nowhere in this Bill 222 that we're being asked to debate here today, nowhere is there any measure that would rectify those situations.

You know, the Conservative ministers on the other side, I'm sure they remember their former colleague well, Colleen Mayer. They're probably thinking about her example quite a bit these days as a minister who lost their seat because of the unpopularity of the Pallister government.

Certainly, when we open the Free Press today we see that there's definitely some PC members who are thinking about what it means to have an unpopular leader at this time. But I invoke that name because we saw that the elections commissioner actually found that there was improper acts taken by that former member, in the form of accepting corporate contributions, right?

So perhaps maybe the reason why that's not included in Bill 222 is because we already knew that it was wrong and it was already illegal under current law in Manitoba. And yet, this governing party saw fit not only to encourage but, you know, many of the

members opposite actively participated in that golf course fundraiser that I'm talking about where improper and illegal contributions from corporations were made.

* (10:10)

And when we go beyond that and think about what that says about a government that would not only, I guess, participate and encourage, but in fact promote somebody who had engaged in that sort of, you know, I guess—not even in the grey area, but on the wrong side of improper lobbying—then I that we see that there's a real issue there.

And I note that the members opposite are now beginning to find their courage and try to speak up for their departed colleague, but, of course, it's too late for that seat. And so, perhaps, there's other ministers that they'll endeavour to try and save the political careers of, but we'll have to see.

Again, when we're talking about issues with lobbying, why is there nothing in this bill that would address the ongoing saga of Bell MTS appearing to control all the levers of government with the PC Party in place on the other side of this House?

Again, during the break, I was speaking to many Manitobans who were encouraged by the huge investment that Valley Fiber is going to be making and expending—and extending broadband connectivity in the Morden-Winkler area. Certainly, that was a good news story for the region; certainly, that's a good news story for that business. But you have to wonder, with such a good news story happening in such a deep blue Conservative part of the province, where was the provincial government? Why is the provincial government not playing a role in expanding broadband connectivity?

And again, it's probably—could it be the fact that there are, like, innumerable former Bell MTS executives running the show on the other side of the House? Is it because Bell MTS is very likely one of the final qualifiers in the RFP process to take over a very, very, very important part of the fibre optic backbone operated by Manitoba Hydro Telecom?

Should we revisit the issue around the Manitoba business network, which we could explain because the minister for Crowns apparently did not understand the difference between those two deals when he was forced to speak publicly on it, and that's probably why we didn't see him speak publicly for some six months after that ill-fated press conference last year.

And so, when we're talking about all these issues, we know full well that the issues around improper lobbying that take place within this building all happen on the other side of the House. And they are all being carried out by large corporations, none of which have their headquarters in Manitoba; all of whom are dead set against gains being achieved by actual working people.

Because, what did Bell—the parent company of Bell MTS—do during the pandemic? Well, apart from raising people's fees to access high-speed Internet and cellphone services, they also took hundreds of millions of dollars in public money in the form of the federal wage subsidy. Then, while clearing huge amounts of profit, turned around and fired people right here in our city. The most public-facing of those, of course, were the employees at TSN 1290.

And so, you have a rigged system in which you have huge corporations that are allowed to line up at the public trough and not be subject to any sort of registration, scrutiny, accountability questions—and then they turn around and exploit the average working person who has been suffering and set further back during the pandemic.

And then what is the action of the backbench of the party that sanctions all of that rigging of the system? Well, it's not only to just permit and encourage and clap their hands for that sort of rigging of the system; but then to bring forward a bill like this, which would couch itself in language of accountability, but actually serve to further set back the plight of working people and set back the cause of trying to empower those front-line essential workers—who, as I opened my speech with, are looking for things far different than what is being brought forward by this bill. They're looking for things like paid sick leave; they're looking for things like access to vaccinations; they're looking for things like a living wage that would guarantee that nobody who works full-time in our province has to live in poverty.

And so for me, I really wonder what the motivation is, and I don't think that you can come up with a reasonable motivation short of partisan political advantage behind bringing this bill forward. And while that certainly is disappointing for those of us on the good side of the House, I don't think any of us should be surprised by it, particularly since it was sponsored by a member who doesn't believe it's right to feed hungry children.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I did just take a quick pause there to allow my colleagues from the other side

of the House to stand up. It seems like everyone over there is pretty tired these days.

An Honourable Member: Not much energy.

Mr. Wiebe: Not much energy. They're certainly out of ideas. And we can see that so clearly and so transparently here with this bill that we're debating this morning.

You know, Madam Speaker, it's—I always like it in politics when the choices and the priorities before Manitobans are made explicitly clear. And, you know, this is a bill, I think, that does that very, very well. Because it puts it very clearly to Manitobans what the priorities of this government are.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) started and ended his speech on, the priorities of Manitobans are certainly not contained within this bill. The priorities of working Manitobans are not being expressed within this bill.

We know that priorities of small businesses aren't being expressed in the contents of this bill. There's no small business that's coming, you know, screaming and yelling at the front steps of the Legislature to talk about collective bargaining, or to talk about the right of workers to organize. No small businesses are talking about that. They're talking about how are they going to support themselves to get through this pandemic, and then on the other side of this, grow and build our economy to employ Manitobans. That's what they're asking this Legislature to address.

Even big business, even big industries aren't, you know, breaking down the doors of the Legislature or burning up the phone lines to ensure that we hear that the collective bargaining right that every Manitoban has is their top priority. No, that is not what they're saying. They are saying, where is the government; why aren't they working with us; why aren't they helping our industry survive this pandemic and grow on the other side.

And workers who are asking for a living wage, who are asking for a safe workplace and supports as some of these industries slow down, that's what they're asking for. They're asking for support and a government that's listening.

And instead, what is the priority of this tired—this government that's out of energy and out of ideas? Well, it's pretty clear, they put up their—one of their backbenchers here, you know, who's doing his level best to distract from his set of scandals that every Manitoban is absolutely disgusted by; whether

it's travel across the county; whether it's, you know, saying well, we're—no, we haven't written those pieces of legislation; as a backbencher, I'm out of the loop anyway, don't blame me. Or whether it's, you know, saying that kids in Manitoba don't deserve a good meal as a means to get a better education.

He's doing his level best to distract, but I think Manitobans are zeroing in very clearly as to who every single member of this caucus is and every minister that sits around the Cabinet table and allows bills like this to come forward and to use the time of the Legislature in debate, rather than the priorities that Manitobans are asking us to address.

At a time when COVID is the No. 1 issue and the No. 1 of concern of workers, the last thing we need to distract them from the work that they're doing with a bill that does nothing to address helping them to organize and helping them to be, you know, strong at the bargaining table to ensure that they get their fair shake.

You know, there's a million ways that we could as the member—and I hope I do have some time—as the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) mentioned, you know, there's a whole bunch of ways we can make the lobbyists registry better. It is a work in progress. I think, you know, it was an NDP government that brought it in. But, you know, we can put this to any member of the House, I think there's a lot of bipartisan support, certainly along—among Manitobans.

We certainly don't want to go the route of, you know, some of the stuff that I know we've seen in the United States as legislators when we talk to our counterparts across the border. You know, when we talk to—or we hear stories about members here who are falling into those traps of allowing lobbyists and special interest groups to write legislation or to copy that legislation. We—I think there's a broad consensus among the people of Manitoba that's not the direction we want to go in.

But just at the very basic level of this piece of legislation and the timing of it and the priority of it, you know, rather than talk about ways that we can help workers or help small businesses or help industry or even, you know—I mean, another—a great talking point that the government likes to talk about is red tape. Well, here we are creating more red tape, more barriers for workers to be represented and to be represented well at the bargaining table

* (10:20)

It just so clearly lays out where this government stands and lays out their knowledge and appreciation for that collective bargaining process. It seems to me here, Madam Speaker, that they got their talking points from Fox News and kind of cut it off there.

Well, oh yes, you know, unions bad, you know. And that's about as far as they made it. They didn't even go to the trouble of actually looking at ways that we could help and improve, you know, the unions to do what they do: to support workers and to enhance their representation at the bargaining table.

You know, Manitobans understand that at this time when we have essential workers who are doing incredible work across the board; when we have front-line workers, like our health-care workers, our nurses, our doctors, our police officers, our paramedics—I mean, the list goes on, Madam Speaker, of people who are putting themselves out every single day, who are working double shifts and triple shifts to make sure that our services continue on—at that time, the last thing they need is a distraction and an unnecessary burden being put on them by this government.

They want to hear about support for their work, not a criticism, and certainly not more burdens being put on them by, you know, having a bill that forces contract negotiations and grievances to be reported by union representatives as lobbying. Again, it just so misses the mark.

You know, this is the fundamental nature of negotiations; these are not lobbying efforts in the sense that we understand or that the legislation was initially written and as every Manitoban, I think, would understand, the spirit of the legislation behind The Lobbyist Registry Act. This is the work that unions do; this is their *raison d'être*.

This is what they do to ensure that workers are getting a fair shake. It creates unnecessary work for those union representatives, and by forcing an unnecessary amount of disclosure and paperwork and additional red tape—it, really, it hurts everybody. It hurts every Manitoban whether you're unionized or not. Because, what it does is it gives workers a sense of worry or of some kind of, you know, dread about what's coming next. And it doesn't allow the unions to do the work that they do that helps all workers in Manitoba.

As I said, I think, you know, this is one of those bills where it's very clear. I think we can put this on the table, we can allow every Manitoban to look at this—and, you know, maybe members opposite don't

give Manitobans, you know, much credit. I do. Frankly, I think they're a lot smarter than, sometimes, the government gives them credit for. I think every single Manitoban would look at this and they'd understand that this is of purely political, purely partisan hit job on the workers of Manitoba. They see through the fact that they allowed their—you know, one of their fledgling backbenchers who's got a growing list of scandals, who's trying to distract by allowing him to push this forward rather than it even coming from one of the ministers who's out of energy—one of the veterans who's out of energy on the other side.

It shows where this government's priorities are and it shows that they're completely out of steam; they're completely out of energy and they're certainly completely out of ideas.

We on this side of the House will continue to stand with the workers who, you know, like many days now, an increasing number of days, are circling the building, who are standing on the front steps of the Legislature, who are demanding that this government listen to them.

And you know—I mean, the times have changed. We can't gather, you know, 5,000, 10,000 strong on the steps of the Legislature. Hopefully those times are coming soon. I think we're all anxious to get out there and join with our friends and the workers of Manitoba to let this government know where they stand.

But it's—it has certainly become very obvious that this government is completely out of touch and completely on the wrong side of the people of Manitoba. And you know, well, so—as they say, the only poll that matters is on election day, but I know that there's a lot of members over there who are watching those polls go down, down, down. That's not just a number on the page; that's not just your own political future.

What that is, is that's an indication that you've got the wrong priorities. And it's not too late to get on board with us to listen to the ideas that we have to support workers and to support the work that frontline workers, essential workers are doing in this province and scrap this legislation.

We will not be supporting it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Very happy to have an opportunity to get up in the House and speak to Bill 222, this bill, which would require union representatives to register as lobbyists, which is clearly

totally and completely outrageous and a very transparent attempt at trying to slow the work of union representatives in representing workers and ultimately getting in the way of unions from being able to do their jobs.

It's frankly quite insulting that, as a legislator, that myself and others are spending time this morning talking about this subject matter that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) brought this forward, that he spent time working on a bill that focuses on this distraction, given what's happening out in the world and Manitoba right now; given the challenges that Manitobans are facing; given the challenges that workers in this province are facing right now.

We're still talking about paid sick leave. That is totally and completely unconscionable that we're still continuing to wait for that. This is what workers want. They want paid sick leave; they want a living wage. Instead, their government, their provincial government, is spending time crafting bills that are forcing us to debate meaningless, absolutely meaningless, content here that is simply a distraction from what we should really be focused on.

Manitoban workers don't want a government that wastes time talking about how we're going to get in the way of them having their contracts renegotiated; they want a government that's worried about how they're going to respond to affordability challenges in this province. Manitoban workers are struggling. They're struggling to get by. Costs of living are going up. These are the kinds of problems that one would assume a provincial government that cared about its citizens would actually be focused on.

So what does this bill achieve? Well, it does nothing to increase accountability; it does nothing to protect workers; does nothing to protect Manitobans. It just creates more hoops, more wasted time, and it gets in the way of contract negotiations and grievances.

Now, it's worth stating that there are opportunities to improve The Lobbyists Registration Act. That's clearly an important act that has a really important function. It ensures that Manitobans have an opportunity to know who is seeking to influence government to try to, you know, advance certain priorities or certain goals. And it allows for a certain degree of transparency. It allows for an opportunity to reveal conflicts of interest that might be at play. None of those things are present in this bill and this amendment.

We're not seeing any real effort to actually improve the act in a way that would actually have a meaningful influence on protecting Manitobans from conflicts of interest in undue influence or hidden influence.

Our online system could be significantly improved. It is lacking in a number of ways. It's in need, deep need, of modernization. It could be made far more accessible to the public. Right now if a Manitoban wants to know who's seeking to influence this government or who's seeking to, you know, have their goals advanced, it's very difficult to get clarity on that because there's no easy way to get access to that information. The website or the online system is old and it's in need of updating. So there are worthwhile improvements that we could be considering here.

But instead of focusing on making any improvements in that context or improving the online system or even improving the act in meaningful ways; looking to other jurisdictions to see how they've improved their acts, this government has chosen instead to waste time having us talk about a bill that we know is simply a distraction, that is not in any way reflective of the types of priorities that working people in this province have and instead has us spinning our wheels here, wasting time while Manitobans want us to be focused on much more important concerns.

This is simply about creating hoops for union representatives when they're seeking to do collective bargaining and seeking to work their way through grievances. And we know that getting in the way of collective bargaining is something this government has become quite expert at, as has been demonstrated over and over and over again over the last several years.

* (10:30)

We could see why unions are concerning—and why their work is concerning—to this government and why this government would want to get in their way, why they would want to create more hoops: because the risk of unions in this province is that they actually risk people working together. They risk people working to advance their lot, to improve their wages, to improve their benefits. And they also risk collective action against illegal government unconstitutional wage freezes. They create obstacles to this government's clear attempts at taking away collectively bargained advancements for workers in this province, and they stop their agenda—and we've seen that over the last several years.

We know this Premier (Mr. Pallister) does not respect unions in this province; they do not respect workers and we don't have to look far to see that lack of respect. Look at how they've imposed an unconstitutional wage freeze on Manitobans across government in our Crown corporations.

They interfered in bus driver negotiations that led to an ongoing strike that caused a huge nightmare for families in division one. The Premier told the University of Manitoba to rip up a collective bargaining agreement in 2016, and later the Labour Board found, in fact, the Premier had engaged in unfair labour practices when they had done that.

They ordered wage freezes for teachers, and now the Premier and this Cabinet are refusing to let Hydro negotiate in good faith with IBEW. And we know that those folks were out there this morning—those hard-working Manitobans that put their lives on the line for us so we can have reliable electricity, that the Premier and this government declared as heroes during the large snowstorm that happened last October.

We all remember that, right? We remember when this government supposedly demonstrated some modicum of respect for those workers. Doesn't appear as though that respect is present anymore, and that's pretty clear by the fact that they're forcing them to walk the picket line all for the purpose of ramming through and forcing them to accept an unconstitutional wage freeze.

Now, the purpose of The Lobbyists Registration Act is pretty clear: it's to keep Manitobans alert to the risk of undue influence or to ensure that conflicts of interest can be brought to light—just like potential conflicts of interest like those that may have been in place when Mr. Brad Wall, who recently authored a commission document that was found to have actually intentionally covered up \$5 billion worth in Hydro sales—that he potentially had a conflict of interest as someone who's deeply connected to a Calgary lobbying firm—which is registered, under the lobbying act—but at the same time was hired by government to write a politically motivated document.

That might be something that would be of interest to Manitobans, and it speaks to the value of The Lobbyists Registration Act and the types of concerns that Manitobans might be worried about.

But that's not the type of concern, I think, that we're seeing here. This is not the type of focus that they're putting forward; it's not to help Manitobans get

more insight into those types of conflicts of interest. That's not what's happening here.

If the government was serious about helping to prevent undue influence or at least alerting Manitobans to undue influence, they might look at putting in measures to protect Manitobans from seeing the undue influence from Bell MTS on this government and contract decisions that have been made, and internal folks at the highest level of this government influencing—in secret—contract decisions that were made. That is of serious concern; that's the type of protection that Manitobans might want to see afforded to them.

But that's not what this bill is about. This is bill is not about that at all. This bill is about making things harder for unions in doing their job and protecting workers in this province.

You know, maybe the most concerning thing about this bill is that it was even brought forward today, as we've already talked about, the fact that we're here discussing this. The member that brought this forward should, frankly, be embarrassed about the fact that he brought this bill forward—we recognize that he's simply carrying water for his boss—but he should be ashamed and he should be more focussed on calling out the leadership of his government for their complete failure throughout COVID, for the fact that people are not able to get vaccinated at the rate that they require; and they should get their priorities straight.

We cannot support this bill.

Thank you.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): As the—my colleague mentioned, we will not be supporting this bill. We will stand on the side of workers, unlike members opposite who continually want to control workers and unions in this province.

Madam Speaker, bill two-two, The Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, does nothing for Manitoba workers in this province. In fact, this government has become one of control and power and wants to continually control workers and unions in this province, and not one of those members on that side that actually represents workers in this province has stood up against their boss, has stood up against the member from Radisson and told the member from Radisson, this is a bad bill. This is the wrong direction, this isn't a priority of Manitobans.

Manitobans want good wages; they want the vaccine rollout to be a good rollout. And this government has failed on that front as well. They want a living wage in this province. They don't want to be working two, three, four jobs, as they've had to do under this government, who does not and will not negotiate in good faith with workers in this province. They've continually froze wages.

In fact, they've had how many workers at the Leg. in the last month driving around in a 'honkathong' telling this government that they need to stop trying to control workers and come to the table in good faith and negotiate? These are Manitobans who have sacrificed throughout this pandemic, who have, you know, made sure that services are available for Manitobans. We had an ice storm; we thanked those IBEW workers during that time, but yet, here we have a government who, you know, does not have the same kind of respect for these workers.

So this Bill 222, The Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act—this government has no respect for workers in the—our province, and they've shown this time and time again with their lack of goodwill and collective bargaining. Manitobans who negotiate collective agreement with the government expect the government to come to the table in good faith but, once again—not once since 2016, since this Pallister government has come into power, have they come to the table to negotiate in good faith. They've continually froze wages, they've not allowed any bargaining to happen, they've closed that right down.

One only has to look outside today as those workers, once again, circle the building, honking their horns, telling this government to stop what they're doing. One only has to open the newspaper today to look at those plummeting numbers of this Pallister government. Manitobans are telling you Bill 222 is a bad idea, to stop it, to not try to take control and power over the workers of Manitobans.

Bill two-two would force union representatives to register as lobbyists for doing standard things like negotiating a collective agreement. As a teacher, I know, you know, how valuable having a collective agreement is. It puts the safety measures in place for workers. It ensures that they have a good wage and we all know that teachers go above and beyond; it's not a 9-to-3:30 job. You know, they work throughout their summer planning for their students.

As we look at our electrical workers, those workers make sure that we have power on at the Manitoba Legislature. But this government doesn't

seem to, you know, value the work that Manitobans are doing and they want to, again, you know, freeze wages, put people in poverty or continue to keep them in poverty. We need a living wage in this province and Bill 222 is not a priority at this time.

* (10:40)

We have a pandemic going on. We have people who are worried about their health, their safety and worried about jobs. People have been put out of work. They've lost their jobs or they've lost hours of their jobs. We've seen, you know, restaurants close and many of those people that work in the—in those fields have not had work.

And how can we, you know, continue to silence workers with a bill like this? It adds unnecessary bureaucracy for workers to simply do their job here in Manitoba. This Pallister government just keeps putting more and more red tape in front of these workers when they continually claim that they want to get rid of it. Well, here's another example: bill two-two, The Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, is not getting rid of red tape in this province, in fact, it's adding even more red tape.

Madam Speaker, this tells a different story and will further cause harm to Manitobans, especially our Manitoba workers who are just trying to make a living; who are, you know, contributing to our economy; who are doing the right thing, going to work every day while this government, you know, just continues to show them disrespect.

Let's look at all the unions in Manitoba. There's so many. You know, I can go through a list—I probably don't have enough time—you know, that this government has shut down since 2016, since taking power, that have tried to negotiate in good faith. There has even been unions that have taken this government to court, and they had a Supreme Court ruling that said it was unconstitutional for this government to do that. Yet, here we are. You know, this government forges ahead and is nothing—and just wants to, you know, assert their power over Manitobans—and that's not the right direction to go.

This bill forces contract negotiations and grievances to be reported by union representatives as lobbying, when they're simply not lobbying efforts. They're just, you know, standing up for their rights as workers, standing up to, you know, continue the services that Manitobans rely on in this province, and, you know, a living wage for those in poverty.

My colleague had mentioned it earlier. The member from Fort Rouge talked about, you know, one only has to drive the street to see, you know, those that are homeless that are still living in bus shacks.

And what has this government done to address it? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely not one thing. There's over, you know, 1,500 people in the last census, 2018, that were identified as homeless or under-housed. And what does this bill do? Bill 222 does nothing to address, you know, getting those people into housing, but also into jobs.

So we'll not be supporting this bill. We'll continue to stand on the side of workers, unlike the members opposite, who just like to flex their muscle and say that we have the power and we're going to, you know, maintain that power and control over workers and their ability to negotiate.

Unions have, you know, negotiated for hundreds of years in this province in good faith. They're not about, you know, getting anything that isn't right for the workers.

Workers deserve to go to work and be in a safe environment. They deserve to have good wage. They deserve to be able to negotiate their contract every year, and they're just, you know, helping to keep this economy going. And this government just continues to create new hoops for unions to jump through so that they're too busy to stand up to this government's poor decisions.

They're administering negotiating collective agreements is—it's not bargaining, Madam Speaker. This is simply, you know, Manitobans standing up for their right to be able to have a fair wage, to be able to, you know, contribute to the economy, to be able to, you know, stand up against this government who simply does not respect Manitobans, does not respect Manitoban workers, has continually showed that through their efforts and getting in front of bargaining and stopping the bargaining from even happening, and saying that we're just freezing your wage and nothing's going to change, and like it or lump it; you don't have a choice.

And you know what, Manitobans want a choice. And in the next election, I can tell you that Manitobans are going to make the choice. And we've seen that today in the Manitoba—in the Winnipeg Free Press. Manitobans have begun to make their choice. And we've seen—and I don't know, could be a lot of members on that side that are considering not running

because it's too much work that this Pallister government has put in front of every single one of these backbenchers and ministers through legislation like Bill 222.

We will stand on the side of workers. And I urge members opposite to, you know, stand up to their boss and tell their boss that this is not good legislation and that they should scrap this, Madam Speaker.

Miigwech.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I see that we're almost out of time today, and I'm surprised to see that no one on the other side of the House is standing to defend this bill that's been, as we've heard, brought forth by a backbencher. So maybe it's not important, but let's move forward.

This bill amends The Lobbyists Registration Act. It repeals clause 3(2)(e), which now includes union representatives. Now any union representative will have to register if administering or negotiating a collective agreement with the government or government agency or representing a unionized employee of the government or a government agency.

It's interesting to me that this private member's bill has been put forward by a backbencher MLA who has likely never worked in a unionized workplace or done his research to understand the critical role of unions in ensuring fair wages and safe workplaces for workers.

We heard that same ignorance expressed last week when the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) simultaneously complained about low wages and union dues in the same sentence. This point of view shows a basic lack of knowledge in the role of unions in negotiating fair wages, paid sick time, vacation time and safe workplaces. Instead of celebrating workers in a pandemic and caring for workers, this government has simply introduced bill after bill attacking workers and seeking to interfere with collective bargaining.

Manitobans who negotiate collective agreements with government expect the government to come to the table in good faith. Bill 222 would force union representatives to register as lobbyists for doing standard things like negotiating a collective agreement.

This bill adds unnecessary bureaucracy for workers to simply to their jobs. This bill forces contract negotiations and grievances to be reported by union representatives as lobbying when these are

simply not lobbying efforts. Workers should be able to do their work without unnecessary burdens put in place by government. This creates unnecessary work for union representatives and creates an unnecessary amount of disclosure.

This government is trying to just create new hoops for unions to jump through so that they are too busy to stand up to this government's poor decisions. Administering or negotiating collective agreements is not lobbying. Neither is the simple act of representing a unionized employee of the government.

The Manitoba Lobbyist Registrar defines lobbying as a legitimate activity in a free and democratic society and says the act defines lobbying to mean, in relation to a consultant lobbyist or an in-house lobbyist, to communicate with public officials in an attempt to influence the development of a legislative proposal by the government of Manitoba or by a member of the Legislative Assembly; the introduction of a bill or resolution in the Legislative Assembly or the amendment, passage or defeat of any bill or resolution that is before the Legislative Assembly; to influence the making or amendment of a regulation as defined in the regulation act; to influence the development, amendment or termination of a program or policy of the government of Manitoba or a government agency; to influence the awarding of a grant, contribution or other financial benefit by or on behalf of the Crown.

And in relation only to consulting lobbyists, lobbying also includes arranging a meeting between a public official and any other individual, or communicating with a public official in an attempt to influence the awarding of any contract by or on behalf of the Crown. This does not currently include administering or negotiating a collective agreement with the government or a government agency or representing a unionized employee of the government or government agency.

* (10:50)

The intention of The Lobbyists Registration Act is to recognize that free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest. Lobbying public officials is a legitimate activity when appropriately conducted. It is desirable that public officials and the public be able to know who is attempting to influence government, and the system for registering paid lobbyists should not impede access to government. Lobbying, when conducted ethically, is a legitimate and legal activity and is an important part of the democratic process. It is an

important matter of public interest to be able to know who is attempting to influence government and the details of the lobbying.

The purpose of the registry is to provide 'transparencing' about lobbying in Manitoba, and in accordance with the requirements of the act, lobbyists must file returns on their lobbying activity. There is no fee to file, and the lobbyist registration is an online system. Lobbyists can file any time, and the public can search at any time.

But this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has just demonstrated time and time again that he doesn't want to negotiate with unions and does not respect the rights of workers. The Premier has no problem sticking his nose in collective bargaining agreements, interfering with our schools, Crown corporations and post-secondary institutions.

He told the U of M to rip up a bargained collective agreement proposal, which caused a strike with profs at the University of Manitoba in 2016, and the Labour Board ultimately found that the U of M engaged in unfair labour practices at the Premier's direction. And then he interfered again in 2020, newly leading to another strike that would've been devastating for students, professors and staff.

He interfered in negotiations with the Winnipeg School Division bus drivers, leading to a strike right when our kids were going back to school in the fall and with so many challenges facing families with the pandemic.

He ordered wage freezes for teachers and MPR workers, and now he's refusing to let Manitoba Hydro negotiate in good faith.

Recently, a letter was sent to school divisions across the province to interfere once again in bargaining with all other labour groups within school divisions.

The Premier's unconstitutional ways freeze led to IBEW workers going on strike, the same workers that the Premier praised for their heroic efforts during the October 2019 storm.

When this government gets involved in labour disputes, things for Manitoban workers always get worse, not better. But as we've already heard this morning, there are some important roles to the lobbying—the lobbyist legislation. We've already heard the example, but I'd like to underline the example of Brad Wall and that conflict, as he was the former right-wing Saskatchewan prime year—premier,

who was hired to oversee the review of Keeyask and Bipole III. And, unfortunately, Mr. Wall is clearly in a conflict of interest. He has proven ties to a consulting firm based out of Calgary, which is registered to lobby the Manitoba government. And this is the exact type of activity a lobbyist registry should catch. Why would anyone trust the impartiality of this review when the person hired to oversee the report is literally registered to lobby the Pallister government?

Additionally, why should Manitoba Hydro follow the advice of a premier who oversaw a province that lags far behind our own in terms of environmental sustainability? Manitoba is a province powered by hydro, whereas Saskatchewan is a province powered by coal and gas. The commission of inquiry into Manitoba Hydro was completely conflict ridden and politically motivated, and the review only helps the Pallister government justify its continued cuts and privatization of Manitoba Hydro.

This review looked into capital investments at Manitoba Hydro by a former PC premier of Saskatchewan. The reviewer has a history of privatizing state subsidiaries and keeping the details—the deals private from the general public. In over a decade of Wall's administration in Saskatchewan he sold over \$1.1 billion in publicly owned assets, costing over 1,200 public sector jobs. That's the risk we're facing in Manitoba: cuts and cuts and cuts to public sector jobs, interference with unions and with the labour movement over and over again. The Pallister government clearly didn't care about Wall's conflicts of interest and only wants support to undermine Crown corporations like Hydro.

I will not be supporting this bill. I continue to stand with my caucus to support workers and to ask for sick leave for workers during a pandemic, to ask for jobs not to be cut. I will continue to stand for the rights and safety of workers in Manitoba across the board and to support their structures that support them at work.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 222, The Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act.

And I, for one, would actually like to take the time to thank the member from Radisson for raising this issue so that people can finally see the priorities of this government in the times of the pandemic and, in particular, the priorities of the MLA from—for Radisson and—raising this PMR at this time during a

pandemic, during a failed vaccination process, during a mass speak-out in the education reform. It just shows the priorities of this government and the priorities of the member from Radisson in particular. And perhaps maybe I'll refer to him as the minister of deflection because that seems to be what his role is in—on that side of the Chamber—

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bushie: —is deflecting from the real issues at hand, and this—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere, on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, I believe you've counselled this House on more than one occasion that we are to refer to each other by our constituency names, not by other nicknames or nefarious made-up names, and I do believe I just heard the member violate the rule which you've reminded us of on more than one occasion.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the member for Rossmere is accurate in saying that we should be referring to members by their proper names or ministers by their proper titles and not to be adding something that isn't recognized in a proper manner.

So, just a caution to members that when referring to ministers, it should be respectfully done with the proper title.

* * *

Mr. Bushie: Thank you for that clarification, Madam Speaker, and I apologize for breaking the rules of the House in that regard.

But it is a frustration. It is a frustration that the member from Radisson chose, at this time, to raise this issue in times of a pandemic. And it really is about trying to stack the deck in the favour of the government when it comes to negotiations, when it comes to discussions, when it comes at issues that are raised by Manitobans, and that's unfortunate.

A simple Google search will ask, you know, what comes about when somebody—what kind of person thinks the rules don't apply to them? And a simple Google search pops up the words arrogant, elitist, self-important, inconsiderate, and those are the kinds of

things that are actually at play here, Madam Speaker, with Bill 222.

Madam Speaker, it's about trying to keep quiet everyday Manitobans, trying to keep quiet workers, and to, like I said, stack the deck in the favour of the government so they can actually see and know what's going on in somebody else's mind, rather than have them being able to freely speak and freely raise their concerns for everybody to see and bring their points and raise their points across.

And it's unfortunate that, at this time, in the time of a global pandemic, when we're still in the midst of a second wave, perhaps going into a third wave, that this is the priority of the government: to raise this and to create more red tape when they sit there and they tout being able to streamline, to reduce red tape to make things easier on Manitobans. This bill actually will create more; it'll create more confusion, create more red tape—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 17—Celebrating Backyard and Community Gardeners

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and the time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Celebrating Backyard and Community Gardeners, brought forward by the honourable member for Seine River.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook),

WHEREAS the Manitoban gardening population has supported the creation of its own chapter of the Master Gardener Association; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a resurgence in backyard gardening as a popular hobby; and

WHEREAS local gardening centers observed a massive increase in plant and seed sales in the spring of 2020; and

WHEREAS many volunteer gardening groups has also seen large spikes in community engagement activities, boosting a sense of community and sustainability; and

WHEREAS gardening volunteers have helped beautify public locations such as Riel House, the Bishop Grandin Greenway, and the Cancer Care Centre of Hope courtyard; and

WHEREAS volunteer projects have also included over 15 pollination and Indigenous plant-growing initiatives across the province; and

WHEREAS backyard gardening can help to provide food security and Manitobans learn to harvest food for themselves and their community; and

WHEREAS local gardeners help the environment by creating habitat for bees and reduce their need to transport food great distances when they grow produce close to home; and

WHEREAS many new gardeners also came from younger generations of gardeners.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba recognize all new and experienced gardeners who have reached back to their roots and continued Manitoba's agricultural traditions while beautifying communities across the province.

Motion presented.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'm honoured to bring forward the private member's resolution celebrating backyard and community gardens. Understanding how our food is grown, being environmentally friendly and improving mental health all have one thing in common: gardening.

Gardening has been shown to improve overall health, well-being, to be a better—or, sorry, to be a great educator and understanding sustainability, and embracing the nature of our planet. Gardening has played a major role for many families. Manitoba agriculture and food manufacturing sectors comprise approximately 7 per cent of Manitoba's total GDP, with exports total—exports totalling about \$6 billion annually.

Manitoba is home to more than 200 greenhouses which grow plants, garden product, shrubs and trees for gardeners of all levels. I am fortunate to have many greenhouses in my constituency and am honoured to bring forward a resolution honouring their importance in our province and our economy.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Many people can reflect and remember seeing a garden or visiting with family and friends and going into the garden to pick vegetables for their dinner. Family gardens were a staple. Gardens provided fresh fruit and vegetables for immediate enjoyment and allowed for gardeners to preserve the excess for the winter when produce was not as easily available. The luxury of driving to a store when you needed a few onions, some lettuce or a potato was not one that many people, especially those living in rural areas, were offered.

Over time, gardens became smaller. Grocery stores, accessibility to fresh produce markets, and ease to transport garden-fresh vegetables and fruits all contributed to the demise of the larger gardens that one would find in many family yards.

The art of canning fruit and vegetables and storing the harvest-to-garden vegetables was not a necessity. Storing garden produce to be kept for months at a time shifted to having some supplies on hand with the awareness that a person could go and buy what they needed. This trend also created an opportunity for local gardeners to sell their goods at local markets.

Over the years, many local outdoor markets and market gardens have provided buyers with a farm-fresh alternative to a grocery store. The availability of produce and accessibility created through various market gardens has been increasing in demand over the last few years. One no longer must own a property where they can plant a garden, trees, flowers or shrubs to still enjoy the benefits of fresh produce and flowers.

St. Norbert Farmers' Market has become a name synonymous with outdoor vendors and people looking to buy good quality, locally grown or raised produce. The atmosphere promotes local vendors and their wares while welcoming people of all ages to visit and sample the many goods offered for sale.

The market has expanded to offer their product online so individuals can order in the comfort of their home. And our government has also provided funding to assist in the construction of a canopy so market vendors could continue to sell their product throughout the winter months.

Driving on the Trans-Canada Highway, you can easily drive by a mix of different outdoor vendors selling fresh, local fruit and vegetables at pop-up summer businesses. Tourists, travellers and people

locus in an area can purchase fresh tomatoes, corn and fruit locally grown.

The demand for fresh has been slowly increasing, and people with limited yards are loyal to their local markets. In 2020, there was a resurgence in gardening. People were again interested in gardening. Greenhouses and online garden supply venues have documented an increase in the number of sales of garden plants, seeds and garden supplies.

The number of backyard gardeners, younger adults, people taking up gardening as a hobby and educators are sharing and learning about the benefits of gardening. Parents are teaching their children the importance of being self-sufficient. Schools have programs which educate the students on the importance of a healthy ecosystem and the ability to be self-sufficient without damaging the environment.

And there had been an interest also in learning the importance of life skills with gardening. Garden boxes and rented garden plots for individual and community garden also reflect the increased interest in home gardens. Be it for personal consumption or to contribute to local food banks, more people are sharing their time and talent to grow a variety of vegetables.

A recent Nanos survey identified an increase in the number of people actively gardening. People polled were classified through their experience as being either past, current or recently introduced to gardening.

The interest by gardeners of all levels identified a few trends and showed a positive trend in gardening. Avid gardeners represented about 17 per cent of the population, identifying gardening to be a part of who they were. This 'demograph' would include local market gardeners, small farmers and anyone who has actively maintained a backyard garden.

Fair-weather or hobby gardeners make up about 31 per cent of Canadians, with new gardeners representing 12 per cent of the people surveyed. Of the new gardeners, the largest increase in interest was between the ages of 18 to 34, and this increase was at 16 per cent.

Older individuals—those considered 55 and older—came in at 8 per cent of new people who have taken up gardening. Twenty-two per cent of those polled were re-entering the gardening world after five years or so of not being actively engaged in gardening.

The survey highlighted the trend supporting healthier lifestyle changes, an increase in gardening

and an awareness to the sustainability and environment through planting and harvesting of produce. The quality of life improved along with the ability to take in light physical activity.

COVID reduced the amount of visiting and social interactions between many family and friends. Last summer, with the limited social activity, a lot of people took to gardening to help them fill time that would have been spent with family members or friends.

When asked, people in the survey identified an improvement in their own mental health. Gardening gave them an outlet to work with their hands so they could feel grounded as they were working in the dirt and gave them a sense of accomplishment. The ability to contribute to growing your own vegetables and to harvest the final product had a positive impact on a person's well-being and general health.

When comparing different jurisdictions throughout Canada, Manitoba and the prairies ranked high in both the avid and fair-weather gardeners. Climate and local contribution to the type of agriculture foods grown, business and the length of the growing season.

Madam Speaker, one does not have to look too far to see the many beautiful landscapes that are open for public enjoyment. Local parks offer an opportunity to take in the beauty and the brilliance of many native and transplanted flowers and grasses of our region.

Assiniboia park, provincial parks with their natural habitat and municipal parks are always on display for viewing. The International Peace Garden has drawn visitors from all over the world. People come to take in the beauty of the gardens, to learn about the local history and to appreciate the beauty and peace that comes with relaxing and calm spaces.

One does not even have to travel far to appreciate the beauty of a garden. The Legislative grounds showcase many gardens blooming with exotic flowers, grasses and shrubs. The Legislative grounds have been showcased and are reputed to be one of the most beautiful grounds in Canada.

One can often see in springtime families, grads, couples getting married, taking pictures with the gardens as some of the beautiful backdrop.

According to Psychology Today, gardening is beneficial to our mental and physical health. Gardening has shown to lower blood pressure, increase a person's awareness, improve well-being and lower a person's level of anxiety, improve life satisfaction,

enhance cognitive function, reduce depression and stress, have enhanced people's overall life quality.

* (11:10)

Madam Speaker, be it a local backyard garden, your local farmers' market, the community plot, agriculture through an agriculture farmland or any area that has been set aside for people to view and appreciate, agriculture and farming, in all mediums, has been a staple in Manitoba for generations.

I myself grew up in the country and enjoyed the benefits of a large garden and the peace and quiet that came around with having the ability to just sit and relax and enjoy everything that was growing around me. The garden has been a part of our lives for many decades and is a natural part of our history. With our busy work schedules, with the need to want to preserve our climate, be environmentally friendly and to seek a relaxing and healthy outlet for our health, gardening has been the best doctor for all ages.

Thank you.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party, any subsequent questions must follow rotation between parties, each independent member may ask one question and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It's great to be up here asking questions of the member from Seine River.

I would like to ask, what plan does your government have to promote and fund gardening projects in communities that struggle with food insecurity?

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): And I'd like to thank the member for that question.

Our government has been looking at funding different programs that would promote individuals who are able to sustain garden food and other products through different venues. The monies that have been donated—or sorry, given to the St. Norbert Farmers' Market helped individuals who were growing food locally and the individuals who were purchasing the food, not just in the summer but throughout the winter.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): I just want to—I want to first thank the member from Seine River

for bringing up this great resolution. It's good timing of it, especially since COVID 2020.

What inspired the member to bring forward this resolution?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: I'd like to thank the member for his great question.

As I had stated, I grew up in a rural environment and gardening had always been a part of our lifestyle. And with everything that's been happening recently and the availability of greenhouses in and around Winnipeg and across our province, it's great to be able to access and plant and grow and see something positive when we've been struggling with so much in the last little bit.

Thank you.

Mr. Altomare: As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, food insecurity is something that is not just an inner-city Winnipeg problem, but it's also a problem that extends throughout our province.

So I would like to ask the member, how does this government plan to eliminate food insecurity in remote First Nations communities, lower income neighbourhoods that exist outside the inner city of Winnipeg?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: And thank you to the member for his question.

Our government has always been looking at ways to promote healthy lifestyles and to encourage individuals to be able to access with winter roads and the availability of transporting food up north. We are looking at having a greater variety of produce sent up north for individuals, and some of the rural communities have also been looking at larger greenhouses, making the transportation costs less expensive.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, as I expect the member from Seine River is aware, Intrinsic, about a year and a half ago, brought forward a report which showed that there's significant contamination of lead in a number of neighbourhoods in Winnipeg and such lead can be picked up and incorporated in plants. And lead, of course, is neurotoxic.

I just wonder what the member is doing to address this concern about lead, and to reduce the problem of lead toxicity and lead poisoning in children.

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you to the member for that question.

Always investing in agriculture and finding new ways to have crops that are produced that are going to benefit everyone, and always having regulations in place to ensure that our food supply is not in danger. And our government is working to continually to ensure that people are receiving healthy, good quality food.

Thank you.

Mr. Altomare: For the member from Seine River, when it comes to the gardening piece and all of the benefits that we accrue from gardening and being outdoors, for many people gardening is a necessity because they don't have the resources to ensure that they have some food security to get then through the winter. This is especially exacerbated in our northern, more remote communities.

Is there planning that you're putting in place, the member from Seine River, where you can communicate and liaise with northern First Nations to come up with a plan to address their food insecurity?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you to the member for that questions.

As I touched upon in my opening comments, a lot of the produce that is being planted and harvested in the summer can also be canned and/or frozen for winter months. And individuals are able to access different programs or go online and, with the excess foods that they are able to plant, harvest and save over the long winter months. So they're still having access to fresh garden produce over the—that time.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Can the member speak to any organizations that promote gardening in their community?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you to the member for that great question.

In south Winnipeg, there are a great number of organizations that have continued to support agriculture. We have the St. Vital ag society, which introduces individuals of all ages to agriculture, and it promotes individuals to grow a garden and submit produce for a contest. We have many greenhouses that go down the—St. Mary's Road with a variety of vegetables, shrubs, plants, flowers for anyone from beginner to experienced. And then we have the Bishop Grandin Greenway, which has been actively—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Altomare: I think with my previous questioning, what was—what I was trying to drive at is a plan for self-sustaining growth in northern communities. Kind of like what we're doing with renewable energies, kind of like what we're trying to do where—you know, where you teach a person to fish, they can fish for a lifetime.

So instead of trucking things up to these remote communities, what do—what plan is there in place so that we can actually have greenhouse areas in these northern remote First Nations communities?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Again, thank the member for his question.

Greenhouses, gardening, a lot of the agriculture, everything that individuals are looking at promoting central northern Manitoba are all in place. And a lot of individuals who are wanting to plant and farm—you can go to Swan River and see a lot of great farms that are there. And it will all promote produce for individuals who are then wanting to take examples of some of these larger farms in agriculture area and utilize that in their local communities.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): I thank the member for introducing this resolution.

I know the member had mentioned a number of physical health benefits of gardening. Just wondering if she could mention a few mental health benefits as well.

Thank you.

* (11:20)

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you again to the member for that question.

Gardening has a huge impact on a person's well-being and mental health. It has, through psychologically—sorry, Psychology Today, they have cited how it helps lower blood pressure, stress, helps individuals with depression, gets people outside in the great outdoors enjoying the sun, which helps lift a person's well-being. So it has a lot of great benefits.

Thank you.

Mr. Altomare: What I'm driving at with some of my line of questioning is the opportunity to partner with our northern communities, the northern First Nations, so that, you know, we can show some degree

of willing to work together on projects that are important, just like being able to grow your own food.

So here's an opportunity to show, for this government, to show that they are interested in these types of partnerships.

I want to ask the member from Seine River, have you explored the possibility of having these partnerships with our northern communities and northern First Nations?

Ms. Morley-Lecomte: Thank you again for the member for that question.

I know when we look to our agriculture community there always new, innovative and great ways that we are learning on how to grow crops, produce, for individuals living in many areas of the province.

But I will follow up and ask with the Agriculture Department to see what other ways they may have that will assist with the northern communities to specifically help their needs.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I would like to thank my colleagues on our side of the House and my colleagues on this side of the screen for their enthusiastic reception to my beginning debate on this PMR.

You know, it would be great if we would be debating a private member's resolution that maybe looked at the need to—especially during a pandemic right now—you know, we're—with the variants coming out, with provinces that are east and west of us dealing with unprecedented increases, not only in COVID infections, but also in ICU admissions—it'd be great to have a PMR that maybe talks about a plan to vaccinate essential workers, people that don't have a choice about going to work. I mean, we even have—next door in Saskatchewan, there's even a plan for a vaccination of essential workers and they get three hours, three hours off, to go and have that very necessary peace because they're all doing their part to be contributing to society in a way that, you know, a PMR maybe from the other side of the House would address this type of an issue.

Unfortunately, you know, what happens is that we have many members of our society that don't have a choice; they have to go to work and, typically, it impacts those that are—that, you know, have to put food on the table and would love to have the luxury of being able to garden in their spare time but don't because they have to deal with the everyday realities of putting food on the table.

And now is—just let me segue back into the private member's resolution. We do agree that gardening and having the ability to grow your own food is something that is honourable, certainly something that is a great pastime for many people.

I will tell you, in my experience growing up in east end Transcona, that for my family, it was a matter of food security to the point that, for us, we kept two—two gardens that sustained us throughout the winter, one in our backyard and one, actually, in the RM of Springfield that was about a quarter acre, and my mom and dad spent a great deal of time planning that and growing from seed during the late winter, early spring, the plants that they were going to grow and that were going to sustain us not only through the summer, but also through the winter.

I can tell you that the experience of many first generation Canadian families and settlers here on Treaty 1 were one of having to do that because we could not afford to pay the prices that were in the stores. And the other, of course, benefit to that was that it sort of taught us growing up that work is very important and the work that you put into your garden is certainly going to sustain you through those lean times in the winter.

And I can say that we're starting to see that now during the pandemic. Yes, the member from Seine River brings up a good point that this is great exercise; that this is something that, you know, would—improves our neighborhoods. But I will tell you, when you have food insecurity as something that's right there, right in front of your eyes every day, the gardening piece is something that is done of necessity. And I also—I think I recall one time—I do know that the member from Radisson was also a bit of a gardener in his youth, and that particular member, I think, tried to sell his tomatoes, to my uncle, who had, probably, on the corner of Pandora and Wabasha, probably one of the best gardens in Transcona.

I remember my uncle laughing going, what's this guy trying to sell me tomatoes for when I got my own here? I can give him mine and he can go sell them.

So that's a bit of a story that myself and the member from Radisson share.

But I will say that the gardening piece is something that when I was a principal, I had a lot of experience with as well, because—and typically in many of the schools that I worked with and many of the families that I worked with, food insecurity was something that they dealt with on a daily basis, something that could have been, you know, that could be solved by a government that actually supports and sponsors nutrition programs in schools instead of having members actively debate against those types of things that would support our kids at school.

I will tell you, when I was a principal at Polson School, we had an extensive gardening program that was brought into place by our community connector—and I will name this person, because this is a very special person. This person's name was Rachel Galindo—G-a-l-i-n-d-o, for Hansard—and Rachel was absolutely instrumental in not only getting the gardening program at our school going, but also instrumental in teaching the—how important this was to get people more security when it came to their food.

Because, typically in the neighbourhoods that I worked in the large stores were far away. The stores that were available were close and they charged exorbitant prices for their produce. And so it was very important for our school and in our community to create a program that taught not only our kids, but what was magic about this community connector that we had is that she was able to bring in the community to be part of this very large—I would say, you know what, it's probably almost a quarter acre on our school's property completely devoted to market—our own market garden.

And so what did we do? With the market garden that we were able to create at the school, we had the ability to not only create a community of gardeners, but also sustain our community, because we went through the process of not only planting in early spring and doing the seedlings in all of our classes—K to 5—with every teacher, with every EA, along with this community connector, growing produce up until June, and then, of course, we have the two-month break.

And what would happen and what was magic also about this community connector that we had is that she maintained the space for the community throughout the summer so that when we returned in fall, in September, we were able to have the kids back out there learning how to—not—it wasn't quite harvest time

yet. What we would learn how to do is remove certain sucker portions of the plant so that they can grow a more robust and more—and be more fruitful in their bounty.

* (11:30)

And so what the 'gard' created and what all gardens create in a community, is a great sense of everyone working together to create something that benefits everyone, right. What a concept, what a great way to bring the community into our school and to have the community support the school and our kids. It was fantastic.

This ultimately, of course, culminated with harvest time in October where some of the pumpkins we raised were able to be carved. And then we did the seeds. I know our custodians didn't like the seeds that much, but you know what, we're able to bake and roast those pumpkin seeds. What a treat. And then have the kids, instead of having to buy a pumpkin, actually use it for Halloween. The other piece that we did is that we had a community gathering where we made soup with the bounty from our garden.

And I guess the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I'm trying to make here is that this is an exercise—the gardening piece—that is—it's more—about more than just personal enjoyment. For many families, this is something that sustains them throughout the winter. And I know I touched upon my own experience growing up in Transcona. I can tell you that we were able to be sustained throughout the winter, just like many families throughout the winter, by going into their freezer or going into the cold room in the basement, pulling out a jar of tomatoes, some frozen basil and making ourselves a fantastic meal from very basic ingredients.

What we would like to see, of course, is a government that understands this. That funds not only nutrition programs in schools but also programs that teach kids how to do this stuff so that they can sustain themselves as adults.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for the time and it was great to speak on this PMR.

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): I just want to thank, again, my colleague from Seine River for bringing this resolution forward. It's—brings back a lot of memories.

I know myself and the member from Seine River both grew up in the Parkland area. I grew up in the communities between Roblin, Russell called Dropmore and Shellmouth. Our farm—our dairy farm was right between the two hamlets, which was the Dropmore and the community—village of Shellmouth.

And we were very close to the Shellmouth Dam. Most of those rocks, I always say that, to—my grandfather supplied the government with those rocks from our land. We can grow rocks like crazy there. But the thing is, when we had the dairy farm, one of the memories of the hard work that we did on the farm was, you know, milking cows but also getting ready for winter. But also, getting ready for winter was not just baling hay and getting straw ready for the cattle, but my mom, she would actually grow a garden. And that garden was over an acre large. When you have three growing boys that—each time, actually, my—I had a fourth brother who came about nine and half years after myself—but, you know, to feed four boys, you had to make sure that the grocery bills were so large.

We did have free milk, basically, but the thing is, my mom grew a large garden. And in the garden, she—it was over an acre large, you know. We would have, you know, corn, a lot of potatoes—potatoes that would last us the—through the whole winter. It was sustainable. She canned all her pickles, she did beets, you name it. Like, we even had berries and we actually went picking in the wild for berries. And I think most of the times I don't think we ever bought jam from a grocery store in all the years when I was growing up on the farm.

And you know what, my mom right now, I don't—I think she's going to kill me when I say this, but she's 83 years old. She finally moved off the farm last September and she moved to my seniors complex in Virden, Manitoba. She is—she grew her last garden last year in the—during the pandemic.

And it was kind of nice to go and help her harvest. Every fall I used to go and sort of help her harvest the gardens. It just brings back memories.

And the thing is, I don't think she'd be at this age if she didn't have the garden, because I think that also made her—a purpose; to get ready for winter. She—you know, she kept in good shape, she went for her walks. But I think garden is a mental health, is really good for individuals. And I contribute to her for her good health and—at age 83 now.

One of the things I got out of gardening was that you can always take the boy out of the farm, but you

can't take the farm out of the boy. And I remember when I moved to Virden, or even before that, I actually—I worked for an insurance agency called Lylyk Insurance in Winnipeg, and I know one of the things he did on certain spring times—had had actually a—just on the—on St. Mary's Road, he actually lived—had a farm there. And I remember he would say, if anybody wanted to help, you know, set—get the farm ready for spring, I'll give you two dollars more an hour to leave the office and work outside for the two hours.

And you know what? I was probably one of the few that actually jumped for the opportunity because I am—you know, being in the office all winter, through the summer, you know, given an opportunity to spend a couple days out in the farm, in the garden and stuff like that, was my—a way that I would feel that it was kind of a balance.

You know, I was a financial planner for many years, sitting on the office. I believe that gardening, landscaping, was kind of my way to keep my weight down, like, weight down—keep in good health; it was balancing my mental health with my physical health, and that's what I—why I continued doing landscaping and gardening.

And I remember I helped him out to a point where I remember he said, give me two years, when I started in his business, the insurance business—I gave him two years to the date and I bought an insurance agency in Virden, Manitoba.

But the whole time I was in Virden, I actually—one of the jobs I did was I had a big yard, I had a garden, but one more passion was more of landscaping. I remember going to greenhouses and buying trees; I actually had a pellet—a clean pellet for when it come to landscaping my—our own yard. We live in a house that was built in 1905, and I was able to design my whole landscape.

And I took a course at ACC—it was about an eight-week course, evenings—and I remember I was the only male in that course. And so, it was great. I had a colleague from the insurance industry who actually built himself a house and he actually took the same course; he told me all about it, and he landscaped his own yard after he built his house. So that's what I did.

And so now, with my—with the yard, I was able to design the yard; I was able to design some hardscapes which would be, you know, a pizza oven to an outdoor fireplace, an outdoor kitchen. And again, that's kind of where our family spends our time during the summer. And that is our—my wife says that's our happy place,

and it is. It really helps with mental health—especially this past year and 2020.

I actually had a landscape business that I developed outside of my financial business, on the side, and I really helped a lot of friends design—I actually helped a lot of non-profit organizations in the town of Virden be able to design—a design of landscape; I would actually get some volunteers and I would actually do all the landscaping.

All they would really do is charge them the cost of the materials and the plants. And to this day, you know, I go around still in my constituency assistant last because—you can actually see me going around Virden trimming hedges and trimming evergreens just to shape them up better.

This is kind of my way of giving back to our community that didn't eat very well; my family, who welcomed us when we moved there in 1994; my kids grew up in the town of Virden.

But it's giving back. And I think, with all the things that happened this past year, I actually started my landscape business, and now, because I'm getting older—eight years older—I decided that I can't do all the physical work when it comes to preparing for landscaping, but my son has actually taken a passion to become—to do a landscaping business.

So I've actually got him going and he does that on the sides after his full-time work that he has in—he had some summer jobs and working at Tundra Oil & Gas, and then in the evenings he would—we would take on some landscaping projects and then he would actually do all the heavy lifting now.

I'm getting to a point where I get my—my back gets sore, and it's harder when you get to over 50. And you know, the interesting thing was, I had a colleague—the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon), which was now the minister of mental health—and she was the one that actually brought forward that we were—our PC headquarters.

We were going to—she wanted—it was actually looking very drab. It looked very un-kept. And she brought the idea of actually landscaping the PC headquarters, which is just across the Leg right now.

* (11:40)

And, so what I was able—I—she asked for volunteers and one thing I waited until she got enough volunteers, but I decided that, you know what? I'll help her out. And you know what? We actually had a great time, you know, going out and designing what

we were going to do; going to the greenhouses to buy plants. We had volunteers—our conservative ways of doing things—and we had many volunteers to make the work easy. I know, the honourable member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte) came and helped. It just brought our PC team together and actually become—be a team during this—during COVID time and we sort of nicknamed that—our—that garden now—across the Legislature here now, our COVID garden because we did it during the summer of 2020.

And I think I'm going to have the opportunity to pass it on to other people who want to speak on this topic. I know this is a passion to mine and I want to thank again the member from Seine River for bringing this resolution forward.

Thank you.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'd like to thank my esteemed colleagues on this side of the House for their very warm welcome into this—debating this resolution.

I'd like to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward. I actually think it's nice when we get to debate or discuss topics that are—that I know are probably near and dear to many of us. This is certainly something that we should be talking about in terms of sustainability and food security and communities and climate change and the environment.

I—you know, and during a pandemic, do I think this is the most important thing to bring forward? No. But it does give us an opportunity to talk about some of the things that are happening during this pandemic that this government is actually failing to address—food security certainly being one of those issues. And I reflect on the fact that the member for—I believe it was the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) who, months ago in this House—and actually on social media, I think that's where it really reared its head—but did say, as a member of this House, that he doesn't think that we should feed kids who are navigating, and their families are navigating food insecurity.

So, I think that when we talk about celebrating backyard and community gardeners, we have to talk about issues that communities face, like food insecurity. I want to quickly give a shout-out to the folks at the Broadway biz—West Broadway Biz, who do a tremendous job of creating accessible gardens in really creative ways, planting different medicines throughout the West Broadway and West End community, downtown community, and engaging community in the core and getting engaged in gardening

and planting and watching things grow and building community that way. They make a tremendous effort, so I want to give kudos to them.

There are some folks who live on Furby Street in the West End who also have a community garden and work really hard to make that accessible and engage their neighbours in that effort, which I think is really beautiful. And it's a really important thing for us to acknowledge and highlight and celebrate, the fact that organizations and community members, citizens alike, do make these efforts to ensure that they're addressing food insecurity, they're creating beautiful opportunities to connect with their neighbours and they're looking at ways at beautifying their neighbourhoods. Those are all positives.

Certainly, you know, I will say that it's harder for organizations to do those things and make those efforts when the government in power is under-resourcing those very organizations and forcing them to compete for funds and dollars that they should be able to readily access and therefore put to work in their communities, create an abundance of opportunity to do exactly what the minister—the member is doing in bringing this motion forward. And so, in the spirit of this resolution, I call on the member to push her government to make sure that our local organizations have access to the resources they need in order to continue to do this good work and, in fact, enhance and expand on the good work that they do.

I know from personal experience, as somebody who is a very mediocre gardener, how beneficial it is to have people in your communities who have that expertise and are very generous in sharing it. I had an unfortunate experience a few years ago—a couple of years ago, with a neighbourhood cat, a few of them I believe—might be a wild allegation to make in this House but I'm putting it on the record—that was consistently and insistently using my garden beds as a personal washroom, which made it very difficult for me to be motivated to get in the dirt and get those things growing. But you know what? I reached out to some local neighbourhood organizations. I really did, because they had these great programs. Spence Neighbourhood Association had a great program where they would support folks who wanted to establish gardens. And there were some folks in the neighbourhood who I knew had green thumbs. And, unfortunately, I was completely unsuccessful in deterring the cats, but the cats did enjoy the abundance of my garden for a couple of summers. And, you know what, and I had a lot of fun in the process. I love growing herbs and flowers and things like that.

And, you know, foundationally, developing those skills and building those relationships is about more than just having a backyard or community garden. And, you know, we should, within our capacity, do everything that we can to support those folks who are making those efforts and doing that good work. And, you know, it's not only about funding those organizations adequately and making sure that they're well resourced to do that good work; it's also about making meaningful steps and actions to address the growing climate crisis.

The reality of it is, you know, we're only going to be able to have backyard and community gardens for as long as we have this beautiful planet. And, unfortunately, under this government, no significant efforts whatsoever have been made to address the climate crisis. And so, you know, it would've been great to, alongside with this resolution, see some efforts being made here or some dialogue around what this government intends to do make sure that we have safe and healthy communities and an environment to do this work in. But there's been no mention of that.

And I do look forward from hearing from my colleague on this side of the House and our critic for environment and climate, on ways that that can be done because I know that she's well versed in this area, has some fantastic ideas. I encourage the members opposite to reach out to her and access some of that expertise. It benefits all of our communities, not just the great community that she represents in Wolseley.

Certainly I appreciate how that kind of expertise can help communities downtown where we actually see folks have less access to green space and have to get very creative about how they establish backyard and community gardens. It requires much more of a creative and ingenuitive effort in coming together to do so. And so, again, we need those resources going to community organizations without barriers and very low barriers so they can continue to do the work. We need meaningful actions and steps taken to address climate change, the climate crisis that we're facing right now.

And lastly, I think what I'd like to say about, you know, celebrating backyard and community gardeners and this resolution is the fact that, you know, many of the folks who would benefit from community gardens and backyard gardens are folks, like I've mentioned, who do live in the core. And these folks are living in neighbourhoods that have been affected by lead contamination. These are folks who may want to establish backyard and community gardens, but

unfortunately face risks in doing so. Talking about neighbourhoods like Daniel McIntyre, Centennial, Glenelm, Chalmers, North Point Douglas, the River and Osborne area, St. Boniface, Wolseley, much of the West End, including Sargent Park, Weston, and Minto. These are communities, these are residents, that need action to ensure that their gardens, that their soil, is safe.

You know, before we can even celebrate and talk about gardening and all of the joys that come along with it, we have to talk about the fact that there are many folks in our communities who don't have a safe opportunity to participate in any of this. And so we need to see efforts made in this regard. We need to see immediate action taken in this regard.

You know, I know that there are families who are afraid to let their kids play on playgrounds, never mind digging in the dirt and, you know, getting their garlic ready for next year or planting tomatoes or herbs or whatever it may be. Maybe it's the failed spinach attempt I had a few years ago that they're trying to establish in their gardens. Who knows? But first and foremost, folks need safe soil to do that in. And that's a responsibility that's incumbent on this government, and, again, unfortunately, we've seen a lack of action.

So this resolution, while it's nice and feel-good and warm and fuzzy, and I actually think that it's kind of a lovely thing to bring forward, it's sort of empty without the actions being taken by this government to make sure that as many people as possible get to see a resolution like this being debated and talked about in the House and also get to celebrate it in their own backyards, in their own communities, know full well that their government wants them to have the same experience as other folks in other areas that get to celebrate and enjoy these things as well.

* (11:50)

So I look forward to hearing other folks and their thoughts on this particular resolution. I want to commend the downtown Union Station organizations and community members who make every effort so that we can celebrate backyard and community gardeners, and I look forward to the efforts I know they're going to make as we transition into the summer months and the season where we get to enjoy this.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak in support of gardening and in support of gardeners.

Gardeners provide nutritious food for us to eat and for them to eat, beautiful flowers for us to enjoy and habitat which is important for bees and for wildlife and so much more. Gardening provides, for those who are gardening, a time to be outside, to be engaging in physical activity and an opportunity to benefit from the calm and nurturing environment of a garden. Gardeners benefit from improvements in mental and physical health. To go outside and to work in a garden is a good way of reducing stress and of getting away from troubling issues. Decreases in depression, in anxiety, and an improvement in attentional capacity have been shown to happen as a result of gardening.

Gardening and raising food locally can also help us in dealing with climate change, can reduce the amount of greenhouse gasses generated as a result of transported food from longer distances. Gardening can help with food security which is important to many individuals and communities in Manitoba. I can speak personally to the importance of gardening, of looking after plants, of caring for the soil, of eating fresh vegetables. These are pleasures which everyone in Manitoba should have access to.

In River Heights we benefit from a River Heights farmers' market. Elsewhere there are others, including the one in St. Norbert, which has already been mentioned, locally produced food from people who like gardening.

The MLA for Turtle Mountain has talked of his growing up in Dropmore. Dropmore is famous internationally for the work of Frank Skinner, a horticulturalist, plant breeder and scientist. He began the Hardy Plant Nursery and operated it for many years as Skinner's Nursery starting in 1949.

Frank Skinner introduced, hybridized and marketed over 300 hardy varieties of flowers, shrubs, vines and trees. I visited the site which is really neat to see. It has a Skinner introductions garden. Investors can see the site and its history, including many of the new varieties he introduced, and learn first-hand of the major contributions of Manitoba Frank Skinner to horticulture and to gardening in our province and elsewhere. There are varieties of Dropmore plants, which are known internationally. We should recognize that and glory in it.

We also need to be aware of the limits to access so many in our province had to gardens. With their renters, unless there's a community garden nearby, it's much more difficult. School gardens can be a help in educating children. We have both in River Heights—

community and school gardens—but we need to have this possibility all over Manitoba. All children should learn about gardening and benefit from the opportunity.

As the MLA for Union Station has emphasized, we also need to check on and make sure that everyone all over Manitoba has the opportunity to garden safely and to produce food which doesn't have lead contamination.

A little over a year ago the same report released by Intrinsic, which predicts that the proportion of children aged one to seven years of age with a blood lead level of more than two micrograms per decilitre in north Point Douglas is 97 per cent; in Weston is 70 per cent; in Daniel McIntyre is 40 per cent; and in St. Boniface is 17 per cent. Levels above two micrograms per decilitre have been shown to have an adverse impact on the neurological system and to decrease school performance and increase learning and behavioural problems. We need to have safe places to garden, and the government needs to be very active in this area. This is a fundamental, important issue.

When people have their own garden, can garden safely and can produce good, high quality, safe food, this is really important. I hope that the MLA for Seine River will work with others to make sure children all over Manitoba can have soils which are free from lead and can produce food locally which is free from lead. Blood lead levels need to be tested in areas at high risk so that children with high blood lead levels can be met—helped.

It is important that we are supporting gardening, but it's also important that people can know that lead levels in their garden and in their community garden are not high. And if they are high, that their soils are remediated and that good, safe, lead-free plants can be produced to help people stay healthy, to help people get involved more in gardening and doing it safely.

So I hope that the MLA for Seine River will get actively involved in this cause, which is a really important one, as the intrinsic report has shown, for Manitoba and for Manitoba children and for Manitoba gardens.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): I know that my time is limited, so I'd just like to put a few words on

the record. I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), for bringing this—forward this resolution, Celebrating Backyard and Community Gardeners.

In the last year, Manitobans have faced extremely challenging times with the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has restricted many activities that were part of everyday life for most of us. Manitobans needed to find activities to replace the ones they lost to the pandemic. Many Manitobans decided to start or return to planting a garden. Gardening has been around for centuries, but it was nice to see a 'reasurgent' in backyard and community gardens this past year.

I hope that this interest continues this year and for years to come, especially for our young Manitobans, because once they get hooked on gardening, they will continue to see the benefits of growing their own vegetables. I encourage all members to support this resolution, because I do believe it is an important one.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Thanks for the opportunity to put a few words on the record about this resolution.

April is Sikh Heritage Month, and I would like to wish everyone happy Sikh Heritage Month. Talking about gardening and community gardens, I would like to start with a quote from Sikhism: pavan guru pani pita mata dharat mahat. Means air is our guru, water is our father and Earth is our mother. This quote relates to nature, relates to agriculture, relates to food and our natural resources.

I want to say thank you to the member for putting this resolution forward and creating an opportunity for all of us to talk about community gardens, community building, backyard, kitchen gardens, food production and our love for soil, for plants and for each other.

When I started my career as assistant professor back in the year 2000, the first location I was posted at, it used to offer a gardener's training course. I was in the—

The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson): Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

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