

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 31, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Excess Moisture Affecting Agriculture Crops

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to excess moisture that has brought great difficulty to our producers this year.

I want to extend my gratitude to our Manitoba producers who have gone through some of the toughest seasons these past two years, one of the worst droughts in Manitoba history, and now our producers are facing overland flooding and excess moisture on their fields which inhibits their ability to seed. I want to thank all the producers who, despite of these hardships, plus a worldwide pandemic, continue to work 'tirelessly' each and every day to provide food for Manitobans and consumers around the world.

Each week, the Department of Agriculture releases a Crop Report to keep Manitobans informed on how much seeding of each crop has been completed. Seeding progression of annual field crops reported in the department's weekly crop and weather report today will indicate that seeding is 36 to 40 per cent complete, compared to a five-year average of 92 per cent. The profitability of the yield is reduced for all crops each week seeding is delayed because of excess moisture.

The excess moisture insurance feature of our AgriInsurance program provides coverages for Manitoba crop producers who are unable to seed land because of excess moisture and flooding. In years past where excess moisture was as severe as we see it

today, insurance payments issued to producers were between 22 and 23 million dollars. Some historical instances, we have seen as much as \$162 million paid out in a single year. While it's too early to estimate the insurance payments for this season, the Department of Agriculture will keep the House and producers updated, and producers can expect to see these payments starting in June and hopefully wrapping up in August.

On that note, I want to thank the Department of Agriculture for their outstanding efforts to ensure they are available to help producers in their times of need.

Recognizing the difficulty faced by producers, the AgriStability program application deadline has been extended to June 30th to ensure all producers have sufficient time to file for their programs.

Manitoba Agriculture will continue to monitor the situation and update the crop weather forecast each week. I want to remind all producers that we are here to support you through this difficult time. I also want to remind all producers of the Farm and Rural Stress Line, as well as the new Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program introduced in January of this year, which offers free counselling services to farmers and their families while they navigate through these extremely difficult times.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues in joining me in thanking and applauding our Manitoba producers for their tireless efforts to feed not just Manitobans but people around the globe through these difficult conditions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, we've heard from the producers who say they are struggling. The last few years have been challenging for many, with a significant drought. Many producers have left the industry, and now, too much rain has come.

Even in areas in which flooding has gone down, the soil remains so saturated that it can be impossible to seed. The weekly Crop Report shows that the seeding effort has been slow. Producers are looking for drier fields and switching their intended planting order. Producers are also changing what they intend to plant to account for the delay. Some farmers, too, switched a small amount of planned corn or soybean acres into canola and spring wheat, while planned

field pea acres have dropped in some parts of the southwest in favour of more canola.

According to the latest Crop Report, no part of agro-Manitoba has received less than 131 per cent of normal rainfall for the period of April 12th to May 22nd, while large parts of central and eastern Manitoba have had over 260 per cent of normal rain during that time. And as we can see, current conditions have only got wetter.

Provincial seeding progress as of May 24th sits at an extremely low 10 per cent, which is far behind the five-year average of 77 per cent completion for this time of the year. Producers are especially worried about seeding deadlines for crop insurance. In extremely wet seasons, we have supported extension of seeding deadlines and do the same again here.

The Manitoba NDP supports all attempts to help farmers fight excess moisture. We are committed to the concerns of producers. We remain committed to listening to the needs of the farmers in the weeks and months to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Madam Speaker, we are in a tough situation in Manitoba at the moment, with all the excess moisture and the crops being seeded later than usual. I think it's actually a—pretty positive news that we've got 36 to 46 per cent of the farmland seeded. It looked like it was lower than that, and given the lateness of the spring, I think that we need to look at the fact that there is already a significant proportion of the seeding done.

There is time, still, 'til the June 20th, ordinary date for crop insurance, for seeding to be completed. I called, twice, on the government to make a decision to extend the crop insurance. I'm not sure if extending the paperwork also 'instends' the planting date. If that's true, that's good.

I've also called for looking at cover crops, whether that could be supported later on. I think we owe a special duty to farmers and to the world, indeed, to try and produce as much grain as we can, and that extending the seeding is a positive thing because, hopefully, with climate change, the fall will be extended, as well.

It is a tough situation. It's not time to panic, but it's a time to plan really well and do the best we can to support our farmers and do everything we can to ensure that they are able, where possible, to get their crops in, even if, in some cases, it's late.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements, the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Heavy Rain and Flooding Update

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, our Hydrologic Forecast Centre staff continue to monitor the precipitation system started yesterday, and is expected to continue throughout the day.

This system has a potential to bring up to 75 millimetres over the next 48 hours. The city of Winnipeg received roughly 55 millimetres of rain last night, and the city of Morden received the most precipitation across the province with roughly 80 millimetres.

Madam Speaker, the overland flooding warning is issued yesterday and shifted to include the western portion of the Red River Valley, while remaining in the Whiteshell lakes area and the Winnipeg River basin.

Depending on the amount and the intensity of the rain, water levels could rise rapidly and threaten low-lying and nearby properties, as well as roads, crossings and other infrastructure, Madam Speaker. Please check with Manitoba 511 app and the most current road closures.

The wind effect warning remains in the Manitoba lakes, with the highest amounts of wind set-up expected to be in the larger lakes. North winds gusting up to 80 kilometres an hour—per hour are expected. Winds may cause water levels at Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis and Dauphin Lake to potentially rise more than five feet along the shoreline, Madam Speaker. The forecasted wind is also expected to impact lakes in the Whiteshell lakes region, and levels are expected to rise between one to two feet along these lakes.

* (13:40)

Daily meetings between Manitoba EMO and Manitoba Parks, Manitoba Hydro and the Department of Natural Resources and Northern Development continue to discuss planning, 'co-ordinating' resources, communication strategies and next steps to priority of mitigation efforts on the Whiteshell areas.

Madam Speaker, 30 local authorities, three northern affairs communities, eight First Nation communities and one provincial park have 'desclared' states of local emergency.

Indigenous Services Canada provides updates for First Nation communities, providing the forecasted precipitation and high wind events in collaboration with provincial staff, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday, the community of Grand Rapids requested 15,000 sandbags. Our staff will work with ISC to fulfill these requests, Madam Speaker. A request of RM of Lakeshore has requested 1,000 super sandbags with 10,000 sandbags was 'submilly'-submitted yesterday.

Our provincial staff will continue to work with local authorities to proactively mitigate high water concerns as we work through the latest precipitation and high wind events.

As Manitobans prepare to battle another significant weather system, I would like to remind members in this House and those who are listening that our government remains in a state of response in ongoing flooding, Madam Speaker. However, if you have experienced damage due to flood impacts, I would encourage Manitobans to visit the disaster financial assistant website to determine if—their eligibility regarding compensation on uninsurable losses.

As always, I would continue to commend and highlight our amazing provincial staff and their tireless efforts; Manitobans across the province, my colleagues and I, are deeply grateful, Madam Speaker.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, once again we thank the minister for his update to the House and thank all of those emergency measures and Manitoba Infrastructure staff who are continuing to work around the clock to mitigate the flooding around the province.

Manitobans in all corners of the province are struggling with flooding and the subsequent issues that it has caused. The high recent levels of precipitation and strong wind conditions are not helping as we deal with our sixth Colorado low this spring.

On Twin Lakes Beach, waves are coming over the shoreline into people's properties as winds reach 85 kilometres per hour. St. Clements held an emergency council meeting this morning to prepare for the possible flooding in several of their communities. Dikes in Grand Marais are being tested, and fire-fighters are on hand to help in case they're breached and residents need to evacuate.

In the Whiteshell, business owners are feeling the impacts of flooding and the weather, like Ryan Kelly of Falcon Lake Meat & Grocery, who notes that fewer customers are coming into the Falcon Lake Shopping Centre because of the cold and wet conditions, even though he's been fortunate enough to avoid flooding so far.

Lori, the owner of the Mason Jar on West Hawk Lake, isn't quite as fortunate. Not only are fewer people visiting her boutique because they're busy fighting the flood and cleanup, but her own property has been damaged by the rising waters. She hopes that the government will announce funding for impacted residents like herself soon.

In the southern part of our province, farmers are increasingly concerned about the impact a flood—that is—it is having on roads. Justin Friesen, a young farmer in the RM of Rhineland, says that they're—they've deteriorated so badly that full-on potholes have appeared in some of the gravel roads and that municipalities cannot keep up with the repairs. In Morden, more than 80 millimetres of rain in 24 hours has flooded basements in an already waterlogged area of our province.

There is so much to do in this province to address the flooding and the weather, not just immediately, today and tomorrow, but for the next month and likely for years to come, in order to recover to where we are right now. Once again, we commend all those fighting the flood and thank the minister for the continued updates to the House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Mr. Lamont: I thank the minister for his update. This is clearly a very serious situation for flood evacuees, as well as for the First Nations municipalities, property owners and farmers who are all struggling with

record rainfall and serious disruptions to their lives and livelihoods.

It's clear from the Province's flood map that while flooding in some communities is marked as peaked, in many more, that's not the case. There are more than two dozen Manitoba communities where there is currently a flood warning in place, and a storm surge has the capacity to do enormous damage on a number of lakes.

We received a letter from the concerned residents of Lake Manitoba, who were flooded 11 years ago and are very anxious about the current situation. They are hoping that once the storm has passed, once the flood has passed, a broad-based advisory group, like the Lake Manitoba advisory board, could be restored. Representation must come from affected parties, they say: farmers, ranchers, residential groups, environmental experts and Indigenous leaders.

Since the House is set to rise tomorrow, I hope the minister or his department will consider issuing bulletins by email to all members of the House until the flood waters have receded.

And we just wanted to highlight some of the challenges and vulnerabilities facing evacuees. The Winnipeg Free Press reported today about the measures that had to be taken by the federal government in another evacuation involving wildfires, essentially because predators, including drug dealers and sex traffickers, were waiting to prey on individuals who'd been evacuated.

There were complaints more recently, when members of Peguis First Nation were first evacuated, that they arrived in Winnipeg hotels and were mistreated. Some were served undercooked food and disrespected by staff, which is clearly unacceptable in any circumstance, and even more so when people are evacuees.

Finally, I don't know—just on a very lighter note—I don't know if there's a point in The Emergency Measures Act where the minister is obliged to start building an ark or to start separating the animals two by two, but we can all hope that it doesn't come to that.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ILCS Fundraisers for Ukraine

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize some truly amazing instances of charity and

goodwill that recently took place in the community of Lagimodière.

On March 25th, I had the pleasure of visiting classes at Island Lakes Community School, or ILCS, where Mrs. Nicole Molin's class was of particular interest as they had not only done a lot of work regarding Ukraine awareness, but also had been preparing arts and crafts to sell in order to raise money for upcoming fundraisers. These events were being arranged in order to assist Ukrainians suffering from the terrible war taking place in their homeland as a result of the senseless Russian occupation.

There was a total of three fundraisers initiated and run by students in support of Ukraine, with kindergarten students making and selling rainbow bracelets, grade 5-6 students running a craft, bake and used book sale and grade 8 students volunteering and selling leftover items at Winakwa Community Centre.

Through private donations and funds accumulated by these fundraisers, a total of just under \$4,700 was raised and donated to the Canadian Red Cross to support humanitarian aid in Ukraine. In addition, four students in grade 8 raised over \$1,400 for the UNICEF children's fund to help children impacted by the war. In all, over \$6,700 was raised by three—by these children and youth in hopes of making a difference for those affected by the horrors of war.

In the gallery today, representing 150 students from ILCS who participated from kindergarten to grade 8 in student-led initiatives to support Ukraine, we have with us Mr. Jordan Falconer, the principal of ILCS, and Mrs. Nicole Molin, a grade 5-6 teacher with a group of 15 students.

It was a grade 5 student who organized and initiated the We Stand with Ukraine Fundraiser that took place at Island Lakes Community School on April 21st, 2022, and it was students from grades 5, 6 and 8 who ran the For the People of Ukraine Fundraiser that took place on April 30th, 2022, at Winakwa Community Centre.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing the great work that these students have done for the people of Ukraine.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Mr. Smith: Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask leave to enter the names and the respective fundraising activities of the students in the gallery.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to include that information in Hansard? [*Agreed*]

We Stand with Ukraine Fundraiser: Ksusha Boguslavski

For the People of Ukraine Fundraiser: Laila Alsaïdi, Lexi Derksen, Baljeet Joura, Tejas Kambo, Sanni Kauppinen, Annabella LaForte, Masha Lyubytska, Alia McInnes, Kennedy Robertson, Samuel Rothery, Gracie Smith, Jake Toye, Travis Unryn and Audrey Weiske

Access to Health Care for Gender-Diverse Community

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I rise today to speak about the importance of access to life-saving health care, particularly for trans and gender non-binary Manitobans.

For many populations, access to health care has historically been, and in many ways still is, marked with systemic and discriminatory barriers. For members of Manitoba's gender-diverse community, accessing health services can often be an intimidated and complicated process.

Gender-affirming health care focuses on people's physical, mental, emotional and social health needs and well-being while confirming their gender identity. This care reduces the risk of suicide and increases positive mental health and the overall well-being of individuals.

* (13:50)

Taking the steps to access care which affirms one's identities takes courage and should be met with compassion and a system which is ready to provide that care. Service providers should have stable and adequate funding and resources available to meet needs in a timely manner.

Currently, the surgical and diagnostic backlog in Manitoba is barring some folks from even being placed on a waiting list for gender-affirming surgeries. Many people I've talked to are waiting with no idea as to when they might be able to access care at any stage of their gender-affirming health process.

Policies require extensive enhancements, and Manitoba's list of what is deemed medically necessary is incredibly restrictive.

There is a significant role for the provincial government in not only addressing the backlogs but also in combatting stigma, upholding and enhancing

human rights and ensuring equitable access to all aspects of life-saving, gender-affirming health care.

No longer should this government be one that gets in the way of trans and non-binary people living fully affirmed lives or one that treats their health care as an afterthought. We must do better by trans and non-binary Manitobans across the province.

The Manitoba NDP stands with all trans and non-binary communities and wishes all 2SLGBTQIA+ folks across Manitoba a very happy Pride.

Thank you.

Jim Stinson

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour Mr. Jim Stinson, a resident of the RM of St. Clements, for his outstanding contributions to his community.

Jim and his wife, Darlene, moved to the RM of St. Clements in 1990 while he was still employed with the RCMP and immediately became involved in his new community. When the Province began discussions regarding the expansion of the floodway, Jim researched the proposed expansion to ensure that the drinking water and the aquifer that supplies it would not be affected.

It became very apparent that any further deepening of the centre channel of the floodway would, in fact, endanger the groundwater due to many pre-existing breaches. Jim attended every meeting and fought to reduce the proposed depth. Madam Speaker, the expansion team subsequently conceded and agreed to Jim's proposal.

In late 2000, Jim agreed to assist the municipality in their emergency preparedness program. This endeavour soon became a passion of Jim's to establish ways to protect residents in St. Clements and eventually became a full-time position as manager of Protective Services.

There were many aspects in protecting the RM of St. Clements that required co-operation from many stakeholders, including council, the Province, the Capital Region emergency co-ordinators, first responders and staff with the municipality.

Madam Speaker, in 2009, Jim received the Emergency Coordinator of the Year Award from the Disaster Management Conference. In 2010, Jim initiated a full-scale emergency exercise called Shooting Star. This included all municipalities within

the Interlake and Eastman area. The exercise took over a year to develop and enabled municipalities to respond to emergency situations such as a full-scale chemical spill.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in acknowledging Mr. Jim Stinson for his outstanding contributions to the RM of St. Clements and the province of Manitoba.

Grace Hospital ER

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, exactly one year ago, I published a CanStar article sounding the alarm about a crisis happening within the Grace Hospital emergency room, and since then, it's evident that things have only gotten worse under this PC government.

Simply put, there's an emergency happening in our Grace Hospital ER and the PCs have done nothing to fix it. Doctors, nurses and health-care support staff have been working tirelessly to provide the best care possible in this environment, but it cannot be sustained.

A few weeks ago, a community member reached out to me to let me know she'd taken her 73-year-old mother to the Grace ER with a serious head injury, but after waiting over 12 hours overnight without being seen by a doctor, she took her mom home and hoped for the best.

Other similarly horrifying stories have been shared with me in recent weeks, and the hard truth is that in west Winnipeg, residents can no longer be confident that they can access the emergency care they need when they need it.

The Grace Hospital has been experiencing heavy patient loads ever since the PC government closed three out of six emergency rooms in Winnipeg. The closure of these ERs created a massive increase in the number of patients being routed to the Grace for emergency care, but this increase in patient volumes wasn't matched with an increase in available space or staffing.

Patients have to be kept in the hallway because the emergency department, suited for 31 beds, is sometimes treating as many as 90 patients at a time. Emergency care is a vital component of our health-care system, Madam Speaker. Manitobans facing life-threatening emergencies need to be able to have timely and quality access to emergency services.

I call on west Winnipeg MLAs and on the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon) to take immediate action in response to this crisis.

Manitobans deserve to be confident that they can access emergency medical services when they need them. It's time for this PC government to take serious action to solve the crisis taking place at the Grace Hospital emergency room.

End of Sitting Acknowledgements

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We're about to break for summer and I'd like to rise to express gratitude and pay tribute to some friends who have been lost in the last year.

There have been many difficult losses throughout this pandemic, as well as some tough divisions, and I want to pray a brief tribute to Kathryn Condra-Kay—who died this winter.

Kay was a dear friend of my family. She was like a second aunt, really, a best friend to my mother, a gourmet cook with an acid tongue. She affected the lives of many as a teacher. She taught at Balmoral Hall. She also taught Indigenous students at Gordon Bell with enormous empathy and warmth, and she was an entrepreneur, a supporter and celebrator of the arts. She leaves behind Michael, Kathryn and Gillian and their children and the members of a book club that has been around almost as long as I've been alive.

The other two losses are friends of mine. One is Sal Loxley, whose father John was a renowned economist at the U of M. Sal was a larger-than-life character who loved his city, and his passing, which happened far too soon, has left a huge hole in the lives of his family, friends and community.

The last is Megan Wolff. She was a mom, a teacher, with a special spark of life. She was going to retire this year and sell her house and move to be with her partner in Colorado, but she died of COVID on Christmas Day. She's mourned by so many—by her identical twin sister Jen, her partner Andy, her children Mia and Alex.

And does—you know, summing up, Kay was like an aunt or a second mother; Megan and Sal I knew in high school and university. And I knew them all at a time of life when you don't have a care in the world and you think you'll live forever. And I am grateful for the time we had for them—with them.

At the same time, while this has been a year of many losses and challenges, there's always much to be grateful for and to look forward to.

I want to thank the Speaker, the Clerk, our fellow members and all the staff for all their work that makes our work possible.

To graduates, whether it's from high school or university or college, who are moving on to a new phase in your life, best of luck.

And, finally, to everyone who hears this and everyone they love, I wish you peace, joy and better days. I know they're ahead. I just don't know when.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have a number of guests here in the gallery, and I would like to introduce all of them to you.

In the public gallery we have with us today two grade 4 classes from Greenway Elementary School, who are the guests of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor).

Also in the public gallery we have with us Sandy and Zac Tschosik of Bismarck, North Dakota, and Betty Olinkin of Winnipeg, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (Mr. Piwniuk).

Also seated in the public gallery, from Interlake Mennonite Fellowship School, we have 23 grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Byron Dueck, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Johnson).

And I'm also told that there are 19 guests in the public gallery from Ukraine, and they are here with their chaperone, former MLA MaryAnn Mihychuk. And they also visited the Interlake-Gimli this past week.

And a particular welcome to our members, but welcome to everybody that is here. We're delighted that we can have our guests back, and a very, very special welcome to our friends from Ukraine.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And now it's also time to say goodbye to two more pages.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have this statement for the House.

* (14:00)

One of our pages, Divya Sharma, is serving her last day in the Chamber today and I wanted to share some comments that she has made with the House. Divya was honoured to serve as page and learn all the personal beverage preferences of MLAs. It was interesting to see the human side of politics and people in the Chamber. She hopes to continue learning about these systems at the University of Manitoba in the political science program.

Finally, she would like to say shukria, miigwech, merci and thank you to all the MLAs; her sergeants, Dave and Cam; the clerks; attendants; the security staff and custodians and more for their input to democracy in Manitoba.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Divya's mother, Neha, has joined us today as—and is in the public gallery.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And another one of our pages, Taylor, is serving her last day in the Chamber today, and I want to share some of her comments with you.

She says: I really appreciated my time here at the Legislature. Through this experience, I learned a lot and I am thankful for the opportunity and great privilege I have had for being here. I believe I grew a lot and I would like to thank everyone for their support and guidance.

After I graduate this year from Miles Macdonell Collegiate and the International Baccalaureate program, I plan to study history and anthropology at the University of Winnipeg to prepare for a career in historical curation.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Taylor's sister, Avery, and her father, Kevin, are joining us in the gallery today.

* * *

Madam Speaker: And I know we all grow very fond of our pages, and we just want to wish both of these pages the very best in their future endeavours.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WPS Headquarters Construction Request to Call Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Each day, we learn more and more about the scandal around the construction of the City of Winnipeg's police headquarters.

A judge has ruled the former CAO of the City of Winnipeg accepted a bribe as part of this construction project, and we are learning more and more about invoices for work not done or not completed.

Manitobans expect answers to the questions they have about this project that cost over \$100 million.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) take action today and call a public inquiry into the City of Winnipeg's police headquarters project?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the member knows that there are dozens, I believe, of 'civill'—civil litigations that continue to work their way through the courts related to this matter.

Recently, the CEO of the City of Winnipeg, Michael Jack, said that the reality is, as litigation proceeds, we continue to make our way through literally millions of documents. So, at each stage of these proceedings, we are learning more.

Launching a public inquiry has been seen in the past during litigation—can actually stop that litigation from happening.

I don't know why, when information is being brought forward, the member opposite would want to interrupt civil litigation, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Fontaine: Well, actually, Winnipeg's City Council, alongside Mayor Brian Bowman, are actually calling for a public inquiry. They're calling on this government to do what's right and call a public inquiry.

They all state a public inquiry would help, not hinder, their civil suits on this matter. It would compel people to answer questions and for documents to see the light of day. This is why an inquiry is so desperately needed to get to the bottom of a really atrocious scandal here.

Will the Premier stop delaying, do what's right and call a public inquiry into the police headquarters project today?

Mr. Goertzen: The member opposite references the need to discover documents. Of course, that is what the discovery process in litigation is about.

Michael Jack, the CEO of the City of Winnipeg, said the reality is, as litigation proceeds, we continue

to make our way through literally millions of documents. So, at each stage of these proceedings, we are learning more.

We're getting more information from documents—the very thing that the member is asking for.

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

Ms. Fontaine: There's nothing stopping the Premier from getting up today and calling a public inquiry into the police headquarters. She can do it right now.

But unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this is a political decision on her part to refuse Winnipeggers the accountability that they deserve on \$100 million. On this side of the House, we stand with the mayor of Winnipeg, who said an inquiry would help get to the bottom of this scandal. The government is just using the same excuses as Brian Pallister.

Will the Premier stop all the excuses, get up in the House today and call a public inquiry into the police headquarters scandal?

Mr. Goertzen: In fact, it was Derek Olson, a senior litigator and a former commission council for the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, who said actually that the preference would be to see civil proceedings concluded before an inquiry is held to avoid possible inconsistencies or conflicting results which might influence either the civil proceedings or the inquiry.

In fact, we've seen in the past, Madam Speaker, that where there's a public inquiry at the same time, it can actually spark another form of litigation that could stop the civil litigation that's ongoing. There are accountability measures happening in civil litigation. There's more information coming forward.

I don't know why the member opposite would want to stop that discovery from happening, Madam Speaker.

Health-Care Support Workers Bargaining Contract and Pandemic Pay

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, health support staff in this province have been without a contract for many years. They deserve respect, but this PC government has simply not provided that.

Far too many of these essential workers were left out of health-care top-ups during this pandemic and their service entirely left without the respect it deserves. It's long past time for a resolution.

Will the minister ensure top-ups, and when will they establish a new contract for health support workers?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): Well, this is intervention request number, I don't know, 20, somewhere along the road for—from the members opposite.

Certainly, we are not the employer, Madam Speaker. Shared Health is the employer. They're—are in bargaining with that particular union and their representatives.

There is no space for government to insert themselves in that collective bargaining process, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we will always stand up for workers in Manitoba.

It's been five years since this PC government started closing emergency rooms—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —urgent-care centres and clinics across Manitoba. Their cuts have left our hospitals overloaded. Health support staff are doing more with less and they've been without a contract for far too long. Their wages have been frozen and they were cut out of top-up pay. It's time to show these workers the respect they deserve, Madam Speaker.

Will the minister ensure COVID top-up pay for these workers and a new contract today?

Mr. Helwer: Well, request No. 21, I think, is where we are for the opposition asking us as government to intervene in collective bargaining where there is no space to—for government to intervene, Madam Speaker.

On one side, you have the employer, Shared Health. On the other side you have the union representing the workers. In between you have their professional negotiator.

They negotiate, Madam Speaker. There's no place in there for the government to intervene.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, inflation is now over 6 per cent. This minister and his government had no problem interfering and freezing the workers' wages for years when these workers put themselves at risk, working with patients infected with COVID-19.

It's time for a fair deal for these health support workers all across of—our province, Madam Speaker. They 'desuve' new—they deserve new contracts. They deserve top-ups that recognize their work during this pandemic on the front lines.

Will the minister ensure that that funding is in place for those workers today?

* (14:10)

Mr. Helwer: Well, a flip-flop in the same question, Madam Speaker: blaming the government for intervening, asking us to intervene, but not intervene.

So, which is it, Madam Speaker? I can't see what path the member opposite is looking for. The—

An Honourable Member: Answer the question.

Mr. Helwer: Obviously, the members opposite don't want to listen to the answer. They're heckling me down, Madam Speaker. You can hear them do it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Helwer: There is no space for the government to intervene in this process. The—Shared Health is the employer. They're in bargaining with the union, Madam Speaker. That is where this will come to fruition.

Collective bargaining works.

Madam Speaker: Before everything goes off track here, we have a lot of guests in the gallery and a lot of students, and I'm going to ask for everybody's co-operation today to please listen carefully to the answers, listen carefully to the questions.

And I don't think this is a very good time to be heckling when you are all role models here for future leaders, so I'm going to ask for everybody to please show respect to each other as democracy unfolds.

Hydro Rates and Public Utilities Board Request to Withdraw Bill 36

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Madam Speaker, Bill 36 guarantees that Manitobans will pay more for their hydro bills. It takes all rate-setting power away from the Public Utilities Board and places that power into the hands of Cabinet. The PUB is there to make

sure the PC government can't force through rate hikes for political purposes. That's why Bill 36 is so wrong.

Manitobans are speaking out, and we're joined today by concerned citizens from the Protect the PUB Coalition, who I invite to stand up, made up from representatives from a variety of community groups and organizations who are raising their voices against this bill.

Will the government listen to these Manitobans who are calling for the PCs to withdraw Bill 36 today?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I welcome the guests to the gallery because it allows us the opportunity to correct the record, where that member is clearly misleading people.

We know that Bill 36 contains powerful provisions to protect Manitobans against increases. It regulates increases. It caps a maximum increase: it is either CPI or rate of inflation or 5 per cent, whichever is the lower. This keeps the affordability advantage for all Manitobans. That's what Bill 36 does.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, Manitobans, like those who've joined here today, are speaking up because they're concerned about this government's plans to interfere with Hydro and to undermine the PUB. That means higher hydro bills for families and businesses, and it undermines independent oversight over rate setting. That's wrong.

The PUB already stopped higher hydro rate hikes sought by this government. That's why we should support the PUB's independence instead of undermining it. Bill 36 goes in the wrong direction by undermining the PUB.

Will the minister listen to Manitobans and withdraw Bill 36 today?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the member is just wrong. He uses language like rate increases sought by government, but he knows full well that in this province it is the regulator who sets hydro rate increases, not the government of Manitoba.

The role of the regulator is clearly defined in this bill to protect Manitobans against debacles, like—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —the Keeyask dam, in the future going \$4 billion over budget.

Madam Speaker, this bill is designed to protect Manitoba low rates while it stabilizes Hydro, which is in all of our advantage.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, the costs of living are going up, the costs of groceries are going up, the costs of gas are going up and, if this government has their way, the costs of hydro are going to go way up.

Instead of rates being set by an independent public body like the Public Utilities Board, the PC Bill 36 means Manitobans could be forced to pay rate hikes as high as 5 per cent per year. That's not right. It costs Manitobans money, and it undermines the independence of the PUB. The government should back off of its plans to undermine the Public Utilities Board.

Will the government listen to concerned Manitobans, withdraw Bill 36 and commit to filing a general rate application to the PUB this year?

Mr. Friesen: Well, Madam Speaker, what we see is that the NDP is in a tight spot. It was less than a week ago that they argued that Manitobans should not have tax rebates in the form of the education and property tax rebates, which we finally passed last week, and today he's taking a different tone.

The fact of the matter is that costs are going up, and that is why this bill protects Manitobans from hydro rate increases beyond 5 per cent. But I remind that member, it was also only about two weeks ago that the Free Press wrote about that member and the NDP strategy: It's either a bad strategy, bad messaging or just cynical politics, but they're trying—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —to mislead Manitobans. Manitobans will not be misled by the NDP.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Might just stand here for awhile, if I have to.

I'm going to ask again for everybody to, please, when we've got, especially, students in the gallery and members of the Ukrainian community from Ukraine, I think a better display of democracy here is certainly called for.

BITSA Legislation Timeline for Introduction

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I just want to wish our Ukrainian friends—*Ukrainian spoken. Translation unavailable.*—to the Manitoba Legislature.

Every year, the government hides important financial information from Manitobans. And just like Brian Pallister, the Stefanson government has stripped important information from the Estimates books. And just like Brian Pallister, the Stefanson government has failed to introduce an important budget bill to the House this spring. The House is scheduled to rise tomorrow. We think Manitobans deserve to know what the PC's plans are.

Will the Finance Minister present his BITSA bill to Manitobans before the House rises?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): Well, Madam Speaker, it seems that the member for Fort Garry has had his benching removed by his leader.

I think that we haven't had a question for Finance in two weeks, after his disastrous performance on trying to suggest that triple net doesn't exist to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —give businesses back their tax credit. And after that, he embarrassed himself and damaged his credibility when he took potshots at the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) of Manitoba for standing next to the Deputy Prime Minister to welcome Ukrainians to Canada.

It is never too late to say you're sorry. It is never too late to set the record straight. Will he do it today?

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

Mr. Wasyliv: The Ukrainian community in Manitoba deserves more than empty flag waving from this government. They deserve real action on Ukraine.

Now, BITSA is an important bill—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliv: —Manitobans deserve to see. It contains all the fee increases for things like park passes and other licences the PCs hide in their budget. It contains hidden measures that can impact the finances of regular people.

The PCs have had months to prepare their budget bill for Manitobans to see. It's about transparency and accountability. This is Manitobans' money.

Will the minister introduce the BITSA bill before the House rises tomorrow?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it saddens me to have to answer that question, but I am pleased to correct the record and define what the member actually means by flag waving—empty flag waving.

This government has provided money for health care, for mental health, for accommodations, for EIA-type of portable benefits. We have created a welcoming centre that is the envy of Canada, that officials told the Premier less than a week ago should be the model by which all provinces operate to welcome Ukrainians. Our arms are open, our hearts are open to Ukrainians.

That member has an opportunity today to apologize for his shameful conduct and set the 'reperd'—record straight.

* (14:20)

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

Mr. Wasyliv: The government has revised its budget twice now. They've stripped important information from the Estimates books, and they've now failed to present their budget bill to the House yet again.

Manitobans deserve to know how the government will raise fees on them this year, and how they'll spend their money. The PCs should stop hiding their plans and be open and accountable to this House.

Will the minister stop hiding BITSA and present it to the House immediately?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the criticisms of the member are completely baseless and without form.

He knows that the supplementary for—information for legislative review is more expansive than ever before—*[interjection]* It is. It includes information by subappropriations. It includes information about FTEs by subappropriation. There is every manner and form of information that used to be there.

So, I don't know—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —what he's arguing about.

But more importantly, instead of trying to yell down my response, the member could've used this opportunity to apologize for his shameful conduct and his comments about Ukraine while the consul general was in our midst one week ago.

Will he do it today?

Affordable Housing Investments Needed

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Housing is a human right, and all Manitobans should have access to safe, affordable, quality housing.

Unfortunately, it doesn't seem like this PC government agrees. They continue to sell off hundreds of Manitoba Housing units, even as the wait-list grows from 1,699 in 2017 to over 6,000 in 2021. And other complexes are just sitting empty, despite the urgent need. There's hundreds of people who are homeless in this province.

Why has this Minister of Families sold off hundreds of Manitoba Housing units, despite the increase in demand for affordable housing, while people are using encampments and bus shelters as housing?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): Our government is committed to ensuring that all Manitobans have a safe, affordable place to call home.

That is why we have built 745 new units of social housing, at a cost of \$110 million, since we formed government. That is why, this year, in this year's budget, \$138.7 million towards providing all low- and moderate-income Manitobans a place to call home, something that member voted against.

I'd also like to remind the member that the wait-list for Manitoba Housing was nearly double under their watch. And I'd also like to remind the member that it was their government that kicked 26 per cent of all applicants off the wait-list because they didn't meet the criteria. That is their record.

We are committed to getting housing for all Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Smith: Madam Speaker, 1,699 people in 2017 to over 6,000 in 2021, and this government is saying that they're building enough housing for Manitobans. Obviously not, when you have that many people waiting.

When this government isn't selling off Manitoba Housing units, they're failing to maintain them. Maintenance, cleanliness, safety has declined in Manitoba Housing since this government took government. There's no surprise, considering they cut the maintenance budget from \$120 million to \$31.4 million last year. That's over half—actually, a quarter of what it used to be. Bug infestations, vandalism, safety concerns have become rampant in some of these complexes.

The minister can address these concerns by committing to adequate—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: I'd also like to remind the members opposite that our government has committed \$154 million to providing—through the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit—to providing top-ups. These are for youth that are aging out of care who are in rental markets. We're giving them a \$250-a-month shelter benefit. We're also giving that to people who are experiencing mental health and addictions, and we're also providing that benefit to people who have been precariously housed.

We have also been one of the—for first time in the province of Manitoba, introduced proactive measures to help prevent homelessness by introducing a rent bank, something that that government—or, that NDP party never did. We have prevented nearly 400 people from entering homelessness because of this proactive approach that this government is taking.

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

Mrs. Smith: Manitobans are struggling with increasingly high costs of living.

They're struggling with higher hydro bills because of this government, a pitiful 'mimum' wage because of this government and an expensive housing market that this government continues to give above-market okays to.

Demand for the—higher than ever—affordable housing, yet this government is actively selling off Manitobans while we have people living in encampments, living in bus shelters. They keep opening shelters, which isn't sustainable housing. This is the legacy of this government and this Families Minister, but it doesn't have to be. This Families Minister can invest, she could reverse course.

Will she do so today and make sure that Manitobans are housed so that they don't have to live in encampments, and build more shelters—

Madam Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Ms. Squires: I'd also like to thank the nearly 400 Manitobans who worked with us at collaborating—our homelessness strategy, and I'd also like to thank the more than 100 people with lived experience for sharing their stories with us as we were going through the province to talk to individuals about what we need to do to ensure that all Manitobans have a safe and affordable place to call home.

We recognize that the challenge is complex, and I'm very pleased to be working with other levels of government, as well as many community partners, at addressing the homelessness crisis as well as the housing challenges in the province of Manitoba so that all Manitobans can have a—safe, affordable access to a place to call home.

That is something that this government is committed to, something that government never addressed. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: I'm going to have to call the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) to order, please.

Suffocation Death of 2,000 Hogs Investigation by Provincial Veterinarian

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Dyakuyu *[thank you]*, my Ukrainian friends, for your visit to the gallery today.

Madam Speaker, 2,000 hogs suffocated at a barn on April 24th this year. We've heard these hogs died after a storm caused the barn to lose power and the backup generator failed. It's important to investigate what went wrong to ensure that actions are taken so that this doesn't happen again.

Can the minister tell us whether an investigation by the provincial veterinarian has been requested?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): I'm sure the member opposite should be aware that every farm that houses animals of that size has to have an action plan, including a backup generator. And that generator failed in the process, and sadly there were some animals that passed away.

These—future barns will have a supply on hand as part of their emergency measures plan, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Brar: Not enough details have been disclosed on how 2,000 hogs suffocated.

It's important that we know what happened so that actions can be taken to prevent unnecessary loss of animal life. The minister should ask the provincial veterinarian to request an investigation to assure full transparency. As well, the Province should disclose how many times a suffocation incident has occurred in the last five years.

Can the minister provide us with a list of suffocation incidents and order an investigation?

Mr. Johnson: I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

I'll get that and—to that in a second, but our government is committed to making and creating an affordable climate for Manitobans, and this includes our farmers and farm families. And that's why we're phasing out the education property tax.

That member opposite stood in that very place where he stood a moment ago and he voted against the education—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —property tax rebate for farmers.

We're here to support farmers: this year 37 and a half per cent, next year 50 per cent rebate on the education property tax for farmers. That member voted against it. We support farmers.

* (14:30)

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

Mr. Brar: The Ag Minister is acting like the Finance Minister. I should remind him that he is Ag Minister.

Manitobans want to know that—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brar: —livestock is not experiencing undue suffering; 2,000 hogs suffocating should warrant an investigation into the events that caused this tragedy. Preventative actions should be taken to ensure this can't happen again, and the government should disclose how many suffocation incidents have occurred in the past five years.

Will the minister order an investigation and release this information today?

Mr. Johnson: I'll get to that answer in a second, but this very spring, the member was excited to sit down with Rachel Notley and learn from her. So we will take no lessons from a critic who would embrace a former premier of Alberta and their regressive attacks on farm families.

Our government respects the family farms and wants to give them the support needed not just to survive but to thrive, Madam Speaker. This is a commitment we are dedicated—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —to and we will remain dedicated to for years to come.

If the critic opposite would like to continue supporting—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —those who attack the family farm, they will remain in opposition for many years to come. This government stands—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Indigenous Children in CFS Care Request to Refund Federal Benefit

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, on May 18th, Manitoba courts ruled that between 2006 and 2019 the Manitoba government systematically and repeatedly violated the constitutional rights of First Nations children who'd been taken from their families.

In opposition, the PCs called it illegal and the NDP called it stealing, but what was happening was that thousands of First Nation children weren't just taken from their families, but all of their federal benefits were clawed back.

Neither stealing nor immoral captures the astonishing and lasting damage to children, families, communities that this practice has inflicted. I table a letter from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs seeking assurances that this decision will not be appealed. Manitoba Liberals stand with AMC.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) accept the court's ruling and return the money to affected First Nations children?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): As I previously said, we thank Justice Edmond for his 95-page ruling. It is a very substantial ruling and our departments are reviewing his decision. And we look forward to working with all First Nations partners in

a new era of reconciliation and working with them in transformation of the CFS system.

I'd also like to remind members opposite that his voice would have been very much beneficial when his government in Ottawa was appealing a ruling that was discriminatory towards Indigenous children in care.

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

Mr. Lamont: I'll remind the minister it's not my government and I did speak up against it.

The first five of 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are dedicated to children—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —in care, and that is because the practice of tearing apart Indigenous families has never stopped.

The trauma is not just intergenerational; it is being inflicted right now. And in the last 10 years, there have been more Indigenous children in the custody of CFS than at the peak of residential schools—hundreds and hundreds of tragic stories in Manitoba alone.

It shouldn't take a constitutional lawyer to know that it's wrong to steal from First Nations children in care. The Premier knows this file because they were Minister of Families and voted with every other PC MLA to keep the money and absolve themselves of responsibility.

Will the government do the right thing and reverse the decision and return what is owed to First Nations—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: It is a rare point of agreement between myself and that particular member of this House when we can all agree that we do need to usher in a new era of child welfare. That is something that this government has been committed to.

That is why we have seen an 8 per cent reduction in children in care since we formed office. That is why our Premier, who was then Families minister, reversed the discriminatory policy of issuing birth alerts for babies and reducing the apprehension. I would like to update the House that we have reduced child apprehensions—child birth apprehensions by 75 per cent since that policy was implemented.

We know that there has been a lot of damage done, stemming back decades, and we know that we are all needing to be partners in ushering in a new era of child welfare transformation for the sake of all children in the province of Manitoba.

Electric Vehicle Purchases Promotion and Use

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Provinces with primarily hydroelectric power are most effective in reducing emissions with electric vehicles. BC and Quebec have realized this, with 17.1 per cent and 13.6 per cent, respectively, of new purchased vehicles being electric. That's why it's so disappointing that Manitoba is only at 2.4 per cent of new electric vehicles being purchased, and I table a report that demonstrates this, right now.

Why is Manitoba so far behind other provinces on meaningful climate change initiatives, and what is this government going to do to promote the use of electric vehicles?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Environment, Climate and Parks): I certainly appreciate the question from the member. And we are looking very forward to working with the federal government, particularly on moving forward with funding models to ensure that we can start to move faster, Madam Speaker.

We know 2030 is just around the corner; 2050 will be here before we know it. We know there's a lot of work to do, Madam Speaker, in this space. We are committed to it as a government. We will be—we'll be moving forward with our plans, and I offer that member to come and sit with us so we can work in a partisan way—non-partisan way to ensure we can move forward with electric vehicles right here in Manitoba.

Medical Services for Ukrainian Refugees Fee Waiver for Checkups

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Madam Speaker, Manitoba has been leading the country in support of Ukrainian refugees. We are proud to be the first city to receive a chartered flight of refugees here in Canada.

The federal government is allowing Ukrainians to get necessary medical checkups done within 90 days of landing, as opposed to prior to arrival.

Can the minister explain how this process is assisting Manitoba in providing the necessary supports for Ukrainian refugees here?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I also want to thank my colleague, the member for McsPhillips [*phonetic*] for the question.

He will be happy to hear that, as of Friday, we are waiving the fees associated with these tests to ensure that everyone has access to them as they arrive in Manitoba. We hope to see other provinces following our lead so that we can all ensure Ukrainians arriving in Canada can get the tests necessary for certain work permits.

We're also calling on the federal government to expand who they allow to do these tests, as currently, only four doctors in Brandon, two in Winkler and 14 in Winnipeg are authorized.

Our government remains committed to supporting Ukrainians fleeing war and ensuring they have safe haven here in friendly Manitoba.

Thank you.

Highway 6 Improvements Timeline for Upgrades

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, almost 5,900 Manitobans have now signed a petition calling for improvements to Highway 6. They know that Highway 6 is an essential link to the North, but they also know that it is disproportionately dangerous for those that need to travel it every single day. They're simply asking for a commitment from this government to make improvements necessary to make Highway 6 safer.

Will the minister commit to making these improvements to Highway 6 beginning this year?

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I just want to thank the member for the question.

Madam Speaker, actually, my staff and I are actually going to go up to Thompson after this session's over to actually go and drive on Highway 6. We actually met with a group of—Highway 6 group that actually talked about the issues of Highway 6.

And, Madam Speaker, our government is committed to investing in infrastructure, especially when it comes to Highway 6. We're going to be doing \$9 million this year alone, about \$53 million for the next three years when—our three-year budget.

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

* (14:40)

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, the group organizing to make Highway 6 safer is made up of those Manitobans who have to travel on Highway 6 every single day. Our caucus was pleased to meet with those folks when they were here in person, when they travelled to give the minister that petition and for to advocate for their simple asks of this government. They're asking for real improvements like wider shoulders, flatter shoulders, better snow plowing, more turnoffs and more passing lanes.

They want action now. They recognize that our construction season is quickly slipping away if this government doesn't act now.

So, once again, I'll ask the minister: Will he take action now and start making improvements to Highway 6?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm not take any lessons from this member, who was actually what the government in—the NDP government—back in the 17 years of government, Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: But, Madam Speaker, this—when he was in government, they actually underspent by millions of dollars. In 2013, they underspent by \$126 million; 2014, by \$140 million; and 2015, by \$160 million; and in two hundred—2016, by \$174 million.

Madam Speaker, they actually neglected to invest in highways in rural Manitoba.

Where—when he's talking about safety in highways, Madam Speaker, we're going to do it right.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, this minister knows right now his government is underspending, every single year that they've been in government, on their infrastructure budget, and specifically Highway 6.

When residents have come and are simply asking for the basics for better snow plowing, for wider shoulders, for bathrooms, for garbage facilities, these are simple asks that the minister could take action on today, and yet year after year his government underspends his own budget and continues to come into this House and try to make this a political issue.

These members—these people from Thompson are asking for the minister to act now. Will he take their advice and get to work right away?

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm want—not take any lessons for this member opposite. You know, he—when he was in government, again, they underspent way more in—when it comes to infrastructure.

And when it comes—Madam Speaker, we're going to invest into Highway 6. We're going to be actually continuing 'widening' shoulders, like we have always been doing. We'll continue investing in the North. We'll continue—we have some great opportunities in the North that we're going to be announcing after this blackout, and I'm looking forward to presenting that to the citizens of Thompson.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library has been served—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —notice by the Red River Valley School Division to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoba architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library is published in the 2008 document titled heritage buildings of the RMs of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of heritage site.

(4) The JRL and Red River Valley School Division have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language and literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) The students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal, Kleefeld, are

provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French-language books in rural Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of the Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM of De Salaberry.

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that the—that a memorandum of understanding between the Red River Valley School Division and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community; and

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition is signed by Nadine Bouchard, Salina Breton and Jonathan Shand as well as many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Foot-Care Services

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

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

The population of those aged 55-plus has grown to approximately 2,500 in the city of Thompson.

A large percentage of people in this age group require necessary medical foot care and treatment.

A large percentage of those who are elderly and/or diabetic are also living on low incomes.

The northern regional health authority previously provided essential medical foot-care services to seniors and those living with diabetes until 2019, then subsequently cut the program after the last two nurses filling those positions retired.

The number of seniors and those with diabetes has only continued to grow in Thompson and surrounding areas.

There is no adequate medical care available in the city and region, whereas the city of Winnipeg has 14 medical foot-care centres.

The implications of inadequate or lack of podiatric care can lead to amputations.

The city of Thompson also serves as a regional health-care service provider, and the need for foot care extends beyond just those served in the capital city of the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide the services of two nurses to restore essential medical foot-care treatment to the city of Thompson effective April 1st, 2022.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Catalytic Converter Engraving Credit

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The spike in catalytic converter thefts continues across North America and continues to affect Manitobans.

(2) Organized groups of criminals are climbing under vehicles and cutting catalytic converters, and selling them to scrap metal recyclers for cash without any record of these transactions.

(3) The price of precious metals in catalytic converters like rhodium, palladium and platinum are worth thousands of dollars an ounce. Scrap metal recyclers have catalytic converters priced to the vehicle, with some catalytic converters worth \$800.

(4) Catalytic converter thefts had a total cost of \$2,000 for each replacement. Manitoba Public Insurance charges a betterment fee for new replacements, so insurance doesn't cover the full cost.

(5) Currently, sellers of catalytic converters do not have to provide government-issued photo ID and recyclers do not need to record and retain the information or record details of the transaction.

(6) Catalytic converters do not have any part number or vehicle identification number, VIN, and the inability to tie a catalytic converter to a specific vehicle is a major enforcement issue.

(7) Engraving of a vehicle's VIN on its catalytic converter would be a major deterrent to theft by tying the vehicle to the part and making enforcement possible.

(8) Provinces like BC and Alberta have scrap metal recycler legislation requiring businesses to keep proper records.

* (14:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to bring in consumer protection legislation requiring scrap metal recyclers to keep proper records for five years so only legitimate sales are allowed and criminals can be caught.

(2) To urge the provincial government to pass consumer protection legislation directing Manitoba Public Insurance to provide substantial discounts to auto-on auto insurance premiums to Manitoba drivers for engraving vehicle identification numbers on their catalytic converters.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madame la Présidente, je désire présenter la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative.

Le contexte de cette pétition est le suivant :

(1) La Bibliothèque régionale Jolys Regional Library, B-R-G, a été avisée par la Division scolaire Vallée de la rivière Rouge, DSVRR, de libérer les locaux actuellement situés dans l'auditorium de l'École Heritag School, ÉHS, d'ici le 31 mars 2023.

(2) L'auditorium a été construit dans les années 1960 par le célèbre architecte manitobain Étienne Gaboury, et B-R-G y est installée depuis 48 ans.

(3) Une photo de l'auditorium intitulée « La bibliothèque régionale » est publiée dans un document

de 2008 intitulé « Bâtiments patrimoniaux des MR De Salaberry et Saint-Pierre-Jolys ». Il est indiqué qu'il s'agit d'un bâtiment moderne important qui pourrait atteindre le statut de site patrimonial.

(4) B-R-G et DSVRR ont prospéré grâce à un protocole d'entente mutuellement bénéfique pendant 54 ans.

(5) Leur collection commune compte plus de 50 000 livres et possède la quatrième plus grande collection de littérature de langue française dans les régions rurales du Manitoba.

(6) Les élèves qui sont transportés par autobus des municipalités voisines qui n'ont pas de bibliothèque publique, comme Niverville, Grunthal et Kleefeld, ont accès gratuitement à la bibliothèque publique et à sa quatrième plus grande collection de livres en français dans les régions rurales du Manitoba pendant l'année scolaire.

Nous présentons à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba la pétition suivante :

(1) de demander au ministre du Travail, de la Protection des consommateurs et des Services gouvernementaux d'envisager de concéder l'auditorium à la B-R-G d'ici le 1er mars 2023;

(2) demander au ministre de l'Éducation de reconnaître la valeur que la B-R-G apporte à la population d'étudiants de l'ÉHS ainsi qu'aux communautés du Village de Saint-Pierre-Jolys et de la MR De Salaberry;

(3) demander au ministre de l'Éducation et au ministre des Affaires francophones de reconnaître qu'un protocole d'entente entre la RRVSD et G-R-L est mutuellement bénéfique, financièrement et culturellement;

(4) demander au ministre des Sports, de la Culture et du Patrimoine de reconnaître le potentiel patrimonial de cet important bâtiment et son statut au sein de la communauté;

(5) demander au ministre des Sports, de la Culture et du Patrimoine d'empêcher toute rénovation de l'auditorium qui détruirait et dévaloriserait l'intégrité architecturale du bâtiment.

Cette pétition est signée par Colin Coulombe, Mikaelia [*phonetic*] Laroche et Justice Guigui.

Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, I would like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library (JRL) was notified by the Red River Valley School Division (RRVSD) to vacate premises currently located in the auditorium of the École Héritage School (EHS) by March 31, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was built in the 1960s by famous Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned "The Regional Library" was published in a 2008 document titled "Heritage Buildings of De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys". It is marked as an important modern building that could reach the status of heritage site.

(4) The JRL and the RRVSD have flourished by means of a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and includes the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal and Kleefeld, are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French language literature in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request that the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1, 2023.

(2) To request that the Minister of Education recognize the value offered by the JRL to the student population of EHS, as well as to the communities of Village de St. Pierre-Jolys and the De Salaberry RM.

(3) To request that the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs recognize that a memorandum of understanding between RRVSD and JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request that the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition was signed by Colin Coulombe, Mikaelia [phonetic] Laroche and Justice Guigui.

Thank you.

Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

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

Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and wellbeing of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia or Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

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

The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to

\$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

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

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

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

Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by Patrice Land, Beverly Frankfurt, Gary Bell and many, many other Manitobans.

South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Residents of the River Park South community in Winnipeg are disturbed by the increasing noise levels caused by traffic on the South Perimeter Highway.

(2) The South Perimeter Highway functions as a transport route for semi-trucks travelling across Canada, making this stretch of the Perimeter especially loud.

(3) According to the South Perimeter Noise Study conducted in 2019, the traffic levels are expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years and background-backyard noise levels have already reached—surpassed 65 decibels.

(4) Seniuk Road, which runs alongside the South Perimeter, contributes additional truck traffic causing increased noise and air pollution.

(5) Residents face a decade of construction on the South Perimeter, making this an appropriate time to add noise mitigation for the South Perimeter to these projects.

(6) The current barriers between the South Perimeter Highway and the homes of the River Park South residents are a berm and a wood fence, neither of which are effective at reducing traffic noise.

* (15:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to consult with noise specialists and other experts to determine the most effective way to reduce the traffic noise and to commit to meaningful action to address resident concern.

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation to help address this issue with a noise barrier wall along the residential portions of the river—of the south Perimeter from St. Anne's Road to St. Mary's Road and for River Park South residents.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Drug Overdose Reporting

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Across the province, many Manitobans continue to struggle with addictions, and the pandemic has led to even more deaths and worsened the ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses.

(2) Three hundred and seventy-two Manitobans died from an overdose in 2020; and that's over one a day, and 80 per cent–87 per cent higher than in 2019.

(3) Manitoba is expected to exceed over 400 overdose deaths in 2021, but the data is not publicly available since the last public reporting of opioid deaths was published in 2019.

(4) The data for drug overdose deaths from 2020 to 2021 was compiled through media inquiries, and this should—and this needs to change.

(5) Access to timely data on the harms of drugs helps to inform both government and stakeholders on where to take action and target resources needed in various communities.

(6) Manitoba is the only province not providing regular, timely data to the federal government opioid information portal.

(7) Manitobans deserve a government that takes the growing drug crisis seriously and will report the data publicly in a timely matter—manner—matter to target actions and allow for accountability.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to enact Bill 217, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), to require the Province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths, as well as the type of drug, on a government website in a timely fashion.

This has been signed by Doug [*phonetic*]*—*or Don Monkman, Kristy Daniels, Giselle Morrisseau and many other Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library, JRL, has been served notice by the Red River Valley School Division, RRVSD, to vacate the premises currently situated in the auditorium of École Héritage school, ÉHS, by March 31st, 2023.

(2) The auditorium was originally built in the 1960s by renowned Manitoban architect Étienne Gaboury, and it has been home to the JRL for over— for 48 years.

(3) A photo of the auditorium captioned the regional library is published in a 2008 document titled heritage buildings in RM De Salaberry and St. Pierre Jolys. It is marked as an important modern building that could attain the status of a heritage site.

(4) JRL and RRVSD have flourished from a mutually beneficial memorandum of understanding for 54 years.

(5) Their shared collection boasts over 50,000 books and has the fourth largest collection of French-language literature in rural Manitoba.

(6) Students that are bused in from neighbouring municipalities that do not have a public library, such as Niverville, Grunthal, Kleefeld are provided with free access to the public library and its fourth largest collection of French books in rural Manitoba during the school year.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services to consider granting the auditorium to the JRL by March 1st, 2023.

(2) To request the Minister of Education to recognize the value that JRL provides to the student population of ÉHS, as well as the communities of Village de St. Pierre Jolys and the RM De Salsberry [*phonetic*].

(3) To request the Minister of Education and the Minister of Francophone Affairs to recognize that an MOU between the RRVSD and the JRL is mutually, financially and culturally beneficial.

(4) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to recognize the heritage potential of this important building and its status in the community.

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans, including Christine Slobodian, Tristan Friesen and Shawn Kenyon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Drug Overdose Reporting

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Across the province, many Manitobans continue to struggle with addictions, and the pandemic has led to even more deaths and worsened the ongoing public health crisis of opioid overdoses.

(2) Three hundred and seventy-two Manitobans died of an overdose in 2020; that's over one a day, and 87 per cent higher than in 2019.

(3) Manitoba is expected to exceed over 400 overdose deaths in 2021, but the data is not publicly available since the last public reporting of opioid deaths was published in 2019.

(4) The data for drug overdose deaths from 2020 and 2021 was compiled through media inquiries, and this needs to change.

(5) Access to timely data on the harms of drugs helps inform both government and stakeholders on where to take action and target resources needed for various communities.

(6) Manitoba is the only province not providing regular, timely data to the federal government opioid information portal.

(7) Manitobans deserve a government that takes the growing drug crisis seriously and will report the data publicly in a timely matter to target actions and allow for accountability.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to enact Bill 17, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), to require the Province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths, as well as the type of drug, on a government website in a timely fashion.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I have two leave requests relating to referring bills to the Committee of the Whole.

Could you please canvass the House for leave: (1) to waive subrule 91(7) for Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage); and Bill 234, The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act, to allow them to be considered in Committee of the Whole today; and (2) to append any written submissions to the aforementioned bills at the end of today's House Hansard transcript, provided they are received by 5 p.m. today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave: (1) to waive subrule 91(7) for Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage); and Bill 234, The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act, to allow them to be considered in Committee of the Whole today; and (2) to append any written submissions to the aforementioned bills to the end of today's House Hansard transcript, provided they are received by 5 p.m. today.

* (15:10)

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for second reading of bay-Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 41—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, The Child and Family Service Amendment Act, this afternoon.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à les enfant et à la famille, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Squires: Bill 41 amends The Child and Family Service Act as a key step towards the realization of

Indigenous jurisdiction over Child and Family Services.

These amendments authorize information sharing with Indigenous governing bodies exercising jurisdiction to ensure the seamless transition of services from provincial CFS agencies to service providers operating under Indigenous laws. It also ensures the ongoing province-wide service co-ordination and the continued safety of children.

Additional clarifications are included regarding information sharing and the Child Abuse Registry used by provincially mandated agencies.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Four key legislative themes highlight the most impactful changes introduced through these amendments; the first being that Indigenous governing bodies and their service providers will be authorized to access CFS information about their community members when they are planning or providing CFS services. This includes authorizing trustees or public bodies to share information with Indigenous service providers that may be protected under The Personal Health Information Act or The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act if it is necessary for the health, safety and well-being of a child.

Second, it authorizes an administrative service transfer process so that CFS cases can be transferred from provincially mandated CFS agencies to Indigenous service providers without engaging the provincial court.

Third, it supports the continued use of the provincial electronic CFS Information System by Indigenous service providers and authorizing the ability to refer individuals to the Child Abuse Registry.

And fourth, it's protecting Indigenous service provider records when uploaded through the provincial electronic CFS Information System.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Indigenous governing bodies and their service providers must have access to CFS information so they can plan for the delivery of CFS in-services to their community members. It is just as important that a process is legally enabled to transfer the service responsibility of—for children and families currently supported by the provincial CFS system to service providers under Indigenous law.

The authorization of this process will substantially reduce the financial and administrative burden

for Indigenous service providers, provincially mandated agencies and the courts. Through these changes, our government is signalling the expectation that information should be shared to support Indigenous jurisdiction for Child and Family Services.

The Province is currently engaged with several Indigenous governing bodies at various stages of exercising jurisdiction, with many more expected to come forward soon.

Time is of the essence to proactively make these changes and support Indigenous jurisdiction for Child and Family Services and the path to reconciliation. We recognize that this is only the first step of a longer journey, and we expect to make many more changes as we hear and learn more about what is required to effectively support the realization of Indigenous jurisdiction of Child and Family Services in Manitoba.

I look forward to further discussions on Bill 41 and I would like to thank the support of everyone in this House for bringing this bill to a speedy second reading. I also want to thank the officials in my department for all the work that they've done. I'd like to thank all the Indigenous governing bodies who have consulted with us and worked with us as we've been walking down this journey hand-in-hand towards the realization of this.

And most importantly, I'd like to dedicate this bill to all children in the province of Manitoba and certainly hope that this is the start in creating a better future.

Thank you.

Questions

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

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Peguis has taken on child and family services as recognized in federal bill C-92.

Can the minister explain how the Province is currently dealing with the data-sharing arrangements with Peguis in advance of this legislation passing?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): This legislation is pertinent to pass, and it is our hope that it receives royal assent tomorrow. So then we can share information, anything that is in the provincial CFS information-sharing database—or, information database, and we would also be able to share information under the Child Abuse Registry with Peguis without a court order. This legislation paves the way for that process.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): One of the concerns that has been raised about the information which is in the CFS database is that there's sometimes, in the past, been inadequate quality control, and so that there are allegations put there but there's no assurance that those allegations are valid. And I wonder what process the minister is taken or has taken to make sure that the quality of the information in the records is of high quality.

Ms. Squires: So, as the member opposite is aware, agencies and authorities are enabled under our legislation to access information and contribute to the sharing of information and the compilation of information. This bill is just simply extending that same jurisdiction that a CFS agency and authority would have over to an Indigenous governing body so that they would be able to act as an entity, an agency, if you will, into itself. And so all the rights and privileges that an agency has will be transferred to an Indigenous governing body, and it doesn't address the quality control of the data.

Ms. Lathlin: This bill before us also provides for the transfer of supervision of care and guardianship to Indigenous governing bodies. How is this matter currently being handled for Peguis in advance of the legislation passing?

Ekosi.

Ms. Squires: I'd like to congratulate Peguis. They were the first in the province for bringing their own law into force at the end of January and, in fact, they're setting a precedent in the country because they're exercising jurisdiction for their children that are on and off reserve.

Our government and our—my department officials have been working very closely with them. At the start of this year, what we did is we transferred the funds specifically allocated, traditionally, for Peguis Child and Family Services under the southern authority. Instead of providing that—those funds to the southern authority for transfer to the CFS agency, we delivered those directly to the First Nation, and we have been

working very collaboratively to assure the seamless transition during this—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to move further because this quality control issue is actually really, really important. I'm aware of instances where people have fabricated information as revenge to imply that they were abusing, and that children have been taken away based on false information.

What should happen is that there should be a proper investigation of any allegations to determine whether they're factual or not. But that doesn't or hasn't always occurred in the past.

* (15:20)

So what measures is the minister taking to make sure that there is high quality of information, if we're going to be sharing it and transferring it?

Ms. Squires: And I can appreciate the member's question about quality assurance and the role that government may play in the quality of the data that is kept in CFSIS system or in the Child Abuse Registry, but what we're here to debate today is simply about expanding the parameters and supporting Indigenous governing bodies who are exercising jurisdiction over their children.

And this is—you know, I don't know if this would be the particular time to be moving forward in the direction that members opposite is purporting. This is about working collaboratively with the Indigenous leadership so that they can have a successful repatriation of their children, in Manitoba.

Ms. Lathlin: This bill makes it even more important that the CFIS [*phonetic*] database is kept up to date.

What steps is the minister taking to improve that system?

Ms. Squires: At this current moment, and the bill that we're debating right now, is about facilitating the Indigenous governing bodies' ability to exercise jurisdiction and to assume the successful repatriation of their children under the federal act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families.

It is really important that we move forward in empowering Indigenous governing bodies and work, then, collaboratively, whether it be with the provincial CFS a provincially mandated CFS agency or an Indigenous governing body that the database that we all collectively share is of the highest information and

integrity of information. And that is definitely a possibility for future discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable—okay. The honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: We certainly support the sharing of information because we think this can be very helpful, but the first and foremost and most important item should be that that information is accurate, that there are some quality standards there. Because if we're sharing information and it's not accurate, this is a huge problem, and it's a problem that has occurred in the past, and it's a problem why some agencies are not as ready to participate in sharing as perhaps we would like. I think this is really fundamental, and I'm disappointed that the minister's not going to do more in terms of quality control.

I would ask the minister if a person who's—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: And I'm very disappointed that this member may be suggesting that Indigenous governing bodies are not to be provided the same information and the same—given the same integrity that we would be giving another CFS agency.

If I was in here creating another agency under the provincial mandate, would we be having this discussion? I would certainly hope that this member is not suggesting a different standard for Indigenous governing bodies exercising jurisdiction over child welfare.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I just want to ask the minister, will there be any funds available in the current funding well to help First Nation agencies update their current systems they have for record keeping and record sharing?

Ms. Squires: And that is a great question. One of the things that we have done as a government is assured all Indigenous governing bodies who are moving forward in this process that we want to have a seamless transition, and that all of the funding—the current funding levels that we have set today—would be available to the Indigenous governing body.

And in regards to building capacity, there is a fund available that the federal government has made. This is their law that we're helping implement, and they did make a fund available for capacity building that the Province is supporting.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to assure the minister that we're not discriminating, but rather, this request for quality records came directly from people in First Nations communities, right? Because they are concerned about false information getting into the wrong hands and causing trouble for people.

Will the minister answer this question: that is, if a person who is affected by an allegation, is that person going to be able to be made aware that there is this accusation against them and are they going to have an ability to appeal that allegation so that they can be assured that the information on them—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: I appreciate the clarification from the member opposite, that he was not suggesting a different standard for Indigenous governing bodies, that—exercising jurisdiction over child welfare.

What I also will tell this member, that I appreciate his concerns about the integrity of data collected in the child welfare system as a whole and that that is something that we will certainly address, that we can work with all of partners to addressing.

But I would also like to remind the member that this is a historic day. This is a historic piece of legislation that we are, for the first time in the province's history, creating a pathway forward so that we can help Indigenous governing bodies, repatriate their children after years and years and years of a system that did not support families in the way that would—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable minister's time has expired.

Ms. Lathlin: I understand that this all about transferring, sharing information. But the key point of this legislation is the CFIS [*phonetic*] system, and currently, we're hearing that it's out of date. It needs current—probably needs funding to get it updated, and for all of our First Nations to get acquainted with this as well. So the CFIS [*phonetic*] system is quite 'quey'—quite key to my message here.

So what other Indigenous partners does the minister anticipate will soon take authorities as recognized in federal bill C-92?

Ms. Squires: As I mentioned earlier, I've been very honoured to be a part of Peguis ceremony that happened a few months back as they were the first in the province. There are many others.

There are several applications that are before the federal government and the Province to help transfer Indigenous government—to transfer services over to the Indigenous governing bodies. And I could provide a list for the member in the near future.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to thank the minister for her efforts in bringing this forward.

But I really believe that we need a major effort to make sure that the database that is being transferred and the information therein is of a high quality, that there is ability to correct mistakes when there are false allegations made, that this is, I believe, really important if we're transferring data. I don't want to hold things up, but I think that at the minimum, there needs to be a full review of—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Squires: It is very important that we pave the way for Indigenous governing bodies to work with their respective members in determining how it—their—this private information is managed within their system. There will be system-wide initiatives to ensure the integrity of the data.

I agree with members opposite that the information—the confidential information that is kept in the CFS Information System is important. It's important that there's quality controls there and it's certainly something that this government will address.

Mr. Bushie: I'm just wondering about the—perhaps the definition of Indigenous governing bodies and, currently, there is some agencies—Southeast Child & Family Services, for example, DOCFS—and then there's also independents like Peguis had mentioned—who—mentioned earlier.

So is there an opportunity here—or to, perhaps, open that up so that other communities as individual communities like Peguis, for example, can come forward if they're already kind of associated with a current child and family services agency?

Ms. Squires: So I'm—I am certainly happy to talk to the member and provide a more fulsome opportunity—fulsome answer than I have in these few minutes that we have here.

* (15:30)

But just so that he knows that there is a definition that we've outlined in the bill about what an Indigenous governing body is, and that means a council, government or other entity that is authorized to act

on behalf of the Indigenous group, community or people that hold rights recognized and affirmed by section 35 of The Constitution Act. And if that doesn't fully answer the question, I'd be more than happy to spend some time clarifying and providing further information to the member.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see and we will support this legislation, but we think it's really important that there be a full review after a year to look at any problems, whether it's with quality or whether it's with how the system is working.

Will you support a report stage amendment or a Committee of the Whole amendment, which we will bring forward, to have that review in a year?

Ms. Squires: And I can assure this House that there is much, much more work to be done. We are at the start of our journey. We are working with several Indigenous governing bodies throughout the entire province and we are—and they're all at varying stages of exercising jurisdiction for Child and Family Services.

We are at the beginning of a new era, and I can assure all members that in a year's time, in two years' time, in five years' time, the child welfare system in Manitoba will look nothing like it does today.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The floor is now open for debate.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): It's always a privilege to stand here to put a few words on record in—such as a very important legislation as this.

As many of you know, CFS legislation policies have been very 'dearing' into my family and my community, especially with Indigenous people. So it's quite honourable to stand here and talk about this.

So, first of all, I want to put on record that we support this legislation and believe it is important to move forward quickly with it. And I'm proud of my community of Peguis First Nation, part of my constituency, with them moving, which I agree with the minister, which is, indeed, historic. I believe OCN was on that trail. I could have believed that we could have been there first, but chief-in-council re-election—views change. So it's kind of concerning right there.

So, this change is welcome. But we got to talk about procedural matters that need to be addressed to

ensure proper record-keeping across systems, as well as for arrangements for transfer of children across systems.

So we all agree that this bill will provide information held by Child and Family Services' agencies to Indigenous governments and service providers choosing to take legislative authority over children in care. The information being exchanged includes details about children, families receiving services, as well as personal health information and access to the Child Abuse Registry.

Bill 41 is a step to bring Manitoba in line with federal bill C-290—bill C-92 legislation which recognizes First Nations, Inuit and Métis authority over child welfare.

Now, the key point of this is the CFIS [*phonetic*] system. It's a case-file database. Bill 41 will formally extend access to Manitoba's CFS information system. However, this system—which is quite crucial within this legislation—is decades-old computer system that tracks thousands of children in Manitoba's protection services. It really needs to be improved.

The current computer system was created in 1993. Has there been any discussions to update this system? Because the provincial Auditor General has said about this system, CFIS [*phonetic*], that it is, quote, out of date, not complete and not accurate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is quite concerning with this legislation, especially if this information is coming straight from the Auditor General. And as we heard from members here and from myself, there is concerns—there is concerns coming from the First Nations communities too, and families such as mine.

We affirm the rights of First Nations, Inuit, Métis people to exercise jurisdiction over CFS services; however, we also recognize that there is potential that more complexity may be added to an already complex system. That is why the CFIS [*phonetic*] system needs to be improved. And this is key, because even more so, as a system is extended to existing or new authorities and bodies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all want our children to grow up in safe and loving homes with the supports they need to get a good start and a good education. We want to see real action to reunify families and reduce the number of children in care.

I've heard from many people and my constituents and people working within CFS agencies that the size of the files of children in care are much greater than

one file tower with the reunification file systems. So that shows you that there is more work put into apprehending children than—rather than reunification.

I myself have been just been granted the conversation to adopt my own two nieces after seven years. Tell me, where is unification in that? I've spoken to several ministers, I've spoken to several agencies, so my concern—my own community, seven years to actually look at me to adopt my two nieces, where we've been separated, okay?

So, I just want to get on with why—gosh, sorry, I'm getting a little bit verklempt here.

Okay, let's talk about block funding here. The block funding model is detrimental towards the agency and is clear that their ultimate goal is to reduce costs of all costs, reduce costs at the expense of children currently in care, reduce costs at the expense of children and families. So, what my concern here is that, with leadership from all levels going into this process, how much is there going to be for the capacity building for other First Nations who do want to have their own agency.

I've participated in community consultation in Opaskwayak Cree Nation regarding our own laws that we wanted to implement, and it was quite exciting for me to attend that, especially as Families critic, especially as somebody who has been within the system, the system has been in your home—they're like cockroaches, they never get out and your file is there forever.

And my concern is that within our own communities, what the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) was bringing up, how are we going to be protected too, as well, when it comes to false information? How is it going to be—how are—how is MACY going to be tagged into here as well?

And I also want to talk about leadership, as well. With this legislation, I've expressed before, that, will this include the children's voices as well, which I find, as a mother who has personally dealt with this, that the children's voices are missing.

How is the Province going to work with our First Nation communities, rather than saying, it's up to the First Nation communities, because remember, we're Manitobans, too, and I still want this dialogue to continue. That's what I'm worried about—is this dialogue between the Province and our children going to continue, since it's going to be eventually transferred.

So, we're starting with Peguis. Let's get this right with Peguis to ensure that these concerns are addressed. I've heard from Misipawastik [*phonetic*], Grand Rapids; Ovide Mercredi was there talking about their goal to reach this level where Peguis is at with the Province and bill C-92. But there's concerns from the community, legit concerns about privacy, about whether we're going to be taken seriously from—by our own people, you know, versus legislation, versus First Nation legislation. And I know that. I can say that as a former band councillor and somebody who has been treated badly by this system in my own community.

* (15:40)

So, with this, I support this; however, there's still concerns that need to be addressed. And as critic for Families, I am willing and ready to work with the government and other government entities to make sure we get this right for Peguis.

Ekosi.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): We see the importance of having this bill proceed so that the Peguis First Nation and their child and family services agency can operate effectively together with the provincial government and other First Nations in order to look after the lives of children and families.

We are very concerned about the quality of the data in the database, and we are very concerned about the need to upgrade that quality and the need to have an ability for individuals—where there are allegations against them in the database—to have an ability to be made aware of those allegations; and also to be able to appeal the allegations if they think that they are false, and have the data in the database updated and corrected where there are errors.

This is a really, really important job and the changes in child welfare are highlighting this—perhaps, as they haven't been adequately highlighted before, although minister and the government should have been well aware of these issues because they have been around, as the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) has indicated, for many years. And in spite of this being raised by individuals in this Chamber over quite a number of years, the problems with the database still have not been adequately addressed.

So we look forward to this measure moving forward, but we look forward with some trepidation and some concern about the information that's in the database and the need for the government to invest

significant funds with agencies around the province, and perhaps, in other ways to make sure that the quality of the information is at the standard that it needs to be, because we are working with the lives of children and families.

I can tell you a couple of stories. One, this was a mother who was in a First Nations community, and she was, as usual, ready to welcome her children coming home from school on the bus, and—but they didn't arrive and she was in a bit of panic as to what was happening.

And so, she started calling around, including various sources, the police department, saying the kids were missing. And she was—she found out that the kids had been apprehended. And so, she made inquiries as to who—what had been the—what was the reason and why was the apprehension occurring.

And after her investigation, what she found was this: she had been helping a niece of hers, and she'd been helping the niece of hers by providing a little bit of money here and there to help her get along and to help her, she thought, have a better life. Well, her sister came to her and explained that what the niece was doing was to—using that money to purchase drugs. And she said to this woman, who is a mother whose children had been taken away, that you have to stop giving her, the niece, any money at all. And so she did.

And when she stopped giving the niece the money, the niece got very upset and she called CFS and she made an accusation against this woman, and her children were taken away. And this accusation, which was not accurate, resulted in the children being taken away. And it took several years—not a day, not a week, not a month, not a year; several years—until she got those kids back. It was horrible. And this was all because of an accusation made in revenge under this situation.

And, you know, it's hard to explain to people who don't understand what is happening in families and in the system that these sorts of inaccuracies can get into the system and cause problems and cause kids to be taken away from their families and put into care and information to get into the CFIS [*phonetic*] database—I don't know a hundred per cent exactly what was put into the database, but I presume that this information likely got into the database.

I can tell you another story. And this, as opposed to the first one, which I can verify all the details, but this was a woman who was living in Manitoba Housing, and she was very concerned about her kids

and her kids being taken away. And if you're living in poor circumstances and you don't have resources, you're very vulnerable. And she was hearing and being told that, look, don't you do this, don't do this, or we'll—I'll—we'll send in an accusation and your kids will be taken away.

You know, this system, which was set up to protect kids, has not always worked nearly as well as it should have worked, and it's about time to finally get this database into shape so that the information that's in there is known to be accurate, that false information and false accusations can be addressed and corrected.

We're going to be transferring private information. This is continuing a practice which has been going on for some time, but I think that, even though we're ready to approve and support this bill, we have some significant concerns. And it looks like the minister may be starting to listen, but there is an urgent need to make sure that this database is much better than it is currently.

Thank you for the opportunity to say those few words.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, to—chance to share a few words on Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

Director, authorities, agencies, governing bodies, service providers. It's somewhat unfortunate that that's how we describe and we talk about our children in Manitoba. And I say unfortunate, because there's not necessarily a finger to point at an individual or even a group of individuals, but as a collective here in Manitoba, we've now come to this point that we have to have all of these pieces in place rather than get at the root causes, and there's significant root causes. And, of course, when we talk about child and family services and CFS system here in Manitoba, the children in care, disproportionately, those are Indigenous children.

* (15:50)

And in some of my past roles, I've been involved in child welfare. And one thing I've consistently said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is our goal in that role and as providers and workers in that system is to work yourself out of a job. And by that, I mean, you've now come and you've gone full circle and you've brought those children back to not—to no longer having to feel they're dependent on or reliant on or a part of the child welfare system or an apprehension system, for that matter.

This bill brings forth—and the minister alluded to, it's a step. Are we there yet? Absolutely not, but it's a step in the right direction.

So, information sharing is also very important when it comes time to child welfare, not only in Manitoba but across the country. And when I say that, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it's about—there's a number of factors that have been in place when we talk about The Privacy Act, children being taken into care, being apprehended, being taken miles away from home, communities, provinces, even countries away. And that information has always kind of been bottled up, been put in a silo and not being able to be shared with the people that are truly looking out for the best interests of those children.

And, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that's unfortunate that in some cases, that that was also used as a reason to hide behind, to keep that perpetual system going, because there is—there seemed to be a reluctance to actually change the system, to get rid of the system, to unify those children back at home. And that should be the goal.

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there is—while this piece of legislation coming forward is a step in the right direction, there is still work to be done.

And during the Q & A part of debate here this afternoon, I asked a question about capacity and being able to actually—if you're going to turn over the system or you're going to turn over a certain portion or a certain aspect or certain programs in the system, are you, in fact, going to put the financial resources behind that, too? Or are you setting Indigenous communities up—and in this case, the Indigenous governing bodies—set up to fail? And why I say that, I mean, the capacity and the financial ability to make this system work also. So this government can't offload that responsibility. They have to be able to include that as part of the capacity-building process to be able to take this on.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there's been a—different levels, and you've heard—I'm sure everybody across the Chamber has heard communities say, we want to be in charge of our own child-welfare system, we want to be able to have control of our own child-welfare system. We want to be able to say when, where, how and all aspects of where our children are and where they can come into contact with a system such as this. So those resources for those communities have to be there.

So I did ask the question, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, about the fact of the definition of an

Indigenous governing body, because we have different levels here in the province—we have AMC, SCO, MKO, various tribal councils, various CFS agencies including independent First Nations. So the question remains is, if we have 60-plus First Nations here in Manitoba, if they all wanted to take on their own and be identified as an Indigenous governing body on their own, as their home community, is the financial resource there to allow that to happen? Is that capacity going to be built into this legislation to allow that to happen? And it's not, at this point. But it's a step in the right direction. So, I do call on this government to actually come out and put some of those resources behind that, too.

A couple of years ago, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there was a hack to the southern authority's system. And in that hack—it then froze all information that was in that system, and it was very difficult for agencies to be able to access simple information—financial information, information in files that existed in that system. So we have to make sure information like that is never—for lack of a better term—held hostage by a hacker or somebody else who has ill intent towards the system or towards a community or towards a family or towards children. So that capacity also needs to be built in there to allow those resources and allow that financial ability or organization in the communities to be able to fight off something like that, to protect themselves against something like that, because information sharing is key when it comes time to Indigenous children.

And sometimes it's a matter of—very quick. There's incidents that have—we have heard of maybe things happen over the course of years, over the course of months, but the reality is it happens as—many times in the course of a day. So those decisions and those—that information needs to be at the ready to be able to make a truly informed decision for the best interests of those children that are affected by this. And this is a step in the right direction, but it is not the entirety of the solution here. It can't be off-loading that responsibility by the government. They have to be able to invest those resources.

And we've heard support, also, on this side of the Chamber from Indigenous organizations, communities, leadership, even just community members, foster parents, parents. So we've seen support for this legislation to be able to share that information.

So, in that regard we are in support of this legislation to be able to share that information. But what I call upon is to increase that even more and to now put

those financial resources—because there is financial components behind this also—to be able to invest those financial components, so when we put off the responsibility to these Indigenous governing bodies, that that financial capacity is there for them to be able to truly take that on. And that's important to be able to do.

And, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, as we have here, this legislation, again, is a step in the right direction. Does it fall short? I believe it does because there could be still more investment in this, and that ability needs to happen. We can't just off-load the responsibility and say, there you go; it's all done.

Well, the premise and the intent behind this is there. The good intent behind this is there. Those financial capacity investments also need to be there to ensure that a system that an Indigenous governing body takes on is not something that's going to be detrimental to their own financial resources to be able to take on, and it's set up to fail in that regard. So, that investment needs to be there, and I call on the minister to do that, too, whether it be in this legislation or further legislation. But it just needs to be strengthened in that way.

But, as Bill 41 sits here today, the intent of sharing that information is important and I support this motion.

Miigwech.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there any further speakers to second reading of Bill 41?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Mr. Acting Deputy—the question before the House is second reading of Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act.

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, can you please canvass the House to see if there's leave for the House and the Committee of the Whole to not see the clock today until the committee has completely consideration of the following bills: Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage); Bill 234, The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is leave for the House and Committee of the Whole not to see the clock until the committee has completed consideration of the following bills: Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 44, the employment standards amendment code act, minimum wage; Bill 234, Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

It has been announced that the House will now resolve to—*[interjection]*—oh, sorry. The honourable Minister of Justice.

Mr. Goertzen: You were ahead of me, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Would you now please resolve the House into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on the previously mentioned bills?

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): It is—has been announced that the House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider the—and report on the following: Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage); Bill 234, The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

* (16:00)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Dennis Smook): Will the Committee of the Whole House please come to order.

As announced, this committee will now consider the following: Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Bill 44, the employment standards amendment act—standards code amendment act, Minimum Wage; Bill 234, The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act.

In what order does the Committee wish to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of these bills?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Chairperson, could you please call them in order—the following order: Bill 44, 234 and 41.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: It has been suggested that the committee do Bill 44, followed by Bill 234, followed by Bill 41. Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Bill 44—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Before we proceed with Bill 44, I want to make all members aware that we have received written submissions from the following: Kevin Rebeck, president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour; John Graham, director of the Retail Council of Canada; Shaun Jeffrey, executive director and CEO of the Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association; Kathleen Cook, director, prairie and northern Canada at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Jeff Traeger, president of UFCW; Loren Remillard, president of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce; Scott Jocelyn, president of the Manitoba Hotel Association; Molly McCracken, Manitoba director at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; Kyle Ross, president of the Manitoba Government and General Employees Union.

As per the agreement of the House earlier, these submissions will be appended to the Hansard transcript today. We will also email copies of the submission to all members.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 44 have an opening statement? Does the minister responsible for Bill 44 have an opening statement?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services): No.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Yes.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Flin Flon.

MLA Lindsey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Chair, whichever spot you're filling at the moment, we're certainly not going to stop anything like this from passing, but it's a far cry from what the government could've done, what they should've done.

People need to know immediately that the minimum wage is going up and what it's going up to, and all this bill really does is kick the can down the road. And the minister says, well, we need time to consult. They've had quite a few months that they could have been consulting already so that they were actually ready to increase the minimum wage.

They could've decided, well, every other jurisdiction in Canada has raised the minimum wage already, so we could've said, okay, well, we'll follow along and raise it immediately to \$15 and then consult as to where it really should be going forward to turn it into a actual living wage.

The minister likes to perpetuate the myth that if you raise the minimum wage, businesses will go out of business. And time after time, jurisdiction after jurisdiction, that's shown to be, quite frankly, just not true. BC's raised their minimum wage quite a while ago and businesses didn't lose their business, people didn't go out of business.

What is happening presently is, with the rate of inflation that's gone up so dramatically, people can't afford to wait. And the minister said at the bill briefing this morning, well, we want to make sure that businesses have time to change their computer systems, when potentially what the minister's set up is for businesses to have to change their computer systems twice in a year.

He didn't guarantee that the minimum wage would go up, other than what's currently legislated on October 1st—he has until, actually, the end of the year under this legislation—with no commitment, none whatsoever, as to where that minimum wage is going to be.

* (16:10)

He talks about businesses need predictability, and he had the opportunity to provide them with advance notice of where that minimum wage is going to go. He didn't do that. So he's failed miserably in his job as being the minister and, really, we hope that he's listened to people. They're in the rushed business of passing this legislation.

Several entities, and I believe they've already been read into the record from the Manitoba Federation of Labour, and UFCW and CCPA have made submissions on short notice, and they would've been more than happy to be in consultation process with this minister and this government all along. And, in fact, they've had any number of pieces out there in the public saying what they thought minimum wage should have been.

The minister had the opportunity to listen to them then. He didn't. The government didn't. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) didn't. The only reason they're doing this now is because there's such a human cry going forward that we're dead last in the country with our minimum wage.

So, I hope the minister actually listens to what people are telling him now about where the minimum wage needs to be in order to be an actual living wage that may actually help people get out of poverty and be able to contribute more back into the province.

So, with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the member for those words.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass.

Shall clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

An Honourable Member: I don't have the bill in front of me.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Flin Flon.

MLA Lindsey: I don't, but it won't interfere with my ability to say what I want to say, which is, once again, that the minister has kicked the can down the road. We don't know where he's going to land up. Is he—going to be \$15 or is it going to be \$13.01, just so that they can be over what Saskatchewan is, so that they're not dead last anymore?

The minister hasn't given us any indication of where this is going to land up.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall—[interjection]

Oh, the member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): It's quite surprising that, once again, we have no answers from this minister. No answers to the people of Manitoba, who are asking what their minimum wage is going to be raised to.

If we believe the tweets of members opposite, we might think one thing. If we hear the heckles from others, we might believe another. But at the end of the day, it's the responsibility of this minister to tell the people of Manitoba how they're going to rectify the damage that they've done over the past six years of government.

It's quite—you know, quite frankly, it's unbelievable to me that the minister comes without any kind of prepared statement to introduce this bill through the committee process, rushes it through the committee here—as in Committee of the Whole—rather than going to the people of Manitoba to listen to them.

Maybe he doesn't want to sit here all evening, listen to members of the public come in and tell them how impacted not only they have been but, in terms of labour, how the members of our labour community have been fighting year after year against this government's austerity and the impacts that it's having on working people in this province.

It's absolutely shameful that the minister wouldn't have an opening statement, would so carelessly bring this forward and not even prepare, you know, maybe a couple of minutes of remarks; ram this bill through, push it through without any information for the people of Manitoba and then, when asked a question over and over and over again by the member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey), who is standing up for people—the people of Manitoba, the working people in this province, won't answer the most basic fundamental question: How much will he raise minimum wage?

The minister goes around and says, you know—this was their talking point before this bill came forward, they said, well, we want to depoliticize the minimum wage process, and yet here, the minister is playing ultimate politics with the minimum wage; won't tell the people of Manitoba what the minimum wage is going to be, talk about predictability for employers, predictability for employees. This minister won't reveal what his Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is now telling him to do.

So it's frustrating. It's frustrating that here we are, you know, in one afternoon or in just a couple of days pushing through a bill that we have been asking this minister to address for the past six years, without any input from the public, bypassing the regular business of the Legislature, the regular process that we undertake. This minister could have brought this forward a month ago. He could have brought this bill forward in the fall session. He could have brought this bill forward six years ago when the people of Manitoba told him that their indexing of the minimum wage to a poverty wage was unacceptable.

We've been calling for it consistently now, and we will continue to call on this government to step up and do their duty to make sure that the people of Manitoba who go to work every single day, that work 40 hours a week don't live in poverty. It is the most basic thing

that you could ask for in a country like Canada, and a province like Manitoba; that those who work hard are able to feed their families, feed themselves and get ahead.

This minister hasn't thought that that was a priority for the past six years? Now we're asking for him to just simply answer the question: how much? How much? Will he listen to the member that sits behind him or the member over there? Will he listen to his Premier, who said we should listen to the people of Manitoba and call a proper committee?

No. He'll continue to ram it through, won't give people answers and will continue to make this political when, in fact, it's about people and their right to get a living wage.

So, I appreciate the indulgence of my friend from Flin Flon, who has done an amazing job fighting for this issue for six years now, and now, finally, maybe the minister is starting to see the light. Hopefully, he'll read the submissions that have been submitted, he'll listen to labour, he'll actually go back to the table and figure out how he can best support the working people of Manitoba.

I don't have much faith, but I hope that he undertakes that work over the summer, finally comes back to us, gives us a number and starts paying the people of Manitoba the wage they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The member for St. Boniface has a question.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I had a statement, if possible. I mean, I just wanted to say for the record that when it comes to this bill, there's nothing but talk and there's no real commitments from either party; either the PCs or the NDP, about what they actually want to do.

I'll just go back to 2005. In 2005, Manitoba had the second lowest average hourly earnings of all the provinces. The number of hours a full-time, full-year work required to reach the poverty line in Manitoba with the minimum wage at 2006 was 65 hours a week. Sixty-five hours a week. That was under the NDP.

So, I can really be spared the sanctimony of the NDP, who only now are promising to bring the minimum wage up to \$15. The Manitoba Federation of Labour says it should be \$16, and we actually don't know; we have no timeline on what the minimum wage is going to be, when it's going to actually go up to \$15 or anything else. We have no idea. So we are

basically—have no goals, this is all—this is really just verging on very cynical feel-good politics to make it look like people are doing something when nothing is being done.

And I will remind the opposition that under the NDP, there was a lower minimum wage for people with disabilities. So I really—the level of sanctimony is unbearable. We need to be peeping—pay people a decent wage which has not happened in this province for decades.

That's all I have to say.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Clause 3—pass.

Shall clause 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

* (16:20)

MLA Lindsey: It's unfortunate that the minister has chosen to not answer anything that's been brought up this afternoon.

One of the things that we learned at the bill briefing this morning—although the minister also, at that point in time, refused to share the side-by-side for comparison purposes with us. He went through it, but wouldn't give us a copy of it; said that they never did. Well, I found some in my files from previous labour bills where they, in fact, were there. So, you know, it's once again just this minister, this government, refusing to be open and transparent with people of Manitoba and certainly not sharing the information properly with the opposition.

But to get back to my original point, it seems that if the minister deems that the minimum wage should go up because of this year, for example, where the inflation rate is running somewhere north of 6 per cent, but if next year, the cost of living is running at 4.9 per cent, the minister, with this piece of legislation—and he can clarify this, if he wishes—with this piece of legislation, it would mean that working Manitobans wouldn't get an increase in the next year because the inflation rate only went up 4.9 per cent. So workers, even if they get an increase this year because of inflation, will be—again, be left next year to fall behind again. So the minister can answer if that is correct. I believe that was the answers that I got from the minister and another MLA who was there answering questions this morning, for some reason, as well.

So, the whole premise of this bill is to kick it down the road as far as possible to make sure that they don't raise it anymore than they absolutely have to—which is why they won't tell us what the number is—and then to make sure that going forward they don't actually have to keep the minimum wage going up with inflation, that this will leave them an out card to ensure that people don't keep getting ahead, that people will once again fall into the trap of falling behind.

So with those few words, the minister—certainly, I look forward to him disputing anything I've just said or answering the question.

Mr. Helwer: Well, obviously, the member opposite didn't listen to the briefing this morning, and he's wrong.

MLA Lindsey: Well, I certainly did, because, in fact, I asked that very question for someone to explain it better to me at the briefing, and that is the answer that I was given.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 234—The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We will now move on to clause by clause of Bill 234, The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act.

Before we proceed with Bill 234, I want to make all members aware that we have received written submissions from Janice Gillam, a private citizen; and Arlene Last-Kolb from Overdose Awareness Manitoba.

As per the agreement of the House earlier, these submissions will be appended to the Hansard transcript for today. We will also email copies of the submission to all members.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for Point Douglas, have an opening statement?

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I just want to thank members opposite for supporting this bill. Certainly, it's a step in the right direction and a direction that we need to be heading in.

We also need to, you know, look at making sure that there's reporting done so that we can accurately, you know, get the resources in place that Manitobans

need. We had 372 deaths in 2019, 407 in 2020. This is trending in the wrong direction and you know, certainly, a safe consumption site in this province would help us.

Families have been calling for this for, you know, probably the last six months, so I just want to really, you know, say thank you for listening to those families. And certainly, this is going to help end stigma, you know, educate the public around drug use and, hopefully, help those who are struggling get the help that they need. And we want to ensure that, you know, Manitobans get the support so that we're not having to have these bereavement days, or add families to coming to these bereavement days.

Certainly, we've seen, you know, this number grow, and that's not something that we want to see with Manitobans. You know, these are our community members. These are our loved ones. And these are friends and families. And you know, I want to, you know, dedicate this to a few people: the member from St. Johns' mother, Sharon Fontaine, as well as my own father, Steve [*phonetic*] Tyo, and Kyle Kematch, who was a co-founder of Drag the Red, did lots of work in the community, you know, whether that was supporting folks with addictions that were along the riverbanks and helping them to, you know, have a purpose, coming on the boat, and helping to search for loved ones. He certainly helped lift a lot of folks out of addictions.

And then certainly, I want to, you know, acknowledge all of the families that spoke with me—friends, families, organizations, you know, that helped contribute to this bill. This bill is really the making of their work, so I want to acknowledge all of them and all of the families who are grieving a loss of a loved one and that, you know, to let them know that I dedicate the work that I'm doing to continue to support, to navigate for the supports that they need, so that, you know, we don't have to have another one die of an overdose in this province.

So, miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 234?

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness): I won't take up too much time, but I, too, would also like to acknowledge the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), thank her for bringing this bill forward.

I think this is going to be a very important day for many families in Manitoba to come together and share

in the journey of grief. It is a complicated grief when you lose a loved one to drug overdose, and it is important that citizens have a place to go to speak about their journeys, to also help support families who are newly included within this tragic community, but also to give hope for the future and be a part of ending stigma and contributing to harm reduction strategies here in the province.

So, thank you, again, to the member for Point Douglas. I really appreciate her efforts, and I thank the families that I met with as well, who contributed their feedback in support for this bill. And we are happy as a government to stand together with members opposite to pass this bill.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I just want to echo some of the thoughts that are being shared here, this afternoon and thank the member, commend her, for the work and the diligence she has done on this legislation and for bringing so many folks down to the Legislature.

I think it makes this legislation very impactful to see the faces of so many who have been impacted by loss of overdose and going through that bereavement process, and I think that this legislation has created a lot of dialogue amongst us as MLAs, and—very healthy dialogue to better educate ourselves within the system, as well, Mr. Chairperson. And that's why I want to thank the member for bringing it forward.

And I think it's important that we, as a province, continue to move forward in a positive way with mental health, and that's one reason we should be investing in more resources and creating more days of awareness such as this.

* (16:30)

I'll leave my remarks at that.

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

Shall clause 1 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Smith: I would like clause 1 of the bill amended by striking out Sunday before Mother's Day and substituting the first Sunday in May.

I move

THAT Clause 1 of the Bill be amended by striking out "Sunday before Mother's Day" and substituting "first Sunday in May".

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: It has been moved by the member for Point Douglas

THAT Clause 1 of the Bill be amended by striking out "Sunday before Mother's Day" and substituting "first Sunday in May".

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

No questions? Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The amendment is accordingly passed.

Shall clause 1 pass? Shall clause 1 as amended pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Clause 1 as amendment—as amended is passed.

Clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill as amended be reported.

Bill 41—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We will now move on to clause by clause of Bill 41, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act. Does the minister responsible for Bill 41 have an opening statement?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): I just want to say how much of an honour it has been to be invited to sharing circles and ceremonies with Indigenous-governing bodies as they've been walking down this path towards exercising jurisdiction over Child and Family Services and how impactful some of the stories that I've heard on this journey that I've had alongside as the minister responsible for the child and family services in the province of Manitoba to hear first-hand about the shortcomings and the failings of a decades-old system and then to also be on the cusp of this transformation.

It has been truly remarkable, and the one thing that has never been lost on me is the spirit of willingness and forgiveness and acceptance and welcoming that I've received as a minister of the Crown when meeting with First Nations on talking about The Child and Family Services Act and the forthcoming amendments and the history of the CFS system.

And it is in that spirit of collaboration that they invited me into their circles to talk about the need for a new era of child welfare that I hope to set the table for all of us in this Chamber, and all future members of this Chamber who will be debating and discussing the framework for child welfare, and to enter into that—those discussions and those debates with a desire to achieve better outcomes for children and a better pathway forward. And it is my sincere hope that Bill 41 is the start of the depoliticization of child welfare so that we can all come into an agreement.

And I think to sit at the table with Indigenous communities who have been predominantly, disproportionately and negatively impacted by some of the former systems in place, and to be welcomed at that table in a spirit of love is remarkable, and I hope that they lead the example on the way we need to be discussing Child and Family Services in this province.

And so, with that, I just want to say thanks to all my fellow colleagues in this Chamber for expediting this bill. It was recently introduced and here we are hopefully on the cusp of this bill receiving royal assent, which is going to mean a lot. It is the first of its kind in Canada. My officials had no framework to draw upon. We were literally at the drawing board ourselves in drafting this legislation.

And it is the first piece of legislation to amend the CFS act in ways to adapt and adjust to this new era, and there will be future legislative amendments required that I certainly hope this bill and the way this House has come together to see this bill brought forward, will create that pathway for future amendments to also be brought into this House.

So with that, I just, again, want to thank the—all members of this House. It's really historic when you think about it, for multiple reasons, and I am just truly grateful that we're here to debate this bill at this stage.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

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

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): I agree with the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) that this is indeed a historic day for First Nations in regards to child welfare. I'm especially proud of my community of Peguis First Nation. They've always been trail-blazers in many aspects of government, and I can share too that OCN was on their way, too, to this new legislation change and to our own laws, so I'm hoping that my First Nation will get on board and be as progressive Peguis First Nation.

It's exciting. Obviously, I support this legislation. It's exciting that this is being pushed through. But I, you know, with—of course, there's—we're—there's concerns, you know, as a mother and as a MLA for this area, and as the critic.

I believe that for the Indigenous committees that are choosing to take legislative authority over their children and care, I'm concerned about the actual system that's in place currently, that's outdated. Sensitive—'sensitive' information is stored here, and there's going to be—have to be, you know, capacity building in the future in regards to this.

Like, obviously, Peguis has that capacity. I've always admired their leadership. And we—Grand Rapids, Misipawistik Cree Nation is also on that path, as well.

I got to share that the—a lot of the comments regarding this are of concern. Especially within the communities, there's a lot of—they don't trust this system, so—which is under provincial, and so, how we're going to trust it, you know, when it's under Indigenous? And these are comments from the community talking to chief and council and child-welfare service workers in the community.

* (16:40)

So I agree with them because I've been touched and destroyed by this system myself. And I really want to encourage that Manitoba still has conversations with us, even though this is going to be passed over. And I'm just concerned, you know, when issues come up, we're going to be, that's your jurisdiction—again—it's going to be that all over again. And I'm—the children are still Manitobans, too, and I would like to know the relationship, too, with MACY.

And I'd like to ensure that this system needs, you know, an overhaul, too, with the environment with our workers that are working in. We need respect for the families. We need compassion. I can tell you that I've been not treated that way, especially as the MLA for The Pas, you know. So I'm concerned, you know. But

I encourage it—I really do. I really—this is progressive thinking. But I'm worried as a mother and who's someone who has been destroyed by this system, so I just want to encourage that conversations still include the Province of Manitoba while we're on this journey.

So, again, I support this legislation, and it's pretty awesome how it's been pushed through, and I'm looking forward to working with my community of Peguis to ensure this is going to be successful and safe.

And I really want to push for the reunification files. Like I said, one file tower—reunification, towers and towers of files for children in care. So let's fix that, and I'm willing to work with you on that.

Ekosi.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the member for those comments.

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

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clauses 6 and 7—pass; clause 8—pass; clause 9—pass; clauses 10 through 13—pass.

Shall clause 14 pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I want to move an amendment. Okay, I move

THAT the following be added after Clause 13 of the Bill:

Within one year after the coming into force of this section, the minister must undertake a comprehensive—[*interjection*]

Oh, okay.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Is there leave of the House for an amendment to—oh. Is there leave of the House to revert back to clause 13? [*Agreed*]

Ms. Lamoureux: I move

THAT the following be added after Clause 13 of the Bill:

Within one year after the coming into force of this section, the minister must undertake a comprehensive review of the amendments made by this act that includes public representations.

Within one year after the review is undertaken or within any longer period that the Legislative Assembly allows, the minister must table a report on the review in the Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: It has been moved by Ms. Lamoureux—the member for Tyndall Park

THAT clause—the following be added after Clause 13 of the Bill:

Review

13.1(1) Within one year after coming into force of this section, the minister must undertake a comprehensive review of the amendments made by this act that includes public representations.

Tabling report in Assembly

13.1(2) Within one year after review is undertaken or within any longer period that the Legislative Assembly allows, the minister must table a report on the review in the Assembly.

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Ms. Squires: Does the member have a list of Indigenous governing bodies that she consulted with on this amendment, and if she does, could she please table that?

Ms. Lamoureux: My colleague, the MLA for River Heights, has actually been working with the minister and her department on this legislation, and I believe they would have consulted about this.

Ms. Squires: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all due respect, I am a little taken aback that we would be putting forward an amendment to a bill that is empowering Indigenous governing bodies to exercise jurisdiction without a list of Indigenous governing bodies that was consulted on the amendment.

And so, respectfully, I am not inclined to move on this at this particular moment. But I certainly will speak with our partners on this legislation and Indigenous governing bodies in the future and if they wish to see something like that brought forward, I would be open to that in the future. But at this particular moment, that is not the case.

Ms. Lamoureux: I think it's important to be proactive on legislation, and if we can create a clause that would ensure that a year from now we can check in to see how the legislation is being implemented, that is a nice safeguard to have in place.

Ms. Squires: I think it's really important to do proper consultation, and this legislation is one that is supported by the partners that I've worked with in community and other Indigenous governing bodies for whom this legislation is critically important. And in—I would like to just remind the member that this legislation is pertinent for passage as soon as possible, and I certainly hope that she is not providing indication that there's going to be a delay in passage, because that would be not beneficial to the communities for whom—rely on this legislation.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the amendment pass?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

Clause 13—pass; clause 14—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: This—that concludes the business before the committee.

The hour being 4:50, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Committee rise.

Call the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Is there will of the House to recognize the clock as 5?

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? [*Agreed*]

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Re: Bill 44

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) represents 95,000 small and medium-sized businesses across Canada, including 4,000 in Manitoba. We are pleased to provide our comments and suggestions with respect to Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage).

Following two years of pandemic-related challenges and unpredictability, the introduction of Bill 44 adds another layer of uncertainty for employers in Manitoba. Government has provided very few details of what small business owners can expect with this legislation. In years where inflation exceeds 5 per cent in the first quarter of a calendar year, minimum wage increases will no longer be tied to a stable and predictable formula. Furthermore, this legislation only requires the government to provide 30 days' notice of what could be a significant increase to the minimum wage. Small businesses will be left with little time to adapt to wage changes.

CFIB urges the government to make the following amendments to Bill 44:

First, amend the notice period to provide at least 90 days' notice to employers. This is particularly important with a more significant wage increase. Small business owners need time to plan, and 30 days' notice of a potentially significant minimum wage increase is not sufficient. While presumably the proposed regulation will be made public to allow for consultation (per section 144(4) of the Act), business owners must know well in advance – and with certainty – what they need to budget for wages.

Second, determine a formula or benchmark for determining higher-than-CPI wage increases. "An amount designated in regulation" is too open-ended and creates too much uncertainty for business owners. For example, if inflation is above 5 per cent, how much higher than that will minimum wage be raised? Better articulating this in the legislation would provide some certainty for small business owners and prevent knee-jerk decision-making going forward. If this bill is only necessary for the purpose of aligning Manitoba's minimum wage more closely with that of other provinces this year as a "one-off", then the bill should have a sunset clause or otherwise stipulate that after this year, minimum wage increases will go back to the existing CPI-based formula.

Finally, we would like to add a few comments on the additional steps government should take as it moves toward an increase to minimum wage with Bill 44. For context: post-COVID, many Manitoba small business owners remain stressed about the future of their business. According to CFIB survey data, only 37 per cent of Manitoba small businesses are back to normal sales levels, and many are staring down significant debt while also being squeezed by skyrocketing inflation, supply chain issues, and labour shortages that are driving up the cost of doing business. As small businesses begin the long road to recovery, CFIB's top message to governments has been to avoid introducing new costs.

Governments should be looking for ways to provide some cost relief for small businesses that are still in recovery mode. For example, we have seen several provinces take steps to reduce their provincial fuel taxes in response to rapidly rising fuel costs, and in Newfoundland, where a minimum wage increase was recently announced, the provincial government included a time-limited transitional wage subsidy for small employers to help ease their transition to a higher minimum wage. To date, Manitoba has made no such effort to help small businesses.

Before adding new costs for struggling small businesses, the Manitoba government should ensure it is using all the tools in its own toolbox. For example, Manitoba has one of the lowest basic personal amounts in all of Canada – taxing people at just over \$10,000 in income. To help low-income earners, one of the first things the provincial government can do is significantly raise the basic personal amount and let low-income earners keep a larger portion of their paychecks.

Finally, it is important to note that small business owners care deeply about their employees. Most of them are already paying more than minimum wage – in fact, 80 per cent of Manitoba respondents to a recent CFIB survey indicated their employees are paid above the minimum wage. Small business owners are keenly aware of the budget pressures their employees face and want to ensure their employees are compensated fairly. But many small businesses are still struggling financially in the wake of the pandemic, and there is much more that government can do to create the conditions where Manitoba small businesses can thrive.

CFIB appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on Bill 44; however, it is worth noting that we would

have appreciated more time than we had (approximately 24 hours) to review the Bill and make this submission to the committee. We look forward to providing feedback on the proposed regulations.

Kathleen Cook
Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Re: Bill 44

Dear Minister Helwer,

Retail Council of Canada is a not-for-profit, industry-funded association that has been the voice of retail in the province for more than half a century. Across Manitoba, RCC represents thousands of store fronts of all retail formats operating in virtually every community Manitoba. As Manitoba's largest private sector employer, over 10% all Manitoba jobs and more than 70,000 Manitobans are currently working in our dynamic industry.

As a community volunteer, and on behalf of the retail sector, I look forward to conversations regarding opportunities to support Manitoba's lowest income earners, through targeted tax reduction strategies and programming, as well as contributing to the setting of the minimum wage rate during high inflationary times that Bill 44 will enable.

However, specific to the legislation, I wish to express concern with section 7.1(4) that states that "The regulation must be made at least 30 days before the regulation comes into force."

As I understand it, this could potentially result in only 30 days notice before a new specially adjusted Manitoba minimum wage rate goes into effect. As labour costs are budgeted well in advance, and in most cases must be reflected in retail pricing, we are requesting a minimum of 90-120 days advance notice before any new minimum wage rate goes into effect, so businesses have sufficient time to react.

On behalf of the Retail Council of Canada and our members, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective.

Most Sincerely,

John Graham
Director, Government Relations
Retail Council of Canada

Re: Bill 44

Dear Mr Abbott,

In review of the above proposed bill we ask that the timeline that is being considered to announce and implement any adjustments to minimum wage be reviewed as it pertains to the foodservices industry.

The proposed timeline of 30 day's notice to business does not allow for a reasonable notice for operators in the foodservice industry to make the necessary changes required within the operational schematic to adjust for these increases in labor costs.

We have proposed that this notice be extended to 90 days to allow for any human resource related operational decisions be made within the scope of human rights legislation.

Shaun Jeffrey
CEO
Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association

Re. Bill 44

To the Legislative Committee considering Bill 44 - The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage):

Please accept this submission from the Manitoba Hotel Association (MHA) regarding Bill 44.

The MHA represents 265 hotels across Manitoba. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Manitoba hotels employed approximately 11,000 people.

Hotels were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and are struggling to rebuild their workforces and their businesses. As a result, any changes to the minimum wage are of interest to our sector. The MHA is pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the consultations around this important subject.

Regarding Bill 44, we are concerned with section 7.1(4) which states, "The regulation must be made at least 30 days before the regulation comes into force."

We are concerned that employers may only receive 30 days notice prior to a minimum wage increase. Events and guest rooms are booked months in advance, and so 30 days is not sufficient for the hotel industry. We are requesting a minimum of 90-120 days advance notice before any new minimum wage rate goes into effect, so businesses have sufficient time to react.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Scott Jocelyn
President & CEO
Manitoba Hotel Association

Re: Bill 44

The Manitoba Federation of Labour is Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of over 30 affiliated unions and over 125,000 unionized workers in the province.

No one should work full time but still live in poverty. One would think this would be a statement we could all agree with. But, right now thousands of minimum wage earners can work full time and still fall below the poverty line because our minimum wage is far too low to pay the bills. And it is far too low because The Pallister-Stefanson government passed legislation to keep it that way early on in its mandate.

I want to highlight why working families need the government to immediately and significantly increase the minimum wage up to a living wage level. But first, I want to speak to how we got to a place where Manitoba could have the lowest minimum wage in the country this year – which is absolutely embarrassing.

Under Brian Pallister, the government froze the minimum wage in its first year in government, leaving minimum earners \$400 poorer when you consider inflation. Following that freeze, the Pallister-Stefanson government tied annual increases to the previous calendar year's rate of inflation.

Because minimum wage was frozen well below the level it needed to be for earners to afford to pay for the basics like food and rent, the government legislated the minimum wage to stay at a poverty level for years.

The MFL, unions, workers, economists, and anti-poverty advocates were clear with the government at the time that these decisions would leave low-wage workers behind, and strand them in poverty-wage work. And even though this government knew that, it did it anyway.

Under the Pallister-Stefanson government, working families have fallen further and further behind the rest of the country. We saw how, year after year, Manitoba fell towards the back of the pack when it came to minimum wage. And still, the government did nothing.

The Stefanson did nothing when the Progressive Conservative government of New Brunswick announced it would increase that province's minimum wage by \$2 in 2022 because they were embarrassed by how low their minimum wage was.

New Brunswick's increase meant that Manitoba's minimum wage fell to second-lowest in the country, just barely ahead of Saskatchewan. And still, the government did nothing. Then, when Saskatchewan announced recently that it would significantly increase its minimum wage, and leave Manitoba in the dust in last place in the country – the Premier's first response was don't worry, wages will just rise on their own.

It should have never come to this, where Manitoba is at risk of having the lowest minimum wage in the country. We think that Manitobans are worth a whole lot more than dead last.

Many minimum wage workers are parents, everyday Manitobans who are working hard to provide for their families. Even with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Statistics Canada data shows that over 23,000 Manitobans worked for minimum wage in 2021.

And contrary to the myths, most minimum wage earners are adults, and the majority of minimum wage earners are not students. Half of all minimum wage earners work at places that employ 20 employees or more (not small 'mom and pop' shops). And the majority of minimum wage workers are women.

When our minimum wage falls behind, the workers who earn it fall behind too, making it harder and harder to keep a roof over their head and food on the table. Because of this provincial government's decisions, these workers have fallen so far behind that it will take significant steps from this government to ever catch up. Manitoba's workers deserve a whole lot better.

I know that this bill doesn't set what the minimum wage should be, and that government wants to consult before that number is set. That consultation is something that we have been calling for, through the Labour Management Review Committee, for years.

The MFL's view on our minimum wage is simple. We believe that the minimum wage should be a living wage. If you work for minimum wage, you should make enough to afford the necessities of life. Food, rent, clothing, transportation, things like that. If you work full time in Manitoba, you should live above the poverty line. Plain and simple.

We know that the rising prices at the pumps and at the grocery stores are hitting working families hard, and

they are hitting the lowest-wage workers hardest. To be able to make ends meet and afford the necessities, this government needs to take immediate steps to boost the minimum wage to a living wage level.

Two years ago, CCPA-Manitoba calculated that the living wage for Winnipeg was just over \$16/hr. That was two years ago, and we know that the cost of everything has gone up significantly since then. I would imagine the living wage level is considerably higher than that now. We hope that determining the living wage level for 2022 would be part of these consultations, and this calculation should happen on a yearly basis with government.

Taking immediate steps to boost the minimum wage is the most significant thing government could do to put more money in the pockets of low-wage workers in our province, the very workers who are hit the hardest from the high inflation that working families are struggling with. And these workers spend a higher proportion of their income in the local economy than any other category of worker. In fact, they often spend money at the businesses they work for, like grocery stores or restaurants.

Manitoba's labour movement will continue to fight for a province with a minimum wage that lifts people out of poverty, not one that traps them in it. It's time for the Stefanson government to start working for working families and make this a reality.

Kevin Rebeck
President
Manitoba Federation of Labour

Re: Bill 44

The Manitoba government introduced legislation on May 30, 2022 to allow Cabinet to increase the minimum wage if inflation rises above 5 per cent, as measured in the first three months of the year.

Our office spoke against the Manitoba Minimum Wage Indexation Act when it was introduced in 2017. The base rate the minimum wage is increased against was arbitrary and is not based on the cost of living. This Legislation has kept the minimum wage low to the point that Manitoba will soon have the lowest minimum wage in Canada. Inflationary increases have not been successful in reducing poverty amongst working Manitobans, and minimum wage workers are being forced to work extra hours and choose between necessities.

Our office does the Manitoba Living Wage calculation on a regular basis. The last update in 2020 found the living wage was \$16.15/ hour. An update for 2022 is forthcoming. The CCPA MB living wage is calculated as the hourly wage at which a household can meet its basic needs once government transfers have been added to the family's income such as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), and deductions have been subtracted (such as income taxes and Employment Insurance premiums).

When lower income workers earn more money, they have more spending power to meet their basic needs. Working poverty places stress on social services and adds to intergenerational poverty. Low-income workers were particularly hard-hit during COVID, losing the largest share of hours and jobs across the economy. The COVID recovery requires governments to redress inequalities present before the pandemic and exacerbated by the economic impacts of the pandemic. This starts with making the minimum wage a living wage.

In 2020, our office published "Surviving on Minimum Wage: The Lived Experiences of Manitoba Workers". Researchers interviewed 40 minimum wage workers who reported how challenging it was to make ends meet on Manitoba's minimum wage. Of the workers we spoke to, 38 per cent used food banks or sought out free community meals in order to survive. The cost of food in particular has risen sharply since 2020, above the overall average rate of inflation. The minimum wage must be based on the actual cost of living for workers. This revision to the legislation does nothing to remedy this.

Surviving on Minimum Wage includes a review of the economic literature on minimum wages and confirms the benefits of a sufficient minimum wage: "moderate increases in the minimum wage will benefit low-wage workers without negatively impacting jobs or the economy". Low-income workers spend virtually all their money locally, which actually boosts the local economy.

The report's review of literature and meta studies on minimum wages find that minimum wage increases have little to no effect on overall employment except a small reduction amongst young minimum wage workers. Positive earnings effects for minimum wage workers add to overall economic output.

Making the minimum wage a living wage is an important step to recognizing the contributions of the lowest income earners in our economy. The minimum wage should be matched with the living wage and

regularly increased to meet the cost of living. This should be done as part of a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan that strengthens government transfers such as Rent Assist and measures to improve employment conditions, address precarious employment, require 10 days of paid sick leave, among other benefits.

About Us

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent, charitable, non-partisan research institute.

Molly McCracken
Manitoba Director
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Re: Bill 44

Clerk of Committees:

On behalf of The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and our 2,000 members, I am pleased to share a few brief comments about Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Minimum Wage) for the benefit of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Chamber appreciates that Canada, like many other nations, is experiencing inflation at a rate that has not been seen in decades. We also recognize several other provinces have taken recent steps to significantly increase their legislated minimum wage levels.

With all this being considered, we acknowledge a one-time adjustment to Manitoba's minimum wage beyond the index-based formula outlined in Section 7 of the Employment Standards Code is justified. As such, we support the intent of Bill 44.

However, an adjustment should be made to the bill to require a minimum of 90 days of notice to allow time for employers make the required operational adjustments (e.g. payroll processing, pricing, shift scheduling).

Further, the following measures will be critical in determining the amount of the one-time adjustment:

1. Extensive consultation with employers and labour organizations.
2. Analysis of the impact any proposed increase would have on employment levels, economic activity, and collective bargaining agreements.
3. Consideration for the cost-of-living in Manitoba relative to other jurisdictions.

The legislated minimum wage formula has benefitted both employers and employees, as it has followed an objective, evidence-based process. While current economic conditions warrant an extraordinary adjustment, the process for determining that increase should remain as objective and data driven as possible.

Businesses are prepared to do their part during these difficult times. However, it should be noted that today's data release of the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions - a joint Statistics Canada/-Canadian Chamber of Commerce initiative - indicates that rising input costs, including labour, is the number one concern for Canadian businesses at this time.

The Chamber calls upon the Province of Manitoba to augment any measures that ultimately are borne 100% by business with measures financed through the provincial treasury.

Notably, The Chamber urges the Province of Manitoba to:

1. Commission a provincial tax review to assess how Manitoba's tax policies and framework hinder economic growth for all Manitobans.
2. Increase the basic personal tax exemption amount to further assist all Manitobans impacted by historic inflationary pressures.
3. Provide financial relief (e.g.: grants, tax credits) to small businesses to help them make the transition to an unplanned higher minimum wage.

We look forward to having the opportunity to discuss this issue in much greater detail with the government in the weeks ahead. If any member would like to discuss this issue further, I may be reached at lremillard@winnipeg-chamber.com or at 204-944-3318.

Sincerely,

Loren Remillard
President & CEO
The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce

Re: Bill 44

Good Evening Chairperson and Honourable Members.

My name is Kyle Ross, President of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU). Thank-you for the opportunity to speak to this Bill tonight.

The MGEU represents 32,000 working Manitobans who live and work throughout Manitoba in a wide variety of workplaces — including members employed directly by the Province of Manitoba, crown corporations, universities and colleges, health care facilities, social service agencies, and arts and cultural organizations.

Growing up, we all heard a similar story about work and earning a living. Go out and get a job, work hard and you will get ahead. That was the promise.

The current reality for workers earning minimum wage, and even significantly above minimum wage, is that they can't support themselves or their family even if they work full-time.

In 2017, when the Minimum Wage Indexation Act was introduced, the MGEU raised issues with the Bill. We argued that, "No one should be struggling to keep food on the table or clothes on their kids' backs if they work a full time job. Employment should be a ticket out of poverty – nothing less."

Similarly, this Bill doesn't go far enough to ensure full-time workers and their families are lifted out of poverty. We would prefer to see a living wage as the base rate for workers across the Province – in 2020 that would have been \$16.15 dollars an hour.

For those who believe that is too much, think about the choices working families have to make. When the bills are due at the end of the month do you buy a winter parka and boots for your growing child or send them to school without a lunch? That's not a choice any parent would want to make, but that is the reality for far too many workers.

In 2021, 23,000 Manitobans earned a minimum wage of \$11.95 per hour. The majority of them women who have been left behind as inflation further strips away their ability to afford the rising cost of rent, groceries, transportation, and clothing. It's time for extraordinary action to address this indefensible issue.

It's time to restore the promise that workers will get ahead when they work full-time. Throughout the pandemic we hailed low-wage workers as heroes who kept our lives and economy going. We urge this government to prioritize quality of life and make the minimum wage a living wage.

Kyle Ross
President
Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union

Re: Bill 44

Ever since Premier Pallister brought in the minimum wage indexation act that amended the Employment Standards Code, workers at or near minimum wage have been trapped in poverty wages. This legislation has dragged us down to be the lowest minimum wage in Canada.

Our PC government has both created and maintained this crisis: Last year, minimum wage workers were given a measly 5¢ raise. And it's not just minimum wage earners affected by our province's low wage rates, UFCW Local 832 represents Manitoban workers in security, assisted living and retail working on wage scales based on guaranteed gaps above the provincial minimum wage.

When Premier Pallister announced this legislation, Manitobans were told that minimum wage would increase with inflation, but the devil is always in the details. The calculation for minimum wage increases multiplies the current year's CPI by the preceding year's CPI, meaning that the calculated increase is watered down and spread out over two years, not appropriately reflecting the current economic situation that low-income earners find themselves in. So, when inflation spikes like it has this year, Manitoban workers at or near minimum wage, who are also consumers in Manitoba, see prices go up immediately, but their wages still lag behind. Inflation hits low-income workers much more significantly than others and our government does not have a long-term solution in place to address this.

When it comes to taking away workers' rights, this government continues to use the same tired line about how, "this puts us in line with other provinces."

Now is the time to lift workers up and, put us in line with other provinces. Instead of a clearly communicated minimum wage to help low-income earners to meet their basic needs, the Stefanson government is creating messy legislation with loopholes and caveats that provide them with a method to remove an increase to minimum wage next year. What they are proposing is a band-aid solution to a problem that needs stitches.

The answer to what we need right now is simple: Raise minimum wage to \$16/hour, pull Manitoban workers out of poverty and then tie minimum wage increases to inflation.

Jeff Traeger
President
UFCW, Local 832

Re: Bill 234

Thank you for allowing me to submit this email,

One of the hardest days for many women around the world is Mother's Day ... I know for myself this is very true. It is every parents worst nightmare to loose a child and another altogether when it comes from the cold vice grip of substance abuse.

Losing a child is one of the worst traumas a human being can experience. When a child dies, a mother loses a piece of her own heart. Not only that, she loses all that she looked forward to in seeing that child fulfill their potential. A bereaved mother will never again be able to hold that child in their arms. But they will forever hold that child in their heart.

You have probably noticed that Mother's Day advertisements plaster every available window-front for at least a month prior to Mother's Day marketers won't let you forget. These ads can provoke a painful reaction which is one important reason why The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act is so important and is critical for the multitude of people that are grieving their children and their loved ones.

We know that overdose deaths are preventable with harm reduction, access to safe supply, decriminalizing people, offering rapid access to evidence-based treatment and dealing with underlying health and social conditions that contribute to problematic substance use. Yet, we see a lack of real action, harmful or half measures from all levels of government.

Grieving families need this day and we need your support to pass The Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day Act. Please help us to grieve with dignity, to help us raise awareness in the community and to help reduce stigma surrounding substance abuse deaths. Let us honour our loved ones.

I am a bereaved mother. I lost my daughter Phoebe in July 2020 at the age of 31 to combined toxic effects of fentanyl and methamphetamine. I lost my stepson Chris in December 2020 at the age of 37 to combined toxic effects of fentanyl and cocaine. Both had been prescribed opiates for serious back injuries and both became addicted from legal physician prescriptions. Both died of a poisoned drug supply.

My life is changed forever. I have suffered the unimaginable and yet I am still standing and still walking. 407 Manitoba families lives changed forever in 2021. Since January 2015 ... more than 1,700 Manitoba families lives have been changed forever. Instead of planning graduations, weddings,

birthdays and other life milestones ... they are planning funerals.

I have 4 grandchildren who have been left without a parent, whose parents will not be there for their school and sport achievements. Parents who will not be there to celebrate milestones or to be there for the trials and tribulations of life.

In closing I want to remind you that for many Mother's Day is not a joyful celebration anymore. It was not my choice to survive without my child ... but I now choose to live and honour my child. Bereaved mothers are the mother of all mothers. We are courageous ... we are warrior mamas through and through ... for even in death we still lovingly mother our precious children.

Thank you,
Janis Gillam

Re: Bill 234

My name is Arlene and I am writing today to ask for support on bill 234.

On July 18th 2014 our son Jessie died from a Fentanyl Poisoning.

And again I die a little inside writing these words again.

I have said that it feels like little cuts of pain every time I have to write that our son died.

That my body would be covered in cuts from the amount of pain I live every day without our son.

Everyday I am reminded that I will never see him, never hold him again.

This, is hard for me, for any mother to have to write about there child dyeing.

And because of how our son died and the stigma that is thrown on us, has been even harder I think.

And because of how our son died I have had to advocate everyday for change.

I have had to give my heart and soul to change how my son, our family and thousands of other families are treated because of the choice of substance they chose to use or try.

Everyday we deal with stigma and the stigma is killing us.

I know that all mother's grief is the same when our children die.

Bereaved Mother's day is for everyone.
But, when we have to deal with stigma every day,
When stigma has been a part of what is killing people,
We need all the help we can get.
It has been a long and very difficult road. I have met
to many mother's like me.
407 loved ones gone too soon last year
All are somebodies child.
All died from the same things
We have a long way to go to acknowledge we could
have done better and we will.
Please support this bill.

I know it would mean a great deal to me, not as a
victory, but as show of support and compassion. I will
continue to advocate and try to make thing's better for
your children and grand children and then I will retire
and know that every Sunday before Mother's Day, that
all the hard work was worth it and that my son did
matter.

And maybe I will never have to write about a beautiful
son who died from drugs again.

My son was so much more than how he died.

But his death will and has saved lives and that was
truly who my son was.

A giving person. Someone who cared.

Thank you.

Arlene Last-Kolb

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 31, 2022

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Kathleen Cook Canadian Federation of
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John Graham Director, Government Relations
Retail Council of Canada 2620

Shaun Jeffrey CEO Manitoba Restaurant and
Foodservices Association 2620

Scott Jocelyn President & CEO Manitoba Hotel
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Kevin Rebeck President Manitoba Federation of
Labour 2622

Molly McCracken Manitoba Director Canadian
Centre for Policy Alternatives 2623

Loren Remillard President & CEO The Winnipeg
Chamber of Commerce 2623

Kyle Ross President Manitoba Government and
General Employees' Union 2624

Jeff Traeger President UFCW, Local 832 2624

Re: Bill 234

Janis Gillam 2625

Arlene Last-Kolb 2626

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

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