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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 1, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask Mr. Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

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

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

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

The honourable opposition House—*[interjection]* Yes.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader. *[interjection]* Bear with us here. Order. We'll get there.

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Official Opposition House Leader regarding her caucus's first selected bill for this session. As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each recognized party to select up to three private members' bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote.

The Official Opposition House Leader has advised that her caucus has selected Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary), as the first of three selected bills for this session.

In accordance with the Official Opposition House Leader's letter, the process on this bill will proceed as follows: debate at second reading will begin this morning at 10:30 a.m., the question shall be put on the second reading motion this morning at 10:55 a.m.

* * *

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning, Deputy Speaker. Would you call for second reading from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Bill 200, The Black History Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been requested—announced by the honourable Opposition House Leader that we will now consider Bill 200 for debate and second reading, The Black History Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Black History Month Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I move, seconded by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), that Bill 200, The Black History Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Moses: Really, really excited and pleased to be speaking on Bill 200 today, The Black History Month Act, officially taking the opportunity to recognize February as Black History Month here in Manitoba.

Now, the reason this is important is, you know, I think the reason—the person who really gets credited with starting Black History Month is Carter Woodson in 1926, started a Black history week; the second week of February was chosen because it coincides with the birth—both the birthday of Lincoln and the

birthday of Frederick Douglass. Were both pioneers in Black history and the abolition of slavery, and during this—sorry, the—during the second—civil war in America.

And so, to commemorate their birthdays, that's why February was chosen. And so, for that tradition of using February as a month to recognize Black history, celebrate Black culture and achievement, I think we should continue to recognize that here in Manitoba.

Now, the reason it's important to have it officially recognized as opposed to, you know, just what's been happening already in Manitoba for decades, is because it really amplifies and broadens the consciousness of Black history in our province.

And that was one of the goals that Carter Woodson had when he started it. He wanted to start a week to promote and educate people 'about' Black history and Black culture, and some of the things that people had done during the American Civil War. And really to broaden the nation's consciousness on what Black culture and Black people were doing.

And then, it wasn't until Gerald Ford, US President in 1976, actually officially recognized Black History Month, that it really opened the doors for so many more people. And so, that work had been done by those pioneers, those ground breakers to lay the work for Black History Month and celebrate and do the work, and community advocates. And when it became official, it just opened the door up so much wider. And that's what we want to do here in Manitoba as well.

The committee for Black History Month has been doing work for decades. Every year, they put on amazing programming; educational opportunities to celebrate the culture, to provide the history of Black—of what's happening in Black history in Manitoba and across Canada.

We want to celebrate the work that they're doing. We want to amplify the work that they're doing. And we do that by officially recognizing February as Black History Month.

The whole purpose of Black History Month is to reflect on the history, whether it's both difficult history that challenges our thoughts and what we should be doing; whether that's to celebrate the accomplishments throughout history. It's to honour the people who paved the way for us moving forward, to thank them for their contributions, learn how we can stand

on their shoulders and do even more to promote civil rights and social justice in our communities.

Celebrate the amazing trailblazers, the pioneers who've been in our community and done the work, whether that's huge national or international figures like, you know, Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela; or whether it's small, local advocates.

* (10:10)

Whether it's people in our communities. Whether it's the people who just fight to, you know, help a new-comer family bring justice to them. Whether it's to help to fight for international students. Whether it's to fight to keep a communities culture 'alive' by creating, you know, Caribbean community organizations, or different community organizations within our own networks here, and keep those sort of things alive.

Whether it's to promote a Black-owned business, or whether it's to promote Black art and culture in our community. Whether it's to promote people—Black people in sports, or politics, or education or health care.

All of these people have had huge impacts in our lives and in our communities. And Black History Month is to take a time to recognize all those—all of that work that's being done, large and small, and to say that we see you, we hear you, we recognize you, we support you, we amplify you and we encourage all others to push forward just like you.

And so, I'll just end my remarks today, because I know that there might be other people to speak, I know we want to move this forward, and I'm excited that we can get support for this from all members of the Chamber.

By saying that, I want to specially thank the Black History Month committee here in Manitoba for doing the work, particularly Nadia and Rhonda Thompson, Mavis McLaren and all those others who are a part of that committee, who've been doing the work for so many years. This bill, in part, is really to amplify the work that you've already been doing for so many years.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the

following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member can ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the member for St. Vital for bringing this bill forward.

I know we are pressed a little bit on time, but I want to ask the member if he can elaborate quickly on some of the major contributions that Black communities in Manitoba have contributed to the fabric, and our mosaic, here in Manitoba?

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Thank the member for the question.

Yes, Black people have been huge contributors to our province, you know. Right, there's records of people—Black people being involved as translators during the fur trade in the settlement of Manitoba. We know that Black people were involved in working on the rail lines, right here in Manitoba, throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s and started the first Black union of porters, sleeping car porters here.

Right up through now in our education system. We had our first school trustee elected in Inez Stevenson in the 1970s, to pave the way for things like breakfast programs here.

These were all done by Black people in Manitoba. Their efforts should be recognized, and I think this bill goes to highlight—take an opportunity to highlight those contributions and celebrate—

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I thank the member for bringing in this bill to recognize Black History Month and it's an important step forward.

I wonder—I think it's important that the individuals who are here in the gallery are formally recognized.

Perhaps you can introduce those who are in the gallery so that their names are all on the record?

Mr. Moses: I thank the member for River Heights for the—that question.

I was—during my initial speech, I didn't realize that she had entered the gallery, and so I'd like to welcome Nadia Thompson, co-chair of Black History Month committee Manitoba.

I think we should all give her a round of applause.

Mr. Khan: I want to ask the member for St. Vital how he feels this bill will further young Manitobans of colour.

With this bill, what would it do for them, what would this mean for them?

Mr. Moses: Yes, part of this—part of Black History Month is to educate people. And we take that opportunity to educate young people about some of the trailblazers in Black history. And I noticed that, growing up, too, one of the things that I lacked was seeing representative people that looked like me doing jobs that I wanted to do; having roles that I wanted to fill.

And so, if we can highlight some of those people, saying these people have done these things in the Black community, you can do it too, that will hopefully expire—inspire the young people of the next generation to do and reach even higher heights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions?

The honourable member for River Heights—*[interjection]* Oh, actually, pardon me. As I mentioned previously, independent members are only allowed one question. That member has asked a question already.

Are there any other questions?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No?

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I did have notes here for about 20 pages of reading on the importance of Bill 200 and what that means, but being how we do want to pass this bill and we are pressed for time, I will try to keep my comments relatively short, here.

I want to thank the member for St. Vital for bringing this bill forward. It is a very important bill. As a person of colour and visible minority myself, this bill is of utmost importance, not only for what it means for the Black community, but what it means for all of Manitoba and the direction we are headed as a province.

You know, I grew up—immigrant family from Pakistan. Family came here with really nothing other than two suitcases and a couple of kids. And I was

born here in 1980, one of the first Muslim Pakistani families in Ottawa. And, you know, that was challenging, that was tough.

And we talked about role models, and the member opposite spoke about role models and what that meant to grow up with that. And there really weren't a lot in Ottawa at that time. And as I went through life, I realized, as a lot of members in this House do, and I'm sure the member from St. Vital feels the same way, that we had to become the role models.

And I was blessed with the opportunity to play football. One of the first, if not the first Muslim Pakistani person to play in the CFL. And that gave kids a real eye-open experience that he doesn't have to just to have to be a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer, which is traditionally, you know, people of my culture and background and heritage get into. But you can be a football player. And that was really eye-opening for a lot of kids of Pakistani, East Indian descent.

And then, when I went on to become a business owner and now in politics, you know, kids still come up to me, every day, honestly, where I'm at, and they say, oh, you're the football player or you're the politician or you're the guy who's, you know, on the newspaper. And it's just really refreshing and I think this bill really signifies what we can be as a province for people of visible minority and colour.

Diversity is strength, and I've said that numerous times, and I—again, I think that's reflected here in this House and in this province. My time in the CFL, I was honoured to be recognized as an ambassador in the CFL as a Diversity is Strength campaign and to see the Winnipeg Blue Bombers wearing No. 60 with Khan on the back. And throughout the CFL that was reflected from people of all backgrounds, you know, Black Canadians, Asian, East Indian. It was really eye-opening to see that this is where the CFL is going, but this is where Canada is going.

If you look at it, my colleague here sitting here to my right, the member from Brandon East, just this week listed off a handful of diverse ethnic restaurants that I think five, ten years ago would not have existed in Brandon. And now, it's just overflowing with great restaurants. And the restaurants aren't just food; they're celebrating culture; they're celebrating people; they're celebrating everything that we bring to the mosaic and the fabric of what Canada is.

You know, when I—being elected as an MLA and the member for Fort Whyte, I got invited to a lot of events. And it's one of the greatest joys of this job is

getting out and meeting so many different community members.

And I was not aware that the Nigerian community here is so large, and they're so passionate. And they are involved in everything. And they are welcoming and they treat me and everyone that goes to their events like they are one of their own. And if anyone has been out during an event, you know, African—I recommend go out. The community is so welcoming.

From attending the Manitoba cup of nations, where Nigeria won the cup three years in a row, and speaking and bringing greetings there was just an amazing experience. My son and I went to a bunch of the games and we had a great time.

* (10:20)

To the 62nd Nigerian independence that we got to celebrate and seeing the community come together. To the opening of the Asa cultural museum last week where the member here from Union Station and I, and the member from—where's Jon from? *[interjection]* Waverley. And the member from Waverley—we all attended the opening of the museum. And it was just a fantastic experience to celebrate that.

And again, I think this bill takes another step forward with that. And this province has done this over and over again, celebrating diversity with acts like the Sikh heritage act, The Ukrainian Heritage Month Act, The Jewish Heritage Month Act, the Filipino month act. And I look forward to this House bringing more and more acts forward that celebrate the diversity.

I will close my remarks here quickly because I know we are pressed for time. But I want to recognize some of the amazing Manitobans—Black Manitobans that have really contributed to making Manitoba great: Ismaili Alfa, host of CBC Up to Speed. Black history really is happening right now in Winnipeg.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention the three MLAs here—which, up until 2019, no Black person had ever been elected to the Manitoba legislator—Legislature in 150 years of this province. And now we have three: the member from Union Station, the member from St. Vital and the member from Southdale, who is the first Black Cabinet minister in Manitoba—yes. I mean, if this is any indication of where this province is going, I am all for bills like this.

Markus Chambers, Winnipeg's first Black city councillor, who was elected as city councillor for St. Norbert; also, the first Black deputy minister.

And I can go on and on and on about how many Manitobans—again, I said I had 24 pages of notes to read today. But in the—you know, in the effort that we want to get this bill through, I will close the remarks by saying I want to thank the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses) for bringing this forward and I look forward to supporting him when it comes to a vote.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise in support of this bill. I think it is important that we have Black History Month formally recognized in legislation and even more widely known than it currently is.

My father grew up in—was born in Zambia and spent his early years there, and when I grew up, we had many books which featured Black people. I remember, as an example, when I went through a phase wanting to be a cowboy, I learned about John Ware, who was an amazing cowboy from Alberta who was Black. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: So, there are people who have been mentors and idols and tremendous contributors in the Black community, and it's very important that we recognize that.

The—there's a phrase if you want something done properly, you want the real McCoy. And that comes from a Black fellow who was a bit of an inventor named Elijah McCoy, and when people wanted the right oils or greases and things for bearings, that he was one who invented that and he had the solution where—which was much better than anybody else. So, people said they wanted the real McCoy, and it was after a fellow who was Black and who was—made a tremendous contribution in his own way.

I've attended many Black History Month events, heard and listened to good discussions and panel discussions and events often featuring young people and their future, to banquets and so many more.

I think that the contributions of people in the Black community here are enormous. I want to thank Rhonda Thompson, who's leading the Black History Month event at the moment. I remember many years when Wade Kojo Williams was prominently involved, and I stay in touch from time to time with his son Maurice, who did a lot of training of and

helping people who were doing basketball at University of Winnipeg learn and do well from an educational perspective.

It is wonderful that we have Black representation in the Legislature, as has been mentioned, at City Hall with Markus Chambers, that we have heroes here who are widely respected and known, like people like Willard Reaves. It is time to celebrate the contributions of people in the Black community, and we need to be doing that with energy and with passion.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): In the 1980s, I had the honour of being appointed chair of the Manitoba Intercultural Council, and I had the honour of working with many in the Black community. I want to highlight two of them very quickly; I think they are incredibly deserving.

Because we talked about earlier about role models. There were a lot of amazing role models in the Black community, and I'd like to first of all talk about O.T. Anderson, who was a teacher and I believe he was a principal in Winnipeg No. 1. He was an absolute titan in the Black community who, with incredible integrity, spoke about the contributions of Black people to Manitoba. And he was a very dear friend, and may he rest in peace.

I also would like to very briefly talk about Wade Kojo Williams, who I worked with at Manitoba Intercultural Council and in the communities; and he was just an amazing guy. He would call me at least once a day and tell me everything I was doing wrong as the chair of Manitoba Intercultural Council. And he died way too early, and I was devastated that I wasn't told until weeks after he had passed away that he'd had his funeral.

There are two individuals, and there are many, many more who should actually be mentioned as well as individuals who cut a swath across this province and made it to where we are today, where we have three individuals of Black heritage in this Chamber. They are the titans on whose shoulders we stand.

To O.T. Anderson and Wade Kojo Williams, thank you for all the work you did for this province, for making it the great province it is today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I first want to thank our colleague, our esteemed colleague, the MLA for St. Vital, for bringing this forward. I'm very proud to have seconded his bill, and I know all

of the work and consultation that has gone into making sure that this bill is strong.

I also want to extend my thanks to Nadia, who's here today and, you know, to obviously Rhonda, and all of the many folks in the community who, for a very long time, have been doing a tremendous amount of work to ensure that all Black communities, Black communities here in Manitoba, are incredibly diverse and have been for many, many, many generations. Same with across the country.

And so, I know that this bill, with the unanimous support of the House, is going to be passed; and what I'm really thinking about today is what that means for Black futures here in Manitoba.

You know, we hear from and see a lot of youth who are working very, very hard to make sure that the future of Black activism in Manitoba leaves not a single Black person or Manitoba out of that conversation. And so, want to give a shout-out to the youth, who are doing a lot of heavy lifting in our communities; we see you, we thank you and Black futures across our province looks very, very bright.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 200, The Black History Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 209—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As—*[interjection]*—order. As previously announced, we will now consider second reading of Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary).

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

* (10:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just a question for the mover, I—there's no seconder written in here and I didn't—*[interjection]*—Point Douglas. Thank you.

It has been moved by the honourable member for St. James, seconded by the honourable member for Point Douglas, that Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Sala: Very happy to have an opportunity to put some words on the record here again in relation to Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary).

This bill, I think, is more important than ever. We saw that especially after what we heard yesterday from this government with regards to the report that they released. But this bill is so important right now because we know just how absolutely obsessed this government seems to be with privatization. We've heard, as of late, sort of a growing willingness on behalf of this government to embrace, to openly embrace, privatization.

Where we've always known, of course, that this government had an obsession with taking public assets, things that belong to all of us as Manitobans, and to give those assets away to the private sector, so those profits can be made by private business people instead of ensuring that the benefits of those public assets go to where they belong, which is with Manitobans.

And this bill would help to protect us against—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —more PC privatization, because this bill would essentially require—requires a referendum in the event that this government attempts to sell off a subsidiary of Hydro. We've seen this government already sell off Hydro subsidiaries. We've seen them do a lot of damage to Hydro, and ultimately give away assets that belong to Manitobans over to the private sector.

And again, just highlighting why this is so important: Manitobans know that we need Manitoba Hydro to stay public—all aspects of Hydro—because Manitobans know that a public Hydro ensures that we can continue to have affordable Hydro. It ensures that we can build a greener future, a cleaner energy future for Manitobans and for future generations.

But to do that, to ensure we can keep providing reliable energy, affordable energy, that we can use this incredible hydroelectric system that we've built to deliver on a cleaner energy future for tomorrow, for future generations, we need to make sure that Manitoba Hydro and all aspects of Hydro stay public.

Unfortunately, yesterday we heard, again, this government say the quiet part out loud. We heard the minister talking openly about the prospect of certain aspects of Hydro being embraced, just out here at a media scrum.

And we know, of course, that yesterday, the response to the Wall report was issued. And that response to the Wall report, issued by this government, stated—again, in no uncertain terms—that they intend on redrafting Manitoba Hydro's mandate. And it says very clearly, right in the report—and again, this is not our words as the Manitoba NDP, this is the words of this government—that they'll be directed to look at selling off those subsidiaries.

So, you know, we've heard—and I mean, I don't know how many times we've heard members of this government talk about the supposed NDP privatization bogeyman. And yet, here we have a report issued by this government which states, in no uncertain terms, that they plan on selling off Manitoba Hydro's subsidiaries.

That is wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the wrong direction to be taking this province.

The members across are chirping, but again, I invite them to go have a look at the document that was produced by their government. It's very unusual to hear them suggesting that what I'm stating is incorrect when it's—again, they themselves brought forward—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —a document that states that they plan on privatizing at Hydro and breaking it up, and doing what they seemingly can't avoid doing, which is looking at shrinking, cutting and selling off public goods and giving them away so that someone else can make a profit. That's shameful. Again, it's been put forward in black and white.

One thing that I want to touch on yesterday, that I know that the Minister responsible for Hydro talked a bit about yesterday in the scrum in relation to this report that came forward, where they outlined their plans to privatize, is he gave XplorNet and the giveaway of Manitoba Hydro fibre optic assets to

XplorNet; he gave that as an example of an area that would make sense to see more privatization. We know that is—that's a perfect example of where this government is going wrong and where they're taking Manitoba Hydro, and what we can expect to see more of.

In that case, what they did is they took this invaluable fibre optic infrastructure that's owned by Manitoba Hydro, that's owned by all of us as Manitobans, that serves to make sure that our hydroelectric stations can communicate with each other, and they gave away a huge portion of that infrastructure to a private company so they could make money out of it. That company isn't even based in Manitoba, it's based out-of-province and it's owned by an international hedge fund.

So, what's happened is, instead of having a Manitoba Hydro-owned subsidiary in the form of Manitoba Hydro Telecom continue to use those assets to help expand access to broadband for Manitobans in the North in rural communities, what this government did was they took those publicly owned assets and they took that Manitoba Hydro subsidiary that was using those assets to expand access to broadband and make profits for Manitoba Hydro. And they gave them away to a privately owned company that isn't even owned here in Manitoba.

That's why this bill is so important right now, because that's what we're up against. The minister responsible continues to chirp across the way, but he's not taking—he's not being held accountable, here. We need to ensure that this government is held accountable for what they've been doing with Hydro.

And again, going back to this bill, this is why this is so important right now. This government is obsessed with privatization. We're hearing them talk about it more openly than ever before. We know they're—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —eager to privatize throughout our health-care system. And this bill is one thing that we can do. It's one action we can take to ensure that we protect Manitobans from this government's desire to sell off what belongs to them.

You know, we've seen over the last many years this government privatize other aspects of Hydro, as well. We saw them privatize Teshmont Consultants. We owned a stake in that as Manitobans. This government, what did they do? That was a profit-making,

Hydro-owned subsidiary. What did they do? They sold it off and they gave it away.

And what happened with that? We lost somewhere between 40 to 50 high-paying jobs, here in Manitoba. We've seen them pursue other huge programs of privatization at Hydro. They got rid of around 900 employees, direct employees of Hydro, and they've replaced a huge majority of those with contract workers. Again, another form of privatization that we've seen from this government.

And they also took Manitoba Hydro International, which has made approximately \$80 million, \$80 million in profits for Manitobans—go look it up—that's made \$80 million in profits for Manitobans which helped to keep our hydro rates low.

And what did this government do? They wound it down, they shut it down and again, they took jobs, good, high-paying jobs with that Hydro subsidiary, and they sent them over—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —to Montreal, they sent them to Vancouver, they sent them to Toronto. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: And, again, it's a race to the bottom with this PC government. This bill that—which we've brought forward many times could not be more timely; that we're bringing this back again, especially given what we heard yesterday. We know what this government wants to do.

They're absolutely incapable of staying away from taking publicly owned assets and giving them away. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sala: We know that, as of late, I think, you know, some folks may have had hopes that when the new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) came into the seat, that maybe we would have seen a shift away from the Brian Pallister-era agenda on Hydro.

And maybe even there's some members across the way who'd hoped that that's the direction that we would take, that they would sort of move away from that Pallister-era approach to getting rid of publicly owned assets, interfering in Hydro, doing everything that they can to jack up rates on Manitobans as quickly as possible.

* (10:40)

But what we've seen is—and what's clear to Manitobans, and if we—if any of these members go speak with Manitobans, if they did they would know that Manitobans see what's going on. They know that this Stefanson government is executing on Brian Pallister's agenda for Manitoba Hydro. They're doing it every single day, and in many ways, they're far more aggressive than what Premier Pallister had sought to do.

And now, with the release of this new report, they've told the world. They're no longer hiding it. They're no longer pretending. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: We know what they're seeking to do. We need to make sure that this bill passes to protect Manitoba Hydro-owned assets so that they can continue to benefit Manitobans for years to come.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I note that the important change in this bill is to include subsidiaries. I wonder if the member could provide a full list of Manitoba subsidiaries so that we can understand what all would be 'encomplish.' The international Hydro was clearly an example.

Was Xplornet or the operations of a Internet access, was that a—set up as a subsidiary?

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I really appreciate the question for the member from River Heights.

And what I'd say is that I think the most important subsidiaries we need to be looking at are the Manitoba Hydro International family of businesses. Manitoba Hydro International is really a collection of subsidiaries within Hydro. For example, Manitoba Hydro Telecom is located underneath Manitoba Hydro International, and, of course, Centra Gas.

That would be, I think, one of the most important subsidiaries that we need to be watching very closely, because we know this government would love to divest of that asset.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Thank you to my colleague from St. James for bringing forward this very important members—whatever it's called. Not a bill.

But I wanted to ask him just to elaborate a little bit more on that last question and really explain a little bit more clearly what we're losing by the government carving up and selling things off from Manitoba Hydro International.

Mr. Sala: I really appreciate the question.

And I think, you know, I spoke to this a bit in my debate, but what we have to realize is that these subsidiaries that have been serving us so well over the last many years underneath Hydro are job creators. We've—they've, you know, they've produced well over 150 jobs that are high-paying jobs. These are family-supporting jobs. These are the kind of jobs that, you know, can last for—can help families to succeed.

And we need to protect those jobs and we need to protect those subsidiaries because they create so much financial benefit, economic benefit for our province.

Ms. Naylor: Just to correct myself: It is a bill, Bill 209. I'm glad that you brought this forward.

And I know, many times in the Legislature, the member for St. James (Mr. Sala) has talked about the commission of inquiries by Gordon Campbell and now by Brad Wall, and in—that this is so unusual because commissions are usually led by non-political people.

But I'd love to give the member an opportunity to speak once again to why this is so concerning.

Mr. Sala: As the member for Wolseley has pointed out, this report, the Brad Wall report, was unique in that this government did something that is completely unusual—or is, in fact, as far as I understand, without precedent—in that instead of hiring an expert in the field or a judge or someone who's clearly impartial to do an analysis, they hired not one but two ex-Conservative premiers in a row to conduct an analysis of Hydro decision making.

Clearly, you know, there's not exactly a non-partisan approach that's been taken by this government. That's wrong, and it's not going to serve Manitobans well.

Ms. Naylor: I know that you've—the member for St. James has referenced the fact that the PC government told local media that they directly intervened at Manitoba Hydro with regards to a contract, yet there

has not been a directive posted on the government's website to that effect.

So, why do you think that the PC government believes it can flout the rules with impunity?

Mr. Sala: I think that's a really important question, and I think the answer to that question is that this government has sought to do things in secret. They've repeatedly sought to do things in secret, and we've identified multiple occasions where they've broken their own Crown corporation accountability act.

And the members across, you know, they're quite quiet, I think, when we talk about this question of them being in violation of their own legislation, but they have, on repeated occasions, failed to disclose when they gave direction to a Crown. That's wrong. They broke their own law.

The reason they do that is because they know that Manitobans would be very concerned if they learned about the kinds of interference that this government is trying to engage in with Hydro. That interference has caused a huge amount of issues at Manitoba—

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

Ms. Naylor: Manitoba Hydro is headed to a very profitable year this year.

So, in light of this, the member for St. James: Why do you think the Stefanson government is rushing ahead with plans for cuts and divesture?

Mr. Sala: I—the member for Wolseley raises, again, a really important point here, which is this year, we are headed towards a record year for profits. Over \$500 million. We're headed to a over-\$500-million year and again, yet we still see this government moving forward with their legislation and their plans to essentially jack up Hydro rates as quickly as possible. Even a record profit year. That's a huge concern.

So, of course, you know, they're constantly pursuing rate hikes even in the best of times, even in a banner year for Hydro; that's wrong. Manitobans deserve a break, they deserve to have their rates frozen as we've committed as the Manitoba NDP.

Ms. Naylor: It's fascinating to me that there's no other questions coming from other parties in the House, but clearly people, I mean, both don't know what to ask and have a lot to learn.

So, I'm hoping you could take this answer to just tell us anything else you think we need to know about this bill.

Mr. Sala: I think it's telling that there's no questions from the other side on this bill. I think it's telling. And I think the reason we're not hearing a lot from the members opposite is because, just yesterday, they released a report that stated in no uncertain terms that they plan on privatizing Hydro subsidiaries.

I'd be pretty quiet too if I was on that side of this House, and I could see why they're not really willing to get up and expose themselves to critiques around that. They're all hiding from the fact that they want to privatize and break up Hydro, and I can't blame them. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Oh, sorry, my mic wasn't on. I have to recognize you again.

The honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor).

Ms. Naylor: You know, I'm very aware that it's the member for St. James' (Mr. Sala) very last opportunity in 2022 to speak about Hydro in these Chambers.

So, I just want to give him the opportunity to tell us one more time why it's so important to protect Hydro and its subsidiaries from privatization.

Mr. Sala: What an important question. Manitoba Hydro and its subsidiaries are so important to the future of this province. Manitobans know that.

We know that it's the basis of us being able to continue to have some of the most affordable hydro rates in the world. We know that it's the basis upon which we're going to be able to build a cleaner energy future, a decarbonized future that will serve Manitobans and, frankly, the world around us. It's so important.

But we can't do that if we privatize and break up pieces of Hydro. We cannot do that. And that's why this bill and the implications of this bill are so important.

* (10:50)

Manitoba Hydro needs to stay public so it can continue to benefit Manitobans for generations to come.

Ms. Naylor: I know that the member for St. James is completely focused on the privatization of Hydro and our concerns about that right now, but, you know, in showing a pattern of privatization, could the member speak about some of the other things that we're seeing this government privatize?

Mr. Sala: Yes, I appreciate the question.

And I—again, I think one of the—you know, the base concerns here is that, again, we're seeing this growing embrace or willingness to say the quiet part out loud from this government. More and more, you know, they're—we're hearing them talk openly about what it is that they want to privatize, whether it's aspects of our health-care system or, you know, physiotherapy. Whatever it is, they're seemingly less and less afraid to do so.

Well, that is hugely concerning because we know that we need to ensure that health services, that Manitoba Hydro, all these things stay public because that's how we serve Manitobans best. It's not about giving away big profit-making opportunities to business. We need to make sure we preserve all aspects of Hydro and we stop this government's endless march towards more and more privatization.

That's how we're going to ensure we serve Manitobans best.

Ms. Naylor: One final question for the member for St. James: Why do think the Conservatives' only plan is to cut, contract out and divest our public assets?

Mr. Sala: I just want to quickly thank the member for Wolseley for carrying the day and helping the PCs over there, who seem to be incredibly quiet. Again, due, no doubt, to their embarrassment about the report that they put out yesterday.

Look, we need to ensure that we protect Manitoba Hydro. I know I'm repeating myself here, but this is so incredibly important that we do this. We've seen what this government wants to do. They want to take the chainsaw out. They want to break Hydro apart. We can't let that happen. It has to continue as whole. We have to make sure it continues to serve Manitobans for generations to come.

And I want to thank the members opposite for giving us this entire ten minutes to continue getting our message out to Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And at this time, I would like to draw the attention of all members to the gallery where we have seated, from St. Maurice School, 53 grade 9 students under the direction of Rebecca Stajkowski, who—I wish to tell all members that Rebecca Stajkowski is the fiancée of the Clerk Assistant Tim Abbott, so—and this school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv).

We welcome you all to the Legislature today.

Debate

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'll be on my best behaviour so as not to engage the Clerk's table with the guests that we have in the gallery.

I—what a false flag this entire debate this morning has been. And I don't know if the NDP don't have the opportunity to caucus ever, or if they just don't feel safe going in to caucus to each other. So, we had to see that little two-person play over there that was dramatized by the two members opposite during question and answer period.

But there were a lot of questions that weren't asked. I didn't hear the member who was asking the questions ask about what happened when it came to Bipole III. The member for Concordia probably could've explained what happened during Bipole III because he sat at the table. He sat at the table—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —when the NDP government decided to build a bipole line on the longest possible route around Manitoba; decided to loop it all the way around—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —the province to skirt up against Saskatchewan—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —and build it all the way back to Winnipeg, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, of course, when the member for Concordia was sitting at the table, he would've heard the then-premier say it wouldn't cost an additional dollar—not a single dollar—to build that line on the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —longest route possible. Of course, it was billions of dollars more as a result of that decision; billions of dollars more. And that is why Hydro's debt has tripled—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —has tripled in—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. In accordance with rule 25, and as previously announced, I'm interrupting this debate to put the question on the first official opposition selected bill for this session.

The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 209, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Referendum Before Privatization of Subsidiary).

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

Order. Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Acting Official Opposition House Leader): Can you canvass the House to see if there's will to call it 11 o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

That does mean, then, that we will recess at 11:56.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 1—Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Its Private Health Care Agenda and Invest in Manitoba's Public Health Care System

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will now move to private members' resolutions.

As previously announced, the resolution being considered this morning is resolution No. 1, Calling on the Provincial Government to Stop Its Private Health Care Agenda and Invest in Manitoba's Public Health Care System.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I move, seconded by the MLA for—the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare),

WHEREAS the Provincial Government's reckless health cuts started by Brian Pallister and continued under the Premier have created a crisis in Manitoba's health care system, which has adversely affected the quality of care received by patients, families and seniors; and

WHEREAS rather than taking responsibility for her government's health care cuts, the Premier has

blamed the state of Manitoba's health care system on there being not enough private health care in the province; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has already cut and privatized key health care services such as outpatient physiotherapy services, sleep apnea machines and life flight medical air ambulance transportation, as well as privatizing home care services for seniors, rather than adequately investing in the public health care system; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has increased spending on private agency nurses by over 200% since 2017-2018; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government spent over \$40 million on private agency nurses in 2021-2022 instead of investing in public sector nurses and other front line health care workers; and

WHEREAS despite clear opposition from front line health care workers and their representatives as well as families, the Provincial Government has continued with its private health care agenda, actively worsening the quality of health care in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS it is a fundamental Canadian value that whether or not a person receives health care should be based on need and not the size of their wallet and privatization goes against the fundamental Canadian values of keeping healthcare public and accessible for everyone; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to improve health care outcomes or advance health care equity and further privatization of health care services will only harm progress in these areas; and

WHEREAS increased private health care will further undermine the public health care system by shifting essential staff to the private sector, which will aggravate the staffing crisis in the health care system and will only worsen the long wait times patients experience in the Emergency Rooms right now.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the provincial government's plans for private health care and call upon the provincial government to instead invest in the public health-care system.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: I am grateful for the opportunity to put some words on the record and to bring this resolution forward.

We all know—regardless of where we sit in this House, we are all very well aware of the impacts of this government's privatization agenda on our health-care system here in Manitoba. And I say that because there is literally not a member in this Chamber—and I would argue probably, you know, if there's guests in the gallery, clerks, anybody who's ever in this Chamber would either be directly impacted or knows somebody who's been directly impacted by this government's privatization agenda.

Whether it's someone who is waiting for a diagnostic test or surgical procedure, whether it's someone who, more recently, you know, has a sick kid and is trying to access care at the Children's Hospital. Perhaps it's someone who, during the pandemic, needed a mask and couldn't afford one and because, you know, a minister decided that it was more important for private companies to make profits selling masks than provide the masks that this government had to distribute for free to citizens to make them accessible.

Manitobans across this province have been hurt by this government's cuts to health care and their obsession with privatizing as much of health care as possible.

I bring this resolution forward to ensure that we do not forget the impacts of this government's decision making, and that we recognize that this path didn't start just now, it didn't just start with the Throne Speech, but, in fact, this agenda started in 2016 with Brian Pallister.

* (11:00)

And when the PCs, you know, brought in—elected in a new leader for their caucus, they had an opportunity to abandon that harmful, austerity-rooted privatization agenda that has seen Manitoba have some of the worst health-care outcomes, not just during the pandemic, but leading up to it. And certainly now, when we look at stats, as one example, around STBBIs—sexually transmitted blood-borne infections. But they didn't.

The entire PC caucus since 2016 to today has been on-board with, co-signed, enthusiastically supported a privatization agenda which has directly harmed Manitobans in every corner of this province.

Before the pandemic, we saw a growing backlog—surgical and diagnostic backlog. Now, as much as the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) would like to try to convince Manitobans that the backlog is only the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the interesting

thing is that the Premier's own surgical and diagnostic backlog task force lead has come out very plainly to say that that backlog started growing before the pandemic.

And that backlog began growing as a direct result of this government closing emergency rooms, firing nurses, pushing nurses out of the public system into the private system; or some nurses that I know have quit their jobs in health care all together and are working as servers in restaurants, have gone into different jobs and careers all together and they'll never come back to the health-care system.

You know, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) wants to convince Manitoba that—Manitobans, rather, that her decision to privatize health care in our province is something novel that will solve the problems that she created while she was in caucus as, you know, minister of Health; when she sat on her hands and really didn't do a whole lot of anything because she was busy running a leadership campaign. And now, while she's Premier and she's carrying on with cutting health care, she's carrying on with making decisions that are forcing folks out of our public system into the private.

But all of this started before the pandemic. Mistreatment of health-care workers in this province by this government started before the pandemic. Folks—recognizing that folks were overworked due to mandated overtime because of short-staffing started before the pandemic.

During COVID, we saw this government's privatization agenda in new ways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. And just pause the clock, please.

I just want to ask—I'm just going to ask government members in particular, but perhaps not exclusively, if conversations could be taken to the loge or, depending on how long those conversations need to be, maybe the hallway, whatever it may be.

The volume is inching up, and we should respect the member speaking, just as other members will respect when any other member is speaking. So, general admonition to the House, but please if we can keep the volume—turn it down a little bit that would be great.

The honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), and please restart the clock when they start speaking.

MLA Asagwara: I will acknowledge that it's very easy for me, actually, to tune out the government side of the House while they talk very loudly, as they are having their own conversations, clearly making an effort to not hear what I have to say in terms of their government's decision making, in terms of the privatization of health care in Manitoba.

So, as much as they may not want to pay attention to what I'm saying, I am speaking on behalf of Manitobans who have been affected by their reckless cuts and their very, very callous decisions.

And perhaps they're trying to distract me with their raised voices and loud conversations, but I won't be swayed from focusing on the realities that Manitobans are facing as a result of this government's decision making.

During the pandemic, Manitoba was a jurisdiction that transported our sickest, most vulnerable patients out of the province to receive critical care. Unfortunately, we saw a devastating outcome for a mother, Krystal Mousseau, who was transported, you know, under conditions that were not ideal for someone as sick as she was, and she passed away.

That's a devastating outcome that should never have happened, because Krystal Mousseau should've been able to receive care in her own province.

When I say that Manitoba has had some of the worst outcomes across North America, across Canada during the pandemic, and that some of these outcomes are a direct result of privatization, I'm talking about catastrophic outcomes.

I'm talking about numbers of seniors who passed away in personal-care homes which, you know, this Conservative government continues to make decisions that don't reflect the commitment that we all said we made to improve long-term care for the very seniors and their families who were hurt during the pandemic.

I'm talking about the fact that we had no staffing capacity in our health-care system during COVID, and that we still to this day do not have staffing capacity across our health-care system.

And that is a direct result of this government firing and driving nurses and health-care workers in droves out of our public health-care system.

This government's decision making has consequences. Their cuts and their privatization cost Manitobans their health. A good example that is timely, because we're all talking about it now, because

the MLA for Radisson made an announcement on his Facebook page as if that's the most appropriate place to ever make an announcement about the health care that Manitobans can access.

And in his announcement that they were privatizing physiotherapy proper in Manitoba to three clinics, he admitted that there were Manitobans who, because they cut inpatient, they cut public physiotherapy and occupational therapy—the PCs made that choice—thousands of Manitobans have not been able to get the essential rehabilitation that they've needed after their surgeries.

This government made a \$1.5-million cut to physiotherapy that cost over 2,000 Manitobans their good health-care outcomes after their surgeries.

And so I would ask this government if they think that cut was worth it, if they think that privatizing physiotherapy was worth over 2,000 Manitobans being able to have good-quality health care and good health outcomes

I would argue that any decent person would recognize that was a mistake and change course. But unfortunately, this government doesn't seem to want to make decent health-care decisions, and that is shameful. And what does this mean for the future of health care in Manitoba?

I've talked about pre-pandemic, I've talked about during COVID, I've talked about what we're seeing right now. If this government carries on with their privatization agenda and their running-with-scissors approach to cutting health care, we are going to see even more devastating health outcomes for Manitobans.

If this government continues to prioritize making empty announcements over fulfilling promises, we are going to see growing health inequities in Manitobans.

If people think what's happening with international students is bad, having international students who are paying hundreds of thousands of dollars because they experienced a health-care crisis and their private insurer, as predicted, wouldn't cover the care that they needed; if people think that that's bad, which most people recognize it is, wait and see what happens to everyday Manitobans who are forced into a two-tier for-profit health-care system because this government cares more about profit than they do about people.

That is the wrong direction. It undermines a fundamental Canadian value about public health care being accessible for all. A strong public health-care

system is what's needed in Manitoba; it's what our residents and citizens and constituents deserve.

And on this side of the House we will fight for that value every single day on behalf of every single Manitoban in this province. You can count on it.

Thank you.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Over 12,000 Manitobans have received surgery at one of the private clinics here in Manitoba in the last two years, and our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has asked the Leader of the Opposition this question and it has gone unanswered.

And so, now, I'm going to take the opportunity to ask the member for Union Station this question, and I hope on behalf of their caucus, they can respond appropriately.

* (11:10)

Would the member opposite deny these Manitobans the surgery that they have received?

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I thank the member for Radisson for that question.

I'm concerned that a member who would admit on his social media page that his government and that he, as the member for Radisson, denied over 2,000 Manitobans access to the rehabilitation they needed after their surgeries, would get up in this House and try to speak on behalf of Manitobans who needed surgery for years, some folks, and had to get out of the country to go and get it.

On this side of the House, we'd make sure that Manitobans get surgery close to home, here in their own province.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): PC government decision making has resulted in multiple crises in our health-care system—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —our cherished health-care system, since 2016. We have seen a concerted effort to underfund and create a crisis where really a crisis didn't exist before when it came to human resources, when it came to access to public health care.

I would like to ask the member from Union Station: How would an NDP government approach health care differently than this PC government?

MLA Asagwara: I thank my colleague for that really important question.

I would say that, you know, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) heckled me and referred to me as disgusting. And I would say that what's disgusting is his government's attack on health-care workers since 2016.

And what we would do differently, and we have done differently on this side of the House, is working with health-care workers, listening to front-line workers, their concerns, their ideas, their solutions, their needs and prioritizing there will be in the workplace.

We wouldn't be focused on driving health-care workers out of the public system to go to the private for-profit system. We would treat them with respect and ensure that they can have a good work-life balance because that's really important. And that's what we're hearing directly from the workers that this government continues to ignore.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Just a simple straight question to the member opposite.

I'm wondering if the member could define what they mean when they reference public health care in this Chamber? Because on this side of the House, we are committed to publicly funded, single-payer health care, which is what the system in Manitoba is supportive of.

MLA Asagwara: So, when we're talking about a public health-care system, we're talking about a system that sees—a good example would be a strong continuum of care. So that, no matter where you access care in our health-care system, you can trust that you're going to be receiving care from folks who are part of a strong continuum. And so, that means making sure that we're prioritizing folks having good, consistent employment in the public health-care system.

Part of the problem that we're seeing is a lot of private agency nurses working in hospitals and, you

know, showing up very sporadically for shifts, which disrupts a strong continuum of care. So, investing in the public health-care system, making sure that the continuum of care in public care is strong.

It's a fundamental principle of a public health-care system.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): There is, as the MLA has pointed out—that there has been some privatization of varied aspects of health care in Manitoba.

And I wonder if the MLA for Union Station would elaborate on what other areas there is concern about being privatized in the future?

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question. It is a very important question.

Certainly, we've been talking very recently about private, for-profit agency nurses and the astronomical amounts of money being spent there. We are in concerned—rather, we're concerned, rather, about the growing reliance, over-reliance on private for-profit agencies.

There's also concerns around home care. And you know, we're hearing from folks who receive home care that they're being pushed in the direction of accessing private health care in that regard when these folks simply can't afford it.

And so, we're really concerned that folks who are some of the most vulnerable in our health-care system are going to be—see the impacts of this government's decision making and see even greater health inequities, including in home care.

Mr. Altomare: I do know that, as MLAs, when we're in our constituents, constituents regularly reach out, reach out for support and reach out to ask questions about the services that government provides.

I wonder if the member from Union Station can elaborate a little bit on what we've been hearing from Manitoba families, seniors, about the effects of this government's cuts on the quality of care that they received.

MLA Asagwara: I thank my colleague for that question.

It's an important question, because he's asking about what the impacts are for Manitoba families. And I hear, on quite literally a daily basis, from Manitobans who are waiting for their diagnostic test or for their essential surgery. I hear now from families who are worried about, you know, whether or not their

kids are going to get timely care, should they need to take them to the Children's Hospital.

You know, I hear from folks all the time about home care. You know, people who—physicians who require home care in order to be able to perform their duties in their practices, who have gone weeks without home care because of the short-staffing crisis that's happening there.

And so these are very real Manitobans—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Yes, does the member opposite decry the private health-care clinics that carry the brunt of the walk-in clinic service, that operated under the NDP previously and operate in every province and all the health-care providers that work at these clinics?

MLA Asagwara: I actually couldn't hear the member's question. Could he repeat what he just asked?

Mr. Wowchuk: Does the member opposite decry the private health-care clinics that carry the brunt of the walk-in clinic service, that operate under the NDP previously and operate in every province and all the health-care providers that work at these clinics?

MLA Asagwara: We actually have a really great relationship with those providers. Those providers have been essential, actually, when we look at solutions to addressing the incredible strain on our health-care system. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: And so, as much as—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —members opposite, member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) would like to heckle me down, it is incredibly important that we ensure that our staffing resources across our hospital facilities, across our clinics, are strong, so that we can see an alleviated burden on urgent cares, on ERs, on our Children's Hospital.

Working with all health-care providers to make sure our public system is strong benefits absolutely everybody.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): What would the member opposite say to all the medical doctors that operate as private corporations and provide fee-for-service health care paid for by the Province?

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question.

I think it's strange that—I'm getting a sense that members opposite don't realize that we have conversations with those providers. I'm friends with many of those providers, actually.

And the consensus is very, very clear. We need a strong public health-care system in Manitoba. Every aspect of our health-care system benefits when our public health-care system is strong, when our staffing capacity isn't undermined, when we don't see disruptions in a strong continuum of care because of for-private—for-profit, rather, private agencies providing the bulk of care in these systems.

People are on the same page. People understand public health care must be strong in Manitoba—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Altomare: Instead of investing in private health care and focusing on that particular part of the system, what should the PC government be doing instead?

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question.

The vast majority of Manitobans will always depend and rely on a strong public health-care system. The vast majority of us in this Chamber and our families will rely on a strong public health-care system.

This government needs to start cleaning up the mess that they made, fixing the things that they've broken in our public health-care system, if they—if there's any chance at all—any chance at all—that our public health-care system is going to bounce back from the disastrous decision making that these folks have made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for questions has expired.

Debate

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

* (11:20)

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I want to thank the member for allowing us to debate this issue.

I think it gives us an opportunity to provide some clarity to Manitobans, despite the continued efforts of the NDP to misinform and to create false equivalencies in this debate.

In any case, I just—I first of all want to start off with what—something that I think we all agree on. I think that across the aisle, and both sides of the aisle, we all agree that Manitoba is served and served well by a publicly funded health-care system.

This is the model that has been in place in Manitoba and across the country for decades. It's the model that will continue to be in place, I hope, for time immemorial coming in the future, where people who need health care can access the health care that they need, that they don't pay out of pocket—as the member opposite seems to suggest as somehow automatically linked with the private provision of health care—but rather, that they're able to receive the care that they need.

Whether that's through public providers, like our Shared Health or WRHA and the hospitals within it, or whether that's through private providers like our medical clinics or walk-in clinics, Western Surgery and other surgery—surgical providers in our province and a variety of health-care providers, both private and public.

Because at the end of the day, what's important—and this is what I hope we can agree on—what is important is that Manitobans are receiving the health care that they need and that they're not required to pay out of pocket for that care. So I hope I have agreement with the members opposite.

But I certainly was very, very disappointed in the answer to what I think has been a very simple and direct question that's been asked by our Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) to the Leader of the Opposition.

Now, I had an opportunity also to ask the NDP Health critic this question, and in both cases, neither of them were able to articulate anything that would pass muster as a actual response to the question. Instead, it was a deflect, a dodge, I don't know. Places were gone to that had really nothing to do with the question.

And the question, I'll just remind the House once again, was: We have over 12,000 people in the last two years who've received surgery at private clinics in Manitoba. That surgery is publicly funded. This is—we're taking government dollars and we're making sure that Manitobans are getting the health care that they need.

Whether that's in those public systems or in these—where these 12,000 patients received their care. And in addition to that, I think there's another

13,000 lined up to happen over the coming months, even in this fiscal year, if I understand correctly.

This is an astonishing number of Manitobans that are able to receive care and the care that they need. And that they're able to receive it in a way, in a publicly funded system, where they're not required to pay for it. This is a good thing. This is a positive thing. This is a thing that the members opposite need to be supportive of. And they have had ample opportunity, numerous questions asked and a stubborn refusal to answer.

Now, I mean, my own members are reminding me that when the NDP were in government, private provision of health care was alive and well. Private provision of health care was a significant part of our health-care provision when the NDP were in government. That much is clear to me.

And I think it's fair to say also that, you know, even agency nurses were part of the health-care landscape back then. Now, I certainly can appreciate that we want to use them judiciously, that you don't want to rely too heavily on agency nurses. But to deny them a place in the health-care system entirely is not simply naïve, but also quite hypocritical. And so, I'd encourage the members opposite to really think that through.

But what I do want to point out, and my members on this side, too, should realize that the ideology does matter, and it does have consequences and results. And so, it's clear that the NDP ideology is to say to private health-care providers: you're not wanted. We'd rather you left the province. We'd rather you didn't practice here.

That's their message. They say join the public system, that's the only system we're going to provide care and resources for. This is their ideology that they are saying today. And I think, in large part, it was the ideology that they had back in 2001.

That's why we saw Manitoba go from being the province with the fourth highest numbers of doctors per capita in the country in 2001, dropping steadily over the coming years. Over those years of NDP rule that ratio dropped steadily. Why did that happen? It was because of the dogma, the ideology of the NDP telling private providers that they should go elsewhere, that they should leave our province.

And so, down it went. Down it went. Down it went, until you finally ended up in eighth—eighth place in the province, when our government came to power.

Now we are still, I believe, in eighth place, and that's something, I think, we do want to change.

That's why we've—that's one of the many reasons that we've introduced the comprehensive health human resources action plan: \$200 million to add 2,000 health-care professionals into our system. And this is doctors. This is doctors, this is nurses being added into our health-care system. This is health-care aides, this is paramedics, this is allied health-care professionals, this is nurse extenders, this is student nurses. This is all hands on deck to get people working in our system.

Now, as I'm—as the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), I've had an opportunity to work on this project and I'm very excited about what the future holds and what opportunities are going to come forward.

We've already seen, and the minister's already spoken to—the Minister of Health has already spoken to in this House the progress that we've made on the many actions that we identified when we made that announcement. That already, many of these things, the weekend premium, the—or weekend super premium, I should say, rather, and the weekend worker and many other—the health-spending account for nurses. Many other incentives have already been actioned on.

And this is a good thing and this is already being well received by nurses. I know, not simply because one has dinner with me every night when she's not working a night shift—that would be my daughter—but also her friends and also the many other front-line workers that I keep in touch with.

And I do want to point out for the members opposite that where these ideas came from—where did this health human resources plan come from? This is not the imaginations of the Progressive Conservative caucus. It isn't. It's listening to the front line. This is how these ideas were generated.

So now, I think the member for Transcona asked the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), you know, what's your plan? I think yesterday they said what their plan was in the House, which was very, very brief and not particularly compelling in any way. And here we have exactly the same time, another question asked, and the answer was: listen to the front line, use their ideas. This is already happening. This is already part of our response.

And so what the NDP are saying they would do to help health care in this province is absolutely

nothing. That's what they are committed to doing. What we are doing on this side of the House is we are listening to the front line. We are taking every opportunity we have to provide health care to Manitobans.

We're not closing doors. The NDP are closing doors. They want to close the door on private provision of surgical services, on medical clinics. They want to shut those down and make sure that it's only the publicly—or, public system that is able to provide publicly funded health care.

But we are not closing those doors. We are keeping those doors open. We are making sure Manitobans can move through those doors.

That's why we set up the diagnostic and surgical Wait Time Reduction Task Force as well. They've been making tremendous progress. They have been making agreements and arrangements to have thousands and thousands of surgeries done, thousands and thousands of scans done. Thousands and thousands of patients that were waiting through the pandemic are now no longer waiting or are shortly going to be served because of the actions of this government.

That is what we have done and that is what the NDP have denied.

Today is an opportunity to talk about what a good, healthy, strong, publicly funded health-care system should look like. It looks like what the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party is putting on paper. It looks like what we're putting into action. It looks like the people that we're putting to work—

* (11:30)

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member—oh. Before I acknowledge the member, I would like to just draw attention to the gallery where we have another group of students, 53 grade 9 students, also from St. Maurice School. I think it says a different group. There's a lot of you here today.

We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature, and the school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw).

Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It's always a privilege. And I do want to welcome the grade 9 students who are now leaving. You're missing my debate. You're missing an important part of the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —of the process, here, because when we do—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —enter into debate and healthy debate, we are debating ideas. We are debating items that are important to the people of Manitoba.

Nothing can be more important, Deputy Speaker, to the people of Manitoba: fully funded public health-care system, a fully funded public education system. The parallels between what is this underfunded government has done since 2016 to those two very important pillars of Manitoba society has been absolutely devastating in many, many ways.

And let me continue. I will say that when we talk about creating working additions, Deputy Speaker, nurses are leaving the public system because we rely on their good will every single day. You can only go to the well so often. You can only go to the well and break the people's back working in these situations so often before they finally put up their hands and say, I've had enough. They want to have some control over their lives.

So, what does a working person do when they're continually mandated overtime because they're understaffed, because they don't have the human resources? Why? Because the working conditions are so abysmal that they have no other choice. But then, so what do they do? They need to put food on a table, so what do they do? They go to a private thing. Why? So they can control their life.

Imagine that. A young family, young mothers, young fathers, young people that are trying to make their way in life, working in a system that has been underfunded since 2016. And it's clearly showing, and that underfunding began before the pandemic, Deputy Speaker. And have created working conditions to the point now where people are leaving in droves.

I know the member from Radisson referenced a \$200-million plan. Well, that's a plan that comes after the crisis that's been created. You can't bring two pails of water to a fire that you began and say you're the heroes.

And all of a sudden, this is going to be changed. We have to now get into the business of recreating a culture within our health-care system that values the workers that are there.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And that is the first thing you have to do. You have to create working conditions that are manageable for people. Where they can then come to work and feel like they're being valued instead of being taken advantage of.

We see that regularly, Assistant Deputy Speaker, not only in health care, but also in public education, where we rely on the very good will of those public servants.

One of the biggest things that I've noticed is that when you—since being elected in 2019, is the responsibility of stewardship. We are stewards, 57 members in this House, to ensure that we provide adequate support for the two most important things that Manitobans rely on from their provincial government; that being health-care and education.

And what we've seen, Deputy Speaker—Assistant Deputy Speaker, since 2016, is a concerted effort to underfund, create a crisis. So, then what happens? We have to go to a private sector to fill that particular gap that we've created ourselves.

Instead of having a robustly funded public health-care system, Assistant Deputy Speaker, where people want to work in, right now we have nursing grads that are reticent to even apply for a public space to work in a hospital, to work in clinics. They want to have more control.

So what are they doing, Assistant Deputy Speaker? They're now leaving the province. To do what? To go to other provinces that are offering bonuses to come to work in their public system. Imagine the irony of that. Leaving, being educated right here, and then taking their skills outside of the province.

In any of these plans that we've seen from this government, have we seen a way to maintain and keep our own locally educated nurses here in the province? Or health-care providers? No, we haven't.

I will also say, Assistant Deputy Speaker, that in northeast Winnipeg, we have seen the impacts of these cuts, acutely. I will say that in the second largest growing area of the city—that being northeast Winnipeg—we saw an emergency room removed without creating capacity in the three that remained.

Now, all of a sudden, we have a plan to, oh, we're expanding St. Boniface. This is seven years after the cut was made in 2016. You didn't have capacity, but you cut it anyway, so that people are still waiting—I will tell you, when you walk into that ER at St. B right now, and that—you know, it's a good thing we have the very good folks that are working there. But when you're sitting on that blue chair for 16 hours to see a physician or to get care, when you could've had care up in our Concordia Hospital, that is a big problem.

IV clinics that I have talked about and—on the record before. Oh, that's not a problem, they could—that just means that they pick up their supplies in the St. Vital ACCESS. Well, it's a problem because not only do you have to travel that distance if you're the provider, but then what ends up happening is we have inconsistent arrival times. Removed out of ACCESS Transcona.

I will say, too, Assistant Deputy Speaker, we have seen privatization and how it impacts our—not only the people in northeast Winnipeg, but in other areas when they're trying to access diagnostic services through Dynacare.

There used to be three labs in my constituency where a person could do bloodwork. How many are there in Transcona right now? Zero. What used to be a walk for a person that has mobility issues, close, one block away, Regent and Brewster; can't do that anymore. Right now shunted all the way down to Regent and Lagimodiere, in a very busy parking lot, and we have to then—especially people with mobility issues, seniors—have to rely on other people, their family members, to get them to a place where they used to be able to go on their own.

Imagine having control and taking care of yourself. The dignity of doing that has now been removed. These are the consequences when we talk about this, Assistant Deputy Speaker, when we don't do that. If we're going to be working in partnership with private agencies, we have to absolutely ensure that they're providing services that they—were there before.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Because I will tell you, in the eastern part of my 'constit' right now, it's a growing population of people 55 and over that have to drive to get to services that they used to be able to walk to. And we hear about that on a regular basis. Those are the things and those are the impacts of this agenda that we've seen since

2016, Assistant Deputy—Assistant—or sorry, Deputy Speaker. These have been felt acutely not only in northeast Winnipeg but in other areas of the city and of the province.

And when we have that focus, that inability, then, to invest in our public system, what ends up happening is that people begin to lose confidence in that system. And they don't get the care that they need.

* (11:40)

Because I will tell you, when you're—when you look on the website and you're either accessing an urgent-care centre or an ER, and you're waiting in an *[inaudible]* of 12-16 hours on average, that's a deterrent to care. And many people are making decisions that they should not be making.

So, the first thing that I would see that needs to be done right away is we have to shore up the public system so that there are services available to people when they need them, instead of having that doubt in our mind.

So I want to thank the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for bringing forward this PMR. It's an important one. That's why we're here.

It's unfortunate that the students had to leave, because it's good to get into debate. It's good to be into debate, and I wanted them to see how—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: They were scared.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: They were never scared, member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), they were—they just missed an opportunity, is all I'm saying.

But, I really appreciate the time, Deputy Speaker, and I would like—

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

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I always love the ability to rise in the House and debate something that I am so passionate about and what I spent a career working in, which is health care. But I admit, you know, it's a great opportunity for us as MLAs to bring forward bills and have the opportunity to bring forward resolutions.

So, I really—I take pride in, when anybody presents one in this House, to take the time to sit down and read it and to make sure I understand exactly what

the purpose is, what the intent is, what the goal is and then be prepared to respond either in favour of or explain the reasons why I would not support such a resolution.

I know when I looked at this one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I immediately—it immediately spoke to the desperation of the opposition that they're finding themselves in these days.

The daily barrage of misinformation from the NDP coming out of here is growing as we get closer and closer to the next general election. So, it is obvious by the ongoing fear mongering that the NDP performs on a daily basis, that they are pulling out all the stops in an attempt to persuade Manitobans to support them.

I don't want to spend, or waste, too much time that we have this morning talking about fake news that this opposition is bringing forward today, because Manitobans are getting tired of it as well. I know that the people that I speak to, they understand the reality, they know the truth, they know that we as a government are not moving away from a system of insured health care which is provided by provincial government and their tax dollars.

Manitobans know that we will continue to follow the legislation put forth in the Canada Health Act by the federal government. I am—I'm not sure if the opposition has read the Canada Health Act, or if they would know—or they would know that anyone who resides in a province in our country or in a territory, and are lawfully entitled to remain in Canada, are entitled to health-care services.

Our government will continue to build a stronger Manitoba and a more stable health-care system through strategic investments for long-term and sustainable results and are focused on innovative ways to increase capacity in our system with partnerships in the private and the not-for-profit sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the opposition took exception with the recent Throne Speech that was delivered by our Lieutenant Governor. Some will say, and I've asked people, why would the opposition stand up and say something, or why would they walk out to the media afterwards and say something?

And some say, well, they're opposition, that's their job. That's what they get paid for. In fact, it's simply because they have no understanding of how to run a province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you don't have to take my word for it, you really don't. We only have to look at an article in the Winnipeg Free Press by columnist Tom Brodbeck. I am sure the opposition has read it, because I've seen some of their posts on social media about it, so they are well aware of it. But, I want to refresh their memories and their minds, so I will table the document that was put in the Free Press.

And you will see, Mr. Speaker, that immediately following this year's Throne Speech, the Leader of the Opposition went public with his misleading and misguided comments that the use of partnerships with private service providers was going to be the end of health care.

In fact, the title alone of Mr. Brodbeck's column summed it right up. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Isleifson: It reads: NDP misleading Manitobans on private health care.

I also—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to quote from the article, and I quote: There may be more than one reason why the Manitoba government is looking to expand the use of private clinics for surgeries, such as hip and knee replacements and cataracts. And it has nothing to do with ideology. The government, in its Throne Speech Tuesday, said it plans to further explore the use of private clinics to shorten hospital wait times for Manitobans. The issue probably got more attention that it deserved. There is only one sentence, maybe two in the entire 18-page speech that referenced private health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only did the issue receive more attention than it deserved at the time, we continue to waste valuable time debating a resolution that is based on fiction, made-up data and fear mongering 'induendos.' Even after the Throne Speech, the Leader of the Opposition stated to the media that the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) said that the only path forward is to privatize health care.

I will then quote an article that reads, and I quote: That's not exactly what she said. The Premier said the Province plans to build more capacity in the system in part by using more provided—pardon me—more private providers. The Manitoba government already uses a wide private companies to deliver health care, including in areas such as home care, surgical services, blood and other testing and walk-in clinics. The NDP, when it was in government, used the same blend of private and public health care. It's not new.

He went on to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's also not the only way that the government is adding capacity to the system. Government is expanding or upgrading the number of public hospitals including the addition of a fifth operating room at Concordia Hospital for orthopedic surgery.

Those are quotes right from the article. Those are facts that just don't seem to be getting out there to Manitobans on behalf of the opposition because it does not fit their narrative for the next election, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to turn some factual data that we can be sure—to make sure it's recorded in Hansard. So, recently the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force has reported that a total of 4,554 cases have been completed to date over the last eight months through the RFSA agreements with health-care partners.

It is important to point out that these health-care partners are Manitoba-based and are Manitoba-run health-care partners. For 'examper'—pardon me, for example, Western Medical and Maples are both run and staffed by Manitoba doctors and nurses with procedures done right here in Manitoba.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we expect over 13,000 surgeries and procedures that will be done at Manitoba health-care partners over the next six months, making a huge impact on that backlog. Thirteen agreements are currently operational and are contracted to provide over 13,000 cases combined by the end of March, 2023.

We've already heard that over 12,000 Manitobans have received successful surgeries from health-care partners in Manitoba over the last two years through the task force. According to the NDP and this resolution, they want to follow the dark days of the Selinger government and deny these Manitobans the surgeries they need.

It is definitely clear that none of these people would have their procedures done under the NDP. These 12,000-plus Manitobans who have received a successful surgery prove how detrimental this Selinger style of NDP opposition ideology in health care can be, as they would still be waiting for their procedures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was fortunate to obtain a certificate in health-care administration a number of years ago when I worked in the industry. It was an opportunity for me to better educate myself and get a stronger understanding of the Canadian health-care

system, including health law. Knowing makes it easier to understand.

And I do want to take this opportunity to thank Gary McIntosh, Earl Backman and Ken Martinook of the Brandon regional health authority of the day for the support in allowing me to gain that education.

Every other province has built up their capacity in their systems in a balanced way over the last 25 years, which allows them to purchase capacity at home when something unexpected happens. This is the main reason why Alberta and Ontario have handled their backlogs so successfully at home. Contrary to NDP belief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, governments always foot the bill. No one was paying out of pocket.

* (11:50)

The truth of the matter is, if the Selinger NDP government did their job when they were in power for 17 years, we would be in a very different place in our health-care system, today. It is very and extremely evident that we cannot and must not go back to the dark days of the NDP.

Let's just take a look at a recent Doctors Manitoba report that shows that Manitoba dropped from fourth highest doctors per capita to the third worst under the dark days of the NDP.

I have much more. I've only got about 40 seconds left, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I do want to, and I think it's important to talk about what happened under the Doer and Salinger NDP governments from 2006 to 2011 when we had an exodus of physicians leaving the province of Manitoba. It was a prime time. I worked in the industry. A lot of them were my friends and a lot of them left the province simply because they could not work under an NDP government.

We're fortunate. Just the other day I was talking to one of my friends. Him and his wife, who are both physicians, are now back in Brandon. And so, we'd really like the opportunity to thank them for coming back.

We continue to build our system. We have the capacity to do so.

Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): The MLA for Radisson said, and I quote, Manitoba is served well by a publicly funded health-care system. Except, it would seem, when the Conservative government is in power.

And I should add that health care wasn't looked after perfectly under the NDP, either. As has already been mentioned, when it came to the number of doctors, we were in eighth place after many years of NDP government. And after six-and-a-half years, because this government has not been very effective, we are still in eighth place.

Both NDP and Conservative governments have led up to where we are today. The provincial government's efforts to privatize aspects of health care in Manitoba represent an admission that the current government is and has been poor at managing public health care in Manitoba.

Why is this important? It is important because when the government of the Progressive Conservatives has been in power for six and a half years and we see the areas that they're privatizing, or including more private sector input into, we are finding that they are areas where there are higher costs being expended, where there is lower quality and where there are inequities in the delivery and availability of health care.

I will give examples. The privatization of Lifeflight occurred with a lot of extra costs. The quality of care up in the North is much less than it used to be under a fully publicly operated Lifeflight program, which had been going and doing well for years. And there are now inequities because, without the jets that were there before, there is a much bigger inequity from one community to another in the North.

I can expand that to the use of agency nurses. Nobody will disagree that agency nurses don't cost more, and it's significant. There is a problem with the

quality of care, as we have seen at personal-care homes and in home care; when people are not looked after consistently by nursing staff and they don't know the patients or the individual we're dealing with, the care inevitably is not as good.

And we have heard this in many instances when agency nurses have replaced regular nurses in personal-care homes, as an example. And what happens is that you don't have consistency of care, you end up with more problems.

There are—same thing in physiotherapy, which was privatized and now the government is trying to make amends and realized its mistake, but providing three providers only is an inequity. Because it means people in rural Manitoba are not well served; people in different parts of Manitoba aren't—in Winnipeg are not well served and people who are used to going to their own physiotherapist now have to go to somebody else who's not familiar with them.

So, we end up with higher costs, poorer quality and inequities. And that's not where this health-care system—a public health-care system, which we desperately need.

There are—there could be so much better operation of the public health-care system—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will have six minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 1, 2022

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