

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 6, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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 afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 15—The Court of King's Bench
Amendment Act**

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 15, The Court of King's Bench Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill will address a gap that currently exists in legislation for judicial compensation, ensuring that there is an equitable approach for provincial appointed master of the Court of King's Bench and judges of the Provincial Court. These changes are as determined in the most recent Judicial Compensation Committee of 2022, which was provided to this House in the fall of 2022.

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

**Bill 16—The Domestic Violence
and Stalking Amendment Act**

Madam Speaker: Further introduction of bills. The honourable first—the Honourable Minister of Justice.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 16, The Domestic Violence and Stalking Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill will address the negative impacts to families experiencing intimate partner and family violence. We're also engaged in the family law system by updating exceptions to contact, communication and attendance prohibitions in a protection order. The amendments will improve access by persons experiencing family violence to supervise parenting services, as well as for family dispute resolution, family violence intervention and restorative justice services.

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

Further introduction of bills.

**Bill 17—The Regulated Health Professions
Amendment Act (2)**

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Mental Health and Community Wellness (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), that Bill 17, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act (2), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Gordon: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 17, the regulated health professions amendment act. This bill amends the regulated health professions amendment act to extend to the 17 colleges that are still governed under their own profession-specific legislation and not yet under the act.

This will allow the powers provided in the act to address concerns relating to the administration and operation of health professional regulatory colleges that are currently under the act.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 223—The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act (Adult Education)

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 223, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act (Adult Education); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les allocations d'aide du Manitoba (éducation des adultes), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Marcelino: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce Bill 223, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act (Adult Education). Bill 223 will help adult Manitobans upgrade their education levels, giving them vital skills and qualifications that will help them seek out better-paying employment.

Thank you.

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

Bill 224—The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Thompson, that Bill 224, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Lindsey: I rise today to introduce Bill 224, The Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act. This is not the first time I've introduced this act. The problem still persists throughout particularly northern Manitoba, but all over Manitoba, which is roads are not being maintained in a safe condition.

Therefore, I hope that this bill will pass unanimously. It's a province—we're in a province that experiences extreme weather conditions and roads must be maintained. This bill will help protect Manitobans from dangerous road conditions, and I hope to see this bill passed unanimously.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

* (13:40)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Niverville Clippers Tournament Champions

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): I rise in this Chamber today to congratulate the Niverville Clippers U11 AA hockey team for winning gold at the Hockey Manitoba provincial tournament held in Portage la Prairie this past weekend.

The Clippers tied the Morden Hawks and outscored the Brandon Wheat Kings in round-robin play, then moved on to beat the Portage Terriers and Morden Hawks in the semi-finals. This advanced them to the final game for the gold medal against the Winkler Flyers. The Clippers played hard and were able to outscore the Flyers 7-2 to capture the gold medal.

The Clippers have had a great season, and the provincial gold has only been one of their many accomplishments. They played for—the at the regular league games without a loss. They took the gold medal in a number of tournaments such as the Rob West tournament in Winnipeg, the Niverville Heritage Classic and the Winkler classic.

They also captured the gold medal at the Tournament of Champions held in Brandon. There they had five straight wins, which were against the Brandon Wheat Kings, the River East Royals Grey, the Regina Buffaloes, the Morden Hawks and finally the Estevan Bruins.

It has been a fun season watching the Clippers play and how they have developed into a team that works together. Members of this team are Dorian Arbutnot, Nicholas Tetrault, Marcus Saurette, Riley Shaw, Kolby Mason, Nash Smook, Bryelle Muntain, Benjamin King, Landen Gonzaga, Jonathon Brunel and Madyx Cyr. The coaching staff of Travis Mason, Pat Saurette, Colin Tetrault, Ryan Bruneland, manager Chris Smook worked with these players to advance their skills and help develop them into the team they are today.

I would also like to thank Kevin King for the great job of recording the games and having them on YouTube live for anyone to watch if they were not able to make it to the game.

I wish the players of the Niverville Clippers U11 AA hockey team all the best in the coming years.

Thank you.

Disability Support Sector

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the challenges being encountered by those in the disability support service sector.

Manitobans with intellectual disabilities rely on the support of this sector to assist them in having fulfilling life experiences. However, many of these organizations have reached out to my office to express their concerns regarding the challenges they encounter.

In a recent letter written by the coalition of disability support workers, they write that the sector is in crisis due to years of inadequate funding, that Manitobans who live with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not receiving the support they need to live life to the fullest.

Despite Herculean efforts by the non-profits who provide these services, supports for vulnerable Manitobans continue to wane, resulting in inconsistent service delivery and unsafe working conditions.

The greatest challenge this sector encounters is providing a wage that is commensurate with experience and training.

Madam Speaker, supporting people with complex and diverse needs is not minimum wage work. The skill set required is multidimensional and varied.

The sector is asking for the Manitoba government to fund direct support professionals at 60 per cent above minimum wage, which is in line with the wages of EAs, who perform many similar duties.

This sector has been neglected for too long, and they need concrete and direct action now. They want government to prioritize disability support wages and formulate a plan to implement standardized training.

Madam Speaker, the coalition looks forward to receiving the necessary and long-overdue support from government in the upcoming budget as this sector has been neglected for too long and all at the expense of the well-being of vulnerable Manitobans.

Finally, I want to take note that today is Black Balloon Day. I want to thank Kim Delorme Enns and Brett Enns for maintaining the memorial to Transcona citizens in front of the window of our Transcona constituency office that memorializes those lost to overdose.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Dauphin Skating Clubs

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Skating clubs are winding down around my constituency of Dauphin this month, with ice shows, family skates and many phones full of pictures and videos documenting another successful season. From small-town outdoor ice rinks where volunteers shovel snow and flood ice for the communities to larger centres with artificial ice and heated areas for spectators, skating is a staple of Manitoba life.

I'd like to recognize the many hours and efforts made by coaches and volunteers, family members who give into the lives of their children and young people; those who teach, train, spend hours driving, cheering from the sidelines and coaxing them to get up once again when they fall.

I'd also like to recognize the achievements of a local skater from Dauphin who has put in years of persistent hard work and has seen great results this season in particular. Dauphin's Breken Brezden finished on top of the podium in the junior ladies' competition in Stonewall. She qualified for the Skate Canada Challenge and the national skating championships in Oshawa. With a goal to finish in the top 18, Breken achieved that goal and more, placing in the top 10 with a seventh place finish when she recorded personal bests in both of her skates.

Her dedication and commitment are commendable and, along with Skate Canada, I congratulate Breken Brezden and the Brezden team on this year's successes and look forward to seeing more from her in the future.

Thank you.

William Young

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I am honoured to rise today to share a few words about a truly inspiring individual from the Keewatinook constituency: William Young, from Miskooseepi, in English known as Bloodvein First Nation.

With strong community support, William was born in Miskooseepi through midwifery. His mother was assisted by his aunts and his grandmother. Being born at home in the community and on the land with the assistance of family and elders instilled a connection to the land and culture that helps William to this day.

William's love for his community, his language of Anishinaabemowin and his commitment to the land is

evident in everything he does. William fondly remembers the teachings that his grandfather shared with him about the land and our need to care and protect it. William promised his grandmother–grandfather to do all he could to protect the land.

So when an opportunity presented itself to do something to protect the traditional territory of Miskooseepi and the surrounding area, William did not hesitate.

In 2002, Miskooseepi along with other First Nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg signed an accord to protect their culture and ancestral lands. The accord was a first step toward becoming a World Heritage Site after many years of tireless work and dedication from William and other community members.

In 2012, the Government of Canada submitted the World Heritage Site nomination bid on behalf of the community partnership of Pimachiowin Aki to UNESCO.

The partnership of Pimachiowin Aki became a catalyst for change and cause in UNESCO to rethink its evaluations of Indigenous nominations.

After 16 years of hard work and dedication, in 2018, Pimachiowin Aki became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Madam Speaker, in Indigenous communities, elders and teachers do not go out seeking recognition for work they do and things they share. In saying that, I know William is very humble for the work he has done to protect Mother Earth.

And while I know there are many, many community members to thank for the protection of Anishinaabe traditional territory and the work behind the Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Site, I wanted to take these few moments to say miigwech to William Young for being there for our generation and the generations yet to come.

Miigwech.

Lymphedema Awareness Day

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It is my pleasure to rise today to deliver a private member's statement to talk about Lymphedema Awareness Day.

March 6th marks Lymphedema Awareness Day, a day designed to bring awareness and educate the world about lymphatic diseases.

Back in 2014, I introduced a private member's bill officially declaring March 6th as Lymphedema Awareness Day right here in Manitoba.

Since then, I have made a private member's statement on the topic of lymphedema in hopes of continuing to raise public awareness.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Ms. Kim Avanthay, founder of the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba as well as the resting—the rest of the founding members. Kim was very active in helping to get that bill passed. Her inspiration to form the patient-focused organization comes from her son, Austin, and their family's own experience in dealing with lymphedema.

Lymphedema is a long-term chronic condition that causes swelling in the body's tissues. It can affect any part of the body, but usually develops in the arms or legs. This disease affects more than 300 million people globally and approximately 1 million Canadians are currently living and suffering from lymphedema.

* (13:50)

Symptoms of lymphedema include swelling of the limbs, torso, head or neck, tightness or heaviness in the limb and changes in texture of skin.

I would like to take this time to acknowledge members of the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba: president, Amanda Sobey; vice-president, Nancy Rowsell; and all other LAM board members: Kim Radford, Jessica Diamond, Ron Wersch, Leona Waldner and Sumaiya Sobani.

This past Friday, I was able to attend LAM's Connecting the Community symposium that included keynote speakers, demonstrations and discussions of lymphedema. Tonight, their third annual light up the Legislature building, walking from The Forks to the Manitoba Legislature, is going to be taking place. And I encourage us all to keep raising awareness on lymphedema right here in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you. We have seated in the public gallery, from Living Hope School, eight grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Cliff Friesen.

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Death of Patient at HSC ER Independent Investigation Request

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):

A Manitoban died waiting for care in the emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre last Monday evening. I again offer our condolences to this person's family and friends.

Dr. Shawn Young, the chief operating officer at the Health Sciences Centre, said the patient arrived by ambulance after 11:30 p.m. and was assessed and triaged. And I quote: Approximately one hour later, staff were aware that the patient's condition worsened and medical interventions occurred. The patient was declared dead shortly after. End quote.

Young confirmed that this patient died in a hallway. The facts of this case are very concerning; that's why we've called for an independent investigation.

Does the Premier agree, and will she call one today?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Our hearts go out to the family of this individual for their loss. And obviously, moving forward, we want to ensure that we get to the bottom of what happened with respect to this so we can improve this so this never happens again.

Madam Speaker, that's why Shared Health is looking into this issue along with the WRHA to see what transpired during this. We need to allow that process to take place. It would be inappropriate to comment further on the floor of the Manitoba Legislature when it comes to this incident.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, many people are commenting publicly on this, including the chief operating officer of the Health Sciences Centre. There is nothing which prevents the Premier from commenting on the situation with respect to wait times or staffing at this emergency room.

And let's remember that this ER and this hospital serve people from across Manitoba. Dr. Young, for example, noted that the median wait time last Monday evening was more than two hours. He said, and I quote: This is historically high, but in a range that has unfortunately been the case over the last year. End quote.

Again, we've heard many other details: 70 patients who were triaged but left without being seen within

a 24-hour period there. Manitobans deserve to know the truth and deserve to hear about these details. That's why we've called for an independent investigation, so Manitobans can have confidence in our health-care system.

Will the Premier agree, and will she call an independent investigation today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, again, our hearts go out to the family of this individual who lost their life. I know that this is being looked into; we want to ensure that there is a proper investigative process that takes place with respect to this incident that transpired at the Health Sciences Centre.

We want to make sure we get to the bottom of that, Madam Speaker. That process needs to take place so that we have all of the information before us. And that is—that investigation continues to take place, which is the appropriate way for this to transpire.

When that happens, Madam Speaker, we will ensure that that information is public.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, certainly by now the Premier will have been briefed on this issue, likely several times. There's nothing preventing her from talking to Manitobans today about the conditions of wait times, about the staffing situation at the HSC and from making comments would provide—which would provide greater confidence to Manitobans that when they show up at an emergency room they'll get the health care that they are seeking.

Again, we need to know the timelines. What are the details of this investigation? When will questions around accountability be delivered to the people of Manitoba?

We saw the Health Minister run away from such questions last week. We've seen denials and deflections from the Premier up until now. We're calling for an independent investigation so that confidence will be given to the people of Manitoba.

Does the Premier agree, will she call an independent investigation, and, perhaps most importantly, when will Manitobans know the facts?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of this individual. And I think it's important for them and for all Manitobans that we move through the regular process and that we don't rush the process, that we make sure we get to the

bottom line of what transpired with respect to this incident in the Health Sciences Centre so we can learn from it so it never happens again.

The Leader of the Opposition says he wants more details. We want more details, too, and that's why we need to allow this process to take place. It would be inappropriate, Madam Speaker; it would be inappropriate, as the Leader of the Opposition is going down a very fine line of playing politics with this very serious incident. He's going down and he's playing that fine line.

We will not go there. We want to make sure we get all of the details so we can ensure that it never happens again.

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

Residents of Parkland Region Access to Vision Care

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): You know, Madam Speaker, there's nothing preventing the Premier from telling Manitobans when they will find out the answers to these questions. She should do so today.

Manitobans who live in the Parkland region deserve access to health care, as do folks who live across rural Manitoba.

I want to tell you about Chris Dunn. He suffers from complications from diabetes. He needs ongoing medical treatment to prevent the loss of his eyesight. However, he can't access that close to home and he has been forced to travel to Winnipeg for care. Now, because he's caring for his ailing mother and because of the costs of travel, Mr. Dunn has decided to forgo this treatment and he could now lose his sight.

Will the Premier tell Manitobans why residents of the Parkland are being denied essential vision treatment?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, we have come up with a plan called preventative services plan, \$812 million, and more than that—that's just for the capital side of things—but more than that to ensure that Manitobans can have more access to more services closer to home in Manitoba, and that is taking place.

Now, we do know that there are some challenges with respect to health human resources. The Leader of the Opposition should know that. This is nothing that

is unique to Manitoba. This is something that we're facing across the country.

Again, our government is taking steps to address those matters, and we will continue to ensure that Manitobans get that needed health care closer to home, which is what they need, want and deserve, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, this is about a Manitoban who can't get the health care that he needs right now.

Let me provide some greater details here, Madam Speaker. Just last year, the PC government made an announcement on this topic, an announcement that apparently they had no intention of keeping. They said that they were going to bring retinal specialists to Dauphin, but no specialist has come since that time. This is another example of a broken health-care promise made by this PC government that is impacting Manitobans—in this case, Manitobans in rural centres around Dauphin.

It means that Chris Dunn and others like him are not able to access the care that they need. This is because of the broken promises of this Premier and this Cabinet. It means that people in the Parkland are not getting the health-care services that they need close to home.

* (14:00)

Will the Premier tell this House why her government broke this health-care promise to the people of the Parkland?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, we want to ensure that there's health-care services closer to home for Mr. Dunn and for all Manitobans who live in rural and remote communities. I think what Manitobans don't want to go back to is the dark days of the previous NDP government.

And I'll remind Manitobans about what happened back in those days, Madam Speaker, where they were closing ER—they were closing emergency room hospitals right throughout rural and northern Manitoba. In fact, in Emerson, in—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —Pembina, MacGregor, St. Claude, Gladstone, Vita, Erickson, Rossburn—the list goes on, Madam Speaker—that was under the dark days of the previous NDP government.

We will never take Manitobans back to that.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, Madam Speaker, I'll table the press release that the Premier put out. Again, this is a press release that, apparently, she had no intention of keeping.

Again, this announced retinal specialists coming to Dauphin, but nothing happened. There was no action. And what happens when Manitobans come to the Legislature seeking answers and asking for accountability? Well, they just get the same old PC talking points. But PC talking points are not going to deliver health care in rural Manitoba. Reciting and repeating these same old, tired lines is not going to help Mr. Dunn.

So, again, I would ask the Premier to tell this House: Why did her government break this promise to the people of Manitoba, and when will Mr. Dunn be able to get the care that he needs?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, I will say to the Leader of the Opposition, he knows full well that he doesn't have to bring a case before the Chamber of the Manitoba Legislature. If he has a case and he really wants to get to the bottom of this, he can pick up the phone, he can call the Minister of Health, he can contact her office to make sure we get to the bottom of that.

There is no need to bring something like this to the Chamber floor of the Manitoba Legislature, unless the Leader of the Opposition just wants to play politics with health care in Manitoba. That is not the way we want to deliver health-care services to Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

We will—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson:—continually recognize that there's a health human resource challenge, not just here in Manitoba, but right across the country, and that's why are—we are taking several initiatives to recruit, retain and to train more nurses, doctors and health-care professionals in the province of Manitoba.

Public Sector Nurses Staffing and Working Conditions

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, Manitobans know that the health-care system they rely on is in a crisis. Overcrowded ERs with

patients waiting in hallways, nurse vacancies, shortages, mandated overtime and burnout is a daily reality for our health-care heroes. Manitobans know that they cannot rely on this government, this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), to fix health care.

There's a critical shortage of nurses in the public service, just as there is in our health-care sector.

Can the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission detail for this House the concrete actions he's taking to support this staff?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I must say that our front-line health-care workers are, indeed, our health-care heroes, and I value and appreciate everything they've done over the past few years to continue to provide Manitobans with the care that they need during these difficult times.

Madam Speaker, the staffing shortage that is upon us here in Manitoba is not unique to our province. It's being seen across the country and globally. That is why our government took action to invest \$200 million to add 2,000 health professionals.

We will continue to answer the call, Madam Speaker, instead of bringing this type of information that the members opposite bring to the Chamber floor.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, recently announced initiatives are not being provided to nurses working in correctional facilities and places like the Manitoba Developmental Centre and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. We know that the work of public service nurses is no less vital.

These shortages pose a very real risk to the health and well-being of vulnerable populations in the care of the public service.

Will the minister commit today to meet with these public sector nurses to hear first-hand about the typical working conditions that they face and to ensure that they're no longer treated differently than other nurses?

And can the correct minister stand up and answer the question this time?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the number of nurses who wrote and called my office to thank me for going right to the front line to meet with them at Health Sciences Centre, the St. Boniface Hospital, the Grace Hospital, in community, something the members opposite never, never did.

That's what led to \$123 million in investments for nine nurse incentives.

We will continue to listen, Madam Speaker, and do what needs to be done for nurses here in this province.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, I think both ministers are confused. I am talking specifically about nurses working in the public sector.

The minister referenced incentives that those very nurses are not eligible for based on this government's decision making, and that's why Manitobans don't trust this government to stop the devastating cuts and mismanagement of our health-care system. They don't even know how to answer a very straightforward question.

Our leader and our team understands the No. 1 issue for Manitobans is their health care. A Manitoba NDP government will support patients by supporting health care each and every year.

Will the minister confirm today whether this PC government will treat these nurses fairly and commit to providing the same incentives as nurses in the health-care system?

Thank you.

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister responsible for the Manitoba public service): I'm going to begin by echoing the great words of our Minister of Health. The work of these nurses are certainly very much appreciated by myself and by all of our government, all the members of our government. We very much appreciate that.

We know where negotiations need to happen. Perhaps members opposite have forgotten which union is which. I'm not sure what their issue is. But, in any case, these kinds of discussions happen at the bargaining table and that's where they need to happen in this case as well.

Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel Project Government Priority in Budget 2023

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Promises made, promises broken by the PC government.

In 2016, Brian Pallister promised that the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin channel project would be built by 2020. Seven years later, and not a shovel of dirt has been moved.

It's clear this project is not a priority for the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson). She didn't even mention it in her last Throne Speech.

Will the Premier do the right thing and make the channel project a priority in the government's upcoming budget?

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, safety is our top priority, especially when we had the flood of 2022. And when it comes to our channels, we are working diligently with our First Nation communities to—for consultation, making sure that they are aware of what's happening, making sure that it doesn't impact their communities, how they're going to impact their communities, and this is what we're talking about.

The thing is we're doing a licensing—right now we're looking at licensing right now for the channels and we're trying to get approval from the federal government. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Keewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Bushie: Announcements made, announcements not followed through.

It's clear the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin channels project is not a priority for the PC government. They didn't even mention it in their last Throne Speech. However, if you talk to anyone from the channels communities they'll make it very clear that the channel's a priority that needed action on years ago, never mind today.

While the PC government does nothing, these communities continue to worry about potential flooding.

Will the Premier finally follow through on her government's promises and start construction on the channels project today? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to let you know that when it came to this year, an FPT, a federal-provincial-territory meeting that I had with Bill Blair, I was actually co-chairing with him and also we had Minister Patty Hajdu there at the same meeting. I had a meeting with Minister Patty Hajdu, making sure that this is a top priority when it comes to the channels, getting this flood mitigation done, and we're waiting for the approval and we're ready to go once it gets approved.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Bushie: Hope for it to not flood is not a plan.

Madam Speaker, the PCs' only response is to deflect and put blame on the federal government. Yet the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin channels project delay is thanks to the PCs themselves. If they'd properly consulted with—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie:—surrounding communities and Indigenous communities, they could have started construction years ago. Instead, surrounding communities are eagerly awaiting—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bushie:—construction to start that would protect them from potentially devastating flooding.

* (14:10)

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) do the right thing, admit her government is to blame and commit to making the channels project a priority today?

Mr. Piwniuk: I just want to also let you know that the Premier and the Prime Minister have even talked about this channel, what—how big of a priority it is for Manitoba, Madam Speaker. And we'll continue pushing this project forward, to making sure that this happens and saves a lot of First Nations communities and a lot of communities within the Interlake.

And even—I had—the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) and myself also had a meeting with LeBlanc—Minister Leblanc, and we also wanted to make sure how important this channel was to be approved. And I also had a meeting with the Minister of Environment to making sure that he approves this project so that we can get this project completed, Madam Speaker.

Priorities for Manitobans in Budget 2023 Government Management Record

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): More than anything, tomorrow's budget is about trust, and it's clear the PCs are not the party Manitobans trust to solve the issues our province is facing.

This budget won't make up for the chaos in hospitals and emergency rooms that the PCs created and it won't fix the staffing crisis the PCs helped

create by firing hundreds of nurses and health-care workers. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: Manitobans can't trust this PC government to deliver, given their terrible track record.

Can the Premier tell us why Manitobans can trust her to fix health care, given her hand in creating the crisis in health care in the first place?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): We, on this side of the House, recognize the challenges we're facing in human resources, not just in health care, but across the province. And it's the health human resources right across the country that every jurisdiction is facing.

Madam Speaker, that's why we've committed \$200 million to retain and attract new health-care workers to Manitoba over the next couple of years. This is a significant investment to make sure we have the human resources here in Manitoba to provide the services that Manitobans have come to expect.

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

Mr. Sala: The biggest challenge Manitobans face is this tired PC government.

As Families minister, the Premier helped to sell off 1,700 Manitoba Housing units. As Health minister, the Premier supported Brian Pallister as—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala:—the health-care crisis deepened. And as Premier, she hiked Manitobans' hydro bills and allowed massive rent hikes to go through.

And now, she wants Manitobans to trust that she's the one that will right these wrongs, despite her helping to create them. Manitobans can't trust this Premier and her PC government to deliver on the priorities they care about.

Can the Premier explain to Manitobans why she can be trusted to deliver on Manitobans' priorities, given her failed track record?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, I think Manitobans could trust this government, because they certainly couldn't trust the last government when it came to health care.

What did this government do—that government do under the NDP? Closed 20 emergency rooms in rural

Manitoba: Teulon, Whitemouth, Winnipegosis, McCreary, Baldur, Rivers, Birtle, Wawanesa, Rosburn, Erickson, Vita—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Gladstone, and the list goes on.

No one can trust the NDP when it comes to health care.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. [*interjection*] I'm standing.

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

Mr. Sala: It's clear the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) can't be trusted to deliver on the priorities that Manitobans care about, such as fixing health care and reducing the cost of living.

The Premier claims to understand the cost of living crisis, yet she forgot to disclose \$31 million in property sales. And she's made life more expensive for Manitobans by hiking their hydro rates and allowing huge rent increases to go through.

Can the Premier explain how she expects Manitobans to trust her, given her failed track record?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we recognize the affordability challenges faced by Manitobans.

That's why our government is in the process of sending out cheques to Manitobans for the carbon tax relief fund. We're processing 45,000 cheques per day. We're going to be sending out 700,000 cheques to Manitobans. We're at \$81,000 as of last Friday out of the—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —\$200 million that's going back to support Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we recognize the challenges that Manitobans are facing. That's why we are responding and sending out these cheques to help Manitoba families today.

Senior Health and Home-Care Services Government Management Record

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, unlike this PC government, our team understands the No. 1 issue for Manitobans is fixing health care.

Let's look at the crisis in seniors care. Our seniors and elders are not receiving the dignified care they

deserve and this government has failed to act. Families advocating for their loved ones shouldn't need to fight a system that threatens to send their elderly parents to Main Street Project.

How does this minister justify his government's health cuts in the face of aging population with increasing health-care needs?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I would indicate to the Legislature that this government has taken—has been very proactive in ensuring our seniors are well taken care of into the future by announcing the seniors strategy.

Maybe they haven't heard, that—maybe they have trouble hearing; but, then again, the hearing aid initiative that we're taking probably will help you to be able to utilize, to be able to hear a little better.

Madam Speaker, this government recognizes the support that seniors and health care needs and will continue to deliver.

And get ready for tomorrow's budget.

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, the facts show how much damage PC health-care cuts have done.

Due to PC cuts, terrible working conditions and no benefits, there aren't enough home-care attendants. Staff vacancy rates for home care are only getting worse. They're up to over 20 per cent in 2022, and that's 10 per cent higher than in 2021.

The number of clients helped is down by over 1,000 and the number of hours of care is down—down by over a quarter million hours, and that's close to a 10 per cent decline. These health-care cuts need to stop.

What is the minister doing to fix the problems that his cuts and the privatization of home-care delivery have caused?

Mr. Johnston: Our government just recently announced a 12.6 investment into self and family care, Madam Speaker.

This government recognizes that Manitoban seniors have needs, and we are acting upon that. The seniors strategy continues to announce different initiatives that will support seniors.

And as I mentioned, Madam Speaker, we have a budget coming forward, and I look forward to the

members across supporting the initiatives to help Manitoba seniors.

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

**Seniors Advocate Office
Request to Establish**

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, our grandparents and elders took good care of us and they deserve to receive the same quality of care from us as they age.

A Manitoba NDP government will support families by investing in health care and seniors every year, not just in the weeks leading up to an election.

Will this government commit to establishing an independent seniors advocate to investigate problems, provide recommendations for improvement and hold the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —hold the government accountable for their treatment of seniors?

* (14:20)

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): As the Minister responsible for Seniors and advocating on behalf of seniors, I'm very proud of what this government has accomplished. Let's go through some of it.

Madam Speaker, \$352,000 for cochlear implants; \$21,000 for A & O: Support Services; \$10,000 for good neighbours and active living centres; \$3.4 million to support tuition costs for health-care aides; \$1.3 million for 'adheimer' society First Link program; and furthermore, \$12.6 million for the self- and family-managed care; \$100,000 for the Rainbow Resort Centre's Over the Rainbow program.

Shall I go on? *[interjection]* Yes, I guess I should.

One point three million—

Madam Speaker: No, the member's time has—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, order. I'd recommend to the member that he may wish to direct his answers through the Chair, and then he might also then recognize when his time is up. So I encourage the member to maybe revisit that.

Thank you.

**The Link Youth and Family Supports Centre
Request for Identity of Third-Party Investigators**

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): On January 5th of this year, we were contacted by whistle-blowers from The Link, formerly Macdonald Youth Services, stating the agency's in crisis. We immediately wrote to the minister demanding an investigation.

We're told that half—over half of 300 employees have left, and vital programs and group homes don't have the staff to keep the young people safe. These complaints date back to as far as 2019. They include allegations of financial impropriety, nepotism, unqualified 'haires,' racism, tokenization and a deeply toxic workplace. Those who speak up are silenced with NDAs.

We've heard the third-party investigator hasn't spoken to staff while the CEO and board remain in place.

Will the minister share with the House who the investigators are and table their mandate today?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): We all know the vital services that The Link provides, and it's absolutely critical that these services are continuing to be provided to children and youth and families who depend on them. And when we were informed of these allegations, we immediately hired a third-party auditor.

Deloitte has been in place for about a month now. I am expecting an interim report by March 31st. I will be happy to share their findings with the public at that point.

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

Request for the Removal of Board and CEO

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, considering the tragic history of CFS in the province, I don't know that an accounting firm is up to the task.

The current CEO of The Link, Kerri Irvin-Ross, was an NDP Families minister, who, in order to keep children in care of out of hotels, they put Indigenous children in CFS in jail for weeks. She was also accused of misleading the public when she tried to suppress the report on Tina Fontaine.

Given that track record, do you think the reports of a CFS agency in crisis under her watch would be taken more seriously?

Why are the CEO and board allowed to remain in place during this investigation? Why haven't they been removed?

Ms. Squires: Despite the member coming into the Chamber and casting aspersions, our government had immediately made inquiries to ensure that there were no protection issues at all with any of the children receiving services from The Link, and we have hired a third-party auditor who has got experience and expertise and the ability to go in and ensure that the evaluation is done fairly and consistently, and we look forward to receiving that report from the third-party evaluator in the next few weeks. And I look forward to those services continuing to be provided.

And I would like to also highlight that services have not been interrupted to the children and families served by The Link.

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

The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a final supplementary.

Request for Independent Inquiry

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, with respect, that's not what the people who work The Link have been saying. We keep talking about the harms of the past while we're turning a blind eye to the harms of the present.

Children in care are the first five of 94 Calls to Action of the TRC. They've been—CFS has been called the new residential schools. At over 10,000 children, there are more Indigenous children in custody right now than there were in the entire residential school system at its peak a century ago.

This is one of the most important moral and political issues 'ficing' our province, and these complaints were ignored until Manitoba Liberals were contacted and we alone raised the alarm. Open appeal to the NDP and MLAs and MPs were ignored. Their silence speaks volumes.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) call an independent inquiry into the link to ensure that the people who signed NDAs will be able to speak the truth, because they won't be able to tell anything to Deloitte.

Ms. Squires: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the only thing this member has left is to cast aspersions about people and organizations and services that he knows nothing about.

Here are the facts, Madam Speaker. Our government has reduced the number of children in care every year since we came in office from 11,000 children in care when we took office in 2016 to over just 9,000 children in care today. We are working with First Nations leaders as they are drawing down jurisdictions so that we can repatriate children to their families and their communities. We've also ended the discriminatory practice of issuing birth alerts, and we've had a 65 per cent reduction in newborn apprehensions.

Madam Speaker, we recognize that there's a lot more work to do in transforming the CFS system, but our government is well on its way, apart from that member, who—all he does is cast aspersions about things he knows nothing about.

Affordable Child-Care Services Government Announcement

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Madam Speaker, \$10-a-day child care will soon be a reality for thousands of Manitoban families. Alongside the minister of education and early child learning, our Premier announced how our government is going to make life more affordable for Manitobans with children in daycare.

Can the fantastic Minister of Education elaborate on how our government is helping reduce parent fees for thousands of Manitoba families?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to thank my friend from—the MLA for Dawson Trail for that fantastic question, Madam Speaker.

Our government recognizes that in order for Manitobans to be able to participate in the workforce, upgrade their skills and get trained, support their families and pay an active role in the growth of our communities and economy, access to affordable and high-quality child care is essential.

On Friday, Madam Speaker, we announced that our government has gone above and beyond our commitment with the federal government. Effective April 2nd, 2023, child-care fees for ages 12 and under will be reduced to a maximum of \$10 a day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Look forward to a unanimous support.

Agricultural Crown Land Leasing Impact on Cattle Industry

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the PCs' approach to Manitoba's cattle industry has failed.

They raised rents on Crown lands and stopped unit transfers, which has made it harder for young ranchers to get ahead. Subsequently, Manitoba's beef herd has declined since 2016.

* (14:30)

Will the minister change course and take action to restore beef producers in Manitoba?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): I want to take this first opportunity to thank the producers who keep Manitobans fed.

Calving season is upon us, as we know—well, some of us on this side of the House know—and our thoughts are with you and all the weather conditions that may come. There's multiple night check-ins that I recall as a child, always going out and shivering in the middle of the night to make sure the herd is safe and healthy.

Once again, thank you for all your hard work and thank you for not just keeping Manitoba fed, but keeping the world fed. Thank you.

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

Mr. Brar: Let me try again to get an answer.

Manitoba's beef farms are declining, and the PCs' changes—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brar: —to Manitoba's Crown lands have made things worse.

These changes are making it harder for young ranchers to get a foothold in the industry. The Manitoba Co-operator writes the PCs have, and I quote, badly served 1,700 Crown land leaseholders, and destroyed the point-based unit-transfer system. This is a scandal. End quote.

Will the minister do the right thing and reverse his government's terrible changes to Crown lands?

Mr. Johnson: This government is keyed in to what Manitobans want—their wants and needs. We're balancing competing priorities and needs.

I want to let the member know opposite that young producers, for example, in this last auction took 36 per cent of the units allocated under the most recent auction. So he might want to go back and do some research, but this government on this side of the House is in tune to what Manitobans want.

And as a matter of fact, I'd like to table a document, and I'll quote it here: It appears that the minister is actually listening to producers, and we are hopeful that the consultation process will result in positive changes to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* * *

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Madam Speaker: Petitions.

The honourable—*[interjection]* Order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yes. The first point of order I'd like to address is that the Minister for Seniors did not respect his time limit, and, as a result, we lost somewhere between 15 and 20 seconds from question period. So I would ask whether we could get one additional question in, in light of that fact.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): There's always some discretion that goes into question period. Sometimes, the opposite members are heckling, and that takes a little bit of time; other times, members are clapping and, that takes a little bit of time.

Oral questions have concluded, and I think we need to get on with the rest of the business of the day.

Madam Speaker: I would just indicate to the member that we ended up going 40 minutes 52 seconds, so time was beyond 40 minutes. So, he does not have a point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: And on another point of order?

Mr. Kinew: Yes, on a separate point of order. In the same set of questions, the Minister for Seniors said in his answers with respect to the members on our side of the House, maybe they have trouble hearing.

And he said this with a pejorative tone that is, you know, typical of some of the back-and-forth that we hear, meaning that it was an insult. I think, you know, speaking again with a bit of personal experience here, I don't think Manitobans who are dealing with hearing

loss want to hear that sort of put-down being used in debate here.

It's perfectly straightforward to be able to make a point in debate without resorting to insult. He can deal with policy; he can, you know, make some sort of commentary that doesn't denigrate other individuals who are not involved in the debate.

I would point out that it's particularly surprising that this minister would make this, given the fact that he was out making an announcement on hearing loss just last week.

So I do believe that this violates a rule of the House, and I would just encourage the minister to reflect on his comments going forward into the future.

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I would apologize for that statement. The intent was not to insult or down—or belittle any of the members; it was more a comment—in somewhat jest—to get the opposition's attention, and I do apologize.

Madam Speaker: And I would indicate that, with the apology, that should conclude the matter.

But it does draw to my attention—and I want to draw it to your attention—that when we have heckling in the House and the heckling reaches a louder crescendo in here, it is very easy to members speaking, whether it's on one side of the House or another—it is easier for members to perhaps say things that they didn't mean to say. And I see that all the time, because as members get all wound up, sometimes we step over a line.

And a caution to all members that that can happen at any time. But this matter is now considered closed.

PETITIONS

South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by Norm Ma, Sharon Heikkinen and Tero Heikkinen, as well as many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Provincial Road 224

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road No. 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in need of substantial repairs.

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

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

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

(5) Concerned Manitobans are requesting that Provincial Road 224 be assessed and repaired urgently to improve safety for its users.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to complete an assessment of Provincial Road 224 and implement the appropriate repairs using public funds as quickly as possible.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Ekosi.

* (14:40)

Security System Incentive Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Home security surveillance systems protect homes and businesses by potentially deterring burglaries, reducing homeowners' and businesses' insurance costs.

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

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

(5) The same survey reported half of Winnipeggers polled do not feel safe walking alone at

night, and almost 20 per cent of them said they were a victim of a police-reported crime in the last two years.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach, maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction would help cross-culture friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programming and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

This has been signed by Prabhjot Kaur Malhi [*phonetic*], Inderjit Singh and Harbans Kaur and many more.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices, including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-cultural friendships, relationships and marriages and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

And this has been signed by Simarjit Kaur, Ramdeep Kaur and Kamaljit Gahir and many other Manitobans.

Health-Care Coverage

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

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

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with work permits of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable which—while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(3) Without adequate health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of the uninsured will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(4) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(5) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

* (14:50)

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to undertake multilingual communication campaigns to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to inform all health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without health insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the minister of Health and seniors care to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with training to protect the safety of residents with precarious immigration status and ensure that they can access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This petition has been signed by Joanne Silvester, Annie Savard and Vanessa Boucharel and many other Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Foot-Care Services

Mr. Eric Redhead (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(7) The implications and inadequate or lack of 'podiatric' care can lead to amputations.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

(2) Thousands of Punjabi newcomers are coming to Manitoba as students and as immigrants, looking to call this province home. People of Punjabi origin contribute a great deal to the social and economic development of Canada and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

(3) In coming to Manitoba, Punjabi newcomers make sacrifices including distance from their cultural roots and language. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continual cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens, as well as Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level, should similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

(5) Punjabi bilingual instruction will help cross-curricular friendships, relationships and marriages, and prepare young people to be multilingual professionals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take steps to implement Punjabi bilingual programs in public schools similar to existing bilingual programs and take steps to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

And this has been signed by Parvinder Kaur, Harpreet Kaur and Beant Brar and many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Can you please call for debate on second reading: bills 9, 7, 6, 8, 10, 2 and 12.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon: second readings of bills 9, 7, 6, 8, 10, 2 and 12.

Bill 9—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So, I will first call debate on second reading of Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for The Maples, who has 26 minutes remaining.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): It is always an honour to rise in this House to speak to any bill, especially on this Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sandhu: Madam Speaker, this bill, Bill 9, is yet another attempt by the PC to further privatize the sale of liquor in Manitoba. On Thursday, as I mentioned, this is their third attempt. First they tried it with the bill 40, then they brought in bill 42, now they brought in Bill 9.

This is a bad deal for Manitobans, Madam Speaker. The PC government is trying to take away the benefit or the money that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries generate for our education, health-care, infrastructure and many, many more things.

Madam Speaker, as I said, that this money is—the money that we brought from the sale of liquor is reinvested back to—back in Manitoba.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to highlight a few of the things that is happening in the Seven Oaks School Division. If we were to privatize liquor and take away the benefit that Manitobans rely on, it will be worse than what the situation is right now at the Seven Oaks School Division.

* (15:00)

We at Seven Oaks School Division have already cut 25 non-teaching positions, 25 educational assistants, summer programmings, contract petitions, busing at 1.2 kilometres per grade 1—grade K to 3. So this was just the beginning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They also approached teaching staff, school budget, maintenance and capital improvement. I usually drive by Leila North. Probably there are so many people who drive by Leila North. They can see—look at the roof. That roof needed to be changed about five years ago because the underfunding by this PC government, there isn't much money available to spend on the capital.

In this year's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Seven Oaks School Division is thinking of cutting 25 to 50 teaching positions; eliminating busing for every student in grades 7 to 12; charge for lunch supervision, band instruments and field trips. That's why keeping the Manitoba liquor public is really important because we are investing the money that comes from the liquor back into health-care, education.

Some other highlights that are presented by the Seven Oaks School Division school trustees: they are thinking of eliminating Learn to Skate, Learn to Swim and learn to bike. Closing our school to after-school programming. This is really, really important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when kids are playing sports—it is important that they are busy; they're not in front of TV or they are not in the bad company, but they are busy learning something. They are also thinking of eliminating summer programs.

So how much is—will it cost, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the families in the Seven Oaks School Division? So, lunch supervision is around \$35 a month; field trip and locker fees is \$50; band instrument is \$22 a month; school supplies, \$120. So that's about \$740 to each kid, so in case somebody has two kids, it's going to cost them \$1,480 a year, and if they have three kids, it's \$2,220 a year.

So this is, on the other hand, just a tax on the families that live or their kids go to Seven Oaks School Division. Mr. Deputy Speaker, cutting teaching positions will mean large class sizes, less individual attention, less help for students with additional needs and fewer absences.

And I also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you might be wondering or the House might be wondering how much money the Seven Oaks School Division spends per kid. St. James is fourteen hundred one hundred twenty-seven; province-wide is fourteen hundred two—\$14,205. The Seven Oaks is the lowest: \$13,565.

And the Seven Oaks families, Seven Oaks households whose average house price is around, let's say, \$400,000, they pay \$2,916 in tax. Province-wide, is twenty three—\$2,376. And in St. James, is \$2,322. So we are already paying way too much in the Seven Oaks School Division.

In the Seven Oaks School Division, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a programming such as heritage language classes, Ukrainian, Ojibwe and Filipino bilingual programs, Punjabi bilingual programs; hiring that'll affect our community, Indigenous education, anti-racist initiatives, so on and on.

So this—if we were to privatize liquor with Bill 9 will have a already effect—we have an already bad effect and it's going to be worse than that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I think a few speakers have said it before. Nobody came to us asking to privatize the liquor here in Manitoba. And also, I didn't see a single person from the PC side really put forward where they said, yes, this is what's needed. Not a single person spoke to Bill 9. So even their own caucus is not in favour of this bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our public system works. It creates hundreds of millions in revenue, provides many Manitobans with good-paying jobs, and reinvests money in addiction programs. The revenue Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries generates is used to fund health care, education and much more.

Moving to privatization model moves the public benefit into a private hands. Even considering this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know with bill 42 there were—there was specific different—is changed bill 40 to Bill 9 because there were—they weren't going to allow people to buy or bet on the liquor stores and then allowing people to operate those funds.

But with this bill, it's totally given to 20, 30 families who will be owning these liquor stores, and the benefit will be going to those families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also worried about the public health impact further privatization will have, notably in its effect on underage drinking, potential theft and much more.

The current model of the sale of alcohol ensures public benefit from the regulation and the sale of liquor. It helps pay for the cost of our hospitals. It helps with the cost of our schools and public education. Bill 9 makes changes to that model.

The PC's priority is that public benefits should go instead toward private profit. The government has claimed that they can add new stores that will sell spirits without meaningful—impacting government's revenue. But we have even asked in the question period, there was no study on this at all. There is nowhere to backup, yes, there will now be impact on this one.

We remain concerned that the push for private sale will, in fact, have a significant impact on the profit of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries and, in turn, on the revenue provided to government and social responsibilities.

The Stefanson government has provided no evidence and they have provided no modelling to support their position. They have just said, trust us about a decision that could have very significant financial implications for Manitobans. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no study at all, no way to know what impact it will have on our revenue.

* (15:10)

Important public services are funded by the sale of these products. A change in revenue means less money for our schools and our hospitals. Even, Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier, I had mentioned that the money will also—the savings from this sale of liquor benefits Manitobans, and it will—that money is reinvested back into our hospitals, education, infrastructure.

I really bring to your attention that Chief Peguis Trail in the north Winnipeg part was supposed to be

built in 1958. We—65 years later, we are nowhere near. It was the NDP government who built from Lagimodiere to Henderson Highway. And also, part of it was—so, CentrePort Canada Way was also built under NDP government. PCs has not done anything in that part. So, 1958, 2023. I think, if my math is not correct, this is almost 65 years. The kid who was born in 1958 now will be retiring and there is no—highways not built.

This will also have an impact on our—traffic in my area, especially on Leila Avenue. We are building more subdivisions, but the infrastructure is not there. The Leila Avenue cannot be built until they complete Chief Peguis Trail. This will reconnect—connect to Chief Peguis Trail. So, again, we are growing in Winnipeg north, but the infrastructure is not there to support the traffic or the population or the families that are moving into Winnipeg north.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, important public services are funded by the sale of these products. A change in revenue means less money for our schools, our hospitals. We are also concerned about the impact on good paying jobs. Liquor Mart employees are fairly paid. These are good jobs. They spend money in Manitoba, they spend money in our stores, so it will benefit the small businesses.

The government so-called guarantee of no job losses is not strong. The government and MBLL retain the ability to change direction at any time, including closing stores or laying off employees.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently, probably the—even the minister mentioned there's about satisfaction of 90 per cent with the liquor store with the employees that we have it right now. If we needed to add more stores, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries can add those stores any time.

Again, I said—mentioned earlier, nobody has come to my office for—asking to see if they will have more liquor stores, say, in The Maples. Currently, we have one on Leila Avenue, which is in McPhillips, and other one is in Tyndall Park, which is in Tyndall Park, so we have two stores. Do we need the stores on every corner? No, we don't need the stores on every corner. Do we have enough in our neighbourhood? Yes, we do have enough.

Do Canad Inns need another store? They have a beer store there. Do they need a liquor store? No, they don't need a liquor store because we just have a liquor store just around the corner on Leila Avenue.

So, this doesn't make any sense allowing these liquor stores to be privatized and the revenue growing to—going to the private businesses. I can see a small private business benefitting this is—from this, but again, this is not a small private business we are talking about. These are the big businesses that—they have enough revenue, they have enough money to support their business, they have enough.

You know, again, they—if we were to allow this to go through, a store, let's say, in—at the Canad Inns will hire somebody at \$15 an hour, with no benefits. And there at Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, those are good-paying jobs that support Manitobans, small businesses.

If Bill 9 were to become law, it is clear to us that it would have a significant impact on MBLL. While the minister claims that's not the case, we are just waiting for the other shoe to drop. Again, no study done, have no idea what impact this will have on Manitobans. With private liquor locations, the inevitable result will be loss of good jobs, replaced with lower or even minimum wage jobs and closing of Liquor Marts.

If the PC government was serious about the real job guarantee, they would offer that proactively in the collective agreement with their employees. But they won't do that because it is not a serious guarantee.

This bill and the announcement made by the government propose a significant expansion of locations where liquor can be purchased. It appears they have failed to first consider what role the existing system might play, including the use of express Liquor Marts.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friend from St. James the other day mentioned that there is an express Liquor Mart at the Superstore on Sargent Avenue, which is a government-run liquor store—government employees—and, again, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries had the options to open those stores at other places too. We don't have to go the route where we can now say, especially inner cities, do we need a—probably 10 or 15 small little liquor stores? No, we don't need those ones.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's also important that the government provide the right balance between access to alcohol and social responsibility to the community. The Stefanson government has provided no real study of the social impact of the changes proposed here. That's the wrong approach.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, PCs are saying, believe us, there will be no job losses. But how can

you believe it? How can you believe them? For the last seven years, they have cut health care, they have cut education. Now we are close to the elections, they are saying, believe us, but Manitobans know, Manitobans understand.

Even tomorrow's budget, there may be goodies. But again, come the next—probably four years, three years, seven years—there will be cuts. But Manitobans are smart. They know the impact the PC cuts on health care and education have.

* (15:20)

So, it is right to say Manitobans are ready. Manitobans are ready to elect an NDP government that will look after everyone, that will have everyone's interests in front of them. The ministers, they will answer questions; they will not going to run from the questions; and the government that takes care of the families, that's working for everyday Manitobans, not only just looking for only certain segments of the population, but paying attention to everyday Manitobans.

And also, the government that will make sure the money stays in Manitoba and the liquor stores—or the money that's coming from the sale of the liquor in Manitoba is reinvested into the hospitals, to health care, to education, to infrastructure. And maybe I can say, maybe, Chief Peguis Trail will be built in the NDP's first term. Maybe I can get a guarantee from my leader on this and have a—as I said earlier, our families are growing, our Winnipeg North is growing. Winnipeg North has been ignored for so long, it's the time to get—elect an NDP government that will not only build Chief Peguis Trail, Leila Avenue and help everyday families.

And it's the time—the PCs are—is a tired government. And they are just throwing—or they're trying to buy the votes. But Manitobans are smart. They understand. They understand, but this has been happening for the last couple months.

You know, it's some—so bad when your Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) can't even work with the Prime Minister to—for the benefit of Manitobans. Premier doesn't want even to show the picture of the Prime Minister when she is putting something on social media where an announcement was done by federal government, but the taking occurred—was there for the Premier and the PCs to get.

So, once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a bad move by the PC government to privatizing liquor. The money is reinvested back to health care, education,

infrastructure and it's the time that we kick PCs out of the government and get a new government that will work for all Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please. Order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, please go ahead.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record on behalf of many Manitobans who are concerned with Bill 9.

This bill amends both The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act and The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act. An existing retail beer vendor or specialty wine store operator that wants to expand the products they sell may enter into an agreement with the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and obtain a licence that authorizes the sale of other types of liquor from their current premises.

The holder of a manufacturer's licence may obtain a licence that authorizes them to operate a liquor store at the premises that are the subject of the manufacturer's licence or at a nearby location approved by the executive director of the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba. Agreements between the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and liquor retailers may include provisions respecting security measures to be implemented by the retailer.

So, just in case anyone's just tuning in today, on our second day of debate on this bill, I thought it was worth recapping what we're talking about.

Bill 9 is yet another attempt—the third attempt—by the PCs to further privatize the sale of liquor in Manitoba. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our public system works. It creates hundreds of millions of revenue, provides many Manitobans with good-paying jobs and reinvests money in addictions programs. The revenue MBLL generates is used to fund health care, education and much more. And moving to a privatized model moves the public benefit into private hands.

Ever since the first version of this bill, bill 40, introduced under Brian Pallister, experts on public health and addictions have warned that private profit motives are guiding this government's approach to public policy on alcohol, and we've seen that repeated in bill 42 and we see it repeated here again in Bill 9.

For years the Conservatives have been aiming to expand private liquor sales in Manitoba, but something experts have said over and over, will put a strain on the province's health-care system and reduce resources for substance abuse and addiction treatment.

Premier Stefanson keeps trying to change the channel, but is once again introducing another Pallister-era piece of legislation—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order, please.

I'm obliged to kindly remind the member that members are not allowed to say Premier Stefanson, so please just carry on and that's just fine. Thank you.

Ms. Naylor: The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) keeps trying to change the channel, but is once again introducing another Pallister-era piece of legislation under a new name, and now under yet another new minister for this file. But all the shuffles and all the rebranding don't change the main point of this bill, which is to move money from the public purse; money used to fund health care, addiction treatment, education and even provincial highways, and move that money into the private system.

Alcohol is not neutral. It's not like selling other types of products, and it's naïve and irresponsible to pretend we're talking about expanding more local bakeries or more shoe stores. Alcohol is a carcinogen. It's linked to over 200 diseases, including cancer, diabetes and heart disease, and this makes the sale of alcohol a very important public interest issue. That reality has to be measured against the desire for more convenience.

According to a Canadian Institute for Health Information report, if government monopolies are dismantled and the level of privatization increases there is an increase in alcohol sales, per capita consumption and harm.

With the Crown corporation responsible for more of the liquor sales in the province, it is easier to monitor and enforce policy and regulations and all profits are reinvested back into public health programs and competes. We are worried about the public health impact further privatization will have in terms of health impacts, but notably the impact on underage drinking, potential theft and violence, and more.

The current model for the sale of alcohol ensures public benefit from the regulation and sale of liquor. It helps pay for the cost of our hospitals. It helps with the cost for schools and public education. But Bill 9 makes a change to that model. The PC's priority is that

public benefits should go instead toward private profit.

The government has claimed that they can add new stores that sell spirits without meaningfully impacting government's revenue, but that makes no sense. Further to that claim, the minister was completely transparent during debate last week that he has no idea about how much this will cost.

That should concern all Manitobans, that this minister does not have any clarity on what these costs will be.

We remain concerned that the push for private sale will, in fact, have a significant impact on the profits of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries and, in turn, on the revenue provided to government, and the social responsibility that comes with that.

This PC government has provided no evidence and they've provided no modelling to support their position. They have just said trust us about a decision that could have very significant financial implications for Manitobans.

* (15:30)

Manitobans aren't feeling a lot of trust in this government these days and, you know, no amount of money that's just getting thrown around now at the endgame, when the government is terrified about losing government, it isn't going to—you can't buy the public trust that way. You have to earn it. Manitobans are smart, and they know what had—they know what isn't working.

We can't just trust this without any more transparency or information being provided from the government, with no modelling being done about the impacts on jobs, the impacts on public health. More has to be provided to Manitobans before this bill can be something that can be seriously considered.

This bill shouldn't have come forward at all before the government was able to provide some real analysis of the revenue impact of this change. Important public services are funded by the sale of these products, and a change in revenue literally means less money for our schools—as was just very well spoken about by my colleague around Seven Oaks School Division, but that's true of every school division across this province—and it means less money for our hospitals.

We're also concerned about the impact on good-paying jobs. Liquor Mart employees are fairly paid; they are good jobs. The government's so-called guarantee of

no job losses is not strong. The government and MBLL retain the ability to change direction anytime, including closing stores or laying off employees. If Bill 9 were to become law, it's clear to us that it would have a significant impact on MBLL.

While the minister claims that it's not the case, we know we'll just be waiting for the other shoe to drop. We all know what happened when emergency rooms were closed across the city. Nobody—maybe didn't see that there was a pandemic coming, but we were set up to fail in the health-care system; the government set itself up to fail and it's continuing to fail.

So, when there's no legitimate plan in place, no legitimate amount of modelling done to see what will happen, nothing built into this bill to make this just a trial—like was built into one of the previous versions of this bill—then of course we're waiting for the other shoe to drop, because nobody actually knows what the impact will be.

With private liquor locations, the inevitable result will be a loss of good jobs, replaced with lower or minimum-wage jobs and the closing of Liquor Marts. If the PC government was serious about a real jobs guarantee, they would offer that proactively in the collective agreement with their employees. But we know they won't do that because it's not a serious guarantee.

I know last week one of my colleagues asked in debate for the minister simply to put that in writing, that there wouldn't be job loss. We'd love to see a guarantee like that for workers—for Manitoban workers who are serving the public.

This bill and the announcements made by the government proposes a significant expansion of locations where liquor can be purchased, and it appears that they failed to first consider what role the existing system might even play, including the use of express Liquor Marts. And that shows that the change proposed is not about convenience at all; it is absolutely about moving profit into private hands—government money into private hands.

It's also important that the government provide some balance here between access to alcohol and social responsibility to the community, but the Stefanson government has provided no real analysis of the social impact of the changes proposed here. And that is the wrong approach.

The PC government has been planning to privatize MBLL's operations, exchanging public benefit for private profit; they've been trying to introduce bills for years to get this done. Fortunately, we've been able to

successfully stop some of those bills along the way, and we listen to community members who have these concerns and have acted.

In a mandate letter to the corporation, the PC government told the board to exhaust all opportunities for more privatization. Shortly after, that's when the PC Cabinet introduced bill 40, which would have enabled provincially owned liquor sales by third parties, further privatizing liquor sales. And the Crown Services minister at that time made things clear when he said he wouldn't rule out closing or selling off government-run liquor stores as a result of those changes. And we've been shown nothing to say that Bill 9 would be any different than when those comments were made around bill 40.

After we successfully helped stop that bill from passing into law the PCs came back with bill 42, and this bill went one step further than bill 40 by allowing convenience stores, grocery stores and other retail locations to sell alcohol through a five-year pilot program. And after bill 42 was stopped, they came back yet again with this current bill, except no pilot program this time.

This legislation today is just another bad repeat of Brian Pallister's failed agenda, but, I mean, we already know everything going on right now is a repeat within this government. We know bill 40 was a priority of Brian Pallister. It was withdrawn on October 6, 2021, along with an—other unpopular pieces of legislation, including bill 64, which attacked education.

But just like under Brian Pallister, the Stefanson government is carrying on his legacy with unpopular cuts to education and, again, by bringing forward these changes for private liquor. Last year, they tried again to pass these changes with bill 42. Bill 9 goes even further than bill 42, as I mentioned, by dropping the five-year pilot project.

Manitobans rejected the approach of Brian Pallister, but, unfortunately, this—the Stefanson government is just repeating, once again, another one of his, kind of, pet projects, really: privatization. And that includes bringing forward this legislation.

Remember that—when Brian Pallister said about the government's role in public health and the lives of Manitobans, he said: Let me say again that a government can't protect you.

And our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) said pretty much the same thing: The government can't protect everybody out there; you know, people have to learn to protect themselves. And with this bill, I

have to wonder if this neglect extends to the safety of folks in and around private liquor stores. Does it extend to the underage kids who will inevitably try to seek access to liquor and will have much more success than they currently do?

I don't think Manitobans want the government to keep abandoning some of their most important roles that they're—that they expect the government to live up to, and protecting children, trying to keep us healthier and safer, those are important parts of—important jobs that a government should be doing.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries employs approximately 2,000 people who bring a wide range of skills and backgrounds and experiences. They really pride themselves on hiring talented and passionate individuals who are part of a diverse workplace that represents the vibrant communities that we serve. We know that MBLL generates thousands of additional direct and indirect jobs in the provincial economy, and the casinos and Liquor Marts the MBLL owns and operates generate millions of dollars in spin-off economic activity every year for other businesses.

MBLL's core mandate is to provide revenue to the government of Manitoba to support provincial programs and initiatives in areas such as health care, education, social services, housing and infrastructure. Every dollar earned in profit is to be invested back in the province.

Last week, the minister implied during the debate that the NDP—that we were somehow in the wrong for wanting to have a strong interest in the profitability of this Crown corporation. I know the minister is fairly new to this role and a few have cycled through, but I think someone forgot to tell him that, as the Minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, its profitability should actually be his main concern. It should be his main interest.

Why doesn't he care deeply about providing Manitobans with good public service jobs, providing Manitobans with ongoing excellent client service and satisfaction, ensuring safety for Manitobans working and making purchases and ensuring good profits that help to fund so many important parts of the Manitoba budget, as we have outlined multiple times?

* (15:40)

Privatizing liquor sales reduces government revenue. These revenues directly contribute to programs to reduce addiction and invest in treatment. The direct and indirect social costs of alcohol are shouldered by

government and, therefore, by all Manitobans, regardless of whether alcohol sales are public or private. So we should not be giving up millions of dollars that can be used to address these issues.

In 2016, research done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives looking at BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba found that Manitoba had the strongest position in retaining the revenues generated from alcohol beverage sales. And, at the same time, Manitoba had a more balanced approach. Manitoba had the second lowest in impaired driving rates and consistently had the lowest per capita expenditures on alcohol beverages.

Manitoba has the highest revenue and net government income per capita from its sale of alcoholic beverages. It's not wise, it's not fiscally prudent to throw this money away, especially while we attempt to economically recover from the pandemic.

In recent years, MBLL has contributed over \$600 million to the public purse, money which is invested in education, health-care, infrastructure, housing, other crucial services. And at the end of the day, the real issue here might be that this government is just horrible at managing our assets.

When conservative governments mix private with public, the private seems to make off with the public benefit, and we cannot let that happen with liquor revenue. We know that public Liquor Marts are performing very well. Customer satisfaction surveys rate front-line staff at public Liquor Marts as extremely professional and very knowledgeable about the products they offer; 93 per cent of Liquor Mart customers are satisfied with their overall experience.

Research on privatizing liquor sales has shown that privatization leads to million of dollars in lost government revenue, and the—and weaker control of liquor distribution, as well as less choice for consumers. We believe that the province's Crown corporations do belong to all Manitobans, and that there needs to be a sense of responsibility to keep it intact and to keep it strong.

Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research Director Tim Stockwell said that from the public health and safety perspective, privatization would be a poor move. By and large, the more you put the profit motive into the sale and distribution of alcohol, the worse the outcomes are for public health and safety.

Research shows that our public lister—liquor system works, and it works well. It saves the government money, and it creates hundreds of millions of

dollars in revenue. Private liquor systems require more public spending to ensure that private retailers are compliant, which we don't require in a publicly run system. And these higher costs mean higher and more variable prices than in our current public system.

For example, public Liquor Mart staff are trained to spot intoxicated and underage buyers, and the result is safer communities, less underage drinking. We don't know what's going to be built in for any kind of safety, but we also already heard some horrific stories, and we know what's happened in the news. But one of my colleagues spoke to the two deaths in their community last—or, last year as a result of young workers trying to just do a job, but working around private liquor sales when, you know, the training and the supports just aren't in place.

This bill before us increases the risk to public health in Manitoba. This bill jeopardizes the mental health and stability of families or relationships where our parent or partner is suffering or trying to recover from alcohol addiction. With alcohol more readily available, it does become increasingly difficult for people to sometimes make the right choice that they're trying to make.

MBLL is required by law to allocate 2 per cent of its income to addictions research and treatment, something that no private seller has any obligation to do. I've spoken at length about some of the public benefit of the revenue that is generated by MBLL, but it's important that we keep distribution in public hands so that this revenue continues to go towards the services that it needs to.

We already see a government that has been starving the education system, starving the health-care system, for dollars for the last six, going on seven years now. But to—what would they do with, you know, last money generated from within the public purse that's intended to go towards these services? And health experts are warning that expanding private liquor sales will strain the health-care service even more. And community members are concerned about the safety implications.

Since the many reports of theft, of weapons and violence taking place in and around Liquor Marts a few years ago, MBLL has made significant investments to keep our community safe, such as implementing controlled entrances. Controlled entrances and other security measures have completely eliminated robberies and have reduced theft by 97 per cent.

Private liquor stores do not have the same level of security. Excuse me. And we're worried that the passage of Bill 9 may increase liquor thefts.

Do any of you recall—or, do any members of the House recall how bad things had gotten? Liquor Marts had become a very risky place to work and shop in certain neighbourhoods, and MBLL have completely turned that around.

One of the sites of the most thefts and threats was at the Liquor Mart located on Portage, in my constituency of Wolseley. This is the store where I shop, where my neighbours and friends shop. The new measures have made it a completely different, much better experience to shop there. And I commend the employees and MBLL for making the changes that were necessary. And the staff; really, those employees carry it out with so much grace that it's always a pleasure to speak with them, like, if I visit that store.

But right across the street, there's another small, private wine store. I have my current concerns about safety in and around this wine store, and I completely support their presence, a successful and popular small business in our community. It's a lovely store where my friends and neighbours also sometimes shop.

But my concern is what happens to the safety in and around that small business if they choose to expand to carrying many of the same products carried right across the street at a secure Liquor Mart location? And I can imagine these concerns replicated in communities across the city and province.

Bill 9 states that agreements between MBLL and liquor retailers may include provisions respecting security measures of the private liquor location, but it is unclear exactly what that entails. In a bill briefing with the minister, he did not rule out MBLL paying for security measures of private liquor vendors. So, not only does the PC government want to take liquor revenues out of public hands, they've not ruled out subsidizing private for-profit vendors. And that alone should make it clear that Bill 9 is not good public policy.

We take a reasonable approach to this issue. We want to reduce social harms while ensuring the strongest social investments are made. We do that by supporting the public model in Manitoba. Our system is working as it is. We've already shared the satisfaction numbers that we saw from our Liquor Marts and it's very high: 93 per cent satisfaction rate with service in our Liquor Marts?

Consumers are not asking for these changes. They're not asking for this government to remove profits from the public system and hand them over to private retailers. Let's hold on to public funds to fund public services like health care and addictions treatment, and let's ensure there is no job loss for public servants working in this industry.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the record on this very important issue. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have recently been appointed as the critic on this particular file.

And I—you know, I certainly hope that folks working in this industry understand that, you know, we—that our side of the House is very interested in protecting their jobs, making sure that liquor is sold in this province in the most safe, responsible way possible, that does, you know, keep a balance between profitability and public health and, you know, public—the good health for the public. Sorry, lost my train of thought there.

* (15:50)

Not a strong ending, but I am going to say thank you once again for letting me put some words on the record and turn it over to my next colleague who would like to speak on this issue.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I would like to disagree with my colleague, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor). I thought she put up some absolutely excellent points for the record.

And I also want to compliment my colleagues here on this side of the House, the member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu), who is putting on the actual facts on the record as to what the problems are with Bill 9, and it is truly an honour to stand up afterwards and to also put some words on the record because of the people that I represent up in northeast Winnipeg have also had some concerns with this bill.

The concerns began—I think it was bill 40 and bill 42 and now I think we're up to the third incarnation of this bill, and what I've noticed is I've noticed that members on the other side of the House, they're not up speaking in support of this bill. If it's such a great bill, why aren't they standing up and speaking to this bill? I guess that's one of the biggest questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: We don't have any—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —thing coming from the other side of the House or anyone that is willing to get up and speak in support of this bill, and I think that speaks absolute volumes as to what the problems are with this particular bill that they're bringing forward.

You know, it was noted by—when the minister rose that this bill was somehow a priority for Manitobans. I mean, I can tell you that when I—when we're answering the phone in the constituency offices up in northeast Winnipeg, we're—this concern doesn't come up. Instead, you know what they're talking about? I'll tell you. *[interjection]* The member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), I'll tell you what's coming up. Concern about health care, concern about being paid properly for the services that are being provided, concern for a fully funded education system. That's what's being brought up, not this priority.

As a matter of fact, the member—people in Transcona have, for years—since 2016—been talking about very important priorities that have been ignored by this government. Instead, they bring forward Bill 9. What the people from northeast Winnipeg and Transcona wanted to see is the fulfillment of a promise that was made back in 2016 by, I think, this government over here, that talked about increasing the personal-care-home space in Transcona. Didn't happen. As a matter of fact—

An Honourable Member: Get ready.

Mr. Altomare: Oh, get ready. We've been ready since 2016, and we still have yet to see meaningful expansion in an area of the province that has some of the lowest PCH per capita space around, period. And we're still waiting. As a matter of fact, I remember the previous minister or someone saying that there was going to be an expansion. First thing that happened once elected, took the sign down, but left the sticks up, right? Left the sticks up; that's all that was left behind.

And so this is what we have, Deputy Speaker. We have these bills that come forward that don't have any impact on the everyday lives of the citizens that we represent.

So let's talk about how where the priorities needed to be. We had an IV clinic in Transcona, well—that served well the citizens of our constituency, removed from that area.

So now the people that require IV services, what do they have to do? They have to wait longer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that service to be provided. It was supposed to be reinstated, has yet to be reinstated.

Lab services, Deputy Speaker. Instead of bringing forward a bill that would talk about reinstating lab services to the citizens of northeast Winnipeg, what do we get? Right? At—2016, we had three labs in Transcona. We have zero right now. And what do they have to do? They have to go to Regent and Lagimodiere and make an appointment, and maybe—maybe—they'll get their services provided to them. Instead we have Bill 9 that's brought forward that's talking about the privatization of liquor sales, said by the minister, a priority of Manitobans.

I'll tell you what the priorities of Manitobans are, Deputy Speaker. A fully functioning health-care system, a public education system that can provide services for the growing communities that we have in our areas and certainly in northeast Winnipeg, and we're not getting that.

Instead, we're debating a bill that wants to privatize liquor sales, like that's a priority. I'm sure in all of the telephone town halls, Deputy Speaker, privatization of liquor sales doesn't come up, and they know it. Do you know why? Actually phoned me one night. Picked up the phone; I actually listened to that. I didn't hear that priority ever come up in their own telephone town halls that they called me on. Didn't even come up once in that particular thing. Instead, here I am, today, having to stand up in this House and talk about a bill that no one in Manitoba is clamouring for.

So, this is what we're doing. So, here we are. We have a government that says, just trust us on this. Right? Trust us. Because privatization won't harm—privatizing liquor sales won't harm the provincial Treasury. Yet we have yet to see where the evidence for this exists.

You know, we heard this story once before, Deputy Speaker. You know, I'm—we heard this back in the day when there was—we were told by a Conservative government that selling Manitoba Telephone System won't cost us very much; it'll provide better service.

You know what they did next door in Saskatchewan, Deputy Speaker? They kept their public telephone system. So what happened to their—what happened there? I'll tell you what happened. Who has the best mobility rates in the country?

A publicly owned telephone system right next door in Saskatchewan that provides the best service in the country. Why? Publicly owned where the profits remain with the public. Imagine that. Imagine having that and having some pride in that.

Instead, we sold it by another previous Conservative government. So, now we're left with this yet again, Deputy Speaker. Just trust us because it won't harm the provincial Treasury.

So, what is really at risk, here? Deputy Speaker, \$316 million in provincial profits in liquor revenue, revenue that many of my colleagues have already brought up, but is worth repeating, revenue that supports health care, public education, infrastructure investments, infrastructure investment so that my colleague, the member from The Maples brought up in his debate not 45 minutes ago. Very important infrastructure investments, especially for the people in northeast and northwest Winnipeg. And I want to thank my colleague for bringing that up.

And, of course, important supports for municipalities and the important services that they provide their citizens. Manitoba, with its unique geography, requires that government invest in services that municipalities have to provide to their citizens because of our sheer scale and size of the province, and that also has to be considered when we're talking about where profits from liquor sales can go, Deputy Speaker.

And this government is willing to put all of this at risk. And they have no idea regarding what the true impacts of Bill 9 will be not only on the provincial Treasury but also on our cherished public services, Deputy Speaker. And this government is willing to put all of that at risk and still has no idea as to how they'll replace any of that lost revenue.

This financial strain and damage at a time, Deputy Speaker, when our health-care system is buckling under unprecedented strain, at a time when our public education system is buckling. Thankfully, we have dedicated people in all of those sectors that are absolutely working to the bone to ensure that Manitobans are served.

This is what's being put at risk, and we have to remember that.

* (16:00)

During these times when we're coming into the shadow of a pandemic—a pandemic that's never happened for a hundred years—these are very, very trying

times on the citizens of this province. And what does this government bring forth as an important bill? Privatize liquor sales. Instead of bringing forward bills that would really have a positive impact on Manitoban lives. That is the priority of that side of the House, Deputy Speaker. One that is not mirroring what Manitobans need and desire.

I would like to challenge them to bring forth their analysis that shows that expanded private sales won't harm the bottom line of our provincially-owned Crown corporation. We need to see that analysis. Manitobans are demanding, Deputy Speaker, to see that analysis. Because we know what's at risk: close to \$600 million in revenue is at risk.

The minister's main argument, Deputy Speaker, was convenience and access. Like my colleague, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), brought up, it's more than just about convenience and access. This is a known carcinogen, a known harm to people. And when we talk about the sale of liquor, it is our responsibility as government, as members in this House, to ensure the safety of the citizens of this province. Convenience and access don't come into the picture when we're talking about a known harmful drug and carcinogen. That can't be the main argument for a bill like this.

And I will say, many of my colleagues have rightly pointed out that that responsibility is something that we have to always have in mind when we're bringing forward bills into this House, Deputy Speaker. It's one that we can't shirk or walk away from. And I get the sense that that's what we're getting now. As a matter of fact, we're having some that are standing up right now and walking out of the House, unwilling to listen to some really reasoned debate.

And this is the issue, Deputy Speaker: we're here to debate serious bills. Instead, we have a bill that comes forward that really doesn't match the priorities of Manitobans, and that's an issue.

Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to remind this House that this government has yet to release any kind of comprehensive report that outlines the financial hit that Bill 9 would deliver to Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. That's an important piece of information to have. We want to sit here as 57 members that represent everybody in Manitoba and make reasoned decisions. In order to make those decisions, we need to have the 'nanalysis' in front of us.

And until we see that, you can guarantee that the—every member that's on this side of the House will vote

against it, because we don't know what the impacts are. Because that's our responsibility not only to the people that we represent, but to every citizen in Manitoba—and every citizen in Manitoba. That is our responsibility and one that we take very seriously.

And we have said this before—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Altomare: —Deputy Speaker, this isn't, you know, the selling of a substance that's not harmful to people. This is liquor and, as I've mentioned before, a drug that is a known carcinogen and that now has been proven—proven—to be one of the most harmful things that can be ingested in the human body. And we have to take this seriously.

Knowing all of this, the Province, Deputy Speaker, has to make its financial and market analysis public, has to show what the impact of this bill will truly be to Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries' bottom line.

It is important, because right now, many of our cherished public services are feeling the strain. Feeling the strain of underfunding. Feeling a—the strain of being disrespected by a government that rarely negotiates in good faith when it comes to its own employees. One that is fleeing right now because they don't want to, right, they don't want to work for these people anymore. They're done. The disrespect being shown to the many employees that have had contracts that have expired and they're out working for years without one is actually quite incredible. And one that is putting strain on people and will walk away and will have no desire, Deputy Speaker, to work for a government that doesn't support a worker's right to actual contracts that are up to date.

And like I said earlier, there has yet to be a financial impact study that shows the benefit for Manitobans of Bill 9. Nothing. Zero. And yet, they continue to ask us to trust them with something that's this important. If the reports actually existed, Deputy Speaker, they should be easily available, readily available, should be put and brought on the record, so that we can examine them and see what the true impact would be.

But what we do know is that profits from hard liquor sales will essentially benefit private businesses instead of public coffers, and that is a problem, because these are the same publicly funded services that we cherish in this province.

But here's the irony, Deputy Speaker. If the public truly desires more convenient access, why can't

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries provide that more convenient access? Why can't this government speak to Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries employees and say: You know what? Let's make it more easily accessible. We'll do it ourselves. So that we, as Manitobans, can benefit from that, can benefit from the profits of that. It's a simple process.

What that would require, Deputy Speaker, is actual communication with the corporation, with the employees of that corporation. Of a government that would sit down and actually talk to the people that work for them so that they can provide this so-called ease of access. And ease of access to something that we know, as I've said before on two occasions, is a highly toxic substance that can be put—that is put into our bodies.

The other interesting piece, Deputy Speaker, is that, when Manitobans are asked about their Liquor & Lotteries corporation, the satisfaction rate is over 90 per cent. They're very satisfied with the people that not only are providing the service, but also know that they're doing it in a way that is safe, that—in a way that not only protects Manitobans, but also protects the people that actually sell the product, something that's very important.

Deputy Speaker, I can tell you, many of the people that I'm associated with work for Liquor & Lotteries, and that, when I do actually walk into one of those places, have an opportunity to see these people and to interact and to talk and to catch up. And they're proud of the work and the service that they provide to their fellow citizens. They're well paid and well respected in the community for the service that they provide, and this is something that can't be lost.

I will say, too, that, Deputy Speaker—that we can't just overlook the public health impact of this bill. Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research Director Tim Stockwell says outright that public health and safety would be—from a public health and safety perspective, this would be a poor move because of the recently released reports on the toxicity of alcohol and the impact that it has on the human body.

* (16:10)

But the other piece, too, Deputy Speaker, that sometimes I think we forget to understand is that public liquor system works and that it works well. Just like next door in Saskatchewan where they kept their telephone system, right now, guess what they enjoy? The lowest rates in the country on mobility. What do we enjoy here in Manitoba? Oh, boy, we get to pay

the same rates as everybody else, double what they are next door. I just want to put that as a reminder as when they say, trust us, as to what can happen.

Also would like to say that private liquor systems require more public spending to ensure that these private retailers are compliant with the regulations. Do you think they're going to hire more inspectors to ensure that? Do you think that they're going to ensure that every security measure is taken in these private liquor things?

No way, they'll wash their hands, Deputy Speaker, and just hand it over; that's going to be their fault, right? That's going to be the businesses' job to ensure that they keep their employees safe; employees, by the way, that will likely be paid minimum wage, that likely won't benefit from a collective union environment where not only the workers' rights are respected but also the people that walk in that door, a safe environment.

Deputy Speaker, that'll be gone. And we know that because we've seen it. We see it every day, and that's the thing. This government keeps repeating some of the same mistakes they've made since 2016, and they think that people aren't paying attention, but boy oh boy, are they paying attention right now.

They're paying attention with this bill right here because they can't believe that we're up here in this House debating something that has such a low register on the public opinion piece and as—and we're here and here we are instead of debating—you know, I would love to be up here with my colleagues debating, you know, what the public health-care system needs. What a fully funded public education system could look like, Deputy Speaker. These are the pieces that we need to be talking about and debating in this House, not this piece of fluff. I can't believe that we're standing here.

But I also want to point out that public Liquor Mart staff are trained to spot people that are intoxicated, right, because they're not incentivized to sell that product. They're not incentivized to sell liquor because that's their job—of profit. They're here to look after the welfare of Manitobans. Those same employees wish they had a government that believed that. But they don't. That's why we have this bill in front of us right now.

Did you know, Deputy Speaker, that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is required by law to allocate 2 per cent of its income to addictions research and treatment? I wonder if that'll be in the agreement with

the private sellers. I doubt it. That's why we have a public retailer. Because we—the public retailer knows the harms of alcohol. That's why we have that provision in the statute right now, and that's why it's important that Bill 9 be defeated.

We worry that Bill 9 could increase the amount of alcohol sales to people that are underage, which is always an issue. And like I said earlier in my debate, Deputy Speaker, is that Liquor & Lotteries staff are trained to ensure the safety of every Manitoban, and they do that by ensuring underage Manitobans don't get access to alcohol through a Liquor & Lotteries store. And that is something that we can't lose sight of.

You know, one of the other interesting pieces, Deputy Speaker, is that, as an educator, a former educator, actually, part of the health curriculum—a robust health curriculum—was talking about carcinogens, the effects of illicit drugs on the human body, the effects of—and really having a debate on why does a government even sell alcohol if it's so dangerous.

And these are debates that are open, that we need to have. What Bill 9, I guess, can do is bring this forward, is bring forward this important debate, Deputy Speaker, that we need to have regarding alcohol and drugs that are as toxic as alcohol.

Schools are a great place to have that debate. Right now we're having that in the House here. I think it's important to remember that there are a number of Manitobans under 18 that are watching House proceedings right now, Deputy Speaker, expecting us as adults to ensure the welfare of our people that are under 18.

It's a privilege for me to stand here and to stand and to say that, on this side of the House, we're going to look after that welfare and ensure that our young people under the age of 18 aren't going to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous retailers. They can guarantee that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries won't be doing that because that's not part of their mandate.

And that's what's important here, that we—and when I started 26 minutes ago, I started with the whole premise being that we need to be in this House debating bills that have positive impact on the citizenry of Manitoba. That's why we're here, in the shadow of a pandemic, right now, when people in Manitoba are looking to their government for leadership and investment in key public services, that that's what they're demanding. Not demanding a bill that talks about the privatization of liquor sales; not at all.

Instead, what they want, instead of debating Bill 9, Deputy Speaker, they want a serious dialogue in this House about how we're going to tackle our health-care crisis. They want a serious debate on how we're going to deal with the mental health of many of our citizens in this province that have suffered coming out of the pandemic.

That's some of the important stuff that we need to talk about. They want to talk about how we're going to fully fund our public education system, instead of looking at how we're going to take the revenue from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries and have it be redistributed to private enterprises and interests. We know the last time that happened, when we sold off MTS, and the benefits of that. And we see it right now. We pay some of the highest mobility rates in the country.

Right next door in Saskatchewan that has a Conservative government, kept their publicly owned telephone system. Imagine that. Imagine having profits and then keep them for services that are important to the citizenry here in their—oh—in their province—it's not really here; it's over there. Why? Because we sold ours. I think the last time was a Conservative government that got rid of one of our publicly owned gems.

And so here we are having the same debate. We're having the same debate—what is it, it's 2023 now, or 25 years later, still another—this is, you know, having this same debate.

An Honourable Member: They haven't learned.

Mr. Altomare: Never. Not at all, you know. And Manitobans now are wise to this. They can hardly wait, Deputy Speaker, can hardly wait for the next election so that we can actually have a government elected that cares about its citizens, that invests in public services, and that ensures the welfare of every Manitoban.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

And with those few words, Madam Speaker, I will end my debate.

Thank you.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I am grateful to have some opportunity to speak on Bill 9 and to follow the words of my colleague, the member from Transcona, as well as hearing from my colleague, the member from Maples earlier today, and my colleague, the member from Wolseley, and in previous days, hearing

from—the wise words from my colleagues from St. James and from Notre Dame, and many others.

And I think that those comments are important—frame the debate and the discussion that we're having around Bill 9, Madam Speaker.

* (16:20)

And, after hearing many of these thoughts, and as well, hearing specifically from the minister himself, both during his portion and during the question and answer, I think, ultimately, this comes down to a question of trust, and the fact that we can't trust this government, we can't trust this minister, with putting this bill forward because we don't know the full impacts that this bill will have on Manitobans. And, for that reason, it's very difficult for us to really trust Bill 9, to trust this government.

And, in many ways, Bill 9 is just a small example of the mistrust—the fact that we can't trust this government in general. And let me explain why that is, Madam Speaker.

First of all, I think we have to address the fact that we are now debating Bill 9 in what is, in fact, its third incarnation. Right? Its third iteration, you know? It's like, you know, you have, you know, an idea that you're not quite sure how to get it out. You know, you have an idea, this isn't really working for—let's workshop this, and you put out your first version of it. Nobody likes it. It fails, dies.

And you said, oh, okay, well let's retool it again. We'll bring out our second idea, second—we'll workshop this second time. No. Doesn't like it—nobody likes it. It dies again.

You need—try to bring it this third time. And every time, it's the same, you just change the number. Now it's Bill 9; 42, 40, Bill 9, I mean—the idea is they're privatizing liquor and—and they—and what are people keep saying about this? That they don't want this. Manitobans are—been clear about this; this is not one of their top priorities.

Yet, this government moves forward with this idea—this failed idea that has failed once already—failed twice already. And yet again, they bring forward a bill that seems doomed and almost certain to fail again because it's not really what Manitobans are looking for.

And so I really question whether we can trust this government to be working on the best interests of Manitobans because, so far, they haven't been seen to be listening to Manitobans. If they were listening to

Manitobans, Madam Speaker, I think they would clearly know by now that this direction, when it comes to liquor sales, is not the direction they ought to be going on.

And that's quite evident from the conversations if you actually speak with Manitobans. You know, Madam Speaker, if you speak to Manitobans and you ask them about all of their priorities—and I think a lot of us as MLAs talk to Manitobans. I—at least, I know I certainly do, and I know my all colleagues on this side of the House certainly do. And when we talk to Manitobans, what do they talk to us about? Their No. 1 priorities are things like the health-care system, the failing and crumbling health-care system that has failed and crumbled under the care of this PC government.

And that's their No. 1 priority. I hear that time and time again when I speak to Manitobans. It's not Bill 9. It's not the idea that we need to change the access to liquor. That's not what people are rushing to my door to speak to me about. That's not what I hear when I ring up people's door—or, knock on their door and they open it and say, oh my gosh, you've got to increase the access to—no.

It's about fixing their hospitals, making sure they don't have to wait so long at the emergency room. It's about their surgical wait lines. It's about the fact that they see time and time again a stressed and strained health-care worker. It's the fact that they've had an experience, or their family member or their friend has had a experience in that hospital or is trying to receive care or trying to get a diagnostic test or trying to get some sort of service out of our health-care system. And it's more difficult today than it was just a few years ago because of the direct cuts of this PC government.

And that's what they tell me. You know? And when they don't tell me that, they tell me about the education system. They tell me about the challenges that there's—child—are facing. Or they tell me about the rising costs of living, the fact that every aspect of their life has become more difficult. And they're shocked to hear that this government has continually raised hydro rates year in and year out, again and again.

They don't tell me about this. And that's what happens when you have a government that's out of touch with Manitobans. They bring forward bills like this that don't really 'reflect'—'thefleck' the priorities of Manitobans.

And that's why it's so hard to trust this government, because they don't reflect the priorities of Manitobans. They don't actually work on their behalf because they don't seem to understand what Manitobans are really asking for at this moment.

Now, I go back to this idea of trust, Madam Speaker, because we know that Manitobans do trust and do like Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, with an over 90 per cent satisfaction rate. It has to be said, and it must be noted, that Manitobans are happy with the access to the service and—of receiving alcohol that they have right now.

And so why would this government see fit to spend this time and this amount of time on debate crafting this legislation to change something when Manitobans are already happy, when it—when, by comparison, there is a laundry list of things where this government has failed, and are currently failing, that needs to be addressed in a much more critical way. And so it's very shocking to see that this is a bill that the minister is putting forward.

And so for the minister to say in his comments that this is something that Manitobans overwhelmingly want, you know, again, it makes me—hard for me to trust his words because that's not what we're hearing in actual empirical data; it's not what we're hearing when we have conversations with Manitobans, and so that makes it certainly a challenge, and that's why my theme around this is whether we can trust this.

Now, and when I dig into—even deeper about whether we can trust this legislation, to whether it is a good thing for Manitobans, you know, a simple question is: what are going to be the financial impacts of Bill 9?

That is a simple question. I think anyone who is putting forward any legislation and, furthermore, not even anyone who is putting forward legislation; anyone who is seeking to understand legislation.

And I think, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, that should be—every Manitoban wants to understand how a bill is going to affect their lives, how it's going to affect their province, our province. And, frankly, anyone in Manitoba wants to know that the people who are doing this sort of work understand the impact it's going to have on everyone across the province. And it's only in doing our jobs that we fully, you know, only by going through and digging into the details that we're fully doing our jobs, right? And by going in and doing our jobs, that's how we build trust amongst

Manitobans who are seeking to understand how government works and how it is supposed to benefit our lives.

But yet we see from this minister a failure, a stark and—just evident failure to provide any sort of financial analysis to prove or show how this would benefit Manitobans. It's quite true. It's quite, just, laid bare for all of us to see. When asked in the question period what sort of financial analysis has the minister or the minister's office or team done to show what impact Bill 9, privatization of some liquor sales, would have on M-L—on the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries liquor sales, it seemed like the minister just threw up his hands and said, well, we haven't done our work; we don't know.

So what the minister is basically saying: there is no analysis. There's no numbers to show what impact this will have. What sort of response is that from any responsible minister? It's a terrible response. You're trying to say that you're going to make a change to a corporation whose profits are \$315 million a year. You want to make a significant change to their model of business and you haven't done the numbers to tell us how much that's going to cost, right? What kind of financial management is that? What kind of fiscal responsibility is that? Is this the same sort of fiscal responsibility that this government takes with our education system?

Is this the same type of lack of fiscal care they take with our health-care system? Is this the same type of lack of fiscal care that they take with our justice system? I certainly hope not. But I fear that it is, because if this is what the minister has put forwarding—putting forward for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, then what do I have to expect from any other departments?

If they're putting forward a legislation that would drastically change the sales of liquor in Manitoba and not even putting forward a snippet of analysis to show that this would either change sales by a little bit, drastically lower sales for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, whether it would, you know, what impact it would have on closures of locations or job numbers. With none of that work being done, they've put forward this bill and ask us to trust them. Well, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, we don't trust you. Manitobans don't trust you.

* (16:30)

Now, let me give you an example, Madam Speaker. You know, I went to school—I think a lot of

us went to school here in Manitoba. Even if you didn't, you know the experience of going to school, working on math problems. Money times the—you know the answer and you write it down. But you don't always get all marks, even if you get the answer right. You need to show your work. The teacher requires you, when you're doing a math problem, to show how you solved that problem to ensure that you understand what you're doing and that you're doing it in the correct process.

That's an example of this here, Madam Speaker. The government is putting forward this idea without showing their work. They're saying this is what we want to get to, but we're not showing you how we're going to get here, the impacts of what this actually means. They're not showing us the work.

Now, as a teacher you'd give that a failing grade, even if the answer was correct. But, Madam Speaker, let me tell you, the answer is not correct in this case. Bill 9 would be a disaster for us in Manitoba, taking away—you know, when you consider that thirty—\$315 million of profit that liquor sales drives in for our departments of Health and Education and other revenues through Manitoba—the Province of Manitoba. It would be a disaster to see those profits privatized.

And so not only has the government failed to show its work, they've gotten the answer completely wrong. And so, as a teacher, you have nothing else to do but give that an F and tell that student to go back to class, and that's what I hope the minister learns from this.

Now, as we go on, Madam Speaker, it's still certainly a question of trust when we're debating Bill 9, and regardless of whether the minister is showing his work, which he hasn't, putting forward a bad example, continually not understanding the needs of Manitobans.

We need to discuss something that's very, very important when it comes to this, is that, you know, when Manitobans do talk to me about liquor sales, about the consumption of alcohol, what is it—the No. 1 thing that they talk to me about? They talk to me about the addiction crisis. They talk to me about the challenges that Manitobans have when it comes to dealing with the addiction crisis and seeking treatment for alcohol abuse and alcohol-related concerns.

And that's the No. 1 thing that people actually talk to me when the topic of alcohol is brought up, not the actual access to alcohol. I think it's very available in Manitoba when you consider that especially with

many of the convenient quick liquor marts that are available through many private retailers. I know there's one close to my place at a Superstore location. And when you consider that it is already very accessible and available, the No. 1 thing that people talk to me about when asked about alcohol is, how do we deal with the addiction crisis that we're facing here in Manitoba, because No. 1 addictive substance used in Manitoba is alcohol.

And I know that there are, you know, many times the media—many substances that get media attention, and I won't list them, but regardless of those media reports, the No. 1 used substance is still alcohol, right? And that needs to be kept very seriously.

And so for us to be dealing with this we also need to be dealing with the ramifications of what alcoholism and addiction has in Manitoba.

Now, when asked—again, when asked—the minister, what impact would these increased sales of alcohol have on addiction, on alcoholism, on any alcohol abuse, what impact would that have, the minister had no further information to add. He simply either didn't know or didn't care about that side of it. And that's a serious impact because not only does addiction have a huge impact on our community here in Manitoba, but it also goes to show that maybe that this isn't a whole-of-government approach; that, you know, the talk of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries isn't connected to that discussion around how we deal with the addiction crisis.

It's really two sides of the same coin, Madam Speaker. But unless you really connect those dots, and see how those two can be related and how you can, you know, use one to help the other, then we're not going to solve some of these serious challenges that we're facing.

And, Madam Speaker, it's important to really understand that. And I say that specifically because M-L-B-B commits by law 2 per cent of their income to addiction research and treatment. And so if we're going to be making a change—a significant change—to decrease the potential income of M-L—Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, then we're going to be then changing the amount of money that goes into addiction research and treatment; and what are you then saying to those who suffer and are looking for treatment from addictions?

You're then saying that, well, you know, too bad. We privatized this; we took it out of public hands. We then took less—we took money out of the fact that—out

of addiction-treatment facilities. We took money out of addiction research. And we put it all over into private businesses' hands. And how does that help us solve some of those addiction challenges that we're facing?

You know, we know these addiction challenges are very prevalent in our communities. You—it's very challenging to go, you know, a day, a few days without seeing it visible in our communities, or reading about it or seeing it on—reading about it in the paper or seeing it on TV. And that should be one of the main charges of a responsible community, is to help those people who need it the most. Those people who have addiction issues. Those people who have mental health issues. Those people who are in poverty or live in homelessness.

And this is a prime example about how this government is wilfully choosing to not help those people. It's not an accident; it's not a coincidence that this bill is put forward, and it will have a negative impact on those who are seeking addiction treatment. It's not just—doesn't just happen. It's very clear in this bill; if you know anything about Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, that they put forward a portion of their income, 2 per cent, toward addiction research and treatment, then there—it's just logical that there would be a reduction in that amount if this bill passes.

And so this government, again, is clearly staying—saying their priorities, that they don't want to spend as much money on addiction treatment and addiction research as they are right now. Again, another cut to a service that Manitobans are relying on. And those Manitobans who are among the most vulnerable. It's just shameful, Madam Speaker.

Now, as we dive into this even further, and we look at exactly some of the things that Manitobans are talking about when it comes to Liquor & Lotteries, and we look back at the minister's words during the question-and-answer period for this bill. And we look at those words, you know, the minister made a comment in his direct quote that there would be, quote, no store that would be closed. You know, he said that when it came to Bill 9.

Now I don't think that he really had the evidence to back that up. As we already said, the minister doesn't do his homework. So he didn't put forward the financial analysis for this bill, and he didn't put any social impact analysis for this bill. There's no homework done on either of those fronts. And then he said—made this comment that there would be no stores closed. Well, has he done a human resource analysis

on this bill to see whether there would be, actually, no stores closed and no employees impacted?

That they're—if that's the case, if he—because he said those words, then put it forward in writing. Commit to that. You know, put that in writing and let people know that there's not going to be that—no store closures, or no employees impacted. You know, we know right now that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries has good-paying jobs. And we want to keep good-paying jobs here in Manitoba. We know that Liquor & Lotteries has employees—over 2,000 people in Manitoba with good-paying jobs. And we want to keep them.

* (16:40)

This minister's—potentially threatens those jobs with no analysis on how he's going to ensure that stores don't get closed. Because we don't trust him. We've shown you that he doesn't do his homework, didn't do the financial analysis, didn't do the social impact analysis, hasn't done a human resource analysis, but yet can make these wild claims.

And we don't trust him. On this side of the House I know we don't, and I know Manitobans are quickly catching on that they don't trust him either.

We want those good-paying jobs to stay here, and that's why we disagree with the fundamental principles of Bill 9. The good-paying jobs need to stay with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, over 2,000 of them. They do not need to be privatized for potentially lower paying jobs—for potentially far lower paying jobs.

Now, what does that do not only to those individual employees who potentially face job loss, but what does it do to our overall economy when we're saying, we would rather take away good-paying jobs from Manitoba and replace them with lower paying jobs in the private sector. What does that really say about our economy? That we—do we want to have a growing and vibrant and, as much as we can, income—and avoid income inequality in our economy?

Well, this is not what this government apparently wants when they put forward legislations like Bill 9. They're saying that they're hoping for farther income inequality. It seems like they want to take revenue out of the hands of Manitobans and, you know, and give them to large corporations. This is what it seems like they are intending to do, and I think there's no other way around it because that's exactly the impact that Bill 9 will have.

And so, if you look at all of these things combined, Madam Speaker, there is almost no way that we can trust this government. Not with Bill 9. Not certainly with Bill 9 because they haven't shown the work. And I'm really afraid that this attitude and this approach to Bill 9 is the same attitude and approach that they'll have with other pieces of legislation or, quite frankly, with how they're running the government right now.

You know, we see these sorts of things all the time with our health care, with the Department of Education, with the department of post-secondary, where we're seeing this government fail the interests of Manitobans. We're seeing them not respect the best wishes of Manitobans. And we're seeing them choose financially irresponsible decisions that would put the province in jeopardy, and Manitobans and our economy in peril.

And it doesn't have to be this way, Madam Speaker. It really doesn't. We have a system that works here in Manitoba where people have good access to alcohol, where they have the ability to buy the alcohol they need in convenient manners and in a safe way.

One of the things that we—was also questioned during the minister's question and answer was what is he going to do to ensure that increased liquor sales are done securely. We know that there are many challenges around safety at alcohol vendors and how they're sold, whether it's at an—liquor store or at a beer store, and we want to ensure that not only are Manitobans who are purchasing alcohol remain—kept safe, but also those employees who are selling alcohol are safe. And in order to do so, there—with the increased alcohol sales, it only stands to reason that there might be a need for increased security.

And so, when asked—when we asked the minister a reasonable question: Is there a plan to increase security around Bill 9? He said well, you know, perhaps we might look into—there might be a plan, maybe we'll have to see if there's something that we might do, I'll have to check with their—with the department to see whether they're doing anything right now. You know, a lot of unsure—surety around what the security would be.

Now, that doesn't distill any confidence in Manitobans who are looking for this government to actually know what it's doing, because it clearly doesn't with Bill 9.

Now, when you look at all of these things combined, Madam Speaker, you look at the clear trend that they have failed when it comes to providing financial analysis on Bill 9.

They have clearly not considered any social impact in terms of the addiction crisis when it comes to Bill 9, and the impacts it would have on those who suffer from alcoholism or are seeking treatment from any addiction and—because the addictions funding that comes from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, that 2 per cent, goes for addictions research as well, so there might be other spill-off benefits of those dollars that go to that sort of research. As we know, research has many benefits to not only growing that particular knowledge base in our province here, but also economic impacts and spill-off effects that may—that down the road might end up being quite, quite beneficial for our province.

But not only has the government failed there; they have also failed to really communicate to Manitobans and actually consult with Manitobans to see whether this is what Manitobans want, and it, clearly, is not a top priority. Manitobans already value and appreciate and are satisfied with the services provided by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

And, again, the government has failed to show how they will provide any additional security measures when it comes to increased alcohol sales. And I think that should put a lot of us in question—question this, because we know that there can be potential dangers. There can be, you know, at some times, a violence when it comes to people trying to rob liquor stores, or not just in liquor stores, but around them. And a lot of work has been done over the past few years to ensure the sale of liquor is done in a safe and responsible manner.

And now, for the government to put forward a legislation that could potentially threaten some of that work that's been done to make sure the sale of liquor is done safely seems a little bit backwards and a little bit strange. Why would they potentially put forward a legislation to increase alcohol sales and make it potentially more risky without providing the additional security to also ensure its safety? Now again, in that regard, it's clear the government has failed.

And, again, the government has also failed to show any real way—any real analysis on its human resource challenge when it comes to this Bill 9. Good-paying jobs, that's what we have right now. And you're talking about a time, Madam Speaker, where we are still trying to grow our economy and come out

of a pandemic, right. We don't need to add more low-paying jobs. We need to add good-paying jobs, and that's—those are the jobs that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries has right now: over 2,000 of them. And not just those jobs are impacted, but there's hundreds of spill-off jobs that benefit from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries right now, and so we ought to be very, very proud of what we have right now.

And the last thing I'll end on, Madam Speaker, is just that, frankly, that this is just a reread of an old and bad idea. We heard it once before. We heard it actually twice before. It came up first time and it didn't go anywhere, because Manitobans knew it wouldn't work. It came up a second time and it didn't go anywhere, because, again, Manitobans knew it wouldn't work. And it's come up now a third time in Bill 9. And Manitobans are still sure that this bill won't work. It's not good for this province. That's why we don't support it. It's clearly why we're here not supporting this bill.

And I'm proud to be putting these words in the records to say that us on this side of the House will do better for Manitobans. We will certainly listen to Manitobans. We will work harder for Manitobans. We will do our homework for Manitobans and ensure that, when we put bills forward, they will be working better for all of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable—[interjection]—order. The honourable member for Union Station.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, I'm really grateful for the opportunity to put some words on the record in regards to Bill 9.

You know, I think my colleagues have done a tremendous job, really a tremendous job, of articulating why this bill that's being brought forward by the PCs poses a risk to Manitobans.

* (16:50)

And I know, Madam Speaker, that that may sound like a bit of strong language to say that this legislation poses a risk to Manitobans, but I use that language very intentionally. Because I think, quite frankly, any time a bill is brought forward by a legislator, any time a bill is brought forward by someone in a position of power in government, any time a bill is brought forward by a minister who will himself admit that he has not done an analysis on the—what the impacts of that legislation will be on the constituents of our province, I think that we can all agree that that poses a risk, potentially, to the residents of this province, when the minister bringing the legislation forward

himself doesn't understand what the potential impacts of that legislation will be.

Foundationally, the introduction of this bill is flawed based on that alone. That a minister in Cabinet in this government doesn't even understand what the impacts of legislation will be—I think most people on this side of the House would argue that's kind of a nonsensical approach. It's the approach of a government that is tired. It's the approach of a government that, quite frankly, continues to show that they are not competent. It's a disqualifying quality of any bill being brought forward that the person bringing it forward doesn't understand what it will do.

And so I think it's important to frame it that way because that really does speak very clearly to the reasons why this government can't speak on the issues that we're bringing forward in terms of what the risks are to Manitobans. We're talking not only about the public health risks—of which there are several, and I'll get into that—but we're also talking about the economic risks.

Madam Speaker, we are in a crucial time in our economy where Manitoba families in every corner of this province are struggling with the cost of living crisis and affordability crisis where now, more than ever, Manitobans need good jobs, well-paying jobs, jobs with good benefits, jobs that are protected, jobs that are providing them access to training opportunities, jobs that, you know, provide safer environments for employment—jobs that, currently, under the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corp., are provided to many, many Manitobans.

And the fact that this government would bring forward legislation that does not speak to, in any way, shape or form, how this bill would result in more well-paying, protected jobs for Manitobans and not less; how this bill would result in Manitobans working in safer environments, not less; how this bill would result in Manitobans having stronger workplace benefits, not less, is yet another example of the risk I'm talking about in terms of this bill being brought forward, and the lack of due diligence done by the member who brought it forward—and, quite frankly, the Cabinet and that caucus.

Madam Speaker, you know, we see pretty plainly on this side of the House that this piece of legislation also doesn't speak to how they're going to mitigate the potential public health implications relating to this bill. We all are probably now pretty well aware of the recent health recommendations around alcohol consumption that had been brought forward nationally.

Now, this is a conversation, Madam Speaker—I don't know about you, but in my social circles, in, you know, my friend groups, from constituents, when those recommendations came out—the new recommendations around alcohol consumption—and I think we saw it in the media, too—the reactions from the public were pretty strong.

The thought, for a lot of folks, that the recommendations are saying that we should keep our alcohol consumption to two drinks or less per week is a huge pendulum shift for many, many people. It's huge. Right? There are a lot of folks of all ages—all ages; it's not just maybe some folks who think about young adults who are going to the clubs or going to the bars and socializing that way—it's people of all ages who are really having a bit of a challenging time reconciling themselves with these new standards around alcohol consumption.

And I really have to credit the folks who, for the past two and a half, three years—I would say, really, two to five years—if we're going to look at the data, like, very, very, very intensely, this work has been going on for years actually, around the research behind what alcohol consumption should look like for Canadians.

You know, it's a reality that many folks are struggling with. And if we think back to many years ago, decades ago, when the conversation was around smoking, many folks had that same reaction.

I grew up during a time, Madam Speaker, where you could smoke in restaurants, you could smoke in all different kinds of social settings. I remember being, as a younger person—I don't want to say I'm not young, I'm young-ish maybe now—but as a younger person going out in social settings, you would go to places and people would be smoking, and that would hang on you, that would be on your clothes, it would be in your hair. And so you knew you were in a place where people were smoking.

And it was a big shift to get establishments and people on board with recognizing the negative health implications of smoking, the exposure to second-hand smoke, et cetera. And now, in 2023, we're all reconciling with this reality that we really do need to have a national, and also local here in Manitoba, conversation around the impacts of alcohol consumption.

It is a public health situation of significance. Alcohol consumption is directly related to increased risks and rates of cancer, injuries, be it related to motor vehicle accidents and other areas as well. It's directly

related to, you know, mood disorders. It's directly related to, you know, a host of physical and mental health issues being increased in terms of their risk the more you consume alcohol.

And so, when we look at a bill like this that is proposing to make alcohol more readily available in different establishments—establishments, rather, that would have access to those licences, it's really perplexing to me that the government wouldn't be able to very plainly answer the question: what are they going to do to ensure that, given what we know now about the increased risks of all kinds of health issues related to increased alcohol consumption—which is a newer conversation for many folks—given that conversation, it is—it's perplexing that they wouldn't have a strategy outlined as to how we're going to ensure the current funds that are taken from the profits of the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and used to educate the public and generate awareness and all of that.

How are they going to make sure that we're not directly in, inter—in to—what's the word I'm looking for—we're directly negatively impacting the funds being generated that provide that education and awareness and resources to organizations that provide the supports for people who deal with the consequences—physical and mental health consequences—related to alcohol consumption?

That doesn't really—that doesn't—the math doesn't math, Madam Speaker. It doesn't add up that this government would bring forward a piece of legislation that is more than likely going to have a direct impact on the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation being able to bring in revenue that directly supports folks who are struggling with addictions, who are living with the impacts of alcohol consumption and the risks associated with that, and not have a solve to that.

And, you know, Madam Speaker, the, the lack of proactive planning, the lack of research, the lack of evidence that has informed this bill, the lack of understanding of the potential impacts of this legislation on Manitobans and their families, on their health, physical, mental and emotional well-being, speaks to why Manitobans can not trust this government with their health care.

Bringing this bill forward is a public health consideration. This is about the economy, it is about jobs. It is about many things, but it is also about public health and the well-being of Manitobans.

Manitoba has some of the highest rates of domestic violence. Manitoba has some of the highest rates, the highest rate of sexual assault. Manitoba has some of the highest—well, the poorest, poorest health outcomes across a myriad of health issues.

And yet this government is bringing forward a piece of legislation without a clue as to how this bill will impact all of these areas in our health-care system, in terms of our public health, the health of

Manitobans. It is incredibly irresponsible. It reflects the values and the priorities of this government.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 20 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 6, 2023

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