

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

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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

Thursday, April 13, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 236—The Public Expression Protection Act

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I move, seconded by the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux), that Bill 236, The Public Expression Protection Act; Loi sur la protection de l'expression quant aux questions d'intérêt public, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamont: I rise today to introduce Bill 236, The Public Expression Protection Act, also known as anti-SLAPP legislation.

The acronym SLAPP stands for strategic lawsuits against public participation, referring to litigation without substantial merit that is brought against citizens or groups to silence their opposition to issues of the public interest.

Several jurisdictions in Canada and around the world have already adopted similar legislation. The express purposes of The Public Expression Protection Act seeks to balance the protection of public participation and freedom of expression and the protection of reputation.

The act is to encourage individuals to express themselves in matters of public interest, to promote broad participation and debate on such matters and reduce the risk that participation in public debate will be hampered by fear of legal action.

We look forward to the support of all members towards Bill 236.

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

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage—and I would indicate that the

required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 27(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

Vaisakhi

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today and recognize Vaisakhi in Manitoba, which is observed on April 14th of this year. Vaisakhi is an important festival that is celebrated in Punjab and marks the beginning of the new solar year and the harvest season, as well as to celebrate the year 1699, when Sikhism was born as a faith and a religion.

Before its significance as a Sikh religious festival, Vaisakhi was celebrated as the harvest festival in Punjab. However, in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh chose this festival to establish the Khalsa, a warrior community of Sikhs.

He came out of a tent carrying a sword to take any Sikh who was willing to sacrifice his life for faith. Few men disappeared into the tent and, after a while, five men came out of the tent unharmed and wearing turbans on their heads. These five men became known as the Panj Pyare and became the first five members of the Khalsa.

They were baptized by Guru Gobind Singh by sprinkling holy water on them and reciting holy prayers. The same ritual is now followed at the baptism ceremony of the Sikhs, with all men adopting the name Singh, meaning lion, and all women named Kaur, named princess—meaning princess. This signifies that the Khalsa forms a single family and they should defend the weak and promote justice.

Now, during the Vaisakhi festival, Sikhs visit gurdwaras, their place of worship, which are specially decorated for the occasion. They are also special processions and parades which take place during Vaisakhi called Nagar Kirtan. Nagar means town and Kirtan stands for the singing of hymns found in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, which is also carried in the procession.

The celebration on the day includes activities such as singing, reading aloud the scriptures and chanting hymns.

Madam Speaker, the Vaisakhi celebration demonstrates the tremendous pride that Sikhs have in their culture and heritage. In Manitoba, we encourage all communities to explore the history of their ancestry, honour their customs and traditions and share their culture with others. This, in turn, creates mutual respect and understanding.

The diversity of our people and our tradition of sharing our cultures continues to advance Manitoba as a model for an inclusive and a welcoming society. It is my hope that we continue to work together to build a welcoming community for all people in Manitoba.

As a Punjabi man myself, and the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage, it is my true honour to present a ministerial statement on Vaisakhi. I would also like to recognize and honour the Punjabi men and women that have come before me. And, additionally, I would like to honour and recognize the two other Punjabi men in this Chamber: the member from Burrows and the member from Maples, as well as the larger Punjabi community and all the Punjabi members here in the Manitoba legislator.

Madam Speaker, I ask that we rise and recognize the Punjabi community as they celebrate Vaisakhi.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. [*The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory belongs to God.*]

Madam Speaker, I feel so proud today to stand up and respond to this ministerial statement on Vaisakhi and the birth of Khalsa, and by my traditional clothing, kurta pajama and pagri.

Vaisakhi is a holiday celebrated by millions of people of many faiths across the globe. This holiday began as a spring harvest festival in the region of Punjab, which is known as the breadbasket of India. Vaisakhi is particularly meaningful for agricultural producers, who use the holiday as an opportunity to celebrate and prepare for the next farming season.

Although Vaisakhi has traditionally been a harvest festival in Punjab, the day has a special significance for the Sikh community, as it is the day when Khalsa was born as a collective faith in 1699. Sikhs are a vibrant part of Manitoba's society, and Vaisakhi is one of the largest Sikh celebrations of the year. For Sikhs, Vaisakhi is also a festival to celebrate the birth of the Khalsa.

On Vaisakhi in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji created the order of the Khalsa. The Khalsa refers to a collective of practising Sikhs who commit to live their lives in the spirit of service to all, equality and compassion.

It was also on Vaisakhi Day in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh Ji asked Sikhs to adorn themselves with the five Sikh articles of faith. The Khalsa Panth was created to serve humanity and oppose injustice wherever it may exist.

While Manitobans celebrate Vaisakhi, we are also concerned about the situation in Punjab, where people are still fighting for their basic human rights and freedom of speech. As different communities celebrate Vaisakhi, we must also recommit ourselves to caring for those around us and ensuring the rights of our fellow community members are protected. I urge everyone to live in peace, love and harmony.

Madam Speaker, I ask all the members to join me in wishing all those celebrating a happy Vaisakhi and Khalsa Day, and welcome my Punjabi community members in the gallery—and especially the school students and teachers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: Sat Sri Akal [*Truth is God*] and happy Vaisakhi to you and to all of the guests who have joined us today in the gallery.

Madam Speaker, as you can tell, I am wearing a turban and I feel so honoured to be able to participate in Sikh Heritage Month by wearing a turban along with some of my colleagues here inside the Manitoba Legislative Chambers.

I was quite young when I first started learning about what a turban represented and, throughout the years, I have learnt that it deserves immense respect as it means humility and kindness; how it is integral to religious identity; and how it's a symbol of sovereignty, courage, equality and self-respect.

Madam Speaker, the member for Burrows did an excellent job in educating all of us in these Chambers about the turban when he introduced his legislation last year, and I want to thank him for today's event in the Rotunda and express how much I really appreciated his remarks about the Komagata Maru.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't use this also as an opportunity to also encourage the government to help resource the Komagata Maru Park in Tyndall Park, as it's a step towards forgiveness and we need to make sure this happens.

* (13:40)

Now, Madam Speaker, the celebration of Vaisakhi is a festival to celebrate the birth of the Khalsa. And what's so cool about this for me right now is less than two months ago I was in Anandpur Sahib, the place where the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa in front of thousands of people in 1699. And whether it's Anandpur Sahib or visiting the Golden Temple, the biggest takeaway is the sincere respect, kindness and humility that Sikhs give to others and the community.

Madam Speaker, this is what Vaisakhi is all about, and I look forward to celebrating more this weekend at the Vaisakhi event. I know there's one coming up tomorrow night. A lot of my colleagues are going to be joining, as well, at being hosted by Punjab Foundation of Manitoba.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ruth Ann Furgala

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ruth Ann Furgala, a resident of Riverton, for her many years of devoted service to her community and to 'numous' organizations.

Ruth Ann retired in 2013 from an almost 40-year career with the Manitoba government. She also served for 28 years as a school trustee in Evergreen School Division and is an honorary lifetime member of the Manitoba School Boards Association and also the Canadian School Boards Association. She served eight years on the MSBA executive, including two years as president, and four years on the board of the CSBA, including one year as president and another two years as vice-president. In 2018, Ruth Ann was inducted into the Evergreen Foundation Hall of Fame for her dedicated contributions to the Evergreen Foundation of Manitoba.

Ruth Ann's inspiring volunteerism included 13 years on the board with the Riverton-Bifrost recreation commission and was four years on the board of the Westshore foundation of Manitoba, and she currently sits on the board of the Reggie Leach golf committee. She is an active member of Djorfung Ladies Aid and,

in 2022, completed six years on the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority board.

Ruth Ann has been a member of the Riverton Transportation & Heritage Centre board of directors for 15 years and is thrilled the construction of the centre will soon begin. The warehouse will house new exhibits to showcase the heritage and diversity of the community.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize Ruth Ann Furgala, who is in the gallery today with her husband Wayne. I thank Ruth Ann and commend her for her dedicated service to her community and to Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses)—oh, sorry.

The honourable member for Burrows.

Turban Day

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I am honoured to rise in the House to recognize Manitoba's first Turban Day and Vaisakhi—the birth of Khalsa.

In 2022, I brought forward a bill, bill 227, The Turban Day Act, to recognize and promote the significance of turbans as a part of Manitoba's diverse and multicultural social landscape. Manitobans of Punjabi heritage were pleased to see it pass with unanimous consent, and I would like to thank all MLAs, the community organizations and gurdwaras for their support.

Turban, also known as the dastaar, is an article of faith donned by Sikhs all over the world. For the last 500 years, many Sikhs around the world have worn the turban as an expression of their faith and their commitment to serve humanity. Throughout history, Sikhs have worn the turban to signal their readiness to protect all people against injustice, regardless of faith, gender, caste or colour. Some of the most influential turban-wearing Sikhs have been women, one being Mai Bhago. Mai Bhago was a great female Sikh warrior who fought for justice and religious freedom.

Sikhs have faced and continue to face racism, violence and persecution throughout the world, including their homeland, the state of Punjab, because of their religious identity. I stand with my brothers and sisters in Punjab who are facing human rights violations as we speak. Today serves as an important reminder for all Manitobans to embrace principles of inclusivity each and every day.

My turban is an important part of my identity. It represents my commitment to equality, unity, service—the very values that are at the heart of my friendly

Manitobans. As I stand in this Chamber, my *dastaar* serves as a constant reminder of my responsibility as an elected official towards my constituents and all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask members to join me in recognizing Manitoba's first Turban Day and welcoming guests in the gallery.

Arts and Culture Funding for La Vérendrye

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): The month of March was an exciting time for the constituency of La Vérendrye, with the announcement that six local organizations are receiving funding as part of our government's Art, Culture and Sport in Community Fund. La Vérendrye is receiving over \$1.5 million across our communities in new funding.

The local organizations and projects receiving funding are: the RM of De Salsberry [*phonetic*] is receiving \$700,000 for arena renovations to the St. Malo Arena. The RM of La Broquerie is receiving \$650,000 for an arena ice plant efficiency enhancement to the La Broquerie arena. The Otterburne Curling Club is receiving \$132,500 for an upgrade to the insulation in the rink area. The Dufrost Curling Club is receiving \$39,320 for a new chiller. The Sprague & District historic museum is receiving \$25,000 for an Indigenous exhibit building. The Jolys Regional Library in St. Pierre Jolys is receiving \$25,000 for an access gatherings-accessible gathering space.

I'm proud to be part of a government that understands how vital projects like these are to communities. Arenas and curling clubs are hubs for communities during the winter months. They provide participation and entertainment for a healthy lifestyle. These projects will foster creativity and innovation in local arts, culture and sports initiatives in our communities, now and for generations to come.

I would like to thank all the volunteers for the countless hours they spend to make the many community facilities function and grow. I thank them for their time and service.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: We have a group of students in the public gallery that won't be staying for very long, so I want to introduce them before they leave.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Arthur Wright, 30 grade 7 and 8 students under the direction

of Julie Rowluk, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu).

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

* * *

Madam Speaker: Further member statements?

St. Vital Constituent Concerns

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of hosting many coffee parties with seniors' groups throughout St. Vital. This allowed me the opportunity to listen and hear their concerns and discuss with them the state of our province.

Now, I heard concerns about the lack of funding, both from the K-to-12 education system as well the advanced education system and the impact that will have on Manitoba's future, as well I—as I heard concerns about the lack of affordable housing which this government has only made worse, and the need for more supports for renters, plus the frustration that the PC government hasn't addressed the addictions or the homelessness crisis.

But, unsurprisingly, Madam Speaker, more often than any other issue, the No. 1 concern for seniors was our health-care system.

You know, they shared with me the impact of some of their cuts by this PC government. That includes extended ER wait times caused by ER closures here in Winnipeg, extended surgical wait times, long wait times for bloodwork at super-testing sites.

It includes health-care staff burnout caused by mandatory overtime, limited access to diagnostic testing, increasing prescription drug costs, lack of timely and consistent access to home care, communication and co-ordination issues between health departments, lack of health-care services for rural Manitoba, the increasing trend of health-care privatization under this PC government and the closure of QuickCare clinics in St. Vital that serviced all of southeast Winnipeg.

* (13:50)

Now, while I could go on and on with even more ways that this PC government is failing our health-care system and hurting the lives of seniors in our community, I would rather close by saying that Manitobans want better and deserve better, and our NDP team is committed to providing better health care for all Manitobans.

So, I thank those seniors for raising their concerns, and I will continue to work on their behalf.

Foster Parents

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Today, I am rising to share with the House a bit about the resolution that I have introduced and will be debated next week.

The resolution calls for this government to recognize the incredible contributions and sacrifices that foster parents continue to make and asks the government to look at designating a day of appreciation for foster parents.

Madam Speaker, we have foster parents all over the province of Manitoba, and these incredible individuals, who have opened up their homes and hearts, have contributed so much, not only to our province but to hundreds of thousands of children and their families.

The resolution begins by emphasizing the importance of doing everything we can to ensure families are never unnecessarily separated. I think this it's important because we—whether it be us as politicians, or CFS, or judges and more, we need to do everything we can, as we have a role in making sure that families can stay together.

Further into the resolution, it talks about how children, no matter the age, should feel safe, and live in a caring environment.

It also speaks to the challenges that both children and families face throughout the fostering process, as well as the very positive cross-cultural exchange that is happening where foster parents continue to try to help children and themselves in their families, through learning about reconciliation and important cultural considerations.

Again, Madam Speaker, this resolution calls on the government to recognize the incredible contributions and sacrifices that foster parents continue to make, and asks that the government look at designating a day of appreciation for our foster parents.

And I hope for unanimous support by both the government and the official opposition.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: We have some other guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce to you—and we may have lost one of them just now, I'm not sure: students

from école Sisler High school, under the direction of Orysa Petryshyn. And those are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

Also in the public gallery, we have with us today high school students from the lady of the bay Catholic high school in Collingwood, Ontario, who are here on an exchange with The Peaceful Village Program, along with their Winnipeg host, Daniel Swaka, the executive director of Peaceful Village, and students of Peaceful Village, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Agricultural Crown Land Leasing Timing of Changes to Program

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Brian Pallister didn't tell the people of Dauphin that he was going to cut jobs and close their correctional facility prior to the 2019 election. We know that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) and the current Premier also did not share this information with the people of Dauphin.

FIPPA documents that I'll table show another example of how the PCs hid their bad decision until after people voted in 2019.

In March of that year, government gathered important stakeholders to discuss the future of Crown lands, but it was only after the election that ranchers found out about the bad changes to the Crown lands program.

Will the Premier tell the House why her government hid these changes from ranchers before the election?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Certainly, when it comes to our Crown lands, we have significant consultation.

We conduct significant consultation with agriculture producers in the community and right across this province, Madam Speaker, and we will continue to make sure that there's progress made in those consultations.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, we know the impact that these changes on the Crown lands program has had on young producers, ranchers in the Parkland Region and Interlake

regions as well. It means that young ranchers are cut out of getting a start in the industry.

Now, producers were handed huge increases to the cost of their leases during a time of drought and pandemic, and out-of-province companies pushed local community members to the brink. Brian Pallister hid these changes from Manitobans. That's what the FIPPA document that I shared shows.

Will the Premier be accountable? Will she tell the House why her government hid those changes from Manitobans before the last election?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, changes will continue to be made as a result of the outcomes of those consultations and so, that will continue to move forward.

But I think it's very important, Madam Speaker, that we thank all of our agriculture producers right across this great province of ours. We know that they not only feed people here in Manitoba and not just right across the country, but they feed the world.

And so, we want to take this opportunity to thank them for the incredible work that they do.

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

Mr. Kinew: Closing the Dauphin jail, raising the price of Crown lands while pushing out young ranchers and other producers. In both instances, the government knew before the election what they were planning and they hid it from regular people in our province.

Manitobans are right to feel as though they were misled. That's the record of the Pallister and Stefanson governments. Manitobans deserve accountability for their decisions.

Will the Premier tell the House why her government hid the changes on Crown lands from ranchers before the last election?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those ag producers right across this great province of ours.

And those producers will know that we gave them significant relief—tax relief on the—on their farmland, Madam Speaker; something that members opposite, each and every one of them, voted against and even started to call them rich individuals across the province.

We don't believe that. We believe that our farmers do yeoman's work for feeding not just people in

Manitoba and across the country, but right across the world.

We respect the work that they do, and we thank them each and every day.

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

Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Timeline for Outlet Channel Construction

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier still won't tell Manitobans why her government didn't tell the people about their plans prior to them voting last time around.

For five years, Brian Pallister did nothing on the channels project in the Interlake. And now, for two years, the Premier has done nothing on the file, as well; in fact, didn't even bother to include it in the government's most recent Throne Speech.

FIPPA documents that I'll table show that the government allocated \$5.7 million to the channels project, and I quote, contingent on construction commencing in December 2022. End quote. But like all the announcements this government makes, no construction took place.

Will the Premier tell the House when construction on the channels project will start?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, yes, each and every year we budgeted for the Lake St. Martin outlet because we are anxious to move forward with the outlet.

But we know that it's—continues to go through the environmental process, Madam Speaker, with the federal government. We are encouraging that process to move forward as quickly as possible so we can move forward and look at making sure that that outlet is there for those who need it in the community.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, for years, Brian Pallister wasted time picking fights with the federal government instead of building the channels project and now, unfortunately, we see more of the same from this Premier.

It's flood season right now. Families, ranchers, communities—they're all worried about the impact that flooding could have on their operations and on their properties. The channels project is important to making sure communities are safe and protected.

But there's been no action. Instead, the government pretends to allocate these funds knowing full well that they are not going to be spent. Residents of the Interlake deserve answers. All Manitobans deserve answers.

Will the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—Premier tell the House when construction of the channels project is going to start?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, maybe the Leader of the Opposition could consult with his NDP-Liberal coalition friends in Ottawa and ask them when we might be able to expect that outlet to commence.

* (14:00)

We will continue to make sure that the funds are there on the provincial side in the event that the federal NDP-Liberal coalition decides to move forward on this project, Madam Speaker. We have been asking them to do that; we do, of course, and respect—we do, of course, respect the environmental process that it's going through right now.

Maybe the Leader of the Opposition doesn't respect that process. We do, Madam Speaker. And we are—we will continue to work with all parties involved to ensure that we get this done as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we respect the people of the Interlake. And when we talk to those folks, they say that there has been no engagement and no work to advance the channels project by this Premier.

Now, this is one of the most important flood-protection projects that our province needs to get built, but there is simply no movement. Not a single Cabinet minister or the Premier is standing up to ensure that this project advances or even that a single shovel is put into the ground.

Will the Premier answer directly a very important question for this House: When will the construction of the channels project begin?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I think it's important to remind Manitobans that 17 years, the NDP government had the opportunity to do something about this, and they chose to do nothing.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition claims to have respect for people in the Interlake. Well, perhaps if he has so much respect, he could call up his NDP-Liberal

coalition friends in Ottawa, Madam Speaker, and have a conversation with them about moving this very important project forward. We recognize it's going through the environmental process. We respect that process.

But again, the Leader of the Opposition has an opportunity to do the right thing and call on his federal Liberal-NDP coalition friends to get the job done. Why won't he do that, Madam Speaker?

Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel Indigenous Economic Development Fund

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): We know the PCs have broken every single promise when it comes to the Lake St. Martin-Lake Manitoba channels project.

They promised in 2016 to build a channels project by 2020, and now we've learned through FIPPA, the \$15-million fund they set up to support Indigenous economic development opportunities related to the channels project has not handed out one single dollar. I'll table the document now.

Again, more announcements with no action from this government.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain: Why has she failed to spend a single dollar on the channels project Indigenous fund?

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Well, Madam Speaker, if the member from Keewatinook, if they would—he was actually tell his colleagues in Ottawa, Singh, the leader of the NDP coalition government with Trudeau, to make sure this licensing gets passed so that we can actually start the channels.

We do want to have First Nations participation when it comes to contracts within the design and the construction of the channels, so we want to make sure that we're getting this right.

We're doing consultations. Our staff are out there continuously for the last number of year—two years to get consultation to make sure this channel goes through, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Bushie: To be clear, this is a Manitoba fund. In October, the PCs announced \$15 million to support Indigenous economic development opportunities related to the channels project, yet FIPPA documents show that they haven't spent a single dollar in over six months. That means this project has not made any progress and

communities are having to wait even longer for flood protections.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) explain: Why has she failed to make any progress on the channels project whatsoever?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, our staff are working continuously hard to make sure that this channel gets done. We need to get the federal government to make the announcement that we can actually—the—when it comes to the licensing to be passed—so then we can start the construction of this.

We're ready, the contractors are ready, to go on this project. And we're working with First Nations communities to making sure that if there's any contracts out there, to make sure they apply to this grant, this opportunity to get some grant money, when it comes to helping them build their businesses so that they can be part of that construction side of this project.

And this is going to happen, and with—when we get the announcement happening with the federal government making an announcement that this licensing has passed.

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

Mr. Bushie: To be clear, Indigenous communities in the Interlake call this a slap in the face and crumbs, and they're not even delivering on the crumbs for this.

Seven years later, and not a shovel of dirt has been moved for the channels project. And it's been almost six months since the PCs announced that—the \$15-million fund to support Indigenous economic development opportunities related to the channels project, with absolutely no movement by this government.

And now we're getting into potential flood season, yet it appears the PCs are waiting for another devastating flood before they award a single dollar.

Can the Premier explain why she failed to take any action at all to complete the channels project here in Manitoba?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, when—much the work is based on trust. Our department wants to work with First Nations communities.

But the member opposite thinks that it can be managed if you can manage this department. But court records show that he cannot even manage a gas station. Suppliers had to go to court to get paid for a quarter of a million dollars worth of unpaid bills, Madam Speaker.

So, if this member is giving us some advice, I don't think we're going to take any advice from this member from Keewatinook, Madam Speaker.

Increase in Tuberculosis Rates Contact Tracing Program

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, PC cuts and the damage they did to health in Manitoba came at the worst possible time, and it set health workers up to fail when working in a broken system.

We've now learned that, under this PC government, Manitoba tuberculosis cases are among the highest in the country along with Saskatchewan, and death rates more than doubled during the pandemic.

Dr. Plourde, the medical director for integrated TB services with the WRHA, recently said that the death rates increased because TB contact tracing programs all but ceased as public health workers were redeployed during the pandemic.

Will this Health Minister tell the House what specific efforts her government is now taking proactively and pre-emptively to address this public health crisis?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we take TB very, very seriously. That is why our government has made record investments in Budget 2023. It is going to be spread across the entire health system to many program areas.

We are working with public health. We are working on the ground with front-line health providers to hear what the needs are post-COVID and how we can help the system to recover.

We will continue to listen, Madam Speaker, and take action.

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

MLA Asagwara: In next-door Saskatchewan, health officials are warning medical practitioners to watch for TB in children, as a handful of First Nations communities experienced an unusual uptick in cases and, sadly, several children have died.

Manitoba shares many of the same challenges in controlling TB as Saskatchewan. Living conditions in remote First Nations communities—can be overcrowded housing, poverty and scant access to essential medical care—make residents more vulnerable to tuberculosis.

She didn't answer the first time I asked, Madam Speaker, so I'll ask the minister again, a very important question: Can she confirm what concrete actions she is taking to reinstate and increase the contact-tracing efforts for these communities?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, TB is—we take it very, very seriously. We value and appreciate all our health-care providers in the system, all the program areas that they work in.

I do want to ask the Leader of the Opposition a question today. In debate with the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) last week, he said nobody can explain the benefits of Shared Health, Madam Speaker, and vowed to cut their funding. Health Sciences Centre is part of Shared Health. The TB program is part of our health system.

Can the Leader for the Opposition please tell Manitobans today which of the services—is it TB, Madam Speaker—that the Leader of the Opposition is planning to cut? How many of the 18,000 individuals who work at Shared Health—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (14:10)

The honourable member for—[*interjection*] Order.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the minister really needs to cut the theatrics. This is an incredibly serious issue.

Under her government, under her watch, active TB—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —cases in Manitoba increased to 195 last year. And, at the same time, death rates doubled.

The trends are moving in the wrong direction. TB can be prevented and cured with long course of antibiotics, but can be fatal if it's left untreated. And that is what we're seeing under this government.

The disease progresses slowly and can sometimes be mistaken for smokers coughed or, in children, can be mistaken as a run-of-the-mill viral illness.

We know that this government is distracted by the health-care crisis that their cuts have caused. And so, how can Manitobans trust any decisions they make in regards to health care?

What is this minister going to do today—

Madam Speaker: This member's time has expired.

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has laid out his first platform promise to Manitobans: he is going to cut the funding to Shared Health.

Part of Shared Health, Madam Speaker, is the Health Sciences Centre, our provincial hospital. Why does he want to close it down and cut it?

Addictions Foundation, the Children's Hospital at HSC, Selkirk Mental Health Centre, diagnostic services—which of the services is he planning to cut? Is it services and funding to TB, Madam Speaker? How many individuals is he planning to fire?

All the programs in the health system—TB, HIV, AIDS, children's programming, CancerCare—is important to Manitobans. I want the leader—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Premier of Manitoba Financial Disclosure

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): We know the Premier of Manitoba broke the law when she failed to disclose 31 million in—dollars in property sales.

We are now learning—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —new information about the Premier's finances, and it's raising serious questions, Madam Speaker.

We've learned the Premier is a client of an exclusive, out-of-province management company that requires a \$5-million minimum to join—\$5 million minimum.

We don't know the full amount of the Premier's investments or what those investments are in, but when it comes to millions of dollars invested by the Premier, Manitobans deserve to have answers.

Will the Premier tell the House what her millions are invested in?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Here we go again, Madam Speaker. We get members opposite just making things up on the fly.

And I hope the member opposite would take a moment or two to actually read the judge's ruling. The commissioner advised that there was no conflict of interest. In fact, he—I think he went on to say that it would be absurd to rule otherwise.

So, clearly, the judge had ruled there was no conflict of interest.

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

Mr. Sala: Regular Manitobans are struggling with the costs of groceries and gas, but not the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson).

We're now learning the Premier of our province has invested at least \$5 million with an exclusive management firm. I'll table the documents for this House. The firm claims to, quote, create high returns on invested capital, end quote, while boasting of returning \$55 million to clients to fund, quote, lifestyle expenses.

The Premier holds the highest political office in this province, and when millions are at stake, Manitobans expect their leaders to be transparent and open.

Will the Premier tell this House the amount of money she has invested in this private company?

Mr. Cullen: Clearly, I don't know what rabbit hole the opposition's going down today, but I mean, we're getting a little sick and tired of the allegations that they keep bringing forward with no justification whatsoever.

I mean, even the Liberal Party—in conjunction, I'm sure, with the NDP—said, listen, we're going to take this to court, as well, in terms of the conflict of interest. And again, the judge ruled, listen, this was an unintended breach, inadvertent. The evidence demonstrates the failure to do so was inadvertent.

Nothing to see here, Madam Speaker. Nothing to see in these allegations either.

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

Mr. Sala: When the Premier of our province invests millions in exclusive private management companies, the people of Manitoba are right to ask questions.

The people of Manitoba expect their leaders to be transparent and open, and when it comes to millions of dollars of investments by the Premier, the expectations are rightly even higher.

We know this Premier has a problem with disclosing conflicts of interest. She failed to disclose \$41 million—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —in property sales. Now we've learned about—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —an exclusive fund that requires a minimum \$5-million investment to participate in.

Manitobans are right to ask: How much money has she invested and what is she invested in? These are straightforward questions.

Will the Premier answer them today?

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, I'm speechless, quite frankly. I mean, these allegations are coming out of left field. There's absolutely no—nothing to the truth here.

The members have to read the document that—put forward from the court. And they should take the time to read that. No criminal activity here, again. I think this was the allegations that are coming.

Madam Speaker, if you want to talk about criminal activity, let's talk about the Leader of the Opposition who paid court costs here: failure to comply conditions of reconnaissance; refused to provide a sample; assault; failure to comply in condition of undertaking. Paid the bills—guilty.

Madam Speaker, I table these documents. That is criminal activity.

Northern Health-Care System State of Health Services

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): My colleagues and I from the North have been raising concerns about the lack of access to health care in our communities throughout this Legislative session.

In Lynn Lake, the hospital auxiliary group has been trying to raise funds for much-needed items for patients, long-term-care residents at their local hospital. This group of volunteers is stepping up to advocate where the PC government is failing.

With the chaos this Premier's caused in health care, when does she suppose they will pay attention to the crisis they've created in northern Manitoba?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Unlike the members opposite, members on this side of the House do not suffer from perimetritis, Madam Speaker. We spend a lot of time in the North, speaking to health professionals—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —speaking to Indigenous groups.

I was pleased to be up in Thompson meeting with over 30 stakeholders, Madam Speaker, around the table of solutions, talking about the challenges and how our government can assist.

We are responding, Madam Speaker, to the needs of the North, and I ask the member for Flin Flon to get on board with those discussions.

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

MLA Lindsey: The Pallister-Stefanson governments' cuts to health care make an already challenging situation so much worse when it comes to providing health care in the North. Year after year, people in the North are completely ignored at best by this PC government.

In Leaf Rapids, our elderly loved ones can't get access to proper home care. And the PC government serves up nothing but excuses. Excuses for 20 per cent vacancy rate—and that's province-wide, not just in the North. I'm sure it's much higher in the North.

So, what exactly will this minister do and will she acknowledge today that their government's cuts have made challenges of delivering health care so much worse in the North?

* (14:20)

Ms. Gordon: Our government is committed to investing \$812 million to support northern and rural health care, Madam Speaker. The clinical preventative services plan is part of that \$812 million. Front-line health-care workers were part of the discussions to create the clinical preventative services plan in the North and in rural communities.

We are excited to be working with our 'nordern'—northern partners to reduce the need to travel to Winnipeg or other regions to receive care. We will continue to listen to the needs of the North and respond accordingly.

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

MLA Lindsey: Health delivery is always a challenge in the North. We accept that, and we know it. Shared responsibility with the feds complicates things. We know that, too.

But, with the entire provincial health system in crisis like it is today, it further isolates people from accessing proper health care. The Keewatin Tribal Council declared a regional state of emergency to sound the alarm over deaths, suicide, drugs, violence, inadequate health care.

Last week, my colleague, the MLA for Thompson, asked this PC government what they're doing, if anything, to support northern First Nations in accessing necessary health care. The same question applies to all northern Manitobans.

When can northern Manitobans expect help for health care in the North?

Ms. Gordon: It appears that the member for Flin Flon's concerns for the North and—

An Honourable Member: Flip-flops.

Ms. Gordon: —issues—yes, it flip-flops. And it's situational, Madam Speaker.

So, where was this member's concern when, under the NDP, the northern patient transport program was crumbling and underutilized because it was terribly underfunded? Where was the concern then, Madam Speaker?

Our government more than doubled the funding to the program, 'mathern'—Madam Speaker. Our government sat around the table of solutions with northern and Indigenous stakeholders to create the clinical preventative services—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —plan. When I was in Thompson, I don't remember seeing the member for Flin Flon around the table of solutions.

He only wants to complain, Madam Speaker, but not take appropriate actions.

Treaty Rights and Natural Resource Revenues Manitoba Premier's Position

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yesterday, when responding to news that First Nations might actually finally have their rights recognized for natural resource sharing, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) called it a needless provocation.

I don't know who the Premier thinks she's standing up for, because I was at the miners and prospectors association of Manitoba gala, and they want partnerships and revenue sharing with First Nations.

And I don't know who the Premier thinks she's fighting, because it's not Ottawa. It's Indigenous Manitobans who, for decades, have been shut out of revenue sharing while the provincial government builds dams and signs off on mines to extract—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont:—billions in revenue while leaving communities in poverty and pollution.

Why is the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) siding with other provinces against basic rights for Indigenous Manitobans that the rest of us can take for granted?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Economic Development, Investment and Trade): I'm a little disappointed in the member from St. Boniface in his question, knowing full well that I actually meet regularly with First Nations regarding mining.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, when I was in Toronto, at the PDAC conference, I was honoured to sit around a large room of First Nation and Indigenous folks from northern Manitoba with industry.

Industry and First Nations are working together to betterment of First Nations, not only in the south but in the North, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont:—we're all Manitobans, and what is good for Indigenous people is good for Manitoba. We start the day in this Chamber talking about respecting treaties.

Well, revenue sharing is respecting treaties. We talk about reconciliation. Revenue sharing is reconciliation. But the second that reconciliation stops just being talk and starts being something real where the rights of Indigenous people would be respected in Canada, the Premier calls it a needless provocation.

Equal treatment isn't special treatment; it's fairness. And making up for wrong isn't special treatment; it's justice.

Why would the Premier join a chorus of far-right Conservatives in this litany of false accusations? Could she explain exactly why she thinks that finally recognizing Indigenous rights in Manitoba is unconstitutional?

Mr. Wharton: Wow, Madam Speaker. Well, I'm going to put some facts on the record, unlike the member from St. Boniface.

Madam Speaker, I'll give the member, actually, an example of First Nations and industry working together for the betterment of First Nations.

PADCOM recently—and will be opening up shortly, in the southeastern–western Manitoba. And we know that the profit-sharing agreement signed between Gambler First Nation and industry are going to help First Nations, particularly Gambler First Nation.

I don't know where the member gets his information from, but I suggest he goes back to research and figure it out.

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

Condition of Manitoba Roads Investments in Building Sustainable Roads

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Ouch, ouch, ouch. Potholes, potholes, potholes. The Romans built roads and buildings that lasted—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard:—for 2,000 years. Why is it that, under this government, Manitoba can't build roads that last?

Is it—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard:—because, for decades and decades, we have had NDP and PC governments which have not made the commitments and the investment in research that's needed to build a made-in-Manitoba road surface which lasts for more than a few years?

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Municipal Relations): I'm not sure where the member was going with that question, but it's clear that he obviously doesn't read the press releases or watch media.

Madam Speaker, our government just recently gave the City of Winnipeg \$7.5 million for road repair and pothole repair. That's in addition to the \$47-million increase in operational funding and in addition to the \$23.5 million in capital funding in Budget '23.

So, I'm not sure where the member gets his information from. Of course, research seems to be a little difficulty for the members from the Liberal caucus today. Suggest they go back to their caucus meeting and figure out what's actually happening in Manitoba.

Housing Programs for Seniors New Program Announcement

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): All members of this House should be proud that, for the first time Manitoba has a real seniors strategy.

This morning, the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care announced further supports in form of additional housing supports.

Can the minister outline how this program will address the needs of Manitoba's seniors?

Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank my friend from Portage la Prairie for that excellent question.

Madam Speaker, in less than two months since launching the seniors strategy, we have already invested \$34 million in multiple key initiatives to support Manitoba seniors. I was pleased to announce an investment of \$3 million today on two housing initiatives. The first one is—the first initiative was to 'appride' \$1.5 million in funding for new home-modification grant programs. Second item is supportive housing; our government has announced \$1.5 million to stabilize and strengthen Manitoba's supportive housing program.

Madam Speaker, this government has a plan, and we're implementing it.

Construction Industry Apprentices Wage Reduction Concerns

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, this PC government is completely out of touch with regular Manitobans. The cost of groceries keeps going up; the cost of living is going dramatically up.

But this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) could not care less about the workers and apprentices who build our province. It's no surprise that this PC Premier has tens of millions of dollars she conveniently forgets to disclose.

I would ask again, from this Premier: Will she tell the House why her PC government is looking to cut wages for apprentices?

* (14:30)

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): This member knows that she has absolutely no facts to stand on when she's making these false claims.

And, Madam Speaker, I have some concerns about the fear mongering that is coming from all members opposite of us. That is unfair to Manitobans, and they need to apologize for what they're doing. There is no discussion about wage decreases for any apprentices.

And if that member has information, she needs to table it today.

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

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

MLA Marcelino: Madam Speaker, there are young people looking to work in the trades and there are those that are taking retraining courses to look to invest in themselves and their families so that they can help our economy grow.

While the minimum wage just went up, now the PCs are looking to cut the wages of apprentices this year. That's wrong. This will just make retaining skilled workers harder and hurt our efforts to tackle existing labour shortages. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: These folks work hard and should be paid properly.

Will this minister stop her plans to cut apprenticeship wages today?

Mrs. Guillemard: Clearly, the member has nothing to table because she had no facts to draw from.

I, again, will call on the member to apologize for fear mongering. This is unfair to do to Manitobans, especially young apprentices who are entering into a very rewarding career, and I commend them for making that choice. There will be no reductions to wages of apprentices. And that member knows better.

And I hope she's willing to apologize to the apprentices, to their families and to all Manitobans for putting false information on the record.

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

MLA Marcelino: I tabled those documents for the minister three weeks ago, and I'd be happy to bring those documents again to her office upstairs when we're done right here.

Madam Speaker—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —Manitoba workers know that this PC government doesn't have their backs. Under this PC government, apprenticeship funding was cut by 43 per cent since 2016. And they weakened safety protections by cutting apprenticeship ratios.

While everyday Manitobans are struggling with increasing bills, PCs are trying to cut the scheduled wage increases of apprentices who are trying to enter

the trades. Manitoba workers deserve a clear commitment today.

Will this PC government back off their cuts to apprenticeship wages? Yes or no?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Madam Speaker, on the topic of affordability, I want to remind the member for Notre Dame that—was the former member for Logan and interim leader of the NDP that said their illegal PST increase of 1 per cent did not affect many low-income earners, many of whom are earning minimum wage. I table this.

Well, Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House, we are the side of affordability. And when our government reduced the PST from 8 to 7 per cent in 2019, we put hundreds of millions into the pockets of hard-working Manitobans each year.

We always stand up and fight for hard-working workers and families, and we will take no lessons from the NDP.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions—oh, the honourable minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage.

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

It brings me no joy to do this—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Obby Khan (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

It brings me no joy, especially today, to do this. This morning, I was at an event I was invited to attend by the member opposite from Burrows. Thank you for that.

Following the member's comments, and that of the Leader of the Opposition, I was asked to bring comments of my own. I felt honoured to do that.

I feel a deep sorrow that I am rising, but I feel that it must be said. I feel hurt, disrespected, threatened,

unsafe as a matter—as a member of this Legislative Assembly. After my remarks, I walked over to shake the hand of the member from Burrows and a hug—Uncle. Went to shake the hand of the Leader of the Opposition, at which point there was a delay in standing; stood up, reached for my hand, aggressively pulled me in, physically squeezed my hand—I'm a big guy, I can take it—he has a very strong handshake. Pulled me in close to his ear—and the incident I'm about to recount is a clear violation of privilege, as noted by the House of Commons Procedure and Practice on page 83, and is a prima facie violation of the privilege of members of this House.

I am raising this at the earliest possible moment that I'm able to. As you may have noticed from my ministerial statement earlier, I was visibly shaken and delayed in my comments. I needed time to exit the Chamber, clear my head and gather my thoughts, for this incident just happened a few hours earlier.

When the Leader of the Opposition grabbed my hand, physically pulled me in as I went out to shake it, the comments I'm reluctant to share; I feel as though I must. I warn the language is going to be offensive and profane for the members in the House, for people at home, the media.

The Leader of the Opposition pulled me in and said: You piece of shit. How you dare you politicize this fucking event? What you did is fucking wrong. We are never inviting you again to a fucking event.

I tried to back away from it—I'm a big guy, I could've probably backed away if I really wanted to make a scene. And I leaned over—we were close to close—said, now is not the time for this. We can talk about this later. And he would not let me leave, held my hand in, again repeated: You piece of shit. How dare you do this? How dare you politicize this? We invited you here.

After what was an awkward, what felt like five minutes—it was probably only one or two—he let go. I walked away back to the other side. I sat down, not sure what to do. When someone in this building calls you a piece of shit and swears at you, let alone the Leader of the Opposition—and I'm a big guy, I can take abuse, I was a professional football player for 10 years. I wasn't afraid for my life. I'm a big guy, I can defend myself. For 10 years I took a lot larger insults on the field and physical abuse playing football.

But now, when I'm coming to work as an elected official, now, when I'm at such a joyous, such a great, great celebration of the Turban Day, laughing,

celebrating how far we've come as a Punjabi man and my Punjabi colleagues—and to be called a piece of shit.

This isn't just for me; I can handle myself. But I am, as you can see, I'm emotionally shaken by this. I was not expecting that. Intimidation attempts, insulting language and, to what I believe, a physical shove at the end of it. It takes a lot to move me. You could shove me as hard as you want and I probably wouldn't move. But when you're leaving the—when we left the handshake, there was a shove in the stomach. And with someone else, it might move them; for me it's not going to move me, but I felt it.

If this can happen to me at six foot four, 200-plus pounds, it can happen to anyone. I expect more. I come to work and would like to be treated with respect. I know inside this Chamber things get heated and we say things back and forth, but outside of this it's—and even in here—I didn't expect Leader of the Opposition for his actions, intimidation, aggressive language and physicality.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the MLA for Fort Richmond, that this matter be immediately referred to a permanent standing committee of this House for investigation. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

* (14:40)

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I do want to address the commentary from my colleague from Fort Whyte, so I do beg your indulgence so that I can run through a few key pieces of information.

I want to begin by apologizing to my colleague from the Burrows, which I have done already privately.

I do dispute the facts. Significant details were incorrect about what the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) said. However, what we do agree on is that we had a tense exchange earlier today. And this was neither the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Kinew: We had a tense exchange. It was a tense verbal exchange. We should have found a different time, a different place to follow up on this matter. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker, I would ask for the ability to address you on this matter without heckling from the other side. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: So I apologize to my colleague from the Burrows. It was neither the time nor the place. We should have sought an opportunity to address the concerns that I had later on.

So I would like to apologize to my colleague from Fort Whyte for this tense exchange that we had earlier. I can tell that he is upset, and for that, I am truly sorry.

However, what happened between the two of us was partisan bickering, to be blunt.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

I would remind members that this is a matter of privilege. This is the—not the time for heckling or comments. This is really the time that we really carefully need to listen to what is being said. So I'm going to ask the members to please respectfully hear what is being said so that I can properly rule on this.

Mr. Kinew: Again, so, we shook hands. As we shook hands, I told the member for Fort Whyte that he should not have made partisan comments while he was speaking at the event. Earlier in the event—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —I had taken specific time to say, this event goes across party lines. The member for Fort Whyte, at said event, said that, you know, not only should the NDP banner be there, you should have a Liberal banner, a PC banner, and he also talked more about the PC government.

So I told him—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —as we were speaking, that he should not have brought the partisanship into that.

And I said, we took a step on the high road to invite him—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —to our event. And then he went and did that, you know, course of action that he was addressing.

So, again—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —I addressed this to him directly—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

I know this can be a tense issue, but I think we need to be listening to everything. I need to hear everything, because I'm going to have to rule on this. So I'm going to ask everybody, although emotions may be high on this one, this is really one that I need to be able to hear everything, and everybody should be able to hear everything because this is what is expected when we have a matter of privilege.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), to conclude his statements.

Mr. Kinew: There's a bit more to share, Madam Speaker. And I do feel it's important so that you have the information.

So, we go back and forth. I said, you should not have said these partisan things. He comes back at me, he says, you have no class. We should address this at a different time. And then so I say, well, you should not have made these partisan comments.

He then goes to attack us for having an NDP banner at an NDP-sponsored event. My colleague from The Maples was beginning to speak, and so I turned and said, we should listen—and I said the name of the member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu)—to speak. That was the entirety of the exchange.

At no time was there any swearing. At no time was there any name-calling. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: At no time was there any swearing. At no time was there any name-calling. And the interaction was that of words exchanged—albeit tensely, over—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —a handshake.

So I do apologize to my colleague from Fort Whyte that I didn't avail myself of the opportunity to seek a different time or a different place to share my thoughts. But that is the entirety of the exchange that took place earlier today.

This occurred in a room full of people, Madam Speaker, right? Within earshot of many, many other people.

So I dispute the facts, but I am apologizing for the nature of our exchange.

And when it comes to the procedural matter at hand, this is something that took place outside of the Legislative Chamber; it is therefore not a matter of

privilege. And I would ask that you rule on this matter as soon as you are able.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I would just say this. This is a serious matter. It should be taken seriously. I recommend that you take it under advisement and look at it calmly before coming to a decision.

Madam Speaker: And I will indicate that a matter of privilege is, indeed, a serious concern. And I am going to take this under advisement to consult the authorities and I will return to the House with a ruling.

PETITIONS

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 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities.

The road is in need of substantial repairs. 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 on a regular basis.

(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 fine Manitobans.

Ekosi.

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

Security System Incentive Program

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

The background of 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.

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

(4) A 2022 Angus Reid Institute poll found 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) Though the public understands that 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 these as they help the most vulnerable in our community by removing financial barriers for personal protection.

* (14:50)

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.

This petition was signed by many, many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Did you call mine?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Altomare: Okay, thank you.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): 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, Spanish. Punjabi [*phonetic*] 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 therefore 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.

This petition is signed by Kulvir Sidhu, Kanwalpreet Sidhu, Kamaljit Sidhu, and many other Manitobans.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): 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 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 would 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.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Learning Disability Supports

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Individuals with neurodiversity and learning disabilities frequently have long wait times to get support

and often fall through the gaps in current provincial support.

When a child with a learning disorder turns 18 years old, there is little in the way of helpful services except through the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba, which, sadly, has been under-supported and underfunded, both by the present and the previous governments.

Individuals with learning disabilities can have a high IQ and have great potential to succeed in work and life if they receive timely help to fully address and overcome their learning disability.

However, if their needs are not met, some with learning disabilities are frustrated with delays in being diagnosed and being placed in an education system which does not appropriately accommodate them. These difficulties often result in individuals dropping out of school, experiencing a life of inconsistent employment, juvenile delinquency, crime, and likely will require additional health-care costs that could have been avoided.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to provide online resources for children and adults with learning disabilities and IQs above 75, including:

Online videos featuring individuals with learning disabilities explaining their situation in a strength-based way to help create awareness;

(b) A centralized listing of all resources for those with learning disabilities, including relevant support systems for family, schools, educational and employment institutions; and

(c) A free online webinar series and resources to enable individuals with learning disabilities to access government supports.

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide additional resources to ensure that the present two-year wait-time list for assessments for learning disabilities is reduced to less than one month.

(3) To urge the provincial government to partner with organizations to provide supports for individual and/or group supports for those with learning disabilities who are transitioning to adulthood.

(4) To urge the provincial government to improve funding for Community Living disABILITY Services, CLDS, and other organizations which provide supports

for those with learning disabilities in order to reduce wait times.

(5) To urge the provincial government to recognize that individuals with learning disabilities with a normal or high IQ have great potential for working, provided they have adequate supports, and to set up initiatives to help these individuals get and keep jobs.

(6) To urge the provincial government to mandate that all teachers must take courses on learning disabilities during their post-secondary education to better understand and educate in order to end the discrimination they often experience in the classroom.

Signed by Richard Oakden, Douglas Adams, John Gross and many, many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Further petitions?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Fairly Negotiate with Allied Health Professionals.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Fairly Negotiate with Allied Health Professionals.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please call for second reading debate this afternoon, in this order: Bill 8, 15, 19, 12 and 22.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider the following bills this afternoon—second reading of the following bills: 8, 15, 19, 12 and 22.

* (15:00)

SECOND READINGS

Bill 8—The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act

Madam Speaker: So I will therefore start with Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act.

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate (MLA Klein), that Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Natural Resources and Northern Development, seconded by the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate, that Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message is tabled.

Mr. Nesbitt: It is my pleasure as Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development to stand today for the second reading of Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act.

Bill 8 establishes a new act which will introduce a nominal \$25 user fee on registered off-road vehicles, with the revenue generated going directly to support activities to develop and maintain ORV trails across the province that help to keep Manitobans and visitors to our trails safe. It will also be used to support the rehabilitation of lands damaged by ORV use.

Growth in the use of and demand for trails has highlighted the need for enhanced planning and management of Manitoba's trails network. Our forthcoming provincial trails strategy and action plan will provide a road map to ensure an intentional and co-ordinated approach to this critical work.

Creating and implementing the ORV user fee will help to advance several priorities identified in the upcoming strategy. All of the revenue generated will be provided to support ORV-related activities. The government of Manitoba will not be using any of the funds to support government's ongoing operation.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Manitoba cannot do this work alone. Some of the funding will be provided to organizations like Snoman Inc. and ATV in Manitoba to continue and develop and maintain thousands of kilometres of trails and increase safety training, driver education and other such programs that benefit all ORV owners.

A portion of the funds will also be directed towards rehabilitation of lands and trails that have been damaged by ORV activity. This will help to ensure that Manitoba's beautiful landscapes across the province are maintained and important ecosystems are protected.

This initiative will help to provide Manitobans with safe riding experiences while also attracting ORV enthusiasts from outside the province and generating economic development opportunities for small towns and businesses in rural and northern communities.

In addition to the creation of the ORV user fee, this bill also includes provisions that will enable Manitoba and Snoman to work together to enhance the Snopass snowmobile trail permit program.

These provisions will facilitate the creation of new short-term Snopass options and support additional ways to buy them, including online. These improvements to the Snopass will increase convenience for customers and make it easier for out-of-province riders to purchase a Snopass.

Bill 8 is an important piece of legislation that will ensure our ORV trail networks are maintained and enhanced for years to come, helping to keep riders from Manitoba and abroad safe while we continue to protect the natural environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to welcome Yvonne Rideout, the executive director of Snoman Inc., who is here today. Their organization has been great supporter of this bill.

I look forward to the ensuing debate, and seek all-party support for this important bill so it can have quick passage through the House.

Thank you.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: the first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from

other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So, we always ask a question about who did a minister consult with. That question becomes even more important with this particular piece of legislation because it affects a lot of divergent groups, different areas, that have different needs, different wants, different requirements.

So, my first question is, to the minister: Who all did he consult before he brought this piece of legislation in?

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development): Pleased to respond to that question. Our staff has been consulting extensively with Snowman Inc. and the ATV Manitoba on this issue. There's been discussions under way for the past couple years to make sure we get this right.

We've also had internal consultations with Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, and Manitoba Public Insurance as well. And back in 2020, we had public engagement on the development of the provincial trails strategy that illustrated a high level of support for Snoman and ATV clubs and riders for some type of user-pay system in Manitoba.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the member for bringing this over. It looks like a reasonable move, but I would like just a clarification.

Trails which are used in winter by snowmobiles and the like—to what extent are they used in the summer for ATVs or for hiking trails, and what kind of diverse usership is likely or is occurring?

Mr. Nesbitt: That is a great question. The Snoman Trails are often quite different from the ATV trails across the province. There's much more Snoman trails that, you know, with the permission of landowners and things like that, cross them. ATV Manitoba is in the process of creating trails, and this funding provided through this will help them expand their network across Manitoba.

MLA Lindsey: So, my understanding from what I've read and what I've just heard is that this bill now allows ATVs to use Snoman-approved trails, and I question whether anybody from Snoman has actually agreed to that. Maybe in the summer, but I'm pretty sure they don't want ATVs on their snowmobile trails that they pay to groom and maintain.

So, can the minister address those questions?

Mr. Nesbitt: I think the member, perhaps, wasn't listening to my response, or misinterpreted it.

Snoman has trails that cross over private lands. Snoman also has trails on Crown lands and things. All I'm saying is some of the ATV trails may utilize some of those trails, but likely not on private land. They would need agreements with landowners to use those trails.

And, like I said, the ATV trails in Manitoba aren't very extensive at this point, and they're mostly in eastern Manitoba, so this funding will allow them to increase their trail network for a sport that's growing across the province.

Mr. Gerrard: Just one further bit of clarification on this matter. For a snowmobile trail in the winter, are some of those used for hiking in the summer, or not?

Mr. Nesbitt: Certainly, there's some trails across the province that will likely be used for all three—for snowmobiling, ATViing and hiking. The majority of the hiking trails would be different than ATV trails, though, and different than Snoman trails, but there could be a little bit of crossover in some areas on Crown land.

I would expect the Trans Canada Trail—sometimes there's hikers on that. Some of the Trans Canada Trail doesn't have motorized vehicles; some, I understand, there is. But we're trusting our organizations to deal with our landowners and ensure they have permission to go on any trails.

MLA Lindsey: So, my first question to the minister was about consultation, and he told us how he consulted with Snoman.

But, really, did he consult with some of the various users of these off-road vehicles? People like northern Indigenous groups have used them as part of their traditional use to hunt, to trap, to fish; farmers, perhaps, that use them for various reasons as part of their work that they use an off-road vehicle for some of these issues.

* (15:10)

So, that's part of my question that the minister didn't ask the first time; was the consultation piece seems like perhaps maybe it was missing—

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

Mr. Nesbitt: This new \$25 fee will apply to all ORV owners who are required to register their ORV with Manitoba Public Insurance.

But, there are exemptions. Owners that are exempt from the registration requirement of their machines are also exempt from the ORV fee. For example, individuals in remote communities and individuals that only drive their ORV on land they own or lease are exempt. Traditional harvesters who currently pay to register their ORV will pay the \$25 fee.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, just out of interest and for clarification, how much money does the minister expect to raise and what sort of percentage allocation will be used for what purposes?

Mr. Nesbitt: According to my numbers, there's 84,500 ORV owners in Manitoba. We expect this \$25 levy, by doing the simple math, will raise around \$2 million per year. And we'll be allocating that to Snoman Inc. and ATV Manitoba for the work, I said in my opening statement.

MLA Lindsey: Well, I guess I have to raise now and question the minister's math, because he talked about the total number of off-road vehicles in the province of Manitoba and does a simple multiplication to say how much money they're coming up with. But previously, he said that a certain number of those vehicles are exempt from having to pay this. So, clearly the minister should get his pencil out again and come up with the actual number, instead of using PC math.

Mr. Nesbitt: I'd be happy to respond to that. I said there's 84,500 registered vehicles. I'm assuming there's maybe 4,500 of them that aren't, you know, that aren't going to have to pay this fee. Actually, 84,500 gives more than \$2 million. So that's PC math; 80,000 would give \$2 million, correct?

So, we're going to allocate that on a 50-50 basis, between Snoman—whatever we collect, we're going to allocate. That's the point. The government will not be keeping a nickel.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I just thank the minister for the clarity that he's provided so far, and would ask as well, can the minister describe a little more detail the improvements that he anticipates being able to achieve with the funding?

Mr. Nesbitt: Certainly. We—of course, there'll be improved maintenance of trails and development of new trails. I mean, Snoman has been grooming trails

across the province for years, and, you know, they have Snopasses to run on those trails.

Our department has also been doing enforcement to ensure that machines have Snopasses and things like that. But there obviously is—we can't be everywhere and there are people perhaps using those trails without Snopasses.

So, this fee will help Snoman continue their good work of grooming trails across Manitoba. It's going to be used for safety education, training and promotion of safe trail riding, things like that; emergency trail repair, should we get any inclement weather—rains and such—on ATV trails.

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

MLA Lindsey: So, some of the stuff we've talked about so far, it hasn't really added up the way the minister would like it to.

But let's talk about the safety aspect of it. He's referred to—this will help safety of off-road vehicle operation, and certainly, none of us are opposed to better safety and ensuring that, particularly young people—well, all people—wear helmets and all the rest of that.

So, can the minister us a little more detail on how he thinks collecting \$25 from every user will actually make the use of those pieces of equipment safer?

Mr. Nesbitt: Obviously, safety is, you know, is paramount in any sport. And organizations like Snoman, ATV Manitoba, they have safety training courses, and they're going to expand that. In meetings with ATV Manitoba a month ago, they're very excited about expanding training courses for people operating ATVs around the province.

Snoman has always been a safety-conscious organization and stresses safety. This is going to help them continue to promote safety, especially amongst our young people that are getting into the sport.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I want to congratulate Snoman and the off-road vehicle organization, and compliment you. But can you give us a 10-year view, a 10-year vision of where we are now?

How many kilometres of off-road trails are there now? What do you expect in about 10 years?

Mr. Nesbitt: I don't have actual trail numbers here. The trails will be created by the clubs. This money is going to help them; it's going to be consistent funding year over year, we hope. And, as the sport grows, it will be even more.

Like I say, none of the money is going to be kept by the government, so we are going to encourage ATV Manitoba to develop more trails across the province, certainly for our summer season, and this money will help Snoman continue their good work throughout the winter.

MLA Lindsey: So, we've heard some answers and had some good questioning here.

Can the minister explain or answer, does he think that there is a potential—because of this registration fee now being required of the \$25 additional fee when you register your equipment, does the minister think there may be some people who perhaps now will not bother registering their vehicles in order to save that \$25 or to take a stand against the government collecting \$25? Does he see the potential for that?

Mr. Nesbitt: Is the member referring to off-road vehicle people breaking the law by not registering their vehicle and going on trails off of their land?

I've said that, if they stay on their own land and they don't register their vehicle now, they're completely legal. If they go off their land, don't register their vehicle and don't pay this fee, they're breaking the law.

Mr. Gerrard: Clearly, in the next two decades, we are concerned about things like climate change and what an impact it may have.

I'm just—would like the minister to put in context, you know, what we expect in terms of impact of climate change on trails, and what action the minister may be taking.

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, I think this fee will go a long way to ensuring that our trails are maintained properly. If we get more rain, I mean, we can gravel these trails and things like that. They'll have money to do that.

I think that this is a great step for protecting our Manitoba infrastructure here, and allowing these two great organizations to create new trails so that more Manitobans and, indeed, more Canadians can experience the great outdoors.

MLA Lindsey: So, when it comes to the use of off-road vehicles like this for Indigenous trappers and fishers and stuff, I believe the minister said that they would be exempt from this \$25 fee, but they're travelling everywhere, right? Everywhere within their traditional territory to carry on.

So, is the minister saying that because they're not on a piece of farmland that's registered in their name,

that now they must pay this \$25 fee, because they're travelling all over?

Mr. Nesbitt: Again, I think the member misinterpreted my comments. I said traditional harvesters who currently pay to register their ORV will also pay the \$25 fee. So if they're going off land that they own, and they're—have their vehicle registered, they're going to be responsible for paying this \$25 fee to MPI.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

* (15:20)

Debate

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

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): It's unfortunate that I wasn't part of the conversation that the minister had with the previous critic for the area that maybe some of my questions could've been better fleshed out and answered at that point in time.

Something that the minister just said does concern me, in—when it comes to use of these pieces of equipment, particularly by Indigenous people who are on their traditional lands, although under our colonial lands may not be a piece of property that they have a title to. I think they have a pretty strong argument that they do have title and own their traditional lands and should be able to use that. So, I think, perhaps, maybe we had—need to have a more in-depth conversation around that, to make sure that that's actually what takes place.

And that's part of why I wanted to see who all the minister had consulted with before bringing this piece of legislation in, because certainly those Indigenous groups throughout the province, not just in the North but throughout the province, may have had some very worthwhile input that would've made this a better bill, and that perhaps has been missed, unfortunately.

The minister talked a little bit about making the use of these pieces of equipment safer. But there's nothing in this bill that actually does that, although it does talk about providing some money to go to training. But there's nothing that says somebody has to take that training. There's nothing that, like, if I get a driver's licence, I have to get the training—get that licence. So I'm not sure how this exactly is going to make sure that people are wearing helmets and are doing the things that they should do to operate safely.

I understand the concept, because it's similar to the previous Snoman, where the shared cost of operating

and maintaining the snowmobile trails has been tacked on to users; and there was great controversy when that first came into being, too, by the very same people that I'm talking about here today. So, I just—I want to make sure that those particular issues haven't been overlooked.

Certainly, there's been way too many deaths by people operating some of these pieces of equipment without the proper safety gear, or in unsafe manner. And if—if some of this money that the minister's collecting goes towards that, that's not a bad thing. It's just a questionable thing, at this point in time, as to how that actually is going to look, and how it's going to play out.

I'm glad the minister said that he had talked with Snoman, because my question is a valid question about the use of groomed Snoman-approved trails by off-road vehicles. And the two pieces of equipment aren't necessarily combatable—compatible with the same trail. I know I've heard any number of complaints, and seen where people have used Snoman trails with other-than-snow machines, and it does affect the quality of the trail and the safety of the trail.

This bill doesn't prevent that from happening, and may actually encourage it. So, I just want to make sure that we understand that that is what this bill may, in fact, do.

I really question, and it comes back a lot of—to the consultation piece that the minister really didn't give us a fulsome understanding of who all he may have consulted with.

And, certainly, things sometimes in northern Manitoba are different than they are in rural Manitoba. Private property—I get there's farms and farmers, as the minister said, that—they have a title to that piece of property, however many sections it happens to be—or, hectares, I guess, is the proper term now. So, they're not going to register their vehicles, perhaps, or they're not going to pay this fee, but it's the use of vehicles outside of the minister's normal scope of operation, scope of view, that may or may not have been addressed properly here.

So, I guess the other question I have that I never got, really, a chance to ask—time being what it is—is, MPI's going to collect this fund; has there been anything added to MPI, such as workers?

Well, I understand there's been quite a number of workers added to MPI, but they're dedicated to something else other than this. So, when people go to register these pieces of equipment and pay this fee and

all that stuff, is it going to be a smooth operation, or is it going to be something like the minister's previous parks entry fee, where it was just a nightmare to operate?

And I understand there are several other things within the minister's purview that have turned into a bit of a nightmare for average people to access, but that's a conversation, perhaps, that I will have with the minister somewhere else because it has come to my attention that there's issues there, and so we'll address those elsewhere.

I really want to make sure that, before everything comes to pass, that everybody fully understands that—what's being implemented; that everybody has had their say in it, which I don't think has happened quite yet. My understanding is, certainly, from what the minister said, there's more of these designated trails in the southern part of the province.

And, certainly, I know in the North there's any number of trails that people use, that people have made to get to their cabins—their remote cabins. There's trails that trappers have made to get to their traplines; fishers have made to get where they need to get with their line of work.

So, if everyone in the province is sharing in the cost, will everyone in the province share in the benefit? Will enough of the money collected go to maintain trails in the North or to develop recreational trails in the North, as opposed to necessary trails? And, by necessary, I mean ones that get you from your remote cabin back to the road or back to town or your trapline. Those, really, are the more necessary trails that may or may not, should or should not be captured by this particular piece of legislation.

But, if people are going to be asked to pay the \$25 fee outside of the southern region of the province, will enough of that revenue be shared? And maybe that's a question that the answer is maybe, if they don't share it, then it's not as big a concern for people in the North because the trails won't expand.

And—some of the things that we don't know that the bill, I believe, talks about penalties if people are found without this fee using a trail. Do we know what those penalties are going to be? Do we know if someone who's conducting their traditional use on a trapline has to cross one of these designated trails; they don't have the fee, they're doing their livelihood? Will they be subject to fines? Will they have to go to court and fight that? Is there some means to identify people that have the rights, that the minister talked about, that are excluded from this?

* (15:30)

So, that there's things that, I'm sure, the minister will put in regulation that are somewhat unknown at this point in time; that it's always the devil in the details, right, so.

An Honourable Member: Trust us.

MLA Lindsey: Well, I see the minister heckles from his seat and says trust us. And there's the problem, because most Manitobans have lost trust in this government. And it doesn't matter whether we're talking about this, that people want to trust them, or whether we're talking about health care, where people have zero trust in this government.

The minister talked earlier about, well, some of this money will go to maintain the trails. We can't get this government to maintain the highways.

So, I'm not sure that anybody trusts them to put money into maintaining anything at this point in time. So, the minister has opened up the whole line of questioning around trust and it's an argument that he may not win.

And I see the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) is suggesting that I should hurry along. And maybe I will; maybe I won't.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: Fair enough. I do now, and it'll be longer when I'm done.

All kidding aside, this is serious and it's serious to the extent that while this piece of legislation is probably going to pass today, I certainly hope that the minister and people with concerns can have more conversations, perhaps, before it gets implemented, and look at—is there something that needs to be added as an amendment before third and final reading to make this piece of legislation better than what the minister involved has presented so far.

And I would hope between—if it passes today and third reading—that the minister would take time to leave what he sees as normal operations and get out and talk to, particularly Indigenous groups, particularly people in the North, particularly people that have a vested interest in what's taking place and what the minister has proposed.

So, with those very few comments—

An Honourable Member: Sparse.

MLA Lindsey: –sparse, even; yes, for me it is—I will wrap up my comments.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I note that that may be the shortest speech from the MLA for Flin Flon since I've been here.

Anyway, I think that the comments from the MLA for Flin Flon are important, but I would suggest that, you know, you make sure, since we can now have people connect in by Zoom, that you have a number of people from the North appearing at the committee and making comments and suggestions, because I think it's important that the northern voices are heard. And I'm sure you've got a few people who would be ready to comment from the Flin Flon constituency.

So I want to pay tribute to Yvonne Rideout and the work that she has done as the executive director of Snoman, just a tremendous amount of effort in making sure that trails are identified or gloomed—groomed, that people are trained and educated on safety issues. Thank you so much for all you've done over quite a number of years.

The—we're ready to support this legislation. We think these trails are of vital importance to a lot of Manitobans. Some of these groomed trails are on the trans-Canada trails, which are shared not only by snowmobiles in the winter—Ski-Doos—but also by people walking—horses, sometimes—and so this is, you know, what's being done here in terms of promoting trails and making sure there's greater connectivity is being done for people in the winter, but it's also being done that will help people in the summer as well.

So I think it's exciting and needed, and we're ready to be fully supportive of this legislation and hope that it will pass. I think it will provide some important stability for Snoman and perhaps for other organizations and will also enable Snoman to be able to assure people that those trails are going to be groomed and that there's going to be some new connectivity that will help and extend—enhance the experience of people who are travelling these trails.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 8, The Off-Road Trails Safety and Maintenance Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

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 Seniors, that Bill 15, The Court of King's Bench Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: The objective in bringing forward these amendments is to close a gap in the legislation for judicial compensation. Financial security is one of the key components when it comes to judicial compensation. Financial security is one of the three components of judicial independence. Judges must be guaranteed sufficient and fair compensation to make decisions that are free of influence and based solely on the facts of law.

The senior master of the Court of King's Bench in—is—and I know that there's some discussion about changing the name of masters, but I need to use it here for clarity. The senior master of the Court of King's Bench is compensated at the same level as the associate chief judge of the provincial court. When an associate chief judge completes their seven-year term, if they choose to continue serving as a regular judge, they're entitled to be paid at the associate chief judge level of pay if it is greater than the current pay of a regular judge. But it was recently identified that a senior master does not have this same entitlement under the current law.

The goal of government is to ensure that equitable compensation exists and to follow the recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Committee. These amendments will ensure that a senior master who has completed at least seven years as a senior master will be entitled, upon stepping back into a regular master's role, to be paid at a senior master's pay level if it's greater than the current pay of a master and the same as an associate chief judge.

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important for Manitobans to know that we're taking the necessary gaps to—steps

to close the gaps to ensure that the compensation lines up for judges and masters. It's also important to know that, when it comes to the compensation of judges, and in adherence with judicial independence, it is through provincial legislation that a judicial compensation committee is regularly struck and that compensation committee then comes back after hearings and research with a report, and that we are obligated to then institute the findings of that report.

This has been a long-standing practice in Manitoba, differs somewhat in other provinces. I believe that that's the Manitoba practice and former ministers of Justice and Attorneys General have also gone through that process and adhered to the recommendations of the compensation committee.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions and I am not seeing any questions. Am I right in that there are no questions? Okay.

The time for questions is thus over. The floor is open for debate.

Debate

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I strive to simply indicate that we support this bill and this minor change that is to be made. I do want to simply note, I guess, what you might call the irony of bringing forward this bill, which the minister references—or, are referenced in his opening statement.

He uses the word master a number of times, on the same—very same day that we brought forward a bill by the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), which seeks to eliminate that word and its connotations—its harmful connotations and detrimental connotations from our system.

So, I want—I just wanted an opportunity to rise to commend the member for St. Johns on that work, and the minister for agreeing to move that bill forward.

We do look forward to hearing at committee stage if there are any concerns with Bill 15 as it stands right now, but we do expect that this should be passed very quickly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I just want to put a few words on the record. It's worth recognizing that compensation for justices of the court is important—*[interjection]* I'll wait until my colleague's here.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's worth recognizing that compensation for justices of the court is important for discussion for the reason that we need to ensure that competitive salaries are being paid to retain high-quality legal minds who serve as effective impartial justices here in the province of Manitoba.

We do, however, need to be diligent and ensure the process for judicial compensation be maintained, specifically towards a depoliticized process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the Judicial Compensation Committee to provide non-partisan advice to the government to depoliticize the compensation of judges, and the government is then to make its proposals to the independent committee which will, in turn, provide the government advice on the appropriate compensation of justices of the head of the courts.

We look forward to learning more about this legislation.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay, the question before the House is Bill 15, The Court of King's Bench Amendment Act.

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

Bill 19—The Provincial Offences Amendment Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the minister of culture, heritage, tourism and sport that Bill 19, The Provincial Offences Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This bill will amend The Provincial Offences Act to address gaps in the inconsistencies in the act and clarify the application scope of certain provisions of it in line with the goals of criminal modernization, efficiency, timeliness and consistency in the application of the act.

It'll first standardize the rules respecting quashing and amending tickets and information. The existing provisions in the act regarding tickets allow a justice to correct an irregularity or a minor error in its form or substance, provided that there was no prejudice to the defendant. A justice may quash a ticket that fails to meet the requirements of the act.

The amendments clarify that a justice would be able to amend a ticket on the same grounds that exist for amending an information. That is, a justice may amend an information that is valid on its face to add, delete or change any wording in the information to grant an adjournment if that is necessary for the matter to be fairly decided. A justice may quash an information that fails to meet the requirements of the act unless it can be corrected without prejudicing the defendant.

Second, clarifying the information contained in the certificate evidence that appears to be signed by an enforcement officer or other authorized person, as well as information contained in an appendix that sets out evidence of the alleged offence that is attached to the certificate, is admissible as evidence and is proof of the fact stated in the documents in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

This is important because, at times, appendices may be used to include important information that does not fit on the certificate, such as diagrams of the scene. When an appendix is not presumed admissible under the act, additional resources and time are needed to prove the evidence contained in the appendix or the evidence is not admitted, and prosecutions are hindered.

Third, it clarifies that there are no interlocutory appeals or decisions made on motions or other

preliminary matters in proceedings under the act unless the act specifically allows for one. The act currently has a broad ground of appeal that does not specifically limit on the circumstances of which leave to appeal can be sought.

Interlocutory appeals create significant delays and inefficiencies; at times they can purposely be used as a delay tactic. The existing availability of an appeal of an interlocutory matter is also inconsistent with the appeal provisions of the Criminal Code, which only allows for an appeal from a conviction, judgment, sentence or verdict. The amendment will provide consistency of the application of the rules respecting interlocutory appeals with the Criminal Code and enhance efficiency of the justice system. It will not impact a defendant's right to appeal a final decision or judgment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I had a question—a follow-up question to one that was posed during the bill briefing.

Can the minister give some indication as to how many traffic tickets and other offences this would impact—the change that's proposed in this bill would impact on—in, say, any given year?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We'll seek to bring that information to committee when the bill reaches that stage.

Just for clarification, I want to make sure that I understand the question correctly. Is the member asking for how many traffic tickets there are a year, or how many traffic tickets would otherwise perhaps be quashed and not quashed if this act were in provision? Is that what he's—which one is he asking?

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Can the minister explain the reason why the appeals process

on decisions made on motions or other preliminary matters is removed under the new act?

* (15:50)

Mr. Goertzen: I think the member's referring, I think, to interlocutory matters.

And so, interlocutory matters are things that aren't really the substance of the issue by which is being tried, but there are others issues, maybe about admissibility of certain things, that are decided within that trial or decided within the matter that a judge might rule upon. So they're not ruling upon the actual substance of the matter that's before the judge or the master; they're simply making a determination within the trial.

And so it was never the intention that those matters, which are—I wouldn't want to call them procedural, but are not specific to the main issue—should be appealed.

Of course, the main issue—

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

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify.

So, what I was asking about was the number of tickets that would be otherwise quashed because of minor, you know, issues with the ticket that could now be corrected by the magistrate.

And appreciate the minister—if he could bring that to the committee stage, that would be appreciated.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll ask the department to provide that information.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions? The honourable member—are there any other questions? No?

Okay, seeing none, the time for questions, then, we'll wrap that it up; it's over, and we'll go to debate.

Debate

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'm pleased to put a few words on the record with regards to Bill 19.

This bill makes several minor amendments to The Provincial Offences Act with regards to rules respecting when a ticket or information can be amended or quashed, which are clarified and standardized under this bill.

We know that information contained in a document attached to a certificate of evidence signed by an enforcement officer or other authorized person is

admissible as proof of the fact set out in that document. And there are no appeals of decisions made on motions or other preliminary matters and proceedings under the act, unless the act specifically allows for an appeal.

This bill will allow for these changes to be made. I think this is, you know, sort of a fairly straightforward, understood situation.

In fact, I was, you know, anecdotally, I've been talking about this bill to a number of folks, and it's amazing how many people will say, well, that situation happened to me, and will say, you know, I got a ticket. I brought it into the magistrate, noticed there was one clerical or simple error on it, and it was thrown out at that point and so I didn't have to pay the ticket.

So the reason why I asked the minister and do appreciate that he's going to get some information for me, is that, you know, this may be a fairly significant number of tickets that now will need to be considered in the court system. And these tickets may be tickets that otherwise, you know, folks—they are planning to challenge these in some ways or to put—you know, to have a hearing rather than simply pay the ticket.

And so my concern there is, once again, more pressures on our justice system. Now I appreciate that this a different system than other parts of the justice system, but there are certainly going to be potentially new pressures now put on these magistrates and on that particular court system. Or, you know, quite frankly, this might be something that folks want to take to the next level in terms of their legal rights.

So, I am concerned and do want to hear more with regards to this. I think this is one element of the bill, and you know, the reason why we bring this forward is because there are—have just been a number of pressures on the judicial system that this government continues to not address and not fully fund and not fully deal with. And so, we're very concerned.

We know that in just this last month, CBC reported that court delays were causing many cases to be thrown out or, you know, not be considered before the accused even stands trial. Lawyers say this is a sign that the system just isn't working.

In 2016, the Supreme Court ruled that cases for lesser charges must be heard within 18 months or 30 months for more serious charges. And data obtained by CBC News from Manitoba prosecutions showed delays—delay motions were filed for 53 cases in the province over the last two years. The Crown is

stayed 13 of them; another five were dropped because of these lengthy delays, meaning 18 cases were tossed and the accused went free simply because the resources weren't adequate in our justice system.

According to a Winnipeg defence lawyer, these delays have corrosive effect across the entire criminal justice system. As people claim their innocence, don't have the opportunity to clear their name in court, the accused often looks—is looked at as guilty even if they're let go on a delay motion because they were freed on a technicality. They don't have their day in court, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is important.

Additionally, some of these cases that have been dropped due to delays are serious charges, including at least one case of child pornography charges, which is incredibly concerning that delays in the justice system can affect such a serious case.

Having cases heard as quickly as possible is, quote, for victims, the accused and for society as a whole. End quote. And that was a quote from Scott Newman, a Winnipeg criminal defence lawyer that I mentioned earlier.

However, this past year, more than 3,000 cases took longer than 18 months to be heard by a judge, according to last year's provincial court annual report, which is an increase of nearly 5 and a half per cent. That's despite fewer cases being tried in the system, the report said, which have taken longer to conclude than in previous years, mainly because of suspensions of court proceedings before the—sorry, during the pandemic.

The report also found that 40 per cent of the provincial court's workload involves the administration of justice offences, which include bail breaches and people moving without court approval. Experts say the system is being clogged with these minor offences, and this obviously impacts the more serious ones.

Poor Internet accessibility exemplified the problem for those in rural and northern parts of Manitoba and that leaves those in—particularly in our northern communities, our Indigenous communities, particularly vulnerable once again.

Another quote by Mr. Newman; quote, There simply aren't enough court dates to deal with the volume of cases there. I think they—we are falling down in our efforts at reconciliation if we're not putting appropriate resources into helping those communities.

We also know that there are—is a major issue with regards to prosecutors in this province. Judge—sorry, prosecution and judge vacancies across Manitoba are at an all-time high. In October 2022, the Winnipeg Free Press reported that, quote, burnout, unmanageable workloads and stagnant pay, end quote, were draining the Manitoba justice system of seasoned prosecutors by forcing them to move out of province, into the private sector or, in some cases, into early retirement.

As of October 2022, 17 of the Province's 175 full-time Crown prosecutor positions remained unfilled. In the past two years, the department has lost 22–26 prosecutors, 16 of whom have left to work for the Crown in another province or switched to the defence bar. Of the remaining 10, two were appointed to the bench and eight retired.

Many Crown attorneys are being recruited by Crown offices across the country because Manitoba has just failed to be competitive in this field. This is a direct result of this government's refusal to address the problem and to act.

Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys President Erika Dolcetti said that, quote, the government is unwilling to do what they need to do, and we are losing Crowns at an exponential rate. Crowns are doing everything they can. We are at a point where the government could do something or things are going to fall—that the government has to do something or things are going to fall through the cracks. End quote.

We know that that is already being seen in our communities across this province. As violent crime rises in Winnipeg, the already strained justice system is struggling just to cope with the number of cases that is has, but this government continues to refuse to help. As of October 2022, Manitoba Crown attorneys have been without a new contract since March of the—that year. And the previous contract included no increase to staffing levels.

According to the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys, contract negotiations with the Province had been unsuccessful up to that point. Quote, we are asking the Province for a fair offer—a fair offer, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to retrain and recruit Crowns, and that's just not happening. And that is a quote by Erika Dolcetti.

In addition to the new contract, Crown attorneys need support, they need resources, they need a real partner and a real government at the table. Quote, with the high crime rate, Crowns do not have the time or resources to properly manage their caseloads. The

government needs to do something to retain and recruit our senior litigators. End quote.

* (16:00)

The burnout rate among Crown prosecutors is also much higher than normal. Well over half of this province's Crown prosecutors have sought counselling stress, and at least seven of them are currently on stress leave.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

This is just the tip of the iceberg with regards to ways that this PC government has failed to address the massive strains within our Justice system and, despite the words and election-year positioning that this government wants to now do, we know that our communities continue to get less safe because of the actions of this government. So, we will continue to hold them to account.

We do expect that Bill 19 will make some changes that will be positive, and we'll certainly allow this bill to pass here today. But I do look forward to hearing at committee if there are any concerns that are brought forward, and we look forward to bringing those back to the Legislature.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I just want to make a few comments on the last provision of the bill, which deals with no appeals of the decisions made on motions or other preliminary matters and proceedings under The Provincial Offences Act.

This section of the legislation seems to narrow the appeal rights of a defendant. Perhaps part of the reason for this provision is the legislation is to deal with the multitude of fines being contested in the provincial court system. It is absolutely a defendant's right to go to court, contest a ticket or a fine they receive under The Provincial Offences Act. However, it is also important to note that the court must have the capacity to handle such cases to deliver appeals in a timely manner.

Referring to the provincial court's recent annual report—specifically page 14, which I table—Winnipeg continues to have more appearances per case than other regional court centres, which is attributable to a higher volume of charges and greater frequency of court settings.

However, in the administration of justice, all defendants need to have the possibility of appeal, and the appeals process should continue to be accessible

to all, instead of narrowed in the administration of justice.

Looking forward to further debate. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this matter?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 19, The Provincial Offences Amendment Act.

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

Bill 12—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2023

Madam Speaker: I will now call second reading of Bill 12, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2023.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation, that Bill 12, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2023, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: This is the highlight of the legislative session every year, where the minor amendments and corrections act is brought forward.

And just for the edification of, maybe, new members or those who don't monitor these things as closely as others do, this is the process by which, throughout the year, departmental staff will look for spelling errors, either in the English version of an act or the French version of an act, and make note of those errors and collect them over the year, and then they compile them into the minor amendments and corrections act.

In addition, though, there are some things that are truly minor in terms of the correction of acts that aren't just spelling errors or typographical errors; they're actually corrections that are deemed to be relatively small. And it's not just the Minister of Justice or others who make that determination. There are Leg. Counsel folks who give us advice whether or not they are minor enough to fall within the minor corrections and amendment act. And so, this is the 2023 version of that act.

I've had a few times I've been able to introduce this. I will forewarn members prior to the question period—and I'll give some description of the changes—but prior to the question period, because this is something of an omnibus bill, where different—yes, lots of concern now about that word—but there are a variety of departments that bring forward these spelling mistakes or these minor corrections, and they are acts that are amended that aren't strictly under the Department of Justice. In fact, there are very few under the Department of Justice. So, if I don't always have complete knowledge of the acts—and members, don't be surprised by that—but I will, in committee, try to provide answers to any questions that come.

So, with those provisos and that explanation, here we go.

There are a few different changes to the act. The Drivers and Vehicles Act is amended to address a small gap in a section relating to out-of-province vehicles. The current section requires owners of out-of-province vehicles to carry proof of financial responsibility required by the act.

However, there is no provision in the act that requires—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Goertzen:—ownership of out-of-province vehicles to maintain proof of financial responsibility.

The amendments clarify that owners of out-of-province vehicles are required to maintain proof of financial responsibility in the amount and form set out in section 160 and 161 of The Highway Traffic Act.

Under The Ombudsman Act, it is amended to provide the Ombudsman with the ability to delegate to the Deputy Ombudsman the power to make a report in the circumstances where the Ombudsman is in a conflict of interest. A similar amendment is made to the child—The Advocate for Children and Youth Act.

The Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation Act is amended to change the corporation's annual filing date—report-filing date—from three months to six months after the close of the fiscal year. This reflects the timing of when the corporation has information from a third party that is necessary to be included in the report.

The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Act is amended to add registered psychiatric nurses to the list of health-care professionals who are subject to the verification and inspection provisions in the statute. This is a consequence of a class of registered psychiatric

nurses having been given the authority to prescribe certain drugs in the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba general regulation.

Inspection provisions are also amended to refer to podiatrists. This corrects a missed consequential amendment from 2005—still cleaning up the NDP mess.

The Resource Tourism Operators Act is amended to enable the minister to designate a member of the Resource Tourism Appeal Committee as a vice-chair and specifies that the minister cannot appoint a core public servant to the committee.

The Family Support Enforcement Act is amended to reflect the recent enactment of The Disability Support Act. It expands the definition of income assistance recipient to include an individual receiving disability support, shelter support or any other payment or service under The Disability Support Act.

The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) is amended. This unproclaimed statute applies to regional health authorities when the restructuring of the health system under the health system 'governance' and accountability act. These amendments are required to extend the reporting and consultation requirements to the provincial health authority, which provides treatment to child survivors of sexual assault, in particular at the Health Sciences Centre.

Part two of the bill consolidates into The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act several commemorative days, weeks and months that were proclaimed in six separate statutes in 2022. Since these commemorative statutes will each be included in The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act as their own schedule, this part also repeals each of the separate statutes. These amendments will ensure that the public has a single location where they will be able to find each of the commemorative days, weeks and months proclaimed by the Legislature.

And, finally, part three of the bill will amend two regulations and validate those amendments. The first is the Designation of Employees and Persons Deemed to be in the Civil Service Regulation. This is a retroactive amendment that is needed to ensure that a small number of long-time public servants will not be erroneously excluded from the pension fund because they were transferred to Shared Health Inc. prior to September 1st, 2019. The second is the School Divisions and Districts Establishment Regulation. The amendments adjust the boundaries of nine school divisions to reflect the awards made since 2014 by the

board of reference under The Public Schools Act, which is transferred land within—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen:—and outside school divisions.

* (16:10)

This concludes my remarks, and I'd be pleased to fully discuss these at committee.

Madam Speaker: I understand there are no questions to be asked on this bill.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The debate is open, however, if anybody wishes to speak in debate.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I thought the minister might read out every spelling error and grammatical mistake that was being corrected in this bill. And, you know, we may actually have appreciated that because, you know, while this is truly minor amendments and corrections, these really are inconsequential, we know that this government has a history, in the past, of bringing forward a BITSA bill, which is normally, you know, fairly straightforward enacting of the provincial budget, but they would often slip something in there that impacted real people in our communities.

And, you know, when the minister pointed out that this is an omnibus bill, I thought, uh-oh, I better go back and re-read what was in here and maybe I would catch another cut, PC cut, that's come forward.

But, you know, I haven't seen it yet although I'm keeping my eyes open because there are so many of these cuts and it really could be one stuck in the back of this bill. At this point, I don't see it. I do hope that if there are any concerns, they'll be brought to committee, and we do expect this to move forward quickly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is there any further debate on this motion?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 12, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2023.

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

Bill 22—The Emergency Measures Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will now call Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, the second reading of Bill 22.

Hon. Doyle Pivniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith), that Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pivniuk: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 22, which will allow government to better plan and respond to emergencies and disasters.

These amendments are—streamline that process government—provincial government's departments use to—prepared for emergencies and disasters. This is because Bill 22 will require all departments to prepare a continuity plan instead of emergency management program, which was required before.

The continuity plan focuses on preserving the services that are delivered to Manitobans during any type of disaster compared to the emergency management program, which was specific plans for different types of emergencies.

The continuity plan, known as the all-hazards plan, is flexible and adaptable, allowing departments to respond to any type of emergency, Madam Speaker. This change will allow departments to focus on their efforts to deliver key services; however, recognizing some of the departments for the more critical role of emergency planning and response than others.

EMO will maintain the authority to direct departments to develop a detailed emergency management program if they feel is needed, Madam Speaker. These changes will also allow EMO, which will see its name changed to Manitoba emergency management organizations from previously the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization. This will be very consistent to other organizations across the country with other jurisdictions and will be more consistent. And as a result of this bill, to focus on extension, on establishing priorities and expectations for emergency preparationness and responsiveness.

This bill will also allow governments to designate business and organizations to define as critical service providers by groups or class as well as individuality. Without these amendments, critical services providers can only be designated individually, which is less efficient and increases the chance that a business or organization may miss during designation.

Along the classes of groups of businesses or organizations or even sectors in—of the economy, to be designated as critical service providers will make the process of declaring critical service providers during an emergency and—more efficient and allow a more timely response, Madam Speaker. It will also minimize uncertainty as to what entities are considered critical services providers.

This important legislation will ensure that Manitoba is well-equipped to plan for and respond to emergencies and disasters in the future, Madam Speaker, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to move this bill forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I'd like to ask the minister, does this legislation come with any consultation from communities that were affected by natural disasters in previous years, for example, floods or wildfire?

Hon. Doyle Piwniuk (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Well, I just want to let the member know from Keewatinook that, when it comes to this change of legislation here, it's basically for the departments of government to continue their services during a disaster and emergency.

When it comes to individual municipalities, they—everything stays the same. They will all be—basically, preparedness, when it comes to a flood—and will be communicating with our staff or they come through our EMO staff for any kind of ongoing—when it comes to, say, the spring, with flooding happening, we will

consult with our municipalities just like we did before. Nothing changes there.

Mr. Bushie: So, the minister referenced municipalities, but also highly affected communities or northern communities, in particular First Nation communities, when it comes to fire in particular. I'm just wondering if the minister involved them in any discussions to change these parameters.

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, this legislation is just an amendment. It's to clean up the—when it comes to the legislation on the EMO. And the name change is the big one.

But when it comes to departments, it's basically allowing the departments to continue doing their continuous service without any interruptions and making sure that they don't follow the same thing that a municipality or First Nation communities have to follow.

Our staff are always in contact with First Nation and municipalities when it comes to preparedness. We work with them, especially with First Nation communities. We still work with the Indigenous Services Canada and we also work with Red Cross if it happens to be that there is an emergency evacuation for fires or flooding—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Bushie: I was wondering if the minister plans on using this legislation to act in an urgent manager for the potentially inevitable upcoming flood season.

Mr. Piwniuk: Yes, well, this—when there comes sort of passing this bill here, what's going to happen now is that our—again, the name is going to be changing.

Our departments, when it comes to certain departments that are more active when it comes to a flood, let's say, of—let's say, last year or this coming year—say, Families. You know, when it comes to evacuations and housing with evacuees we want to make sure that hotels—it really affects the Families Department.

But when it comes to Sport, Culture and Heritage, for instance, it's not being impacted by the flood, but we just want to show that, in government, we—each of the departments will have a continuing of their services without any interruptions when it comes to a flooding situation or a forest fire.

Mr. Bushie: I'm wondering if the minister could give us an example of the corporations or organizations that will be designated as critical services under this piece of legislation?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, some of the organizations that we've actually tendered before, when it comes to a tendering process, we may have to go to these companies to get—when it comes to engineering firms or if it comes to contractors, we go to them for emergency when it comes to having to fix a road in a flash flood.

We have that opportunity to use those same designated who are tendered when it comes to these companies that are actually—provided a tender process when it comes to a flood situation or a natural disaster.

Mr. Bushie: Madam Speaker, further to that, then, is there a—then going to be a pre-approved list of companies and organizations that will be allowed to tender on such events?

* (16:20)

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, when it comes to—way before any kind of flood, we always put it into a tender process that every company has an opportunity to bid on that opportunity to—would go to if we have a flood emergency.

So, we do have a fair process when it comes to tendering.

Mr. Bushie: Yes, Madam Speaker, I'm wondering, with the government proposing these modest changes now as opposed to earlier in the pandemic, why didn't they do it earlier on, when it would have had a larger impact?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, when it comes to the pandemic, no one was—like, it was such a—something that came so quickly.

When it came to a pandemic, we—you know, you—when it comes to crisis, you learn from that situation, and there was no playbook when it came to a pandemic. And this is where we are changing to make sure that government flows and continues to provide services.

No matter what happens, what comes our way, we want to make sure—we learned so much from our floods in the past, we learned so much from our pandemic, and we'll—now, we are making sure that we change legislation and regulations to make sure that there's more of a continuous service from government.

Mr. Bushie: I'm wondering if—with the designation of these organizations, if the minister feels it's sufficient enough to provide protections that need to be empowered, sustainable and resilient to the challenges of potential forthcoming—upcoming emergencies.

And does the designation come with any specific support from the provincial government?

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, because of so many different floods from, you know, from 2011, '14 and '17 and '20, all these years, we have had floods. You know, I am so proud of my staff, who have been there last year to making sure that everything flowed so well.

We've actually had the second worst flood in Manitoba history. And the thing is, we've hardly had any snags when it came to getting people to safety, getting DFAA programs paid out. You know, Madam Speaker, we do have a very good, efficient department that gets things done.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: There any further questions?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, debate is open.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record for Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act.

In some cases, it may be looked at as a—as house-keeping measures or just trying to tighten up various legislation or wording to change various descriptions of the organization and the functions that it may have. But the reality of when—talk about emergency, there's nothing kind of simple and easy about it. And I think, here in Manitoba, we've seen that time and time again.

And the sad thing is, especially under this PC government, it's more like a reactionary approach to things. We need to be more proactive.

So, we're talking about these changes, these amendments and these empowerments of various organizations and jurisdictions but, at the same time, we're now doing that after a number of different emergencies, including a major flooding over the last couple years, major forest fires over the last couple years.

So, it does beg the question, is, what took so long? What took so long to be able to do this? And it—this can't just be an—I'm hoping it's not just another kind of election year kind of—we're going to do this so we're—look like we're doing something. Let's put some real action behind this.

So, the question—the legitimate question in all this is, why didn't this take place sooner? And this is a

piece of legislation that we're in support of, but we do have that question about why didn't this come sooner.

Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned about municipalities in—all over Manitoba, and the question I kind of bounced back to him about that, too, is also First Nations in northern Manitoba, because they were also affected.

So, when we talk about natural disasters, there's not just one. We're not sitting here just talking about flood; we're not sitting here just talking about forest fires. There's a combination of both that encompasses our entire province, and so we need to be prepared in all ways that we do it.

So, when government says we're doing support—and it's about provincial and federal government saying we're doing enough to support. If that's the case, why do we still have displaced members from flooding, displaced members from forest fires, 'displaced' members from other natural disasters? If that's the case, we shouldn't have that situation, we shouldn't have people displaced after extended periods of time.

And I'm not talking days or weeks or months, even; I'm talking years that people have been displaced from their homes and places that they lived and grew up and their parents and grandparents and their ancestors even lived.

So, we have to have those discussions to exactly what happens the next time. When we talk about we've learned, we've learned from the past—not necessarily learned from our mistakes, but we learned how we need to kind of adjust and adapt to what we're going to do.

So let's do things that are more proactive instead of reactive. Let's not sit here today—and I mean, that's why earlier today, we asked questions about the channel project, because that's an important part. Hoping that it doesn't flood, hoping that it doesn't rain, hoping that we get either a slow melt, a quick melt, an easy melt, low—no rain, less snow; hoping for those kind of things is not a plan. So we need to be able to plan and implement for when those things arise, and when those emergencies arise.

So, maybe we don't even look at them and—as emergencies anymore, because we're thoroughly prepared. And that's what we want to see in legislation. That's what we want to see governments do: prepare our communities and—so everybody is ready. So we're ready to have that—and we don't use the word fight when it comes to floods and water; fight when it comes to fire and forests. We use—this is what we're

doing; we're reacting to this in a positive way, for protection of all of us. Because that's the important thing.

And I know members opposite will thoroughly agree with that, that the safety and health of all Manitobans is our utmost priority. So that's—when we talk about Bill 22 and bringing forth minor changes and doing some empowering to various organizations, that's why it's important to do that. It's important to be all-encompassing and really bring that forward and say, this is what this means. This really encompasses the best we can do.

So, we're not coming forth later on and making amendments and changes to Bill 22, because it is enough on its face; and is it? That's the question that we're asking. We're asking that question. Does this really do that? Does this really empower, does this really prepare us for an emergency?

And I don't know if this does. I really don't know. Because we've asked questions about—we need to talk to more people. We need to consult not just municipalities, not just northern folks, not just First Nations, but all of Manitobans, because these disasters are happening on the norm. You've heard that term many times over the last couple years, the one-in-one-hundred-years flood, or the one-in-one-thousand-years flood, or forest fires, or dry season. But now it's becoming the norm. Now we're saying that's what's—something that's happening year after year after year. So let's prepare for that. Let's get ready for that.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So let's put a piece of legislation that truly encompasses all that, and truly gets us prepared to go across and have everything in place. Because we're sitting here today north of where the water is right now, north of where there's a majority more snow now. I mean, we had a pretty decent melt here in Manitoba, pretty decent melt here in Winnipeg. But look what happened to us last week. You know, we, all of a sudden, had a massive dump of snow. It only lasted a day or so, but that water still was here.

So we need to be prepared; if that becomes normal, what do we do? So, when I asked the minister about empowering organizations and different parts of this legislation, and corporations and being able to do that, what does that mean? What does that mean on a real picture? When a true emergency happens, that we're not panicking, that we're not scrambling around and just kind of throwing money at the problem. That we, in fact, thought it through, and it's something that's

resolvable amongst all of us because we've all contributed; we've all put our pieces in, and we've all been a part of the solution.

And Manitobans at large know what's going on. Because there's been times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where Manitobans have not known what's going on in emergency, have not known what's going on with the rising waters in their backyard, have not known what's going on with the forest fire that all of a sudden cut off their power supply. So, we need to know. We need to have a comprehensive system where we can inform all of Manitobans—and it links a lot of different departments. There's a lot of different things that come into play. We can talk about broadband and cell service, and those kind of things.

Where I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, sending messages to the people in Bloodvein and Poplar River, and all of a sudden, nothing. It just went blank. No messages were being delivered, no responses at all, because they were totally cut off. Not only that, this was 2 o'clock in the morning. So, totally cut off and in the dark.

So we had to be prepared: what do we do there? So when we talk about Bill 22 and making changes to our emergency measures, we need to take all of that into consideration and really bring that forth in a wholesome way and say, this is what we need to do; this is the strongest piece.

So we don't have legislation that we're having to amend next year, or we're having to amend over a change of government. That we can come to agreement on, say, this is the strongest piece of legislation we can do today, for us today.

And yes, I'm sure there'll be changes when something may arise in society overall. But when we talk about Mother Earth and what happens in our communities with flood, with water, with fire, we can prepare for that, as well. There'll still be some things that maybe we're—not be totally prepared for. But for the most part, we can.

So, as much as this may be a housekeeping measure kind of bill and an amendment act in terms of changing some terminology, it also talks about empowering various organizations. So we need to know that those organizations truly have the best interests of all of us at heart, and they're truly prepared to do that. And we're not just doing it for whoever does it on the cheap, whoever's the cheapest place to go, whoever promises the best results. We need to know that those things can be delivered.

* (16:30)

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words on the record here, I just wanted to say that this is a start. But, once again, with number of pieces of legislation, it still, I don't feel, is quite enough, so it still can be strengthened, but I look forward to being able to support the intent of what this does. Especially now that we're going into a potential flood season, and we really don't know what the outlook looks like; it changes on a daily basis, depending on the weather.

And, I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and, I mean, we talk about—we visited from time to time on your area of Manitoba and kind of the changes that come—the water, the snow, the situation, the dryness of stuff. So that's all of us. That's not just the city of Winnipeg; that's rural, that's northern, that's southern and south-east, southwest of Manitoba. So we all know what this means for us and what this piece of legislation means for us.

So it is more than just housekeeping. It is being able to thoroughly prepare us. And I don't know if it does it, but it is a start in the right direction.

So with those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes, I mean, when it comes to emergency measures, in some ways this is sort of closing—as they say, closing the barn door once the horses have bolted.

I just do want to briefly comment on the role of emergency measures, because it is floods, it is fires, but it is also supposed to be pandemics. And as far as I know, EMO was completely sidelined.

Actually, emergency measures is supposed to be the lead in a pandemic, according to a document set out as a pandemic plan during and after the H1N1 pandemic, which was never used during the pandemic. Emergency measures normally would be, as I say, the lead, but it was never clear throughout the pandemic who was in charge at all. We would sometimes ask, who's actually responsible for making these suggestions, making these decisions? Is it political? Is it medical? Is it public health? Is it emergency measures?

But if you look at what emergency measures was doing—normally, they'd be the ones who are in charge of all the logistics, because, with all due respect to public health, public health's job is public health. Emergency measures is usually the organization that says, okay, well, we're going to book that building,

and we're going to rent that building, and we're going to make sure that—we're going to gather all these volunteers and we're going to make sure that all these things are ready.

And so now, we're reading that each government department has to prepare an emergency management program and that they have to develop continuity plans. Well, there were plans. This is what's even more distressing. There were plans that were written—they're on a Manitoba government website—an entire plan for what should happen in the event of a pandemic: What should Education do? What should business do? And it was all ignored.

So, we have to have a robust emergency measures system, because we don't. And we continually have emergencies in this province, some of which are natural, and some of which—or, like, all them—and some of which are climate change-related, some of which have happened for a long time.

But we need a concrete—we needed a concrete proposal—or, a concrete system to make this happen and make sure that emergency measures was working properly, independent of political control, 'independent' of political considerations, and that didn't happen. That did not happen during the pandemic.

And it's just as much of a problem when you look at issues. You know, we were—just yesterday, I was talking about Wasagamack First Nation, which had a colossal fire in 2017. They were evacuated under incredibly dangerous conditions, but that's something that's common; it happens all the time.

But we have to—one of the things about disasters, you know, we accept that certain things are always going to be a problem, so we build systems that deal with them. We accept that there are always going to be issues of people who break the law, so we have the police and we have a justice system. We accept that people are always going to sick—be sick, so we have ambulances and EMS, and we have the hospital system, right?

But there is—but we are not doing the same that we need to do—that is absolutely critical—when it comes to emergency services across Winnipeg and across Manitoba, because we haven't done a good job; we haven't done a good enough job of mitigating these dangers and these risks.

And while this is a welcome bill—it is a welcome bill—to actually make sure that there'll be greater degree of preparation, that often, the hard part about it is that we have to be vigilant while not getting

exhausted. But, as I recall, even when it comes to, again, preparations for how we would deal with a pandemic in—and look, I'm looking at right now; we have people on Zoom, we have people working remotely. That was something we initially proposed in March 2020, before there was a single case in Manitoba, because we recognized that one of the things that has to happen is the province of—the Legislature has to keep working and that all sorts of other systems and departments need to keep—need to be able to keep working in event of a crisis.

And, look, we are in a—and the other thing about it is that it's about being—emergency preparation is always going to be less efficient than anyone wants because to be safe in an emergency, you need redundancy, you need backups; you need two of everything—because otherwise, your entire system is too fragile—so that if one thing breaks down, you'll always have another thing to count on.

But when you have years of austerity and cuts where you're not putting the money you need into communications, into training, into making sure that the people are there, into early distant—distant early warning measures, into—whether it's detecting and surveilling infectious disease, fires, floods, making sure we actually have the measurements that were out there so that we can respond in time and dealing with it in a way that's timely, appropriate. Those are—these are enormous challenges, but it's—that's how we actually survive. Emergency measures are absolutely critical.

And the one other thing—aspect of this is—was the lack of communications, because I think part of the problem during the pandemic, again, was that people simply rejected that it was an emergency, because it wasn't the kind of emergency that people are used to. If you see a car crash on the highway, you know it's an emergency; you take it seriously. You see a flood and you see people in trouble, it's emergency. If you see forest fires, it's an emergency. But when you have a pandemic and it's invisible, it's not as obvious.

And I think that's part of the problem people had, is that you don't see it. You don't—it's an invisible threat. And so people had trouble taking the—that emergency seriously and fought the idea that it really even was an emergency at all, and they sort of denied the seriousness of it.

So there's an incredibly important communications aspect of this around emergencies and around making sure people understand how serious an emergency is, how people need to change their behaviour in an emergency and in order to keep people safe.

So, this is, as some say, you know, a few days late and a few dollars short in terms of improving measures to emergency organization. We do need this bill, but we also need to make sure that we're putting money into all the training and all the reinforcements we need to make sure that emergency measures are actually sufficient in order to keep people safe across this province because it really is—you know, sometimes we talk about the fact that we—when we work in this Chamber, we make decisions that are life-and-death situations.

Emergency measures is one of those. It's something we absolutely have to get right and that we have to put—make sure that we put all of our efforts into.

So, with that, I'll sum up. Thank you very much. I appreciate the time.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there any further speakers on this motion?

Hearing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is second reading of Bill 22, The Emergency Measures Amendment Act.

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

I carry the—I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, could you please canvass the House and see if it is the will of members to call it 5 p.m.?

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is it the will of members to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 13, 2023

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