

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Acting Government House Leader): Could you call for debate Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act for concurrence and third reading.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 208—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'm very excited to rise this morning for the third reading of The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act.

And I really want to just begin by thanking RTAM, many members who have joined us here in the gallery this morning, for all of their persistence and all of their hard work and diligence over the years. They've been pursuing this piece of legislation since 2006 and over the years, they've sat down with former governments, current governments, opposition parties of all parties, Madam Speaker.

And they've spent the time. They've done their diligence. They've explained it to all members here in the House, the importance of this legislation. And I really want to thank them for all the education that they have shared with myself personally as well. I know we've gone back and forth quite a bit over the last year, a lot of emails and—so thank you for all of your time with that, and all of the comments that were shared at committee.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to keep my remarks very short because we want to see the legislation passed here this morning but, in short, TRAF, the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund, currently has seven members and this legislation adds two extra seats, one selected by our Province and one for an RTAM member—keeping in mind RTAM has over 10,000 members presently.

And I just want to ask that the names of those who have joined us here in the gallery be added to Hansard for this morning.

And thank all of my colleagues for their continued support on this legislation, and I'm excited to see it unanimously passed here this morning.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to thank the member for introducing for third reading this Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act. This has been something that has been ongoing, as the member had mentioned, since 2006 or seven, when discussions first began with—between RTAM and the government and MTS regarding issues that were outstanding.

There were a few issues back then that had to be cleared up before changes could be agreed on. There was an outstanding issue with interest from one of the reserve funds that both sides thought should go to their funds. Our government has been able to clear that up about a year and a half ago, which kind of opened the door to review where we're sitting with that board.

It is one of the better-run pension plans in this province and we're happy to participate in it. Certainly, it provides a significant safety net for teachers on their retirement and I know that the RTAM members certainly appreciate the ongoing support and co-operation. It has certainly been a worthwhile experience for our government to participate in this—in that pension plan.

Moving forward, I'm sure that the member has consulted adequately with MTS. I know that they had a few outstanding issues that we will continue to work to make sure that those are dealt with as they arise. The change to the board numbers will not significantly change or shift the management of the board, but it will provide the voice that RTAM has been looking for, for some time.

And I think that is extremely worthwhile. And I know that our government will be happy to move in support of this.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): We do know that this bill amends The Teachers' Pensions Act to allow two members to be part of the TRAF board, or added to the TRAF board. That's important. I think what we're seeing now is this demographic shift where we have more retired teachers than actual teachers in the field. And having a RTAM member on the board would make sense in that way.

And we certainly support publicly funded pensions that are also funded by the people that work in the system.

So we look forward to this bill's passing, and I thank you for the time to speak.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to say welcome to our guests from RTAM this morning for this long-time-coming bill and opportunity to be part of the TRAF board.

And so, at this time, I'd like to commend the collaboration and the collegial work of the member who brought forward this bill, Madam Speaker. I know that

we have had many discussions, and I know that for many years as opposition members, I know that we had brought forward this idea to add RTAM to the TRAF board and to get them a seat.

* (10:10)

And it took some time, once we formed government in 2016, to sort of decipher some of the pits and valleys that we had inherited earlier on. But working with the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux), knowing that we were striving towards this, she took it upon herself to reach out to our department as well, to have this discussion.

And, of course, I know that RTAM, many of you have been involved for quite some time in this journey to get a seat on the TRAF board and as the—as some of the members have spoken this morning, it is important. It makes sense. You are—have been in—had been in the profession teaching and still contributing to some form, whether that's substituting or still giving back to the—to your communities where you taught for many, many years.

So with that, I applaud the member for Tyndall Park on the successfully getting this bill through. I know that she has a couple more things that she'd like to mention yet before we vote in favour. So our government is definitely in favour of passing 208 and moving on with the additional seats on the TRAF board.

So thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to your hard work, RTAM members, for all the years of service that you've done, not only just in the teaching profession but also after, when you've been retired as well.

So, thank you again.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Ms. Lamoureux: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: On a point of order.

Ms. Lamoureux: I would just like to ask for leave to have the names of those in the gallery added to Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the member to have the names of our gallery guests put into Hansard once she is able to get the names? *[Agreed]*

Gallery attendees:

Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba: Linda Blair, president; Joan Zaretsky, vice president; William Cann, past president; Sean Seywright, executive director; Dave Najdich, board secretary; Anne Williams, board member.

Prairie Sky Strategy: Tara Bingham.

And I would indicate that that's not a point of order, but I do commend the member for asking leave to have those names included.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Greg Nesbitt (Acting Government House Leader): Can you canvass the House to see if there's agreement to proceed with Bill 201 now?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to start debate on Bill 201? *[Agreed]*

We will now move to—I would indicate to the House that while we are starting debate on Bill 201 now, the question for this will be put at 10:55, as this was a selected bill.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 201—The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So I would now call the honourable—recognize the honourable member for River Heights, to move his second reading motion.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I move, Madam Speaker, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 201, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act; la Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, I speak on Bill 201 to talk about the importance of accountability in health care, which is something that Liberals have been talking about for a long time.

For too long, the RHAs and Shared Health have not been accountable to the Legislature. We need better accountability. We need the RHAs and Shared Health to provide an annual report and to appear before legislative committees in the same way that Crown corporations do. Too often the minister, when asked in question period or in Estimates, doesn't know the sort of detailed answers that come with real accountability.

The budget for the RHAs and shelled—Shared Health together is just under \$4 billion a year. This is an incredible 25 per cent of this year's budget, and yet these big spenders do not appear before a legislative committee. We are seeing, day by day and month by month, lack of access to health care, delayed access to health care, inefficiently delivered health care and poor-quality health care.

The examples are too numerous to describe in detail, but include individuals waiting many months for cardiac surgery, which the individual told should have been done in two weeks. An individual dying in transport, without a full inquest. And on and on and on.

We need accountability. We need to be able to ask questions of Shared Health and the RHAs directly.

I hope all MLAs will support this bill, which will lead to better accountability and to better health care. Let us reflect on the last 20 years, when we've had record-long wait-lists for going to our emergency rooms under NDP and PC governments, when we have had long backlogs for surgery. And yet, for example, Grace Hospital has problems staffing and has had to cancel surgeries recently.

We have had excellent physicians and surgeons leave, among them the award-winning neurosurgeon Dr. Demitre Serletis. We have many other physicians and nurses and health-care workers who are talking about leaving, and some, quite a number, have left because of burnout, because of the nature of what is happening in health care in Manitoba. It is a bad situation, which needs attention and which needs to be addressed.

We have a situation with home-care hours being cut back at a time when hours should've been increasing, and with more patients being looked after at home rather than fewer.

We all need answers. Our province needs answers. Improving our health-care system needs the RHAs and Shared Health to come before a committee of the Manitoba Legislature to provide answers which we have not been getting from the government.

Just like with Crown corporations, Shared Health and the RHAs each need to come before a committee of the Manitoba Legislature. I hope all MLAs will support this bill today.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I was just hoping that the member could talk a little bit longer about the bill that he's bringing forward and speak specifically about who they were consulting with and what considerations the people that they consulted with brought forward in the drafting of this bill.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My answer to the member is this: I have been working on health care and accountability for the whole time that I have been in the Legislature, which is 23 years. This area was stimulated by a report of Romanow which recommended that accountability be a full principle.

* (10:20)

I have brought forward legislation a number of occasions to have accountability as a full principle, but that has not yet been accepted, and so I'm bringing forward this as a way of bringing accountability to health care.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): The change would mean Shared Health, CancerCare and all of the health regions, including WRHA, Interlake-Eastern, Southern Health, Northern Health and Prairie Mountain would be subject to standing committee.

How would that work in practical terms?

Mr. Gerrard: My answer to the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak is that this would work—as we do with Crown corporations, we would have the head of Shared Health and senior staff come before a committee. At a separate time, we would have the head of the

RHA, each one individually. So we would have a series of committee meetings like we do with Crown corporations.

These organizations are large, they employ a large number of Manitobans. They are, together, one quarter of the budget. It's about time that we have them come forward individually—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I know with all kinds of bills, when we bring them forward in the House there, we take an opportunity to reach out to the departments or to the minister's office.

And I'm just wondering if the member opposite could just elaborate a little bit more on the information that he may have received from the Department of Health during the process of putting this bill together.

Mr. Gerrard: In opposition, it is our custom to talk with people. I have talked with many people, as I have knocked on doors, I have gone out and reached out. I have held forums on health care.

I have talked to numerous physicians and nurses and what I hear repeatedly is concerns about the operations of Shared Health and the RHA. It's time that they come before committees.

Ms. Lathlin: The relationship between government and its Crown corporations is different than of government and its health organizations.

Why has the member chosen this model?

Mr. Gerrard: It's true that the relationship is different, but the fact is that there are some significant similarities, and we have, as with Crown corporations, government getting up and saying, well, this is Shared Health doing this, this is RHAs doing this. We need to have direct accountability.

There is, you know, one quarter of the budget. I would suggest that a large proportion of the time in this Legislature deals with health-care issues and that it is time to do this. That is, to bring Shared Health and the RHAs before—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Teitsma: The member made note that I'm—I also serve as Vice-Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. And recently in Public Accounts Committees, we've had senior leadership from various parts of the health system come to Public Accounts and be held accountable in a—in this Chamber here, actually, in a very non-partisan way. And I thank the

Chairman of the—of Public Accounts for making that possible.

So I think there's already this sense of accountability. I wonder if the member would agree and how he thinks—and maybe—or, just tell us why he thinks his approach would be preferable.

Mr. Gerrard: There is some accountability through the Public Accounts Committee. That's true. But the Public Accounts Committee and the audits that are done look at small facets of the whole operation of Shared Health and the RHAs.

And so it's fine to be accountable for a small piece of health care, but what we need is accountability for how health care operates across the province, in rural areas as well in the city. And we've had many concerns expressed over the years, and it's time we have this level of accountability.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, were you getting up? *[interjection]*

The honourable member for St. Boniface.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): If the member could—knows, and this might—I hope this isn't a trick question—the last time that the CEO of—or, Shared Health or the—or a CEO of any RHA has reported to the Legislature?

Mr. Gerrard: The CEO of Shared Health played an incredibly important role in the COVID response and yet, we didn't have the head of Shared Health, we didn't have the heads of the RHAs hearing before committee, which is what we really needed and we should have had during the COVID pandemic, but we didn't have.

Ms. Lathlin: Speaking of accountability, currently, members can ask questions of the minister in the Estimates process relating to these health organizations.

What information is the member relating—excuse me—what information is the member seeking that they are not getting through the process of Estimates?

Ekosi.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I think that there is adequate evidence, for instance, during the COVID pandemic, that when we called on the minister to pay more attention to personal-care homes before there was even a case in Manitoba, when we called on the minister to test everybody once there was a single case in a personal-care home, when we called on the minister to put in place a rapid response team, that we

didn't get responses for months, and some—it was never adequate.

If we had at least been able to ask questions and directly interact with the CEO of Shared Health and the heads of the RHAs, I think we would—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Isleifson: I know in this House, and we've seen it many times, that a lot of the ministers rise and table annual reports. And even with Health, a lot of the annual reports from Health are tabled in this House.

And I'm wondering with—if this bill was to pass, what, in the member's eyes, would the committee structure—what would it look like to actually put one of these bills in front of a committee?

I'm just wondering if the member had an idea he could share with the House.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the committees would look just like a Crown corporation and be formed in the same way. We would have questions.

The fact is that what's happening at the moment with the annual reports, there's talk about expenditures, there's aspirational goals, but there's no outcomes. And what we want is an annual report which actually delivers outcomes and measures that we can assess. And it's time we had actual outcomes that we can see and we can have that in the report, and we can have questions based on why the outcomes aren't as good as they should be.

Ms. Lathlin: I would like to ask how many—excuse me—how many days of standing committee does the member envision being required under this proposed model?

Ekosi.

Mr. Gerrard: With most of the Crown corporations, we have a single day once a year. Occasionally, there are situations which are emergent and needed attention, which we have more frequent meetings.

I would think one day a year before a Crown—a committee of the Legislature, one day for the Shared Health and one day for each RHA.

Mr. Teitsma: You know, what the member said in response a couple of questions ago made me think. I know he's a medical doctor, so he probably takes a different view, but we've seen across the country, sometimes, politicians interfering or meddling with the decisions of health professionals and medical health professionals and system leaders.

Would you suggest that that should be expanded and we should be doing more of that sort of thing?

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, the member makes the point precisely that I'm trying to make. And that is that, because the Shared Health and the RHAs are apart from or somewhat distant from political accountability, right now—and political influence—that it—this is the way to bring accountability.

* (10:30)

We don't want political interference in Crown corporations. We don't want political influence in Shared Health and RHAs. But what we do want is accountability, and that's why we need these committee meetings.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I thank the member for bringing this matter forward. I think, you know, we might disagree on the specifics of the bill, but certainly, he and I share the concern for accountability within the health-care system.

I've recently taken on the role as legislative assistant to the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), and certainly, accountability is something that I hope to assist the Minister of Health with and ensuring that the system is doing what it's saying it's doing.

And one of the ways that I intend to be doing that is by connecting the front line with the minister's office. And I think the member would agree, I hope the member would agree, that oftentimes the messages that we receive and that we see at the top level, the directions of the minister and even the reports of senior leadership doesn't always correspond to what's happening on the front line and the way things are going there.

So I think it's vitally important to ensure that we use whatever mechanisms we can to connect to the front line. That includes all health-care professionals: nurses, doctors, allied health professionals. And I would also say it includes members of the public and—including patients, of course—patients, their designated caregivers and visitors.

A lot of times those folks, too, are coming to their legislators, folks like myself and the member who's introduced this bill, and they're asking for help and for guidance as to what their rights are within the health-

care system and what expectations they can have, and what we can do to help them.

So as I said, I realize and I agree with the member that accountability and transparency are very important. I was pleased to see that, after some technical hurdles, the diagnostic and surgical backlog dashboard has been launched with, at the current moment, nine procedures listed.

I believe that's going to be expanded, and it may already be in expanding, because it felt longer than nine when I was looking at it this morning. And eventually we'll get to, I think, 30 procedures being reported there and being very much publicly visible in terms of the number of completed cases, the size of the backlog, the median wait time.

And I think these are important things, that's an important step forward in accountability and transparency. And—so that we can have an agreed-to assessment of where things are at, for example, in terms of the backlog, right, we've seen significant progress in what was a massive backlog after—as the pandemic was ending. I think Doctors Manitoba pegged it at around 160,000 procedures at one point.

And now that has been greatly reduced, I think. In the dashboard itself, it's showing about 35,000 procedures there that are backlogged, and the intent is to continue to address those and to make progress on that.

So I really want to commend the diagnostic and surgical task force for being committed to the kind of transparency and accountability that, I think, both the member and—the member opposite and myself agree are necessary.

As I mentioned in my questions, I also serve as the Vice-Chair on the Public Accounts Committee, and I think that committee is different. And it's different than almost other—any other committee.

You know, the member, the NDP member opposite, kind of hinted at that with her questioning that what happens a lot of times at these standing committees is that they're essentially turned into an expanded version of this House, where it becomes relentlessly partisan and just an opportunity to debate between political parties, instead of co-operatively working together to achieve what is in the best interest of all Manitobans.

And I think the Public Accounts Committee, especially in the last year—and I thank the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), and prior to him, the

member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith), now Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, for the work that they did and the co-operation they were able to secure from ministers, from deputy ministers, from our colleagues opposite, so that that committee is functioning in a different way, in a non-partisan way.

And I would suggest that that is where the accountability that the member desires should be sought. Because what I've seen—and we've seen it in the pandemic as well—is when the health system becomes politicized, it doesn't do anybody any good. It doesn't do patients any good. It doesn't do health-care workers any good. It doesn't do system leaders any good; they're constantly watching their back instead of focusing on the task in front of them and running the system that they've been assigned to run.

So I would suggest to the member that the passive accountability that you get from reporting on what's actually happening in the system—the median wait times, the emergency department wait times, the flow, the number of staff, the kind of care that's being delivered and required—patient satisfaction is a huge one. That's something that I've always been advocating for ever since I was first elected, that patient satisfaction and that patient's impression of how the health system treated them is also vitally important.

And those are the kinds of measures that I'm pushing for accountability on. What I'm not going to push for accountability on is a greatly expanded table for politicization of the operation of our health system. I don't think that that serves any good and I think that's—that, for me, is the biggest concern I have with this bill. I don't think I'll be interested in supporting it because of that, because I'm concerned that what comes out the other end is not what the member—it's not what the member intends.

And I'll compliment the Liberal caucus. I see all three of them are here right now and they know I have great respect for the work that they do in this House. The kinds of questions that they ask are different than the kinds of questions that are asked by other members opposite.

And the approach that they take to putting the interest of their constituents ahead of their own political interest is also to be commended. And I commend the member for doing that and for doing that consistently, for now 17—did you say 17 years? Twenty-three? I don't know. It was a lot of years. But in any case, for a long time. And I understand the member 'contingues'—intends to continue to do that.

So I want to commend him for that and I do welcome that type of discourse. But I also have to look—when I'm looking at bills, I know that when a bill is passed it's going to be in effect for a long time. It could be in effect for decades, it could be in effect for, you know, hundreds of years potentially.

And in that light, I have hesitancy with this bill. I don't think it's going to serve the purpose that the member intends. I think that it will destabilize and overly politicize a health-care system that desperately needs to be inwardly focused on delivering care and on ensuring that their health-care workers are treated with respect, and that there's justice and equity and a sense of caring and compassion throughout the system, from top to bottom.

These are the kinds of things that I'm focused on, certainly, in my new role as legislative assistant to the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), and I think these are the kinds of things that will breed the type of accountability we need, which is to ensure that the patients are able to get the right care at the right place in our province, and that they're able to do so consistently; that they—that Manitobans, regardless of their socio-economic background, are treated with respect; that we don't create a system, as the NDP have created, where, essentially, while talking out of one side of their mouth against two-tier health care, they've created an environment where, under their leadership, two-tier health care rose faster than ever before because people would leave the country to get their medical procedures done and people with financial means would go to other jurisdictions when they should be able to get the care that they need here.

* (10:40)

That's disingenuous. That's not the kind of health leadership that we certainly want to bring to the health-care system. We want to make sure that people can get the health care that they need, when they need it, where they need it and that's what we're focused on doing here.

So I just want to commend the member for his efforts in increasing transparency and accountability, and attempt to redirect that member a little bit more into the type of accountability and the type of transparency that will help our health-care system. That's what we need.

And so, I thank the member for his time and for his efforts.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Just want to respond briefly to the previous member's comments about the practice of sending Manitobans outside of Manitoba for surgeries that is being pursued by this Progressive Conservative government. I just want to point out it's being pursued as an official policy of the government because we've run out of surgical capacity here in the province after just under two terms of PC cuts to the health-care system.

Now, as it pertains to the bill at hand here, my colleague from River Heights would have us ask the sort of accountability questions necessary of the CEOs and the health leadership of the service delivery organizations like Shared Health or the regional health authorities.

The biggest outstanding question, as it pertains to Manitobans being sent out of province for surgeries—because we're run out of surgical capacity here in Manitoba to care for them in the jurisdiction where they pay taxes, where they live, where they contribute to the society—is just how much are we paying these American companies to deliver surgeries for people right here in the province.

Now, under the model being proposed by my esteemed colleague from River Heights, he would have us ask that of the CEOs or the health leadership of the service delivery organizations. However, this is where we disagree. I believe those questions should rightly be asked of the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and ministers who have made the terrible decisions that have delivered us to this unfortunate position where we no longer have the ability to care for Manitobans here at home.

And so, again, that question is still outstanding as we meet here this morning in this esteemed Chamber: just how much are we paying these American health-care companies?

Now of course, if you ask the minister or the Premier on a given day, they will feign ignorance. They will pretend that they don't know how much this is costing the health-care system, even though we all know that they are signing off on the payments to these American health-care companies.

So it's clear that the minister and the Premier know how much we're paying for each of these surgeries. The people who don't know are the people of Manitoba. We're left here to wonder, well, we know that spinal surgery delivered in the public health-care

system in Manitoba might cost in the area of \$10,000, but what are we paying the American companies?

Are we paying them \$20,000 per spinal surgery? Are we paying them \$40,000 for spinal surgery? Are we paying more than that? Might it be \$50,000 per spinal surgery to these American companies, because we ran out of the ability to care for Manitobans here at home, because Brian Pallister started a series of health-care cuts, and the current Premier has decided to continue them.

Now, again, I have a lot of respect for my colleague from River Heights. But when he asks us to pose these sorts of accountability questions to the public servants who head the service delivery organizations like Shared Health and the regional health authorities, I believe we would be putting those public servants into an impossible position.

They are duty-bound to implement the decisions being made at the political level. And if any of us as MLAs, even after a future change in government and the PCs then being in opposition, would have opportunity to ask these public servants, these civil servants, we would be putting them in a very tough position. We would be pressing them for answers to questions that they are unable to provide us, because of their allegiance to provide advice fearlessly but implement faithfully the direction that is being given to them at the political level.

And so, while I think that it is commendable to want to pursue these sorts of questions, and I think it's important for us to have transparency and accountability in our health-care system, I think everyone in Manitoba knows that that accountability ought to be delivered from the current Premier and Progressive Conservative members who have implemented this terrible series of cuts, and not only implemented a plan that had at its heart the reduction of health-care services, but then implemented that plan with such gross negligence and such overarching mismanagement that it made a bad situation even worse.

And so I would propose that we continue to pursue these sorts of questions from the politicians of the blue party who have done such a poor job of managing that most sacred responsibility of delivering public health care to Manitobans.

Now, I recognize, of course, that that sort of accountability and transparency will not be delivered from a government that, of course, day after day, even though we all saw the emergency rooms close, try to claim that there were no cuts to health care. Even

though we saw the CancerCare facilities shuttered, always try to claim that there were no cuts to health care.

We will not see accountability or fair dealing from a government that has seen a reduction in the number of nurses working at the bedside and yet, day after day, tries to stand up and claim that there's been no cuts to health care.

So I recognize that that is an important point that needs to be addressed. But I would remind my colleague from River Heights that the way to address that is not to put the CEOs of the service delivery organizations into a committee to try and answer these questions that they would be unable to answer while still implementing faithfully the bad policy decisions handed to them by a Progressive Conservative government. That's not the way to get accountability.

The way to get accountability for our health-care system is to elect a New Democratic government at the next provincial government–provincial election here in Manitoba. I mean, the logical steps are flawlessly laid out before you with the utmost of clarity. And I can only chuckle at the surprise and glee that the members opposite experienced as they realized, yes, he's right, of course we need to have an NDP government so that we can see more accountability and transparency in our health-care system.

I also wanted to just put this on the record, and it barely merits mention but it ought to be mentioned because we are on the subject of accountability and information-sharing with members. And it is to point out that, not so long ago, the members of the Manitoba Liberals were given a chance to sit with health leadership, and they chose to record that conversation and leak it to the press.

And so you bring forward a bill this morning that seeks to have answers delivered to you by leaders in the health-care system, and I would say simply: maybe if you didn't tape record the conversations, you would still have an opportunity to ask questions of Adam Topp or other leaders in the health-care system.

But I digress. I'll merely make that observation and return to the substantive point at hand, which is, again, the idea of having a transparent and accountable series of answers delivered to the people of Manitoba is laudable. It is something that we ought to pursue.

Each and every question period, we are reminded that we are not going to get that sort of transparency

or that sort of accountability from the current government. Each and every one of us who watch question period, we can already predict what the answer is going to be, right, each and every time.

It's going to be deny, deny, outcry—right, they're going to deny that there's any sort of cuts, they're going to deny that, you know, even, you know, when they step outside in the rain that they would get wet. And then they outcry, you know, they lash out at the ghosts of NDP governments past. It's that deny-deny-outcry sort of approach that we hear each and every day in question period.

And so, yes, I say it in a light-hearted manner, but also, everybody in Manitoba knows that there's an element of truth to this, which is that you are not going to see substantive improvements to the health-care system under the Progressive Conservatives, and the Manitoba NDP is the only option that you have in order to repair health services in Manitoba.

And if they want to argue differently, then start today by turning over a new leaf and answer that very simple question: How much are we paying these American health-care companies to provide these surgeries to the people of Manitoba?

* (10:50)

Everyone on the other side who's currently taking a great interest in whatever's on their cellphone screens right now knows that this government, every few weeks, is signing off on payments to these American health-care companies. As a result, they know the total cost of these surgeries, they know the individual cost of these surgeries, and for them to go out publicly and try to claim that they do not—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —understand what the cost of these surgeries are is a misrepresentation of the reality.

And, of course, I'm bound by parliamentary rules to not state my case more forcefully than that, though, you know, given the opportunity outside of this Chamber, I certainly would do so.

So, yay to transparency. I take a slightly different approach—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): With that, the words that we just heard, we could probably spend the next two hours debating directly what the Opposition

Leader said. But I—that's not why we're here. We're here to discuss Bill 201.

And—but I do want to mention one thing, though. This past weekend, on Saturday evening, I was fortunate to attend an annual general meeting of a group in Brandon. And at the end of the evening, they set aside an hour because they brought in Big Daddy Tazz, and there was a lot of laughter. And it was like an hour of laugh, laugh, laugh, but I've got to say, the listening to the Opposition Leader today is probably funnier than listening to Big Daddy Tazz.

So, I've got to tell you, though, listening to—and again, I could go on and on about the work that the NDP did when they were in opposition, because as I've mentioned many times before in this House, I worked in health care for 21 years. I worked through the devastation of NDP rule. And sure, they like to say they ended hallway medicine, but—which maybe they did, but they created highway medicine in the meantime.

And so, there's lots. But again, I want to get to the bill, Madam Speaker, so I'll leave that. I've got oodles and oodles of documents that I could talk about the NDP's government at the day and how bad in was, and how it destroyed health care and how our government is working really hard to fix it. But we can't fix that much devastation overnight.

So—but we will get it done. I mean, we have another four years coming after this to work on it, and then another four after that, and so on and so forth.

But I do want to get back again—I've said this a couple times, I'm going to get back to Bill 201, Madam Speaker.

And I—again, I appreciate the member bringing this forward; you know, some great information. I know the member from River Heights is very passionate about what he's brought forward, and I certainly can agree to a certain amount.

I know I had the privilege of sitting for—I believe it was six years—on the provider advisory council for Prairie Mountain Health. And we had a lot of great discussions. We saw the reports, I attended a number of annual general meetings of the board of directors for Prairie Mountain Health. I even had the great opportunity to present to the board on a number of times.

And, of course, we get—everybody in this House gets a copy of the reports from Shared Health. We get a copy of the reports from all five regional health

authorities, and we have that ability to read them, to ask questions.

And I know, sure, question period can sometimes, you know, get out of hand a little bit in here. But sitting around the table in Estimates, I find a lot of really good questions coming forward and some good answers. And I think that's a great opportunity.

I still struggle to see why we would take hard-working people out of health care to come into committee meetings, to add more to their plate. There is already accountabilities, an accountabilities act that we have, and we can certainly use that act.

And I agree, we need to keep accountability on the forefront. We need to hold them to account for what they do, and we have that ability in place right now.

So Madam Speaker, I know this is going to a vote right away, so I'm going to end with that. But I—again, I just have to say that I really struggle with the purpose and the additional work that we're putting on our health-care providers and our health-care executive teams with this bill.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with rule 25, and as previously announced, I am interrupting the debate to put the question on the selected bill chosen by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 201, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, on division.

Madam Speaker: It will be noted that the vote was on division.

* * *

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Will of the House to see the clock as 11:00?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to see the clock as 11 o'clock? [*Agreed*]

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 27—Calling on the Provincial Government to Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Anti-Semitism

Madam Speaker: The hour's now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Calling on the Provincial Government to Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Anti-Semitism.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park,

WHEREAS antisemitism is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multi-faceted strategy encompassing a range of ministries and agencies; and

WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly acknowledges the debilitating impacts of racism and its various manifestations that seek to undermine efforts to promote and foster inclusiveness and respect; and

WHEREAS implementation of a "whole-of-government" approach in combating antisemitism requires consistent interpretation of Acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Manitobans from discrimination and hate amounting to antisemitism; and

WHEREAS the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism is a critical tool in combatting this form of hatred; and

WHEREAS IHRA now comprises 45 member nations including most of the world's democratic countries, and the organization's non-legally binding IHRA definition and its illustrative examples are recognized as invaluable by civil services and law enforcement in preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism; and

WHEREAS there is a growing North American movement that has seen 27 U.S. states adopt the IHRA definition while in Canada, Alberta and Ontario have done so by Order in Council.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial government be urged to adopt the working definition of anti-Semitism and the list of illustrative examples of it adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, in interpreting acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Manitobans from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, in bringing forward this resolution, I first want to welcome everyone who is in the gallery today.

While the Manitoba government has already adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, I-R-H-R-A, definition of anti-Semitism last week, it is important that we, as a Legislature and as a province, have a discussion of this issue in this Chamber.

I believe that all of us are opposed to hatred directed against people, against human beings, in all its forms. We are particularly opposed to hatred which is expressed as violence. It is our challenge to address hatred, to reduce it and to eliminate it. It is, as we all appreciate, an enormous challenge.

Today, in this resolution, the focus is on addressing anti-Semitism. But I look forward to the day when we can use this discussion as a springboard to bring in a similar resolution to define and protect against hatred toward those who are Muslim, to address Islamophobia, and for those who are Palestinian in a similar way.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I have already agreed to a meeting to look specifically at a similar resolution to define and protect against hatred toward those who are Muslim and in particular, against those who are Palestinian.

Hatred and stigmatization are today also being directed against other groups, including those who are Indigenous, those are Asian, who are 2SLGBTQ, those with mental illnesses, those with learning disabilities, those with autism, ADHD and FASD, those who are little people and those who are obese, to name a few.

Let me now talk about the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. It says anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or

non-Jewish individuals, their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

* (11:00)

I also note that the IHRA, in interpreting this statement, say specifically, and I quote: Criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitism.

A number of examples of anti-Semitism have been provided. These include: calling for, aiding or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion; denying the fact, scope, mechanisms—for example 'gras' chambers—or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of the National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II, the Holocaust; and drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

But, and I repeat: criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitism.

I want to thank and commend Ruth Ashrafi for coming forward and asking me to review the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism and continue—consider putting forward this resolution.

Let me note that anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and is often used to blame Jews for why things go wrong. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits. Anti-Semitism discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others, and is illegal in many countries.

Let me reflect briefly on the current situation of anti-Semitism in Canada. In 2020, an audit of anti-Semitic incidents in Canada showed an 18 per cent increase over the previous year. In 2021, B'nai Brith reports 2,799 anti-Semitic incidents, a further increase of 7.2 per cent compared to 2020; 2021 marks the sixth year in a row in which vandalism, violence and online hate aimed at Jews increased substantially in Canada.

From 2017, when there were 1,752 anti-Semitic incidents in Canada, there has been a 60 per cent increase to the 2,799 incidents in 2021. Of note, for Manitoba and Saskatchewan, there was an increase from 101 anti-Semitic incidents in 2020 to 228 incidents in 2021, a 126 per cent increase. Of the 2,799 anti-Semitic incidents in Canada in 2021, 2,460 were

harassment, 264 were vandalism and 75 were violent incidents.

It is, of course, the violent incidents which are the most worrisome. And for the five-year period from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2020, there were 61 violent anti-Semitic incidents. There was a dramatic increase in 2021 to 75 such incidents in that year alone.

I think we can all agree that this is far too many violent anti-Semitic incidents, and they should be decreasing, not increasing.

I will note that the IHRA definition is one used by the government of Canada and many other governments around the world. It is a substantial definition of what constitutes hate toward others.

It is important because, as stated by Gustavo Zentner, the president of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, last Friday, we have to not only address and reduce hatred toward Jews, but we also have to address hatred toward all other groups, including, as examples, Indigenous people, Muslims, those in the 2SLGBTQ community, persons with disabilities, whether physical or mental, et cetera.

I hope we can achieve support of this resolution today, so that we can demonstrate that all of us in this Chamber can and will unite against anti-Semitism and against hatred for any group who is targeted. We need to move toward a world where there is less hatred.

We need to spend more time talking about the good things that have been done by Jews. There are more than 200 individuals who are Jewish who have received a Nobel Prize, including such distinguished people as Albert Einstein and Elie Wiesel. Four of these are Canadians who are or were Jewish: John Polanyi, Sidney Altman, Ralph Steinman and Myron Scholes.

While there were more anti-Semitic incidents that incidents against other religious minority, Jews are not alone in facing 'hastred.' We need to act today to pass this resolution, to make a statement that hatred in any form will not be tolerated, whether it is toward those who are Muslim, toward those who are 2SLGBTQ, toward those with a mental illness, those with a physical or learning disability, those with autism or those with FASD.

As with those who are Jewish, we should be spending more time celebrating the accomplishments of individuals in these groups who have done so much to raise awareness and to change perceptions in the

world. I will mention one recent example: The Grace Gala recognition of Moe Zeid for his incredible contributions to Winnipeg and to Manitoba.

We also need to recognize those who stand out against hate, and I will mention, as one example, the Palestinian doctor from Gaza, Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, who wrote the book *I Shall Not Hate*.

I will finish with the words of Elie Wiesel, whom I mentioned earlier: No human race is superior. No religious faith is inferior. The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference.

Let us pass this resolution unanimously today.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just before we go into question period, I'm reminding the House that, as this hour started four minutes ahead of schedule, this hour will finish four minutes ahead of schedule at 11:56.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Cathy Cox (Kildonan-River East): I'd like to ask the member from River Heights who he consulted with before introducing this resolution.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Well, as the member may know, I frequently interact, because there are many of my constituents who are Jewish, with people in the Jewish community. And Ruth Ashrafi—who's here today, who's with B'nai Brith—was one of the people.

But there were numerous others with whom I talked to it. I have also talked and had communication with many in the Islamic community in Manitoba.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): As the member for River Heights has noted, that the IHRA definition has already been adopted by the Manitoba government through an order-in-council, but it is important to

discuss anti-Semitism and all forms of racism, prejudice and violence in these Chambers.

I would like to ask the member if he consulted with the Manitoba chapter of Independent Jewish Voices and can he address their concerns?

Mr. Gerrard: I didn't consult specifically for the Manitoba organization for Independent Jewish Voices but I did talk with a variety of people of various backgrounds and some of them may have been involved with that organization during the course of the last several months.

Mrs. Cox: Can the member for River Heights explain how the IHRA's definition, which is already adopted by our government on October 27th, 2022, guide the anti-racism strategy?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism is fairly straightforward, as I have mentioned. It is backed up by a number of examples and interpretations.

* (11:10)

It provides a guide for what is anti-Semitism, and it also provides a guide for what is not anti-Semitism. For example, a criticism of the state of Israel which is not different from that directed to other countries is not anti-Semitism.

Ms. Naylor: Has the member for River Heights had the opportunity to study the Jerusalem declaration of anti-Semitism, and does he support the call for using it jointly with the IHRA definition to help clarify the examples in the IHRA definition and ensure that they are not misused?

Mr. Gerrard: I believe that there is still a substantial amount of work to do on an ongoing basis that this applies to—definition of anti-Semitism. I think that there is also a lot of work to define more clearly and have accepted a definition of what is Islamophobic, for example.

And I have talked with individuals from other groups who have felt stigmatized, discriminated against and hated, and these other groups also need to be recognized.

Mrs. Cox: Can the member share his personal experience with the Jewish community and explain the contributions of the community—of the Jewish community here in Manitoba?

Mr. Gerrard: Sure. My association with people in the Jewish community here and elsewhere has been

quite considerable. My best friend growing up in Saskatoon was a—was Jewish.

When I was in Montreal at McGill University, I worked very closely with many who are Jewish and had a lot of time for friendship and for discussion.

Since I have been here in Manitoba, starting in 1980, which is a few years ago, I have been in regular contact—contact and interaction, and when I entered politics that level of interaction increased. I have been to—

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

Ms. Naylor: Can the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) share with us any concrete actions he feels that this government could take to help Manitoba's Jewish community and to support anti-Semitism in Manitoba?

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I think that the—what happened in the last week is somewhat extraordinary in the sense that this is the first time in my recollection of 23 years when a resolution has been put forward and it's been adopted before it's even debated. So I would say in this instance, the government has moved quickly in the last few days to adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism.

I think that there is room for an ongoing dialogue and things that could be done, but I think at the same time, it is really important that we have an ongoing dialogue with individuals in the Islamic community, in the Palestinian community. Because we need to be able to have a time and a place and, you know, here in Manitoba where we can have discussions, where we can work together and we can reduce and hopefully eliminate hatred—

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

Mrs. Cox: Can the member for River Heights share how the IHRA's definition of anti-Semitism, which was adopted by our government on October 27th, how it will impact your community directly?

Mr. Gerrard: In River Heights, there are many who have Jewish background, who are Jews, and I believe from the conversations that I have had that they will be very pleased that there is acceptance in the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, that there's a clear understanding of what this means, because people have been trying to suggest that it means more than it does, is anti-Semitism.

As I've said already, it is very clear that certain things are anti-Semitic, that other things, like criticism—

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

Are there any other questions?

Ms. Naylor: I'd like to ask the member for River Heights how he feels about important resolutions like this being adopted without having the opportunity to be debated in the Chamber and discussed fully in the way that we're doing today?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I think there is benefit, clearly, from having debate in the Chamber. This may, in fact, be the first time that we are having a debate in Legislature about the adoption of the IHRA definition of 'anti-Semitism.'

I believe the other occasions when it's been done has been done by order-in-council, so I'm very pleased that we are having this discussion today. I think it is healthy and I think it's worthwhile.

Thank you.

Mrs. Cox: Can the member from River Heights share with us what other jurisdictions have adopted the—this IHRA definition?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, there are, I believe, 27 states in the United States, maybe it's 28 now. There was one recently. There are—in Canada, it has been adopted by the Government of Canada. It is adopted, I think, by five or now six, with New Brunswick added on very recently after Manitoba, so that the majority of provinces in Canada have adopted it.

Ms. Naylor: I wonder if the member from River Heights could also share with us a list of some of the countries and human rights organizations and others who have expressed a concern or haven't adopted this policy.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I think it's important to recognize that there has been some controversy. I think maybe part of that is a misunderstanding, but I think that we are having the discussion here.

We need to recognize that we need to address hatred, not just against Jews, not just addressing anti-Semitism, but we need to use this as a springboard to address hatred in a much wider forum, including, as I've mentioned, hatred against Muslim people and against Palestinians.

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

Debate

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

Mrs. Cathy Cox (Kildonan-River East): I am pleased and honoured to put a few comments on record today regarding the member from River Heights's resolution that calls on our government to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism.

And first, I would like to remind the member from St. Boniface that it was just last week, on October 27th, that our government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism. Our government stands strong in solidarity with our Jewish community and the adoption of this definition sends a strong message that anti-Semitism, hate and racism have no place in Manitoba or society as a whole.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to read a quote from my friend, Gustavo Zentner, the president of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, who says: to combat anti-Semitism effectively, it must first be defined. The IHRA definition will help Manitobans identify and combat anti-Semitism in all forms.

With anti-Semitic hate crimes on the rise across the country, fighting anti-Semitism is a priority, not just for the Jewish community, but for Manitobans and all Canadians.

* (11:20)

Our government is committed to working together with our Jewish community to address all acts of hate, anti-Semitism and discrimination.

Manitoba has long been known as the best place to raise a family. And for hundreds of years, we have welcomed people from around the globe to our beautiful province, and we will continue to ensure people of all ethnicities feel welcome, safe and accepted in our province.

Over 200 languages are spoken in our province, and this serves as strong evidence of the diversity and inclusiveness of Manitoba's population. Our multicultural society is not a collection of separate communities divided by law and culture, but rather a single society united by shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities.

In closing, I would like to thank our Jewish community for the immense contributions they have made

towards building our province. I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the generosity and compassion of Manitoba's Jewish community. They are always first to step up and lend a hand at times of greatest need. I consider myself extremely fortunate to call Gustavo Zentner, Adam Levy and many other members of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg my friends.

I want to share a personal story that speaks to the generosity and compassion of our Jewish community here in Manitoba. On February 24th, when we all awoke to the sad news that Russia had invaded our peaceful Ukraine, many of us were in shock, trying to grasp the reason for this senseless attack.

That very same morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while most of us were attempting to comprehend Putin's actions, I received a call from Gustavo Zentner asking how the Jewish community could help Ukraine. I immediately connected Gustavo with Joanne Lewandoski, the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Manitoba, and the wheels were set in motion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've since learned from Gustavo that the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg raised and sent over \$200,000 to alleviate the needs in Ukraine. He said that help is not restricted to a specific faith or community group. It was deployed as humanitarian campaign.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the actions of a caring and compassionate community. These are the actions of Manitoba's Jewish community. To Gustavo and the remarkable generosity of Manitoba's Jewish community, I give a heartfelt thank you today. Thank you.

Our government must and will continue to eradicate anti-Semitism in our communities and province, and I am proud to stand together shoulder to shoulder with our Jewish community and our government in support of this resolution.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I rise today to speak to the resolution brought forward by my colleague from River Heights, and I do so with great solemnity. I do so with a heavy heart, taking the issue at hand very seriously.

I would note that when the government did their endorsement of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition and examples by way of a media announcement last week, that the stories covering this appeared online and in print on

October 28th, I believe. And as we're asked to engage with the very serious and important subject of combating anti-Semitism, I feel compelled to note the historic significance of that calendar date.

This year, that marked the fourth anniversary of the Pennsylvania synagogue shooting, which I know all members of this House condemn as an anti-Semitic terrorist attack of the worst kind. We'll spare the proceedings of this House from all the details of that incident, but I do want to say that at the time, and in remembrance of it this year, I was very moved in a sad way by the idea of seniors being murdered because they wanted to pray.

And as such, the emotional drive at the center of that reaction, I believe, compels myself and others who feel the same way, which is to say all of us in this Chamber here today, to want to do our part to combat anti-Semitism.

And certainly, when we look at the experience of Jewish people in Manitoba, we know that anti-Semitism occurs here as well. This may be acts of violence, it may be vandalism, it may be comments that are made directly to an individual or perhaps on social media or in the public sphere.

In fact, I recognize that many of the convoy protests that we experienced through last winter were events in which we did see anti-Semitism rear its ugly head along with other forms of racism and discrimination.

So anti-Semitism is a live issue that all of us are compelled to take action against. Of course, our team as the Manitoba NDP is proud to be the inheritors of the legacy of bringing in, you know, important human rights protections in Manitoba; not only protections for—against, rather, discrimination on the basis of race and cultural background, but also protections for the two-spirit and LGBTTQ* communities. And so it's important that we stand against all forms of discrimination.

As we come to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition and the attendant examples, I want to say at the outset that this definition is supported by the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, which is an umbrella organization for many leaders from the Jewish community here in our province and in the city after which the organization is named.

I also do, however, want to acknowledge that this definition and the examples are contested, which is to say that it's not universally supported and there are

many out there who take issue with this and certainly, I have heard from many of those folks in the lead up to the debate this morning. And so I want to say at the outset that the definition itself—you know, some folks may find it—certain issues that they want to articulate around it.

However, the definition itself is something that I support. The criticism and contestation that I hear from communities—centres—or, from the community, rather, centres around examples. And so I want to address some of those concerns and explain why I'm standing in the Chamber here today.

I do want to point out that, as we read through the text of what the IHRA has proposed, one of the important concerns that I have heard articulated from people is that the use of this definition and examples would silence legitimate criticism of the state of Israel or Israeli government policies; or to put a finer point on it, would limit the freedom of speech of Palestinians in this country who would seek to articulate their vision for freedom and their ideas of a future in their homeland. But the text itself says criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. I take that serious and I take that at face value.

As I read that and as I reflect on it, I want to share a specific example from just these past few years of the killing which is alleged to have been carried out by Israeli defense forces of the Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh. It's a serious incident which offends the concept of freedom of speech and freedom of the press which I think all of us who support human rights around the world want to see.

* (11:30)

As I read that line from this IHRA document, I believe that criticism of that killing calls for an investigation and calls for a just due process to seek justice for that journalist would be permitted, and cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. And I take that seriously.

The other example that I know many folks have raised in discussion with this is a point that states that denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination would be regarded as anti-Semitic. And I've discussed this with folks who've reached out from the Islamic community, elected officials from other levels of government.

And the question that I have is, why is there an objection to this, because in the United Nations declarations that we review, the right to all peoples for

self-determination is affirmed. I give the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as one example. And so, I understand that folks are concerned about the misapplication or the context in which the definition and the examples may be marshalled in the community.

The point that I make is that the text that I'm being asked to vote on today, in the definition and examples, I believe, do allow for freedom of speech and an engagement with the substantive issues that the government of Israel may pursue. Or, that voices in the Palestinian community may want to articulate.

The question for me then becomes, if the text itself is something that we do not find fault with, then the conversation becomes about the context and about the application.

And so I refer to my earlier comments today, that standing up against anti-Semitism is important, is an important goal for all of us to pursue.

At the same time, I recognize that there are voices from the Palestinian community and from other voices in the community who are concerned about how this definition may be applied in the future. And to that I would say: I hear those concerns, and if this does become a contested territory or if there does become a misapplication of this definition in the future that reaches beyond combatting anti-Semitism and instead becomes a use of silencing freedom of speech, on the other hand, then I would speak out against that as well.

And so, this is a topic that is very emotional. It is a very fraught situation that comes after many years of engagement with people that I respect.

And so, as I stand here today, I do reaffirm my commitment to combatting anti-Semitism and to working with the Jewish community, and I also reaffirm my commitment to combatting Islamophobia and working with the Islamic community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers?

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's a pleasure just to put some words on the record. I want to thank everybody for their contributions to the debate today, and I—recognizing that this is a difficult issue.

But one of the things I want to emphasize when we were talking about the threat of anti-Semitism is that so much of what comprises anti-Semitism is not about the realities of history. It's not about the realities

of what's going on on the ground, which we can talk about and which we must talk about. It's about the fact that throughout history, many groups have fallen into this being targeted as well.

But throughout history, there is a long and shameful history of pogroms which were the complete elimination of Jews in places like Russia, throughout Europe, for hundreds and hundreds of years, and that there is a long-standing history of terrible conspiracy theories which comprise an anti—which comprise anti-Semitism, which are bubbling up again today.

We hear them—we hear sort of dog whistles, when people talk about George Soros or they talk about globalism or they talk about the World Economic Forum, there's this idea that somehow all the ills of the world are to be put at the feet of the Jewish people. And that is part—that is the key toxic aspect of anti-Semitism, because it has been used to try to wipe an entire people off the face of the Earth, which is what happened in the Holocaust.

And what happened in the Holocaust is truly—I mean, it is almost unimaginable, because 6 million people were rounded up, special facilities were built, the technology—the high technology of an entire country was put to the use of building factories designed for the extermination of an entire people. That's what the Holocaust was about.

And part of the reason Jews were vulnerable was because they had no—they were—never had any place of their own. So this is part of the reason why this is important. Because again, we're seeing, if you see on public—if you see on social media, you see Kanye West, who quite clearly is having a psychotic break, but is nevertheless spreading horrific anti-Semitic conspiracy theories which are putting people at risk.

We take very, very seriously the concerns of Palestinians and Muslims who want to be able to free—to be free to speak about what's happening in Israel. That is essential.

But I—as the Leader of the Opposition said and as my colleague from River Heights has said, I think this is a carefully crafted definition. Because we need to appreciate and protect people in our communities who are under threat. Sometimes that's Jewish people, sometimes it's Islamic people, sometimes it's 2SLGBTQ+, sometime it's Indigenous. But this is about standing up for what's right in Manitoba, and we will continue to do that.

I want to thank everybody for their contributions again, and thank the leadership of B'nai Brith for bringing this forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is resolution 27, Calling on the Provincial Government to Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Definition of Anti-Semitism.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask whether we can call this unanimous, in terms of passing it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement to have the vote recorded as unanimous? *[Agreed]*

The vote will be recorded as unanimous.

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Agriculture): Is there will of the House to call it noon?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 12 noon? *[Agreed]*

This House, therefore, is recessed and stands recessed until this afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

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