

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 2, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 221—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act
(Overdose Death Reporting)**

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 221, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Smith: While it saddens me that this bill is required, I am proud to introduce Bill 221, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting) for a second time.

A record 470–407 Manitobans fatally overdosed in 2021 alone, and as of June 2022, an additional 215 overdose deaths were recorded in the province. However, we still don't know the total number of overdose deaths for 2022 as the province has not provided this data. We are the only province that does not report on the national database.

Bill 221 would require overdose deaths to be reported on a monthly basis while also identifying the type of drug causing or contributing to the death so that we can better respond to the addictions crisis in Manitoba.

I look forward to unanimous support from this House.

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

Further introduction of bills?

**Bill 222—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Nutrition Programs)**

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I move, seconded by the MLA for Concordia, that Bill 222, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Programs), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Altomare: I'm pleased to rise today to present Bill 222, the public skills—Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Programs). Educators know that beyond filling stomachs, Madam Speaker, school meal programs foster feelings of self-worth, community, belonging and lead to better outcomes.

Bill 222 will require the minister to table a report each year that outlines all of the schools from each school division that provide a nutrition program. This report must also be publicly available.

My hope is that Bill 222 will highlight the current gaps in school nutrition programs and motivate the government to adopt a universal school nutrition program so no child has to be hungry at school.

I look forward, Madam Speaker, to the unanimous support of this House.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table for the benefit of all members the Annual Report of the Provincial Court for the years 2021-2022.

Madam Speaker: And in accordance with Section 58.8(2) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and section 48.14(2) of The Personal Health Information Act, I am tabling the Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Adjudicator for the year ending December 31st, 2022.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health—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 her statement.

Black History Month

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the Chamber today to recognize February as Black History Month.

As one of the first Black MLAs to be sworn into the Manitoba Legislature and the first Black Cabinet minister, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the many achievements celebrated this Black History Month.

Black History Month is an opportunity for us to reflect on the contributions of Black people and to mark their achievements. The late Wade "Kojo" Williams, a prominent Manitoban and human rights activist, is known for starting Black History Month celebrations in Manitoba over 40 years ago.

Throughout February, I had the opportunity to attend many school events across Winnipeg to talk about my experience in politics and as a leader in the Black community. I visited schools such as Grant Park collegiate, Dakota Collegiate, École Provencher, Frontenac School, École Howden, Niakwa Place School and Holy Cross School.

When I visited these schools, I brought with me several items, including a Canadian \$10 bill featuring the first Black woman on a Canadian bill, Viola Desmond; coins representing Oscar Peterson, a well-known Canadian composer and pianist; commemorative coins as well, featuring the Underground Railroad and the largest all-Black battalion in the First World War and the Canada Post commemorative stamp featuring Chloe Cooley.

I also brought with me a T-shirt made by Zueike in support of the Know Their Names campaign, which was launched by Winnipeg City councillor, Markus Chambers. This campaign recognizes the achievements of Black people in a variety of sectors, including music, actors, inventors, authors and many more.

The Black History Manitoba Celebration Committee held many events this year with something for everyone. These events included a kickoff breakfast with Mayor Scott Gillingham at City Hall, a movie night, a drive-through luncheon supported by the Jamaican Association of Manitoba, cooking classes and a Winnipeg Jets Black History Month hockey night game. I commend the work of the Black History Manitoba Celebration Committee for planning numerous events and for the promotional and educational material they provide.

These events are important to celebrate the accomplishments of the past and to continue to celebrate the ongoing accomplishments from Canada's Black community.

Madam Speaker, Black history is Canadian history. Black History Month is an opportunity to celebrate the culture and heritage from all regions that represent the Black community.

Although we celebrate the month of February as Black History Month, Black history is being made every day and should be celebrated and recognized every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): First, I'd like to recognize some guests we have in the gallery here today: Dr. Jean Augustine, MP, the first Black African descent MP in the nation's history, as well as Dr. Zita Somakoko of Black chamber of commerce of Manitoba; and Mavis McLaren of Black History Manitoba. We're honoured that they're in our presence today.

And I would like to say this is special that we are recognizing Black history in their presence because of the work that they've done and the fact that we and myself stand on the shoulders of great people who have done work like them.

And so, as we celebrate Black history, we not only recognize history of great Black people such as the people who are here with us today, but all those who make small changes and small efforts in our community; from people who help local families, from people who break down anti-racism in every regard that they possibly can.

Madam Speaker, we celebrate Black History Month not just because of the history and the rich, important accomplishments that so many people have made in our country. We 'celebrate' Black history so that we can educate and use that information to make our communities better.

I had the pleasure of going to dozens of schools and celebrating Black history, educating those young people and telling them why Black history is part of Canada's history and why we need to talk about it more all throughout the year.

As we know in this Chamber, we passed The Black History Month Act, which was sponsored by myself and seconded by my colleague from Union Station, to officially make February Black History Month in Manitoba.

* (13:40)

And on February 13th of this past year—this year, we celebrated in the Legislature for the first time the very first Black History Month event, where we welcomed hundreds of people into the rotunda, into the people's building, in the Manitoba Legislature, celebrating Black history as all of our histories.

And the most heartwarming thing, Madam Speaker, was the fact that we welcomed youth into here, because they are going to be the future leaders. In the same way I stand on the shoulders of great accomplishment makers in Manitoba's and Canada's history, I hope that those young people, those young Black people, can stand on my shoulders and all of our shoulders and make this province a better place for all of us into the future.

Happy Black History Month.

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

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

Mr. Lamont: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to recognize Black History Month in Manitoba and thank the Black History Month committee for their amazing work in bringing people together in celebrating so much important history and so many amazing achievements.

I had the pleasure of attending their closing ceremonies at the Winnipeg Art Gallery on Friday, and I certainly can't hope to top the keynote address delivered by Markus Chambers, which reflected on the truly remarkable contributions of Black Canadians and Black Manitobans to every aspect of our culture and lives in Manitoba, in science, business, politics service, public service, medicine and more.

It has to be said that some of the most powerful and inspirational moral and political leadership in recent global history has come from Black leaders like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr.

And I do want to touch on two lesser known stories of Black history in Manitoba.

One is the Canadian connection to the legendary Bass Reeves, who was a Black lawman who has been portrayed many times in film and television. Reeves was born into slavery in 1838. During the American Civil War, he escaped and fled to present day Arizona, where he lived among the Cherokee, Creeks and Seminoles and learned all their languages.

As a freedman, Reeves worked as a farmer until 1875, when he was recruited as a deputy in a historic role: the first Black deputy marshal west of the Mississippi. For 32 years, he worked as a federal marshal and brought in some of the most 'dangeral'—dangerous criminals of his time, and he was never wounded, despite having his hat and belt shot off on 'separate' occasions. When he retired in 1907, he had a record of over 3,000 arrests of felons, and he's sometimes been called the real Lone Ranger and would have worked closely with Indigenous partners throughout his career.

Maybe the law isn't perfect, but it's the only one we've got, and without it we've got nothing, Reeves was recorded as saying.

His great-grandson is Willard Reaves and, of course, his further descendants, Willard's sons Ryan and Jordan.

The other story is of George Prout. Mr. Prout came to Selkirk from the Barbados in 1896, and in the census his mother registered as Black. And in 1915, he was elected MLA for the constituency of Kildonan-St. Andrews in the Liberal government of T.C. Norris. While he was not re-elected, he did go on to a successful career in business and finance, dying in Toronto at the age of 102. Some of his family are still here in Winnipeg. It's from them that I learned this story, and of course his photo is in the hallway from the 1915 Legislature.

As the Manitoba Historical Society web page says, we may have to recognize Mr. Prout as the first Black MLA elected in Manitoba, and I think that is Black History to celebrate.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

The honourable Minister of Families—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 her statement.

National Social Work Month

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families): March is National Social Work Month, and I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to promote awareness of social work professionals and to acknowledge their many skills.

The theme for this year is Social Work Breaks Barriers. Social workers are on the front lines in helping to empower individuals, families and communities to overcome the hurdles that prevent them from living more fulfilling, enriching lives. Whether working in health care, justice, education or in social services, social work professionals bring their specialized knowledge and skills, along with their compassion and kindness, their integrity, creativity and devotion to helping others in making society a better place for all.

Social workers particularly rise to the challenge during extremely difficult and stressful times, and to—and they continue to go above and beyond to support the many Manitobans who rely on the critical work that they do.

Our government is thankful for the contributions they make and their role in improving the overall quality of lives of Manitobans. We recognize the importance of their work and encourage them as they continue to make a real difference each and every day.

Please join me in recognizing March as Social Work Month in Manitoba, and in thanking social workers for all the work that they do.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): March is Social Work Month, a month to celebrate the accomplishments of social work and social work professionals. This year's theme is Social Work Breaks Barriers, which is intended to highlight the need for social workers to facilitate in empowering individuals, families and communities with the goal of keeping families together and supporting Manitobans in need.

Unfortunately, the reality is that this PC government has created more barriers for social work professionals to do just that. Social work professionals go unsupported, programs are underfunded while the needs of communities go unnoticed and continue to support.

And while the minister gets up today to feign support, it's her government that's actually created unsupportable working conditions that many social workers face. The very—this is the very minister that cut the maximum amount allowable for older children in foster care; she decreased daily support for foster parents; she cut newcomer support units in CFS—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: —and let's not forget when she supported her government stealing children's special allowance for Indigenous children.

So on behalf of our NDP team, I say miigwech to those that are on the front lines—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

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

Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Social workers are really important. Social workers are critical to solving all sorts of difficult problems.

When I was working at the Children's Hospital in part of a team looking after children with cancer and blood problems—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —we had a social worker as part of our team—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —she made a big difference in our ability to provide holistic support for the children and their families. We talk often—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: —in this Chamber of the need for politicians to be concerned about those who are most vulnerable in our society. We talk about it; social workers do it.

There has been much talk in recent years of social workers collaborating with police to address family issues. Based on my recent experience, I can see why they can be so valuable in many situations to help resolve family-related issues. In recent years a number of social workers are doing further studies in psychology to help in this work.

Social workers are vital to helping those who are homeless. A good example is the outstanding work of Marion Willis in St. Boniface Street Links and Morberg House.

This month, Social Work Month, is a time for all of us to say thank you to social workers for all their varied and many-faceted contributions.

Thank you, merci, miigwech to all social workers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**World Kidney Day**

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): March is recognized as world kidney month and next Tuesday, March 9th, is World Kidney Day. The message remains the same each year, and it is to raise public awareness of the importance of kidneys to our overall health and to reduce the frequency and impact of kidney disease. Early discovery is critical for kidney health, as is early intervention, especially among high-risk groups. Kidneyhealth.ca, developed by the Manitoba Renal Program is a website with great information.

During our family's very personal journey through the kidney donor and transplant system, we met many caring health-care professionals and have many thanks for their knowledge and strength. We have recognized local heroes like Luke Hatcher whose family made the very difficult but extremely generous decision to donate Luke's organs and tissues in 2019. Last year the Hatcher family asked members of the Brandon community to hide a Hot Wheels toy for others to discover and leave a note with the toy. It was very, very successful, Madam Speaker.

We also recognize Green Shirt Day, that recognizes the impact that Logan Boulet had on Canadians and Manitobans going to sites such as signupforlife.ca to register their decisions to donate the organs and tissues.

Here in Manitoba, there is a dedicated team of physicians, nurses and staff with Transplant Manitoba and the Kidney Health Clinic who help provide the health-highest level of care and access to quality information for those living with kidney disease.

* (13:50)

Please show your support by registering with Manitoba's online tissue and organ donor registry at signupforlife.ca. As of today, over 65,000 Manitobans have registered their decision.

Madam Speaker, I have tried to bring attention to organ and tissue donation, especially kidney donation for 12 years. This is the last time I will be able to draw attention to World Kidney Day on the floor of the Manitoba Legislature as I'm not running in the next election. I trust someone else will pick up where I have left off and be even more successful.

Dr. Jean Augustine

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Born and raised in St. George's, Grenada, Dr. Jean Augustine began her career as a teacher. In 1960 she immigrated to Canada, subsequently earning a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Toronto and master's in education while working as an elementary school teacher. In her career in education, she helped to shape the lives of many young students and help them flourish in their communities.

She also became deeply involved with many grassroots causes. Throughout the 1970s and '80s Dr. Augustine served as the National President of the Congress of Black Women of Canada and was appointed chair of the metro Toronto housing authority.

In 1993, Dr. Augustine made history as the first African Canadian woman to be elected to Canada's House of Commons as the Member of Parliament from the Greater Toronto constituency for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. She served with distinction, winning four consecutive elections until she moved on in 2006.

Notable accomplishments include: legislation to protect disadvantaged low-income individuals including single mothers raising children, and passing a historic motion designating February as Black History Month in Canada, which paved the way here in Manitoba for the MLA for St. Vital to do the same just this December—past December.

Dr. Augustine was appointed as a member of the Order of Canada in 2009; received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012; was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2014 and in 2020 was appointed to the Order of Ontario.

Today, Dr. Augustine continues in the work to help improve the human condition and she reminds us Black History Month in practice is 365 days of the year.

Dr. Augustine paved the way for representation around the country, including in this very Chamber, and is an inspiration for generations of students, educators, migrants and Black Canadians right here in Manitoba.

Please join me today in celebrating Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine, who has joined us in the gallery today. She is also joined by Dr. Zita Somakoko, founder and president of Black Manitobans Chamber

of Commerce and Ms. Mavis McLaren of Black History Month.

Thank you.

Radisson's Affordable Housing Projects

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): Madam Speaker, when it comes to addressing homelessness, I believe we all have a role to play. I am very proud of my constituency of Radisson for taking a leading role in addressing this significant challenge.

Radisson is welcoming the opportunity to provide housing to homeless veterans with the Kinsmen Homes For Heroes veterans' village being constructed on Transcona Boulevard. It's located beside the beautiful new Transcona Library, and across the street from Park City Commons. It's also right next door to the future home of the East of the Red RecPlex. This village will house 20 homeless veterans and provide them with the resources, services and training that they need to help them successfully get back on their feet.

Not only that, but I'm also proud to report that Radisson is home to the single largest Habitat for Humanity build in Manitoba's history. Madam Speaker, 55—yes, 55 homes are being built in the Pandora West development. Construction has started and the first of 11 blocks of five homes is being built as we speak. Our government provides close to \$1 million per year in funding for Habitat for Humanity, and I'm happy to see those dollars being put to work in my constituency.

Just 20 feet outside of Radisson constituency is another planned Habitat for Humanity development with 20 more homes being built on Panet Road.

Yes, in Radisson we have taken the not out of NIMBY. We are welcoming these developments right in our backyard. I invite, I encourage, I urge every MLA in this House, and especially those from Winnipeg where the homelessness issue is most acute, to take a look around your constituency; take a good, hard look. See if there are building lots. See if there are infill opportunities, vacant homes, other ways that you can have affordable housing built in your neighbourhood. If Radisson can do it, I believe you can, too.

So—because when we all work together, we can really make a difference.

Thank you.

Woodhaven's Men's Shed Community Garden

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I am honoured to rise in the House today to recognize members of the Woodhaven Men's Shed for their contribution to the development of a community garden space in St. James.

Over two days last October, a group of approximately fifteen volunteers from the Woodhaven Men's Shed came out to the Deer Lodge Community Centre to undertake a construction project that turned an empty space in our community into a beautiful community garden in waiting.

These volunteers, some of whom join us today, worked tirelessly over a two-day period, setting up an impressive assembly line approach to building a total of 12 four-by-eight-foot cedar and corrugated metal garden boxes, as well as two beautiful grape arbours. One of the volunteers cut an entire football field worth of corrugated metal with a grinder, another worked a table saw non-stop for the two-day period and the entire project went smoothly as volunteers worked together, shared great stories and laughs and took some well-timed jabs at their local MLA.

In addition to building the boxes and arbours, Woodhaven Men's Shed volunteers were also involved in all aspects of design and planning of the construction process. Their incredible willingness to take on all of this work and to donate their time in service of the community has offered our west Winnipeg community a new place to gather around healthy food and time together outside with family and friends, truly an invaluable gift to St. James.

Spaces like community gardens allow people to come together and help combat isolation from members of our community. We know that this isolation is particularly acute for many seniors and was only made worse by the pandemic. The men's shed has done a lot to combat isolation by providing a community-based space for seniors in west Winnipeg to socialize and pursue hobbies. Activities like carving, guitar, ukulele and lunches for members and their families. They have also completed other meaningful acts of community service, including building some of the mini libraries we see around our city today.

I want to again thank all of the Woodhaven Men's Shed volunteers who supported this community project and for the significant amount of time and effort they've invested in helping to make our community a healthier and happier place to be.

Thank you.

Festival du Voyageur

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Merci, Madame la Présidente.

Cette année, le Festival du Voyageur a connu un merveilleux retour en forme, et les organisateurs se sont surpassés en proposant des événements nouveaux et améliorés qui ont permis d'atteindre et d'inclure les communautés comme il ne l'avait jamais fait auparavant.

C'était formidable de voir des députés de tous les partis politiques aux cérémonies d'ouverture, qui étaient une première historique grâce à la participation de la grande Chef Cathy Merrick et de l'Assemblée des chefs du Manitoba. Paulette Duguay, la présidente de l'Union nationale métisse de Saint-Joseph du Manitoba a mené le défilé des Métis.

Et si le Festival du Voyageur est un festival qui célèbre la chaleur et la joie de vivre au cœur des hivers les plus froids, les organisateurs n'ont pas moins pris au sérieux leurs responsabilités envers l'Histoire et la réconciliation. Les artistes et l'art indigènes et des Premières nations ont été intégrés au Festival de manière respectueuse et joyeuse, avec près de 40 artistes indigènes.

Bien sûr, les vieilles-vieux favoris étaient de retour : la famille de voyageurs Turenne, les joueurs de tambour, les aînés, les bénévoles, la tourtière, le caribou, la tire d'érable, les giques, les chansons des voyageurs. La Nuit de fierté était aussi merveilleuse, où nous avons célébré avec un « Gay-Ho ».

Un merci spécial à Darrel Nadeau, qui nous quitte sur une bonne note après six ans, et à Éric Plamondon, qui a apporté son art, sa poésie et son *flair* au Festival, ainsi que Barney Morin, l'incomparable maître de cérémonie.

Le Festival du Voyageur s'adresse à tout le monde et célèbre une histoire commune longue et profonde, qui continue de définir non seulement Saint-Boniface, mais aussi le Manitoba, l'Ouest canadien et le pays tout entier. On célèbre le meilleur de ce que nous pouvons tous être en nous faisant sortir du froid.

Translation

Thank you, Madam Speaker. This year, the Festival du Voyageur made a wonderful in-person comeback, and organizers surpassed themselves with new and improved events that reached out to communities like never before.

It was marvelous to see MLAs of all political parties at the opening ceremonies—a historical first this year thanks to the attendance of Grand Chief Cathy Merrick and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The president of the Union nationale métisse de Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, Paulette Duguay, led the Metis Parade.

The Festival du Voyageur celebrates warmth and joie de vivre during the coldest winters, but organizers also took seriously their responsibilities towards History and reconciliation. Indigenous and First Nations artists and art were respectfully and joyously imbedded everywhere in the Festival, thanks to more than 40 indigenous artists.

Of course, the old favourites were back: the Turenne Voyageur family, the drummers, the elders, the volunteers, the tourtière, the elk, the maple taffy, the jigs and the voyageur songs. Pride Night was also sensational, celebrated with a resounding "Gay-Ho".

A special thank you to Darrel Nadeau, who is leaving us on a high note after six years, to Éric Plamondon, who brought his art, poetry and flair to the Festival, and to our incomparable Master of Ceremony, Barney Morin.

Festival du Voyageur is for everyone. It celebrates a deep and long shared history, which continues to define not only St. Boniface, but also Manitoba, Western Canada and the entire country. It celebrates the best of what we can all be by bringing us all in from out of the cold.

English

Festival du Voyageur is for everyone. It celebrates a deep a long shared history and it celebrates the best of what we can all be, bringing us all in from out of the cold.

Merci, thank you, merci et hé ho.

* (14:00)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would like to take a moment right now to introduce you to the 40 students that we have in the gallery today. They are the University of Winnipeg Introduction Political Science class led by Professor Ives.

And on behalf of all members here, we welcome all of you to the public gallery.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I also have a statement that I would like to read.

I am pleased to draw to the attention of the House the second Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, which is located on the Chamber desks of members. In addition, copies will be shared with Assembly staff, deputy ministers of Manitoba government departments and with legislative Speakers across Canada.

Our first report was released on December 1st, 2021, and was a compilation of the years 2016 to 2020. The second report covers Assembly activities from April 1st, 2020, to March 31, 2022. It delivers a unique insight into the role of the Assembly and Assembly staff plays in Manitoba's parliamentary system through the services we provide to members and to Manitobans.

The second report also covers the activities undertaken by the Assembly during the height of the COVID pandemic. It notes how members continued to represent constituents and also sheds a light on the significant effort undertaken by all Assembly staff to maintain operations and to provide ways for MLAs to continue to participate in the parliamentary process. Necessity forced us all to be creative, and I am so proud of the fact that the Manitoba Assembly was able to provide a virtual-hybrid option to allow all MLAs to participate when it was necessary to reduce numbers of persons allowed into the Chamber due to public health concerns.

This extended into providing capability for the three sections of the Committee of Supply to meet using a virtual format, as well as providing the virtual option for standing committees such that presentations continued to be made by presenters from the safety of their own homes or offices. It is truly a remarkable achievement.

This report highlights the work undertaken by members, and the efforts of Assembly staff in supporting the daily activities of members. By sharing this information into the workings of the Assembly, we are increasing the public understanding of our parliamentary system, and the role in duties of members, which contributes to the transparent public governance expected by Manitobans.

I extend my thanks to all Assembly staff who submitted reports and contributions, and I would particularly like to thank Becki Derksen and Candace Smith of the Assembly's Digital Media Branch for the

work they did in formatting and designing the layout of the annual report. From this point forward the report will be a true annual report, and will be distributed annually to cover the time period of April 1st to March 31st.

I hope you and the public will enjoy reading all about the Legislative Assembly, and the work undertaken by and for the Assembly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Death of Patient at HSC ER Independent Investigation Request

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): A Manitoban died waiting for care in a hallway at the emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre on Monday night. Once again, I offer my sincere condolences to this person's friends and family.

And now, new information is coming to light about what was happening in that ER on Monday night. Several nurses there were working overtime, 40 patients were in the waiting room for more than 12 hours, 70 patients were triaged there but left without ever being seen. That's what happened on Monday night, but this is also what we see on emergency rooms across the province over and over again these days.

Can the Premier confirm for the House that she's aware of these details, and that they're all correct?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Madam Speaker, our hearts break for the family of this individual who tragically lost their life, and we will continue to fight to ensure that all Manitobans get the health care that they need when they need it.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, this issue is still under investigation. Until we receive all the facts of that, it would be inappropriate to have those discussions on the floor of the Manitoba Legislature.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, there is nothing which prevents the Premier from talking about the staffing levels and the waits that patients were confronted with on Monday night at the Health Sciences Centre emergency room.

There were dozens of admitted patients waiting for a bed there on Monday night. It's our understanding that some patients waited over 80 hours for admission. Madam Speaker, that's a wait time that

stretches beyond hours, into days, and this is the situation in the emergency room.

These are the type of health-care issues that Manitobans want attended to, they want accountability for and they want answers on. Manitobans deserve to know if these conditions contributed to the death that we saw at the HSC ER on Monday night.

Will the Premier order an independent investigation into what took place Monday night so Manitobans can know the truth?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, once again, our hearts go out to the family as they are suffering during this time of this tragic loss of their loved one. And I just want to take this opportunity to thank all of those front-line health-care workers for everything that they're doing. These are tragic circumstances.

And in this particular case, Madam Speaker, I've already said to the Leader of the Opposition and to Manitobans that this remains under investigation. I know that Shared Health is looking into this matter and continues to look into this matter as we speak, and we look forward to getting the results of that so that this tragic event doesn't happen ever again.

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

Mr. Kinew: There's nothing which precludes the Premier from talking about the working conditions at the Health Sciences Centre emergency room on Monday night or addressing the wait times that patients face there. And, certainly, there is nothing which prevents her from calling an independent investigation into the situation that occurred there on Monday night.

Health care is a top priority for Manitobans right now. We all know this. Every time we hear a story, that's a story about people suffering and waiting in pain. And when we talk about the front-line health-care workers, not only do they want action, they want accountability and they want to be able to share their truth with the people of Manitoba.

In short, we deserve an independent investigation, examination and exploration of the facts of what took place at the Health Sciences Centre emergency room on Monday night.

Will the Premier commit to that today?

Mrs. Stefanson: I again want to thank all of those front-line health-care workers who help save lives

every single day in our province, Madam Speaker. They do incredible work, and we thank them for the work that they do.

We recognize that there's a health human resources challenge, not just here in Manitoba, but right across the country. We're working together at the council of federation, other premiers across the province—or, across the country, as well as the Prime Minister, as well, and that's why we've been able—by working together, we've been able to come to a solution to ensure that there's more dollars towards those health human resources that are needed in all of the provinces across this country.

So, by taking a collaborative approach to this, by working with front-line health-care workers, we will ensure that Manitobans will be able to get the health care that they need when they need it and that these tragic circumstances don't happen again.

Health Care for Seniors Patient Case Concern

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): On the subject of our front-line health-care heroes, Marilyn Zachariah's mother is a retired nurse, and it just so happens that today she is dealing with complications from renal and heart failure.

Now, knowing that her mom would need a high level of care, Marilyn asked for her mom, the former nurse, to be referred for long-term care. Instead, Marilyn was told by Shared Health officials that her mother would be discharged, and I quote, to a shelter—specifically, Main Street Project—because they have medical staff on hand. End quote.

That's no way to treat seniors in our province. It's no way to treat those who have served on the front lines of our health-care system.

Will the Premier admit that this was wrong and apologize to Marilyn's mother and her family?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier): Well, certainly, we will look into the facts of the issue that the Leader of the Opposition is bringing to the floor of the Chamber. This isn't the place for those to take place, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition knows that.

But I will say that all of us, certainly on this side of the House, have tremendous respect for the contributions of our senior citizens that they have made right across this great province of ours, and we owe it to them to make sure that we're protecting them in their homes. And that's why our Seniors Minister went out last week,

introduced our seniors strategy, which was as a result of the consultation of more than 10,000 Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

* (14:10)

We were listening to Manitobans and that's why we're implementing our new seniors strategy.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, there's an easy way for the Premier to get more information about this case. As it turns out, while her mother was in hospital, Marilyn Zachariah met with the Health Minister twice asking for help to get her mother paneled for long-term care. Sadly, that never happened. No action was taken.

After threats to discharge her mother to a shelter, which I just described, Marilyn brought her mother home. But four days later, she had to be admitted to palliative care, where she remains, at the Riverview centre to date.

Manitobans should not have to plead for support at the end of life—for dignity, Madam Speaker. We need the Premier to invest in hospitals and long-term care so no family has to go through a similar experience again.

Will the Premier commit to stopping these cuts?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, we will look into the facts of the matter that the Leader of the Opposition has brought forward. Certainly, those are tragic circumstances—and unacceptable, frankly. But we will look into the matter further.

But, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that what we're talking about here is we're talking about our parents, our friends, our neighbours, our loved ones, who deserve the respect and dignity by all of us. And they deserve quality, timely access to care when they need it most.

And the Leader of the Opposition is factually incorrect, Madam Speaker. We are making more investments in this area. I just mentioned that the Seniors Minister is providing more money through our seniors strategy. We'll continue to put more dollars into health human resources to ensure that we have the resources there to help Manitoba patients when they need it.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I can assure you that every fact I shared was correct. Marilyn Zachariah is here with her family today. The Premier can go and ask them if she wants to do some fact-checking.

This is a health-care hero. Somebody now retired who served on the front lines of our health-care system, caring for Manitobans in their time of need. And yet, now that it is her time of need, she was not able to access the care required.

And this is not just about the cuts that this government has made to health care. This is also about a Health Minister who had this issue brought to their attention and refused to do anything—twice.

Madam Speaker, we know that seniors need dignity in this province. We also know that seniors care is in a situation of disrepair. This family is speaking out in the hopes that they will save other families a similar sort of stress.

Will the Premier commit today to ending the cuts so that something like this never happens again?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, once again, these are tragic issues that happen and our hearts go out to family members who have to go through these very, very difficult situations.

But the Leader of the Opposition is factually incorrect. We are spending record amounts of money in our health-care system: \$7.2 billion this year—a billion dollars more than the Leader of the Opposition—the NDP ever did, Madam Speaker.

But we recognize there's still more work to done, and—work to do, and we are committed to making sure that that work gets done. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Diagnostic Services Wait Times Health-Care Staff Reduction

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, Manitobans do not trust this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) when it comes to their health care. And that's why nobody—no one—in our province believes any of the PC's announcements.

FIPPA documents, which I will table, show why the waits for medical tests like MRIs are getting longer. The government is cutting allied health positions at hospitals like the Grace.

In November of 2021, there were 92 allied health-care workers. They cut 11 positions in just one year.

Twenty more positions were cut at the Health Sciences Centre. That's the reason, Madam Speaker, that Manitobans do not trust this Premier and the PCs with their health care.

Does the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) believe it was wrong to cut jobs at Grace and HSC?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): I want to welcome all members back to the spring session. I look forward to being able to stand many times in this House to share with Manitobans the facts about what our government is doing.

In November of last year, we announced \$200 million, Madam Speaker, to add 2,000 additional health professionals to end mandating. And, since then, we have introduced incentives for nurses, incentives for doctors, and we are working on the incentives for allied health.

We are adding, Madam Speaker—I know the members opposite have a lot of issues with multiplication—but adding 2,000 health professionals.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Manitobans are waiting for very important procedures. In some cases, they're not able to access those procedures at all because of this government's cuts. And that is why Manitobans don't trust this Premier when it comes to their health care. Their announcements do not match what's happening on the front lines.

They've cut technicians and experts who do important tests like MRIs at the Grace and HSC; 30 fewer front-line workers delivering health care at those two facilities alone. That's why Manitobans are still waiting too long for health care.

Why did the Premier cut allied health-care workers at HSC and Grace Hospital?

Ms. Gordon: I'm not sure where the member opposite is getting their information, but I want to share with Manitobans, through the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force, to date, 22,335 additional Manitoba patients have received their procedures through the task force's request-for-service agreement.

That is MRIs, that is CT scans, that is surgeries, that is cataracts—addition, Madam Speaker, not subtraction.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, Manitobans are waiting too long for essential health care. Manitobans have been unable, and are currently unable, to get the MRIs that they need in our province.

Shared Health told folks—and I won't mention his name right now, we'll bring him up later—but Shared Health told a Manitoban very recently that his appointment date would come in just a few weeks. Unfortunately, a few months later, he still does not have any idea when that appointment will be.

The only response from this government was to change the letter addressed to that patient to say no longer weeks waiting, but instead months until that test date. That same person, Madam Speaker, learned from Shared Health right now that the Grace Hospital's MRI department alone—there's over 1,000 requests waiting for MRIs.

How many weeks or how many months is it that Manitobans must wait before getting an actual appointment in this province for MRIs?

Ms. Gordon: Through the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force, we have completed 66,312 MRIs in 2022.

Madam Speaker, the pandemic backlog for cataract surgery has now been fully eliminated: 11,099 completed procedures in 2022.

This year, 1,601 orthopedic hip surgeries; 2,109 orthopedic knee replacements were completed. We have halved the pandemic backlog for ultrasounds from almost 4,500 procedures to under 2,000.

Madam Speaker, we are taking action. Our government is 'strettening' health care, and we will continue to do so for all Manitobans.

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program Request to Address Staffing Levels

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program provides critical supports for sexual assault survivors and helps collect evidence for potential prosecution of perpetrators.

* (14:20)

Right now, they are so short-staffed they're forced to turn away sexual assault survivors. The PC government promised that they would fix this program and their staffing issues, and they haven't. They've only gotten worse, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) get up today and apologize to Manitoba sexual assault victims and do something about the staffing levels at SANE?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): We recognize that this is difficult for anyone who's undergone a trauma and that is why our government did what we did, Madam Speaker. We took action and invested \$640,000 to create the Forensic Nurse Examiner Program last year, and we recognize that full-time, 24-hour staffing care is necessary.

We will continue to take action. We'll continue to work with Shared Health to ensure that that area is fully staffed. We have a global staffing shortage across the world, Madam Speaker. That is why we've implemented a human resource action plan so that we can fix our staffing shortages.

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

MLA Fontaine: At least 14 sexual assault survivors were sent home with the instructions not to shower or wipe themselves until they could come back when SANE staff were available.

Seriously, in 2023, this is dehumanizing, and not to mention how nurses feel telling Manitobans to go home. The PCs promised that they would fix these staffing issues at the SANE program, and they're so incompetent that they haven't, and things have only gotten worse, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier do the right thing, get up in this House, apologize to sexual assault victims and fix the program today?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, we take trauma such as this very, very seriously, and that is why our government moved swiftly to add new positions to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program.

It is my understanding from Shared Health that six of the seven nursing positions within the program have been filled, including the manager; three are working, three are still in training. And this program was implemented because it is the right thing to do.

Our government has taken action and we will continue to support the good work that is being done at Shared Health.

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

MLA Fontaine: This Premier and that minister are failing sexual assault survivors and nurses in Manitoba. Sexual assault survivors seeking critical

supports are being turned away from the SANE program because there's a lack of staff.

And so what are the PCs doing instead? They're paying for a forensic manager to work remotely out of Alberta; Alberta, Madam Speaker. The SANE program doesn't need remote staff. They need folks that are on the front lines every single day so that we're not turning away sexual assault victims.

Will the Premier or the minister get up today, do the right thing, do their job and hire staff for the SANE program?

Ms. Gordon: Madam Speaker, I must say that the hypocrisy from the member from St. Johns in this House today is overwhelming.

I'd like to point out to the member opposite that the very same program they are criticizing is the same program they underfunded for 17 years—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —filled the program only with—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —individuals who are working casual. I know the member opposite doesn't want Manitobans to hear the truth, but I want them to know that we know the truth, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: It is our government that stood for victims of sexual assault by creating the Forensic Nurse Examiner Program.

Will the member for St. Johns stand up in the House today—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —and apologize for 17 years of mismanagement and underfunding of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program?

Northern Air Services Delays in Court Proceedings

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Madam Speaker, it's said that justice delayed is justice denied. Cancelled flights are causing repeated cancellations of court hearings across the North, denying residents access to justice. And yet, this government offers nothing but excuses.

In fact, it was predicted five years ago when the province was warned that privatizing its air transportation service would spark significant delays. Yet, they pushed ahead with their agenda—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —of privatized government services, to the benefit of their wealthy friends and to the detriment of justice in the North.

When will this PC government take responsibility for the mess that it has caused to justice in the North? [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. [interjection] Order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We recognize that the delivery of justice in every part of Manitoba is important. We also know that there are special challenges in the North, sometimes when it comes to getting court workers, sometimes even when it comes to—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: Sometimes even when it comes to getting judges.

When it comes to flights, I know that there has been special measures taken over the last little while to ensure that this problem is rectified in the short term, and a longer term solution is brought forward. And there has not been any court cancellations in the North as a result of flights for about two weeks.

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

Mr. Wiebe: The fact is that delays in court proceedings are the worst they've ever been in this province right now, and it's no wonder because we have a PC government that is in total chaos. This government's own admission: they said, quote, a single court delay in the northern region of Manitoba costs on average \$10,000 and extends delay—extended delays can lead to cases being thrown out of court. End quote.

They said that their privatization agenda would save money but, in fact, it's doing the exact opposite.

How many court delays and how many tens of thousands of dollars will be wasted by this government before this minister will simply admit his mistake?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, we recognize that access to justice in every part of Manitoba is important. I've indicated to the member opposite that steps have been taken that have already, in the short term,

had some positive effect on this issue, and there are longer term measures that are being looked at, as well.

We do know that there are challenges when it comes to pilots, not just in Manitoba but around Canada and around the world. If the member opposite has an easy solution to the shortage of pilots, while I'd hate to see him leave the Chamber, he might do well as a consultant with Sunwing, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Wiebe: There aren't just challenges in the North, Madam Speaker. This is, in fact, a crisis in our court system in the North, and it's a direct result of this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) pushing through her privatization agenda at all costs.

This was evident when the Premier did not recuse herself, even when they privatized medical flights for sick patients, even though her family has financial interest in Exchange Income Corporation chaired by former PC Premier Gary Filmon.

So, the question is: How can northerners trust this government to deal with these delays, the same delays that they caused, when their only solution is to privatize?

Mr. Goertzen: I'd hoped beyond hope that the member opposite was serious about this particular issue, but his question clearly indicates he is not. I've indicated the measures that have been taken.

Now, there's lots of challenges when it comes to justice. One of those challenges is that individuals who should not be released on bail are being released on bail. Every province in Canada, led by this Premier and this government, are taking action and want to see changes to the Criminal Code. The only party in Canada that doesn't believe that bail should be tightened is the NDP party, as voiced by the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), who said that bail was already tight enough and maybe it should even be loosened.

Will the new Justice critic stand up and repudiate the member for Fort Garry, who wants more violent criminals back on the street, Madam Speaker?

* (14:30)

Budget 2023 Priorities Government Intention

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): We recently met with the Finance Minister to discuss the NDP's priorities we hope to see in the upcoming budget. Top of the list for Manitobans is to fix health care. However, it's not

clear why Manitobans should trust the PCs to clean up the mess in health care that they created.

Can the Finance Minister tell us how can Manitobans trust his government to fix health care, given his government's terrible track record?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Finance): Certainly, health care is top of mind for not just our government but Manitobans. That's why, in the last number of years, we continued to make record investments in health care.

In fact, Madam Speaker, under our Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) leadership, we've been able to attract more money to Manitoba—in fact, each jurisdiction here in the country—from the federal government. We look forward to those investments. We believe it's going to be in the area of \$207 million for Manitoba.

We think that will go a long way to helping Manitobans when it comes to health care.

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

Mr. Sala: Madam Speaker, it's clear the PC's budget won't address the priorities Manitobans want to see action on—priorities such as stopping the privatization of Manitoba Hydro or priorities such as building the channels project, which the PCs promised they'd build, but haven't started on.

So, can the Finance Minister explain how he expects Manitobans to trust his government to deliver on these priorities?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we fully appreciate Manitoba Hydro under the NDP watch. We've seen excess spending there and not within budget, forcing extra rates on the backs of Manitobans.

We've brought legislation forward to protect rates from increasing on the backs of Manitoba ratepayers, and we've also set a path forward in terms of paying down the debt for Manitoba Hydro. The changes we've made will reduce payments for Manitoba Hydro to the government—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —of Manitoba this year alone to the tune of \$190 million.

That will lead to tax savings for Manitoba ratepayers and will lead to stability of Manitoba Hydro, something that would never happen under their watch.

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

Mr. Sala: It's clear this budget won't reverse the damage of—years of PC cuts and inaction have caused in Manitoba. In fact, the previous Finance minister was so disappointed with his government's budget that he resigned in the middle of the budget process. Gone. We wish him well.

We've laid out our five top priorities that PCs should take action on, but it's hard to believe they'll deliver.

Can the Finance Minister explain to Manitobans how they can trust he'll take action to deliver on these five priorities?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we've engaged with thousands of Manitobans over the last several months when it comes to what they view as priorities for—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —our government.

Madam Speaker, we met with hundreds of them face to face over the last couple of months. We've been listening to Manitobans. And I will tell you, next Tuesday on March 7th, we are going to deliver on what they asked us to deliver on.

Diagnostic Services Patient Scheduling Concern

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Dr. Jeff Bresler, who's in the gallery today, has been trying without success to get an appointment for an MRI scan of his brain. After he and many others received a form letter assuring them he'd get an appointment, which I would—which I table, he was told there were 1,000 people ahead of him at the Grace Hospital alone, and they couldn't tell him when he would get an appointment ever.

The person in charge of process improvement for 'diadost' services told them they could be of no further assistance in this matter.

Can the Premier explain why Manitobans can't even get on a wait-list for an MRI?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): We recognize that we have come through a very difficult time in this province—it's called a pandemic—and that we are faced with pressures in many different areas of the health system. That is why our government committed \$110 million to addressing those pressures

through the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force.

We recognize that there is more work to be done, Madam Speaker, and we are committed to getting the job done.

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

Health-Care Professionals Bargaining Contract

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, one of the reasons our health system is breaking down is there's no support for the health-care professionals who make doctors' and nurses' jobs possible. You can't run a rural ER without a lab and a lab technician; you can't do cardiac surgery without a perfusionist, and you can't run an MRI without a technician.

They're all represented by the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals, who've been without a contract for five, going on six years. That is what's breaking our health-care system. It's clear that this message is sending to people who work in health care: they're not valued. That's why they're leaving.

When is this government going to value health professionals and secure a new contract for MAHCP?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): We value, appreciate and respect all health-care professionals, at all levels of the organization, including allied health professionals, Madam Speaker. That is why we are investing \$200 million in our health human resource action plan. That is why we are—we aim to add 2,000 new health professionals to the health system, including allied health professionals.

And when I look at the incentives that we have begun to discuss with allied health professionals, I look forward to sharing more with Manitobans about how we will value and show appreciation for those individuals.

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

Diagnostic Services Patient Scheduling Concern

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Dr. Jeff Bresler, a dentist, has had trouble not just getting access to health care but, unbelievably, he's even had trouble getting an appointment. He tried many times to get an appointment to see his

endocrinologist, and all he got was an answering machine telling him to keep on trying.

A brain MRI is rarely elective, yet since he visited his doctor three months ago, he still doesn't have an appointment to get the MRI. Most recently, he's been told there are more than 1,000 people ahead of him, and that Shared Health has no idea when he might even get an appointment.

Why has the government made such a mess of health care that people are having trouble even getting an appointment for critical services?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health): We are continuing to work with our health professionals, our physicians, our specialists across the entire health system.

I was pleased to announce more seats in—at the universities and at the colleges for physicians. We also, as a government, are—is offering an incentive, a 20 per cent premium for clinics to stay open extended hours in the morning, in the evening and on weekends to address issues such as this, to ensure that Manitobans have more flexibility in terms of accessing their health professionals.

We will continue to talk with specialists and physicians on new ways that we can assist Manitobans.

Education System Funding Investments

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Our government is committed to providing the best educational opportunities for all Manitoba students, no matter where they live, their background or their individual circumstances. We know that for students to thrive in the classroom and meet their full potential, they need a government that will provide them with a system with increased and sustainable funding.

Could the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning enlighten us all on how our government is providing real investments in the K-to-12 system?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'd like to thank my friend from—the MLA for Portage la Prairie for this very—for a great, great question.

Madam Speaker, \$100-million increase in funding provided to all school divisions right here in this great province of ours. The money is going to address ongoing cost pressures, operating support, special

needs and capital support. This increase will provide well over the 200,000—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —students in our K-to-12 system with the supports they need. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

* (14:40)

Mr. Ewasko: Under our government, funding has outpaced inflation. Since 2016-17, operational funding to schools has increased by \$328 million or 23 per cent, Madam Speaker.

We are listening to Manitobans. We're improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. I look forward to unanimous passing of the upcoming good-news budget, Madam Speaker.

Applications to Vital Statistics Request to Address Backlog

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): After years of cuts and backlog-delayed applications, Vital Stats is—continues to have a wait-list.

The Winnipeg Free Press had just reported that the government is sitting on 5,000 birth certificate applications. Rather than blaming Manitobans, if incomplete information is the concern, why are they not prioritizing contacting those applicants? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. [*interjection*] Order.

Hon. James Teitsma (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I appreciate the opportunity to deal with this issue, to speak to this issue.

I recently visited the Vital Statistics branch, so I've had an opportunity to meet with staff there, too, and to encourage them in the good work that they've been doing. They have had some significant challenges. They had 25—a back load of 25,000 applications—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —that they managed to reduce 99.9 per cent of them. I'm confident that they can deal with the backlog that is before them now, and certainly we want to make sure that Manitobans can receive the services that they need and that Manitobans can get birth certificates registered and applications completed.

Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

I'm going to ask that, when members are standing to speak to ask questions or answer questions, that everybody is listening respectfully. You may not like the answers or the questions, but there is no reason to be heckling and diminishing what the person is trying to put across. And there is a little bit of that happening right now, and I'm going to ask members to please rein it in. We've got important topics to cover, and I'm going to ask people to show more civility in what is going on in this Chamber.

Mr. Sandhu: This PC government fails Manitobans and their growing families right from the very beginning of their lives. In their own words, new parents have described their experience with this government as, I quote, disappointing, like pulling the teeth and gross negligence, end quote.

When will the minister commit to a timeline to clear this backlog?

Mr. Teitsma: As I mentioned already, I have met with the staff there. We're developing plans and strategies that are going to be taking effect to reduce that backlog. [*interjection*]

I know the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) is—wants to be respectful to me and perhaps to her own members as well, as she continues to heckle, but I would ensure that member that I—one of the other priorities of our government is to make sure that they are fully staffed at Vital Statistics. That's not the case right now. We are working very hard to fill the vacancies. We have a number of—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —vacancies that we're working hard to fulfil, and I invite the member opposite to join me in inviting Manitobans to apply for those—for that open position. It's been posted since November. We have been filling staff. We have been getting more staff. There's more than 10 positions and—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. [*interjection*] The member's time has expired.

Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

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

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to the 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—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —and Manitoba in fields such as education, science, health, business and politics.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

Foot-Care Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Bibliothèque Régionale Jolys Regional Library

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (14:50)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(5) To request the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage to prevent any renovations to the auditorium

that would destroy and devalue the architectural integrity of the building.

This petition, Madam Speaker, is been signed by Réane Philippot, Rae-Lyn Kuka and Cory Ladobruk and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Home-Care Services

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Home-care workers in Manitoba provide skilled and compassionate care that helps better the quality of life for thousands of Manitobans.

(2) Robust home-care services are proven to reduce the strain on health services and demand for hospital beds.

(3) Home care reduces the demand for long-term-care beds as it allows people to continue living in their own space.

(4) Studies show that a third of the 200,000 Canadians living in long-term-care homes could stay home with proper home-care support.

Investing in home care saves money, as daily services cost half the price of a long-term-care bed and one seventh of the daily cost of a hospital bed.

(6) The provincial government's cuts to home care in Manitoba has resulted in chronic staffing issues that caused the WRHA to cancel 27,000 home-care appointments in the month of April 2022 alone.

(7) Many clients in Manitoba only receive home-care services once a day, whereas countries such as Denmark offer up to six visits a day.

(8) Home-care workers in Manitoba are paid poor wages, are offered little benefits, lack of sick time and are overworked, resulting in difficulty retrain-retaining and attracting workers.

(9) Home-care workers have been without a contract since 2017 due to this provincial government's interference in labour negotiations.

(10) Investing in home care is a proactive approach that would save the Province millions of dollars, as well as allow more Manitobans to age in place.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health and the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care to immediately increase investment in home-care services so that home-care workers can be paid a fair wage and clients can receive the level of service they require.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Lead Water Pipes

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The US government has identified lead water pipes as a clear and present danger to American public health, and President Biden has announced a 100 per cent replacement of lead water pipes in 10 million homes and 400,000 schools and child-care centres as part of the America jobs plan.

(2) Two thousand seven hundred and fifty-five homes in the Elmwood-East Kildonan area have lead water pipes connecting their basements to the City-owned water pipes at their property line. Homes built before 1950 are likely to have lead water pipes running to this connection.

(3) New lead level guidelines issued by Health Canada in 2019 are a response to findings that lead concentrations in drinking water should be kept as low as reasonably achievable, as lead exposures are inherently unsafe and have serious health consequences, especially for children and expectant mothers.

(4) Thirty-one per cent of Winnipeg's 23,000 homes with lead water pipes connecting basements to the City-owned water pipes at their property line were found to have lead levels above the new Health Canada lead level guidelines.

(5) The City of Winnipeg has an inventory of which homes and public buildings, including schools and daycares, that have lead water pipe connection to the City's water main and will only disclose this information to the homeowner or the property owner. The cost of replacing the lead water pipe to individual homeowners is over \$4,000.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately contact all home and property owners in Manitoba with lead water pipes connecting to the City water main line and provide full financial support to them for lead water pipe replacement so their access to clean water is assured and exposure to lead and its health risks are eliminated.

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

* (15:00)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Bhajan Singh, Baljeet Singh and Shinderpal Jandu and many other Manitobans.

South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): 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) Residents of River Park South community in Winnipeg are disturbed by the increasing noise levels caused by traffic on the South Perimeter Highway.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly 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 Gursewak Singh, Baljit Khaira and Sukhwant Kaur.

Thank you.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) According to census 2021, Punjabi is the fourth most spoken language in Canada and there

are 33,315 people in Manitoba whose native language is Punjabi.

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

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

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as Punjabi language instruction at college and university levels 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 Navneet Chandi, Jaspal Chandi, Harjot Kaur and many more.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please call for debate at second reading this afternoon bills 9, 7 and 6.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider bills 9, 7 and 6 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

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

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call second reading of Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation): Madam Speaker, the liquor, gaming and cannabis—I move, seconded by the Minister of Infrastructure, that the liquor, gaming and cannabis control amendment and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Municipal Relations, seconded by the honourable Minister of Infrastructure, that Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Smith: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record with respect to Bill 9.

* (15:10)

Our government knows that businesses need flexibility to satisfy customer demand, and this bill will take an important step forward to modernizing the liquor retail system here in the province of Manitoba.

Bill 9 will allow existing liquor retail businesses in Manitoba, which is 226 hotel beer vendors, 168 liquor vendors and eight specialty wine stores, the ability to sell liquor products carried by MBLL. Additionally, 50 craft liquor manufacturers will now be eligible to expand the assortment of liquor products they're able to retail at their manufacturing location.

This change will further our government's support for the local craft liquor manufacturing sector, and support entrepreneurship in an ever-growing Manitoba industry. This means that people living in Winnipeg will now be able to purchase spirits at up to 102 new locations, and wine at up to 94 new locations. Folks in Brandon will now be able to purchase spirits and wine at up to 10 new locations.

Bill 9 also increases the convenience for other communities in Manitoba by allowing Manitobans the ability

to purchase spirits and wine at up to 170 new—172 new locations, and cold beer at up to 177 new locations. This nearly doubles the number of locations where these products are available, and cuts down on travel time and costs for everyday Manitobans who presently need to drive extended distances.

The amendments under Bill 9 would—will build on the strength of Manitoba's diverse retail market, where approximately 70 per cent of total sales by volume is sold through licensed private retail locations.

Bill 9 also addresses the safety needs of customers and staff of liquor retail locations. Specifically, it provides Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries the option to require enhanced security measures as part of any liquor retail agreement.

As the minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, I am committed to finding ways to make the retailing of liquor more convenient for Manitobans all across this great province. Madam Speaker, the legislative amendment will meet this commitment by allowing a wider range of products for sale at existing retailers, saving Manitobans money on travel times and assisting us in growing our local economy as we continue to recover from the COVID pandemic.

Manitoba has one of the most diverse liquor retailing systems in Canada. We've got hotel beer vendors, rural liquor vendors, duty-free stores, restaurant licence off-sales, specialty wine stores, retail manufacturing licences, temporary retail locations such as farmers' markets and Liquor Marts, Madam Speaker. The legislative amendments seek to build on the strength and diversity of Manitoba's liquor retailing system by allowing businesses that choose to sell liquor as one of their product listings the ability to grow their business with new offerings.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 9 will create new opportunities for hotel beer vendors by opening up the sale of up to 579 new wine and spirit products from the Liquor & Lotteries catalogue. Liquor vendors will be able to retail up to 123 new beer and refreshment beverage products. Specialty wine stores will have the ability to sell up to 707 new spirit, beer and refreshment beverage products.

This amendment will produce opportunities for retail businesses across the province to expand and meet customer demand in liquor sales similar to many provinces across Canada. Craft liquor manufacturers in Manitoba will now have the ability to stock and

carry the products they want in their retail store. This supports entrepreneurship in allowing a beer manufacturer to carry another craft manufacturer's beer, or the ability to branch out and carry a spirit or wine product from another producer.

Our government recognizes the financial challenges many Manitobans and businesses face, which is why growing our economy is so important. These legislative amendments will help support job growth as businesses expand into new lines of liquor product offerings. The balanced approach to growing the economy will permit existing retailers to offer new liquor sales in Manitoba. Businesses will be able to renovate to carry the additional liquor products, hire more staff, to manage and sell new products and earn additional income to recover after financial hardship experiencing by many businesses during the pandemic.

These are just a few of the economic benefits that this initiative will bring to the Manitoba economy. Currently, liquor retail licences are restrictive in nature by limiting what products can be sold by existing retailers and businesses and therefore creating unnecessary red tape on Manitoba businesses. Bill 9 is another step toward our government's priority to reduce red tape and to provide more choice and convenience for the consumer and greater opportunities and flexibility for Manitoba's businesses.

Existing liquor retailers will be able to transition to a standardized liquor retail licence in the new modernized liquor retailing system, creating new, less regulatory burdensome environment for businesses.

Madam Speaker, this bill—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my apologies—this bill will position Manitoba for success in updating and modernizing the liquor retail market for the future and I look forward to the passage of this bill and more convenience for Manitobans, consumers and Manitoba's small businesses.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just a minute. Just a moment, here.

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. Adrien Sala (St. James): I'd like to ask the minister who was consulted in the development of this legislation.

Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation): Well, we've consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, one being the Manitoba Liquor Vendor Association; the Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association; the Manitoba Brewers Association and the Retail Council of Canada; a number of private retailers, Mr. Deputy Speaker; Patent 5 and Four Crowns Inn beer vendor; and a number of other Manitobans we have spoken to who greatly and strongly support this measure.

Thank you.

Mr. Sala: I think one of the major concerns that we have about this legislation are the financial impacts on Liquor & Lotteries' bottom line and, ultimately, the ability to pay for services with the profits that are generated by that.

So, I'd like to ask the minister what modelling was done of the financial impact of a significant expansion of private liquor in Manitoba, and can the minister provide that to the House?

Mr. Smith: You know, I appreciate any question from the members opposite about profitability. I mean, first of all, they seem interested in the profits of MBLL, but they don't seem to be interested in the profits of local retailers and small businesses in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill is going to allow for more access and more convenience for Manitoba consumers, and it's going to give more options for Manitoba small businesses to sell liquor at their retail location.

Thank you.

Mr. Sala: You know, I just want to point out that we asked the minister a very basic question there about the impacts, the financial impacts, of this bill. And what did we hear? No answer. No information.

Hopefully, they have done that analysis and I hope that it's forthcoming.

What modelling was done of the social impact of this significant expansion of private liquor sales in Manitoba?

Mr. Smith: I know that Manitobans largely support this move. Manitobans support more access and more convenience when it comes to their alcohol purchases.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, many provinces across this country have, plus many jurisdictions around the world have taken similar approaches. I think it's time that we get with the 21st century. We're already 20-some years into it.

Thank you.

Mr. Sala: Bill 9 states that agreements between MBLL and private liquor vendors, quote, "may include provisions respecting security measures at the premises of the liquor vendor." Close quote.

Can the minister explain what that would entail?

Mr. Smith: I won't get into specific details on that. I know that it gives MBLL opportunities to have those discussions with individual retailers.

* (15:20)

We know every retailer has their own unique needs given their geography, given what kind of community they are living in and what kind of community they are servicing, so I'll leave that detail to MBLL. But I know that there is a provision in there for that reason, to keep safety top of mind.

Mr. Sala: Will MBLL pay for security measures that will be implemented by private liquor vendors?

The minister just described that there may be a variety of different situations. I'm hoping the minister can clarify whether or not government will be paying for the cost of the installation of security measures in these privately run beer vendors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member—sorry, the honourable Minister of Municipal Relations.

Mr. Smith: As I said before, in my previous answer, that MBLL will continue to work with individual retailers to address their specific needs. I'm not going to be overly prescriptive on that. I think MBLL and these private retailers can come to some kind of agreement, and I will not be overly prescriptive.

Thank you.

Mr. Sala: Again, I appreciate the transparency from the minister here in the fact that they have no idea about how much this may cost MBLL—and by extension, government and Manitobans—to pursue this expansion of privatization of liquor sales in Manitoba. That should concern all Manitobans that this minister doesn't have any clarity on what those costs may be.

At a recent committee hearing, we learned that MBLL's customer satisfaction surveys over the last four quarters have resulted in scores between 89 and 93. In other words, people are very satisfied with their public liquor system and MBLL.

Does the minister agree with respondents that MBLL provides a strong level of convenience, satisfaction and security?

Mr. Smith: Of course, I'd like to take a moment to thank all the workers at MBLL, whether the front line or anywhere through the whole chain of the corporation, for the good work that they do in serving Manitobans, of course.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's be clear: this bill will allow existing retailers—that's existing retailers—to sell a wider assortment of alcohol. This does not impact the—there's no store that will be closed because of this bill. This bill is based on allowing existing—as I said before, existing—retailers to sell a wider variety of products.

So again, I thank the great work that's being done by MBLL, the front-line services that are provided to Manitobans, but this'll provide Manitobans with additional services at local retailers in this province.

Mr. Sala: We're hearing that the minister is guaranteeing that no stores will close. I'm guessing, by extension, he's suggesting that no jobs will be lost. I think one thing they could consider doing is putting that in writing to the union so that they can have that confidence, if he feels that strongly.

But I think the question here is how is it possible that he can confirm that there'll be no closures or job losses if his government has done zero financial analysis to understand the impacts on MBLL stores. That makes no sense.

I'd like to ask the minister again, give him another chance to offer this House some insight into the expected financial impacts that Bill 9 will have on Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries profits.

Mr. Smith: I think in my preamble I said that some 70 per cent of liquor by volume sold in this province is already sold by private retailers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this will allow current retailers—existing retailers—to sell a wider variety of alcohol. I don't know why members opposite are so opposed to doing that. That's going to provide their constituents with more options, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The vast majority of Manitobans support this idea. We've seen polling where that does happen,

where majority of Manitobans would like to see more options in their alcohol purchases. I'm not sure why folks on the other side of the House—the NDP—are so opposed to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, are they on the side of Manitobans or are they on the—own side?

Mr. Sala: The reason we're concerned is because we don't trust this government and Manitobans don't trust this government.

The minister says he doesn't understand why we're so concerned while he takes liquor profits and hands them over to their friends in the private sector, handing millions in profits over to the private sector, stealing those profits from government coffers. That is a serious concern that everyone in Manitoba is concerned about, and we're very concerned about the direction that this bill takes us.

I'm going to ask this minister about the previous incarnation of this bill. Why did the government drop the five-year pilot project that was included in bill 42, the previous version of Bill 9?

Mr. Smith: I'm not sure why the member opposite's so concerned about bill 42. Perhaps he wants to see that re-introduced in its original incarnation.

But right now, we're talking about Bill 9. We're talking about the opportunity for Manitoba retailers—existing retailers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I'll say it's existing retailers in this province—will be able to sell a wider range of alcohol products. It's giving choices to consumers; it's giving choices to individual retailers.

I'm not sure why the NDP are so opposed to the private sector, why they're so opposed to private interests, private companies—small, individual companies—Manitoba-owned, Manitoba-run and Manitoba-employed. Why are they so against them?

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Just wondering if the minister—is there—is this seen as an expansion?

Is—I mean, are we talking about selling more liquor? I mean, because I think one of the concerns around privatization is simply that if you're just robbing or taking from Peter to pay Paul, or if you're going to—if we're, are we expecting a net increase in revenue, a net increase in alcohol sales and a net increase in employment?

Are we actually going to see growth from this, or is it just shifting from one—from private to public—from public to private?

Mr. Smith: Again, this is all about customer choice and consumer choice. I believe that this is going to be a great opportunity for Manitobans, not only consumers, but the businesses and the retailers that exist today, to be able to have more options.

I know that, it was actually the previous Liberal leader in 2016 that ran on a platform to privatize the liquor system, so I'm not sure if the member opposite was aware of that. But for this particular bill, right now Bill 9 is interested in sell—is allowing individual retailers that exist—that currently exist—to just sell more alcohol and a wider range of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Lamont: Yes, I know, the other—there have been a number of instances in the—look, we have to acknowledge that, in fact, if you look at the harms associated with substance abuse that off—that, in fact, the death toll and the sickness toll and the disability toll associated with alcohol is actually worse than most other drugs—in fact, than most of the drugs combined. And there's new evidence, of course, that there is—there—very higher and more serious health risks.

So, I'm just wondering, does the government have any plan to address the harms related to addiction that would inevitably coincide with this legislation?

Mr. Smith: Of course, our government does take the issue of addictions very seriously.

I know MBLL already sets aside a set amount—I believe it's 2 per cent of their net revenue to address some of these issues, to help Manitobans learn the harms and potential pitfalls of certain products, whether it be cannabis, alcohol and gambling.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that—and I said this earlier—we already in this province have, by volume, 70 per cent of alcohol sold is through the private interests.

So, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this will expand on the ability for local retailers to be able to sell more wide variety of alcohol, not only making it easier on consumers. We know that inflation, cost inflation, the cost of gas—

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

Mr. Sala: We've heard the minister, on multiple occasions today, refer to expanding access and making it more convenient. We have, within Manitoba, Liquor Mart Express locations, which are miniature

Liquor Marts. And I've got one in my local Superstore in St. James—provides me great, easy, convenient access when I'm in the grocery store.

Can the minister clarify why he's not looking at expanding the Liquor Mart Express model, if it's all about convenience?

Mr. Smith: I appreciate that question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the ability for private retailers to be able to sell more liquor and different products in the liquor store, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately, the members opposite seem to be opposed to having private companies that are, by the way, locally owned, locally operated and employs local people.

For some reason, the NDP have an ideological opposition to anything to do with the private sector and with small business owners.

Mr. Lamont: I mean, the last time I checked, I think they—Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is also locally owned and completely—all its employees are also Manitoban.

* (15:30)

So the—but, I mean, part of this, from the point of view of—this was actually, as far as I can tell, one of the bills that was withdrawn, along with bill 64 and another of contentious bills, why is it—this seems like a bit of a bait and switch. Why is it being introduced now when it was withdrawn in the past as seen—in the PCs? Why are they doing this flip-flop because it was—they clearly thought it was toxic previously?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate a question from the leader of the Liberal Party in this House.

Again, I'll remind the House that it was his party—a leader under that banner in 2016, that ran on a campaign to privatize liquor sales in the entire province. So, I do find that's a bit interesting he asks this question.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill was been—has been reintroduced. Of course, the NDP did not want to pass it the last time. They didn't want to pass it the time before. We want to make sure that we're giving opportunities to Manitobans to be able to purchase alcohol—a wider range of alcohol products at retailers—at local retailers, while giving those folks—the local retailers—more options in their sales.

Mr. Lamont: For the record, when I ran for leader, I said—I ran on a platform of no privatizations and I was not part of the 2016 campaign.

But I—the other—I've heard real concerns from hotels in rural Manitoba who say that if this bill goes forward it'll simply—it'll likely devastate their business and it will—and undermine the economy of their town.

So, is this something that the minister has heard or has taken into consideration?

Mr. Smith: I have spoken to the Manitoba Hotel Association about this and they are quite positive about Bill 9, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Like I said, we had outreach to a number of organizations and institutions that have to do with the sale of liquor—very supportive of Bill 9.

Debate

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

The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): It's an honour to rise here to put some words on the record about Bill 9, this new bill—or, rather, this old bill—that is now being brought forward for the third time.

This bill, which started out in life as bill 40, and later it came forward as bill 42 and now we're seeing is—in bill—as Bill 9 in its newest incarnation, is truly, I think, a great example of the through-line between the Brian Pallister era and the Heather Stefanson era—sorry, Premier Stefanson era, apologies—the Premier Stefanson era here in Manitoba.

This bill continues Brian Pallister's work of seeking to privatize aspects of government operations to send public dollars over to the private sector. And, you know, we can see when we look at the way that this bill has changed, has been modified slightly, that there have been very few changes, ultimately, to this bill.

The focus of the bill remains on taking profits that are being made by our Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries organization and sending those profits over to the private sector.

This bill is being couched—we've heard the minister now repeatedly talk about this as being about convenience, improving access. Meanwhile, we read to the minister that, you know, satisfaction among Manitobans about their access to liquor, satisfaction with the operation of our liquor stores, is incredibly high. So, these arguments about improving service or meeting some kind of unmet demand don't hold muster, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are not convincing.

One of the biggest concerns, as we've expressed in questions here today, and that I had a chance to express to the minister in that briefing that I had with him a couple months back about this bill, is the impact on Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries profits. And in that briefing, I had an opportunity to ask the minister about what type of analysis his government did to understand the financial ramifications of the implementation of Bill 9.

And what I heard from the minister was the same thing that I heard from the minister today, and what we all heard from the minister, which is there has been no analysis. To repeat, the government is proposing a bill that will open up the sale of liquor—the private sale of liquor, to every beer vendor in this province—will turn every single beer vendor into a miniature Liquor Mart, giving them opportunities to sell those high-value products that are currently sold to those publicly owned liquor stores and will give them the opportunity to make those profits off those products.

The potential damage to our provincial treasury and the impacts financially are huge. Right now, Manitoba earns approximately—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —\$315 million a year—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —in profit from liquor sales.

The members across are chirping; I don't think they like these numbers. They kind of hurt to hear about the potential damage that this government is about to do to our provincial revenues; \$315 million in profits. That's what's at stake with what this government is proposing. We're talking about a huge amount of money that currently goes towards helping to pay for the costs of health in this province, for the costs of education, for infrastructure, to support our municipalities.

But this government is willing to put that at risk and to have no idea about the impacts of this bill and yet go forward with no sense of what that financial damage could be to our provincial treasury. That is not responsible governance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's wildly irresponsible.

You know, in a previous briefing I had with the prior minister—I can't keep track of all the ministers in this government, they cycle through them pretty fast—but in a prior briefing on regards to a prior bill, I learned of—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: –a very important piece of information from Mr. Scott Fielding, this minister's predecessor. And that was—and this was right out of his mouth in that briefing, and I'm sure the minister knows this detail: on every single bottle we sell in a Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries-operated store, we make approximately an 11 per cent margin on that bottle. Not taxes, not the kind of—no other mystery money here; it's 11 per cent margin, clear profits for us as Manitobans that we can spend on health, education and so forth.

This government is taking that 11 per cent margin and they're saying to their friends in the private sector here, take the profit, we don't need it anymore, apparently. They're willing to hand that over. The issue is they're proposing these changes without any clarity on what the impacts are.

This government likes to position themselves as a bunch of fiscal hawks, but they're not even doing basic financial analysis or any kind of estimation about the impacts of this bill financially on Manitobans. What they're saying again is trust us. Trust us. We're—don't worry about it, it's not going to have that big of an impact, it'll make life more convenient, but don't worry about the lost profits, trust us, they're not that big.

We know that we have countless reasons not to trust this government when they come forward with asks to trust them without any sort of clarity or analysis to back it up. That's a real concern for Manitobans in this province.

You know, the other big impact which we touched on in questions here is the question of the impact of this bill on jobs, on good, family-supporting, benefit-providing jobs for Manitobans. What this government is seeking to do is to take good-paying jobs through our Liquor Marts and to convert them into low-paying, minimum-wage jobs with no benefits. The minister is bragging about that like that's some sort of great economic development opportunity.

This is working right now. Liquor & Lotteries produces a lot of fantastic jobs, job opportunities for Manitobans; not just customer service jobs, but all variety of jobs that include service experts, skilled tradespeople, all types of jobs. And this government wants to risk those jobs and convert them into low-paying jobs without benefits.

That is not a plan for economic development. That's a plan for taking good-paying jobs, government—good-paying, benefit-providing jobs and handing them

over to the private sector where folks will make much less money and be far worse off. That is not a benefit to sell to Manitobans.

You know, I'd like to ask the minister—or I mentioned it briefly in the question period there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but if this minister feels so confident that this bill, which he's got no analysis to back up in terms of impacts, but that this bill will not result in a loss of jobs or the closure of liquor stores, I invite the minister to consider putting that in writing. Put it in writing to MGEU staff, say we commit that we will not see any job loss.

I know they can't do that because they don't have any idea about how this bill will impact bottom lines for our liquor stores, but I invite the minister to consider that as an option if he really feels that he can confirm that or guarantee that in any way.

* (15:40)

During the questions, we heard some talk about security measures and how, you know, how those would be managed. And it seems that, you know, the government has thought at some level about what the impacts may be on safety by creating a huge number of new beer vendor/mini-Liquor Marts around the province. I'd invite the minister to reflect on what we've seen in this province over the last couple years.

Members of this House will know we've had two tragedies outside our—around our beer vendors in Manitoba. One was an employee of the beer vendor, a young man, and another were—is an individual that was standing outside of a beer vendor and was victimized. We know that there already are some 'security'- and safety-related concerns in and around our beer vendors. We saw that with those tragedies.

And, unfortunately, I don't think, and we don't think, it's sufficient for this government to be moving forward with the sale of 40-ounce bottles of hard liquor, all varieties of wine and whatever in beer vendors. They're already high-risk locations, and when you start inserting very high-value products in those beer vendors, it's very likely that we're going to see a significant increase in the risk of theft activity and other safety risks to people working in those beer vendor environments and the customers that attend them.

Suggesting that they're, you know—in the minister's words, doesn't want to be too prescriptive or be too directive to MBLL and how they go about that, I think there's a real reason to be concerned here about the potential safety risks that are being created. The government is telling beer vendors, you can become

miniature Liquor Marts; we're going to give you the ability to do that. And, again, it's not clear whether or not this minister has stated whether or not we as Manitobans are also going to subsidize their ability to do that by paying for the costs of security infrastructure.

We know how expensive that security infrastructure was in our liquor stores. We know that that infrastructure was wildly successful. It's helped to very much change those environments and make them into much safer environments. It's important—those investments are important, but they were very expensive.

Will we as Manitobans bear those costs to support this government's desire to hand profits over to the private sector? That's not clear. The minister wasn't able to clarify that. That should make Manitobans suspicious; I suspect it has.

This system—our liquor system is working as it is. We shared satisfaction numbers that we saw from our Liquor Marts; very high: 93 per cent satisfaction rate with service in our Liquor Marts. Manitobans aren't clamouring for these changes. They're not clamouring for this government to go and take these public—publicly sold liquor products and to bring them over to the private sector so they can make profit. They're not asking for that.

I haven't heard that as a legislator. I hadn't heard that as the Liquor & Lotteries critic even once. So I don't know, you know, who this minister's been talking to or who his government has been consulting with, but it certainly doesn't reflect what we've heard from Manitobans.

The public liquor system works. It's serving Manitobans well.

You know, the other piece to this is that CCPA did some really important research in about 2016, 2017, that showed how well our system is working, that showed just how great we got it, how right we have it here in Manitoba. That research showed that we have the lowest per capita expenditure on alcohol in this province. We have the second lowest impaired driving rates in this province. And very importantly, and something that is now being put at risk by this minister and this government, we have the highest revenue and net government income per capita from liquor sales across Canada.

We got it right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this government and this bill and this minister that's

fighting to push this bill forward are putting that at risk. They're putting that at risk.

I know that this government received thousands upon thousands of emails from Manitobans telling them to protect public liquor sales. I also received those thousands of emails, and I was grateful to receive them. I was grateful to receive those emails because those emails represented the voices of Manitobans who know how important it is that we protect public liquor sales because they know what public liquor sales mean. They know it means we get to keep the profits as Manitobans and we get to ensure that some of those profits are reinvested in keeping Manitobans safe in social responsibility and addictions treatment and recovery programs.

The health impacts of this bill also need to be considered, and we didn't hear this minister reference those at all. We didn't hear him reference those at all. And, in fact, if I think about the potential 'impacts' of the bill we discussed yesterday, Bill 7, combined with the impacts of Bill 9, what this government is proposing is a significant expansion in the availability of alcohol to Manitobans.

We know that in their last bill, bill 42, the last incarnation of this bill, they went even further. That bill proposed to have liquor in every single—or allowed liquor in convenience stores and in grocery stores.

Fortunately, I don't know, I'm guessing because they knew that was upsetting to Manitobans and that there was significant risks associated with that and that Manitobans rejected that, that they decided to modify that just slightly and now restrict that—those private sales to beer vendors.

But we know that this government wants to drastically expand the availability of liquor. I think that that is a very important public policy question that we need to be considering very seriously, given the potential impacts.

Again, I already stated some of the facts from that CCPA research, outlining that we've got this lowest per capita expenditure on alcohol, that we've got the second lowest impaired driving rates. Those are things we can be proud of in Manitoba.

The question I'd—I haven't heard this minister or this government answer is: What are the impacts of this bill on expanding the sale of liquor to make it much more accessible? What are the impacts on public health? Those are really important questions that I think we need to be looking at much more

closely, that we clearly have not seen answered by this government.

I want to close my comments on this bill just by again saying, you know, there are opportunities to innovate and provide more options for Manitobans. But we can do that within the public liquor system. We should protect those profits that are going to pay for health, that are going to pay for education services. We need to ensure we keep those profits in the hands of Manitobans. We need to stop the PCs and their relentless efforts at privatizing and giving public profits over to the private sector.

I appreciate an opportunity to provide some thoughts on this bill.

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act—the purpose is to have existing retail beer vendors or specialty wine store operators that want to expand the products they sell to enter into an agreement with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and obtain a licence that authorizes the sale of other types of liquor from their current premises.

It will also have that the holder of a manufacturer's licence may obtain a licence that authorizes them to operate a liquor store at the premises that are the subject of the manufacturer's licence or at a nearby location approved by the executive director of the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba.

This bill will also hold agreements between the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and liquor retailers to include provisions respecting security measures to be implemented by the private retailer.

Bill 9 is yet another attempt by the PCs to further privatize the sale of liquor in Manitoba.

Our public system works. It creates hundreds of millions in revenue. It provides many Manitobans with good-paying jobs and reinvests money in addition—addictions programs. And this revenue that MBLL generates is used to fund health care, education and much more.

* (15:50)

Moving to a privatized model moves the public benefit into private hands. And we are also worried about the public health impact that further privatization will have; notably, its impact on underage drinking, potential theft and more social harms.

The current model for the sale of alcohol ensures that public benefits from the regulation and sale of liquor, because it helps pay for the cost of our hospitals, it helps with the cost of our schools and public education. And Bill 9 makes significant changes to that model.

The PCs' priority is that public benefits should go instead towards private profit. The government has claimed that they can add new stores that sell spirits without meaningfully impacting government revenue, but that's just not plausible. We remain concerned that the push for private sale will, in fact, have a significant impact on the profits of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, and in turn on the revenue provided to government and social responsibility.

The Stefanson government and this minister have provided no evidence, and they have provided no modelling to support their position. They have just said trust us about a decision that could have very significant financial implications for Manitobans. In a bill briefing, the minister himself admitted that they have not done an analysis on what impact Bill 9 will have on MBLL sales, and that's not good enough. This bill should not have come forward at all before the government provided real analysis of the revenue impact of this change.

Important public services are funded by the sale of these products, and a change in revenue means less money for our schools and for our hospitals. We are also concerned about the impact on good-paying jobs. The Liquor Mart employees are fairly paid, with good benefits. These are good jobs. The government's so-called guarantee of no job losses is not strong, and the government and MBLL retain the ability to change direction at any time, including closing stores or laying off employees.

If Bill 9 were to become law, it's clear to us that it would have a significant impact on MBLL. And while the minister claims that's not the case, we're just all waiting for the other shoe to drop.

With private liquor locations, the inevitable result will be a loss of good jobs, replaced with lower or even minimum-wage jobs, and the closing of Liquor Marts. In the experience of Saskatchewan with the privatization of stores there, the average job loss—wage loss was about 30 per cent less. If the PC government was serious about a real jobs guarantee, they would offer that proactively in the collective agreement with their employees. But they won't do that, because it's not a serious guarantee.

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

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

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries employs approximately 2,000 people, who bring a wide range of backgrounds, skills and experience. They pride themselves on hiring talented and passionate individuals who are part of a diverse workplace that represents the vibrant communities that we serve. At MBLL casinos, they hire customer service experts, skilled tradespeople, local performers, food and beverage professionals, equipment technicians and many others across different fields. Knowledgeable Liquor Mart staff ensure the retail experience for our customers is both convenient and socially responsible. Corporate employees help make our company run effectively and are always focused on our customers.

MBLL generates thousands of additional direct and indirect jobs in the provincial economy. The casinos and Liquor Marts that MBLL owns and operates generate millions of dollars in spin-off economic activity per year for other businesses. MBLL's core mandate is to provide revenue to the government of Manitoba to support provincial programs and initiatives in areas such as health care, education, social services, housing and infrastructure. And every dollar earned in profit is to be invested back in the province.

Privatizing liquor sales reduces government revenue. These revenues directly contribute to programs to reduce addiction and invest in treatment. The direct and indirect social costs of alcohol are shouldered by government and therefore by Manitobans, regardless of whether alcohol sales are public or private. So, we should not be giving up millions of dollars that can be used to address those issues.

In 2016, there was research done from BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan because of the privatization that was going on there and we found that Manitoba, compared to those other provinces that had

a significant amount of privatization, had the strongest position in retaining the revenues generated from alcoholic beverages. That's because Manitoba had a more balanced approach.

We have the second lowest rates in impaired driving, and that's very important. We also have consistently the lowest per capita expenditures on alcoholic beverages. Manitoba also has the highest revenue and net government income per capita from its sales of alcoholic beverages. It's not wise to throw this money away, especially as we're still trying to economically recover from this pandemic.

In recent years, MBLL has contributed over \$600 million to the public purse. That's money that was reinvested in education, health care, infrastructure, housing and other crucial services. At the end of the day, the real issue is that the Pallister-Stefanson government is horrible at managing our assets. And when Conservative governments mix private with public, the private always seems to make off with the public benefit. And we can't afford to let that happen with liquor revenue.

We know that public Liquor Marts are performing very well. Customer satisfaction surveys rate front-line staff at public Liquor Marts as extremely professional and very knowledgeable about the products that they offer. In fact, 93 per cent of Liquor Mart customers are satisfied with their overall experience, and research on privatizing liquor sales has shown that privatization leads to millions of dollars in lost government revenue, actually less choice for consumers and weaker control of liquor distribution.

These millions of dollars could be used to improve health care and education or—and in our province and—rather than going into the pockets of private companies. So we believe that the province's Crown corporations belong to all Manitobans, not just to the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her wealthy friends.

The Canadian institute for substance use has a research director named Tim Stockwell who quotes: From the public health and safety perspective, privatization is a very poor move; by and large, the more you put the profit motive into the sale and distribution of alcohol, the worse the outcomes are for public health and safety.

Research shows that our public liquor system works and it works well. Our public liquor system saves the government money and creates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue. Private liquor systems

require more public spending to ensure private retailers are compliant, and that doesn't need to have to happen in a publicly run system. That means there'll be more money that we'll have to pay for—that the government will have to pay for for regulators.

These higher costs mean higher and more variable prices than in our current public system. Public Liquor Mart staff are trained to spot intoxicated and underage buyers, and the results are safer communities and less underage drinking.

The bill before us increases the risk to public health in Manitoba. This bill jeopardizes the mental health and stability of families and relationships where a parent or a partner is suffering or trying to recover from alcohol addiction. And with alcohol more readily available, it becomes increasingly difficult to quit an addiction.

* (16:00)

MBLL is required by law to allocate 2 per cent of its income to addictions research and treatment, something that no private seller has an obligation to do. So, we're worried that Bill 9 could increase the amount of alcohol sales to children and reduce the number of good-paying jobs at MBLL. And it's also been three years since the PCs have announced a gaming review; and there's been no update and the minister has refused to answer questions on what's been done so far for that review.

MBLL revenue provides investments that go towards essential services like schools and hospitals. Keeping distribution in public hands ensures that profits are invested in public benefits, like schools and hospitals. Again, health experts are warning that expanding private liquor sales will strain the province's health-care system and reduce resources for substance abuse and addictions treatment. There are many community members as well that are concerned about the safety implications of these changes.

For security measures, MBLL has made significant investments to keep our community safe, such as implementing controlled substances, and this has almost completely eliminated robberies and reduced theft by 97 per cent. Private liquor stores do not have the same level of security, and we are worried—with good reason—that the passage of Bill 9 may increase liquor thefts.

Bill 9 states that the agreements between MBLL and liquor retailers may include provisions respecting security measures at the private liquor location, but it's very unclear what exactly this entails. The minister

has not indicated what this means, and he has not ruled out that MBLL would have to maybe pay for security measures at private liquor vendors.

So, not only does the PC government want to take liquor revenues out—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

If we could bring the level of conversation down a couple notches—I know it's 4:00—there may be shift changes—but please take conversations outside the room if you can, or on the loges. I'm trying to listen to the member, and—as I will all members that I have the privilege of hearing this afternoon. Thank you.

The honourable member for Notre Dame has the floor.

MLA Marcelino: So, the minister did not rule out that MBLL would pay for the security measures at private liquor vendors.

So, not only does the PC government want to take liquor revenues out of public hands, they have not ruled out subsidizing private, for-profit vendors for these security measures. So, that alone should make it clear that Bill 9 is not good public policy.

Public Liquor Marts work for communities. Currently, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries invests \$12.9 million to promote safety, help fund addiction treatment services and help parents talk to their kids about alcohol. Public Liquor Mart staff are trained to spot intoxicated and underage buyers, and the result is safer communities and less underage drinking.

And with these enhanced security measures, Manitoba Liquor Marts were able to reduce thefts by 92 per cent their first year, and now it's up to 97 per cent. In 2019, Manitoba's public liquor stores began asking all customers for ID, and refused services to over 12,000 intoxicated people and over 14,000 minors. Manitoba's public liquor sales create more than 1,000 community-supporting jobs across our province.

And the profits from Manitoba public Liquor Marts stay in Manitoba. From 2021 to 2022, they generated over \$315 million that was used to fund critical public services like health care, education and infrastructure, and because this is a Crown corporation, we all own it, and it's accountable to all of us, not just to a handful of shareholders or foreign investors.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries invests in sponsoring events large and small across the province, from bringing the Canada Summer Games here to supporting community events and festivals like Special Olympics Manitoba and Folklorama.

There are many organizations and individuals that have written to us to show their support to keeping liquor public. One is the Amalgamated Transit Union. They have a statement.

We are proud to support this important campaign. Keeping liquor public means profits from the sale of alcohol can be used to support investments in social services and infrastructure. It's also important to us that these profits stay here in Manitoba rather than being funnelled to investors in other countries.

At a time when Manitobans are demanding safe and secure Liquor Marts, when hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent in upgrades to stores to accomplish just that, why would we move to allowing just anyone to sell alcohol from anywhere? The current sales model means that profits go back to Manitobans. It means customer and staff safety is a priority. It means great selection in customer service. It means almost \$300 million back into the provincial economy.

A private sales model's main goal is to increase profit, and this is achieved by reducing business costs. This means cuts to staff and customer safety, cuts to training and education of employees and ultimately it means money leaving the province and going into pockets of corporate shareholders half a world away.

Keep liquor sales public. Keep profits from liquor sales in Manitoba and the public's pocket. And that was a comment from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

From Molly McCracken, the director of CCPA, they say: The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives believes that a public liquor system allows us to balance the individual's right to access liquor while mitigating the problems that arise from its abuse. Despite what critics say, a public system can provide better selection and service than a privatized system.

From the Manitoba Nurses' Union president, Darlene Jackson, this was her comment: The Manitoba Nurses' Union supports Liquor Marts and Manitoba's balanced model of public liquor sales and distribution. We know most Manitobans can enjoy a drink sociably without problems. But if used improperly, alcohol is a factor in many injuries, suicides and homicides, is linked with dozens of significant

medical conditions and impairments and can cause death. For this and other reasons, we believe the sale of alcohol should be regulated and controlled differently than other products to ensure strong, socially responsible safeguards are upheld. There's also a benefit to know that the profits from the sale of alcohol are used in part to help deal with addictions and other health-related aspects associated with abuse and overuse.

From the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, their CEO had this to say: It is my perspective, coming from working in the addictions field for many years at a leadership and policy level, that the sale and distribution of liquor must remain public. Maintaining public ownership allows for responsible messaging, responsible marketing strategies and the ability to direct a substantial portion of the profits from sales to address the harms associated with the sale and use of alcohol.

From the Paramedic Association of Manitoba, the director had this to say: Motor vehicle collisions and other accidents resulting from alcohol impairment are frequent calls that paramedics attend to. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba is concerned that further privatization of liquor sales and distribution could result in an increased number of these incidents. The current framework of government sales and distribution of alcohol in Manitoba regulates both access and pricing in a socially responsible manner to ensure public accountability and therefore should be maintained. The Paramedic Association of Manitoba is happy to lend our name to the list of the organizations who share this value.

From the National Union of Public and General Employees, the president said this: Privatizing liquor stores is one of the most irresponsible things governments can do. The evidence shows privatizing liquor sales means an increase in alcohol-related health problems. Prices for all but a handful products increase when liquor sales are privatized. And when liquor sales are privatized, a source of revenue to help fund services like health care is lost.

And from the Manitoba Building Trades and Allied Hydro Council, their CEO said this: Crown assets such as Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries are valuable tools that provide a steady stream of revenue, education and health-care programs in our province. Maintaining public ownership of assets like this is in our province's best interest. Selling off public assets may result in a short-term cash infusion, but looking back at the sale of MTS, it is clear that the revenue is

short-lived and there is no means of replacing the perpetual revenue stream generated by these assets.

* (16:10)

There are more statements that were given by many organizations, like the Winnipeg Labour Council, United Steelworkers District 3, Unifor, UFCW Local 832, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg or the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

And I just wanted to end those quotes with MGEU president—the Manitoba government employees' union president, Kyle Ross—who said: The premier committed during the last two elections that he would not move to privatize any more liquor sales in the province, but the 2020 Throne Speech muses at this yet again. We continue to question why they are doing this.

We have one of the safest and socially responsible liquor distribution systems in the country. With the newly installed controlled entrances at most liquor stores, everyone is carded and staff continues to refuse the sale of alcohol to those intoxicated. There are over 900 staff at liquor stores. That's 900 good jobs for Manitoba families. Those workers go out of their way to provide the best customer service, and it shows. They have a 93 per cent approval rating in a recent survey and as well, last year alone, over \$284 million in profits was brought into the government from the sale of liquor—that's \$284 million for health care, schools and roads. It's now not the time to be throwing millions of dollars away when our economy is still so fragile.

So, many organizations are very, very concerned about this government's new reiteration in bringing back this bill for further privatization of alcohol.

I wanted to turn to, you know, the debate about the private versus public liquor trade off. The minister mentions, you know, there's going to be some kinds of benefits—I can't remember what he was saying, something about competition, maybe, I don't know. But we, you know, have to take a look at what those supposed advantages are and take a look at the evidence that might show otherwise.

Because there are other jurisdictions that have already moved into this direction, like Alberta and British Columbia, and most recently Saskatchewan went full privatization of all their liquor stores. And so we can actually track the evidence to see what's happened.

And we have some research regarding that, as well. And this comes from Simon Enoch, who is from the Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives from Saskatchewan. He writes: It's critical that the public be aware of what they are trading away and what they are receiving in return if the government decides to move forward with the privatization of our public stores. There are arguments in favour of privatization and those against, and while there are certain individual benefits to privatizations, these pale in comparison to the increased social harms that would inevitably result from a privatized system.

So, advocates like the minister here usually point to three advantages to private liquor sales, like price, convenience and selection. They say that private liquor sales are more consumer friendly, even if they make more harmful impacts to society at large. But let's take a look at those supposed advantages and see what the evidence actually says from the other jurisdictions.

So, you know, there's a seemingly universal acceptance that private stores are cheaper, but the evidence does not support this common belief. If you take a look at private stores in Alberta, they offer door crusher prices on specific products like loss leaders to get consumers into the stores because there exists no retail pricing floor in Alberta.

But instead—indeed, on average, public stores actually offer more competitive prices on more products in comparison to private stores, and this is because public systems spent much less in regards to administration, overhead, advertising and marketing than a private store would. And moreover, the public system possesses monopoly purchasing power, allowing it to extract better prices from producers.

Again, there's a price comparison of specific products in private stores in BC and Alberta, and the more—and they were a lot more expensive compared to the public stores in BC and Saskatchewan. And actually, a tactic that some private stores in those provinces where they have privatized liquor sales, they have signs that say we have government liquor store prices, so folks will then know that they will actually have lower prices in those private stores, but really, they don't.

On the issue of convenience, there's actually no argument there. Private liquor sales, depending on how they are regulated, would be more convenient. There would be a lot more stores in a lot more places. So, in Alberta for instance, there used to be 208 government stores in the province prior to their privatization in 1993,

and by January of 2011, there were 1,240 private retail liquor stores in Alberta. They were also open for more hours. For instance, government liquor outlets restricted to 74 hours per week in Saskatchewan but when it was still public, but private stores in Alberta are open 112 hours per week. So there's no doubt that a private system would be more convenient for consumers.

But the question is: what are those consequences for this convenience? The World Health Organization identifies that some of the most effective ways of reducing alcohol-related harms is through policies that regulate liquor's availability in both the economic and physical sense. So, making it cost more and making it less, you know, locally available, would prohibit its use more.

A publicly owned system is best positioned to regulate the number, size and location of retail outlets in an area. And government can assess a broad array of factors that may bear on the appropriateness of establishing a liquor outlet in a particular community, whereas in contrast, a private retail system leaves the planning of retail outlets the discretion of the market.

In this situation, physical availability is determined largely by the private expectations of profitability, and I know from being the MLA for Notre Dame that having private liquor stores in the beer vendors where they are located right now, it becomes a cesspool of all the problems in my constituency.

As for selection, another widely touted advantage for private-'privatation' for the-privatization for the most part actually diminishes consumer choice. While-it may be true that boutique private sellers in more densely populated urban areas will be able to offer a wider selection than existing public stores currently do; however, the majority of the private stores will only offer those products that are proven sellers.

And smaller private stores, particularly in rural areas, simply cannot risk the shelf space on unproven or unknown brands, so this would be to the detriment of locally produced beer, wine and spirits that would have to compete with shelf space with the more well-known and well-advertised corporate brands.

So, let's just move on a little bit to social harms. I have so much to say; I still have so many more pages of notes, but a little bit about social harms.

We know that alcohol consumption is associated with a wide and diverse range of harms, from injuries and trauma to disease and disability, and that costs associated with alcohol use and abuse are high. The

burden on health care and law enforcement services, coupled with the costs associated with the loss of productivity in the home or workplace due to alcohol use to approximate is-amount to approximately \$14.6 billion in Canada.

So health authorities from around the world agree that the best way to minimize the social harms from alcohol is to limit its economic and physical availability in order to encourage moderate and responsible consumption. This includes setting minimum prices to discourage excessive consumption, and taxation-

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

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Look, there are lots of problems with this bill, and I'll try to spell out as many of the issues as I can in the time we've got.

I mean, one of the issues here is, like, if we're looking at, you know, post-pandemic recovery, where is the growth? How are we actually expected to achieve any growth under this plan? Is it based on the idea that we're only going to have growth if people drink more alcohol, if we're going to sell more drinks? To me, that's a problem.

I'm not a prohibitionist-[*interjection*]-no, I don't have a problem with drinking beer. Well-but the issue here is that there is genuine harm associated with alcohol, unduly terrible harm. In fact, much-many more people die of alcohol, and the withdrawal from alcohol is some of the toughest things that anybody has to go through. It's an addiction that touches many, many people, many-and it has truly-in some cases, truly devastating social costs.

* (16:20)

So, if we're just going to be expecting that we're going to be growing this by selling more alcohol, or-and expecting that to be a positive thing, we have to ask how that's going to work in this-from a social point of view.

The other is it, how's this going to work from a business point of view? The idea that there's going to be no losses in the public sector and that there's only going to be growth in the private sector from this, how can that happen unless you've got massive increases in alcohol sales? I don't see it as being particularly realistic.

So, is-I don't see this as being in the public interest. I really don't. I don't really see this as being in interest of public health. And I actually don't really know who's asking for this. I have never been approached by a single Manitoban, not one. The one

person who ever talked to me about this was a lobbyist who lives in British Columbia. No one has ever come to me asking for this, no one.

In fact, I spoke to a hotel owner who runs a rural—a vendor in rural Manitoba, who pleaded with me to oppose these bills, because they say it'll kill their town. Right? Is that—and again, this is a highly partisan and 'ideological' decision, because it's not about growth, it's not about choice; it's about Conservatives taking jobs and revenue from the public sector and giving it to a select group in the private sector.

And, of course, there is a political motivation under that, which is to undermine the public workforce, which has been what this government has done: undermining health, teachers, home-care workers or anybody else. And this is a strategy taken from the US Republicans especially, but also certainly in Alberta and in other provinces, that they figure if you can undermine unions, they can undermine their political opponents.

I mean, this is basically what happened in Wisconsin where the Republicans deliberately crushed public-sector unions out of existence in order to make it impossible for Democrats to run elections and to win. They took away their funds; they took away their organization in order to create a permanent majority. And I don't see that as being a positive thing for democracy either.

I don't think you should be robbing Peter to pay Paul, and privatization is often, quite frankly, rife with corruption. It doesn't tend to grow the economy because it tends to be a pure transfer of income and wealth to the few at the expense of the many. It will undermine and it will act against the public interest; it allows a few private individuals to benefit the rewards. But that's not even anti private sector; that not even anti business; it's just pro good government. It's pro public interest.

And I do see this bill as a betrayal; it's a betrayal of the public interest, and it's also a betrayal of what the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and every PC MLA signalled when they pilled these bulls—bills before. There's no business case for this. If the business argument against this—a real business argument against this is that when you got issues, you don't sell off assets. You don't sell off things that are making you money. You sell off liabilities; you sell off the things that are losing you money.

So instead, what's happening here is they're saying, well, we're going to take a bunch of business

that really works really well, it brings in lots of income for the business that is Liquor & Lotteries—those are businesses. This is it: we have to start thinking and recognizing—you know what? The government of Manitoba is the single biggest local business in this province. It's owned by us; it's run by us; the people who work in it are all Manitobans. And the idea that we're doing anyone a favour by firing people who work in one area in order to—just to give a job somebody else, give somebody the same job at a worse pay, that's going backwards. It's completely going backwards, especially at a time when there are so many people who can barely pay their bills.

So are we going to now be going to people who work in liquor and—if, you know, all of a sudden public liquor stores start to struggle and we're going to say, okay, well you—I know you had a—have a mortgage to pay and you have a family to feed. But sorry, we had to open a bunch of new liquor stores and we can't afford to employ you anymore.

So those people will be out of luck. And maybe they are—if they're lucky, maybe they'll be able to go at a job that's not protected, that has no benefits, that pays worse and is likely to be more dangerous. And we've already seen there was a—there were crises. We talked with workers who had been assaulted, robbed repeatedly, attacked. There were tragedies. We have to basic—we now—our liquor stores are now like vaults where you have to go through—it's like going through airport security. That's a huge change.

And it's—so, how are we going to be able to protect people? How are we going to protect people in rural areas where this is the case?

And it's important to recognize and look at what happened for Alberta because often when you have these laws and these schemes, they come along, they're like—they're packaged. There are actually organizations that write this legislation for Manitobans—for its—for politicians and for business, and they say, well, what can we do to try to—how are we going to—not just how are we going to privatize, but how are we going to sell this privatization? How are we going to sell this thing where we're going to take a whole bunch of money, we're going to take a whole bunch of jobs, and we're going to, well, like, well, you know what, it'll be more convenient for you.

Well, that was the story in Alberta. Right? So, it's important—and Alberta is sort of the model for this—and in Alberta, in September 1993, they said we're going to have more selection, lower prices and convenience for the consumer and great opportunities

for small local business. So, in Edmonton, 23 provincially run liquor stores were replaced by 262 privately run establishments.

So, you end up getting liquor stores everywhere, kind of like we've got cannabis stores everywhere. But now cannabis stores are all struggling because there was a massive oversupply. I don't think we should be—is it a radical thing to say we don't want an economy that runs just on weed and alcohol? It doesn't make sense to me.

But it ended up being a bit of a—you know, what was promised to Albertans didn't happen. Instead, wholesale agents such as Diageo Liquor, which sell products, as they said—this is an example: Captain Morgan and Smirnoff will put their products on sale through limited time offers. Only larger stores can take advantage of these because they've got the money. They buy a whole—they have a—they'll buy a whole bunch of surplus product and store it so they can run sales throughout the year. But independent—small independents aren't able to do that and they weren't able to do that.

So, this is a—an independent wine retailer at the time said, you know, small independent stores can't compete because they don't have multi-million dollars in credit to buy pallets and pallets of Baileys or they may not have the warehousing space to hold all the stuff aside so they can put it on sale later like Walmart.

So, the small independents end up getting crushed out of existence. And David Campanella, who is a public policy research manager for the Parkland Institute and co-author of a 2012 report on liquor privatization in western Canada, warned Saskatchewan against following Alberta's lead because he actually did an 'analysis' in—an analysis and a comparison of average prices of alcohol products in Alberta and to those in BC and Saskatchewan. And he actually concluded Albertans were paying more than at publicly owned stores in western Canada.

And part of this is just because of the way people manipulate prices, sort of the way they do in places like Walmart. Like—even if you go to Walmart, the idea is, oh, it's always cheap, and it's cheap, cheap. What they do is they put a whole bunch of stuff in—and they undercut and put lower prices on big pallets of stuff that they run in the middle of the aisle while everything else is just as—costs just as much or more than it might cost at another store.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

It's manipulation. It's marketing.

But one of the things that happened in, again, in Edmonton, of the 262 liquor stores, more than 70 of them, a huge proportion of them were all owned by Liquor Stores N.A. Ltd., which owns stores called Liquor Depot, Liquor Barn, Wine and Beyond, and between all their locations, they own the market. Which means that a single player is dominating most of the market. And they dominate it by sheer size.

And as somebody said, they said most people who open liquor stores in—it's an ultracompetitive, cut-throat market and they're essentially buying themselves a minimum-wage job after they factor in the hours. That's what's it going to be like not just for the people who work there, but for the people, the—not for just the employees who stock the shelves or who have to work the register, but for the people who own it. He said the margins for liquor and beer are the thinnest compared to wine.

And not only that—so this is—it had massive impacts on Alberta's revenue. And, like—in Alberta, as a—is an oil-producing province; I mean, they are—they have untold billions in revenue. They're able to take a hit much more easily than Manitoba can. But the Parkland Institute estimated that in the 20 years of privatization, that the province of Alberta lost \$1.5 billion in liquor revenue by switching to a flat markup system from a percentage markup.

These are the sort of risks we're talking about. That you've got stores that can be unsafe, you're selling a product that is, by definition, not terribly safe, that's highly addictive, that's incredibly difficult to get people off of, where we don't actually have adequate mental health or addiction supports. And it will undermine the government's ability to provide all those things.

I don't know who's asking for this. It's really unfortunate. I don't see that there's a great demand for this other than that this is seen as an opportunity to buy votes immediately before an election, in a way that is, I think, both a betrayal of a previous commitment to withdraw this law. The impression, certainly, that Manitobans had at the time was okay, well they're not going to go ahead with this.

But if they're going to reverse themselves on this, we start—then we just have to ask, what else are they going to reverse themselves on? Which of those other bills do we expect to—are we going to have to see come back because they've changed their mind or they think that people—they can get some advantage from it.

* (16:30)

It's a bad bill, and we're opposed to it. And with that, I'll close.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Let me make it very clear that NDP caucus stands strong with local businesses, Manitoba-owned businesses and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

Before I move further, I would like to welcome the new Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Smith) and Minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

I have been listening to the debates and Q-A session on Bill 9 and I noticed so many things, some interesting, some funny. And when I look at this bill, we all know that this bill amends two acts: first, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act, and the second, The Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act.

What this bill further does is that any retail beer vendor or specialty wine store operator that wants to expand the products they sell may enter into an agreement with the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and obtain a licence that authorizes the sale of other types of liquor from their current premises. So, that's what the minister says flexibility, convenience, modernization.

And this bill also says that the holder of a manufacturer's licence may obtain a licence that authorizes them to operate a liquor store at the premises that are the subject of the manufacturer's licence or at a nearby location—that means a new shop—approved by the executive director of Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba.

And the—further, this bill says that agreements between the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation and liquor retailers may—I repeat, may—include provisions respecting security measures to be implemented by the retailer.

So, what does this bill do? To me, it reminds me of PPP, which is Pallister's privatization plan. That's what it does to my mind. And then I see a new minister, but nothing new in this bill. It's the same old privatization agenda.

Madam Speaker, I would put it into simple words for the new minister to listen this: my family owns a car, and I have a 10-year-old. The car runs fine. What if I paint it with mud and tell my kid that let's go wash it, we'll support a local business. He would say, dad, what are you talking about? If I poke holes to the four

tires of my car and take it to a repair shop and say I'm supporting local businesses, my kid would say, dad, this is not the way to support local businesses. If I start changing oil for my car every three kilometres, that would certainly benefit the shop I'm getting my car's oil changed from, but that's not the way to help local businesses. There are a thousand other ways to support local businesses.

That's why I said at the start that Manitoba NDP caucus stands with local businesses, small businesses and Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries.

So, this simple example that I just shared, it simplifies what's happening here. And I'm pretty sure that my 10-year-old understands this is not the best way to local businesses. And I'm pretty sure that all members opposite are older than 10 years. I'm pretty sure they are.

But, do they not understand this? They do. Madam Speaker, they do. It's on purpose that they are going this route because their intentions are not to support local businesses. Their intentions are not to support small businesses. Their intentions are to implement Pallister's privatization plan, which I call PPP.

Nothing changed with the change of the premier. Nothing changed with the change of ministers, one after another, in almost all the departments. But they want to pretend. They want to paint a new picture. They want to say to Manitobans: no, that guy is gone; that guy is gone; we're new—we're the new plan, and with wonderful ways to help Manitobans.

That's not true. It's same old, same old. We have a well-established department which Manitobans like. Nobody came to any of the members on this side, and one of my colleagues from St. Boniface recently said that nobody told him as well that we need a change in the system. Then, where this change comes from?

I was listening to the Q session when the minister says that we consulted and the minister mentioned so many organizations. But I think he didn't mention that they consulted Mr. Friesen and Mr. Pallister as well. I'm sure they must have. So, they would simply—anybody can think anything, but that might or might not be true.

So, the thing is, they are together to implement the same agenda that they were working on since 2016: break a well-running machine, hand it over, which will—earlier publicly running machine—hand it over to private profit-making organizations or owners—or, I would say in simple words, their friends.

But this has an impact. This has an impact on Manitobans. I didn't hear the minister saying that consultations were done with Manitobans, who are the ultimate stakeholders of the products sold by Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. Did he miss this part, or did he not consult with Manitobans?

So, when you are not asking the stakeholders or the end users or the consumers, what do you need, how do you know that—what they need when there's no demand for a change? Why are you changing the system?

Stats have been quoted in previous debates that over 90 per cent of Manitobans are happy with how this system is running currently, and the minister admitted that they did no financial analysis about the impacts of this change.

So, if there is no analysis, then why this change? So, to me, it seems like it's based upon assumptions that it has many, many benefits. But there are so many negative impacts of such changes.

* (16:40)

First of all, decline in revenue for Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. It has been mentioned in this Chamber that Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries spends millions of dollars for the welfare of Manitobans, and the revenue that we get from Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries is used in education, used in health, infrastructure and so on.

So when we build a parallel system, private system, of liquor sales, it's going to impact the current system which we have. I want to appreciate the employees. Whenever we go to Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries store, Liquor Mart, they greet us, they serve us professionally, they smile at us; they even educate us. That's my personal experience, and many of you might have similar experiences because they're having well-paid jobs. And whatever they earn, those wonderful Manitobans, they spend here in Manitoba.

But what if this system is totally handed over to the rich corporations which would open small shops in our towns? They would spend it in Costa Rica. They would spend it on expensive flights. They would spend it down south.

So we are actually—by bringing in this bill, we are not actually helping local businesses; we are not. We are actually taking money out of Manitoba.

And when there is a decline in revenue due to such decisions or wrong choices, then we have no money to spend in education, to spend on health. We

have recently witnessed that our school divisions, they are asking for more funds. They are being put into a situation where they have to cut programs, they have to cut learn-to-skate programs, learn-to-swim programs, learn-to-bike programs. This has been recently published. And those are free programs.

And who signs up for free programs, Madam Speaker? Regular Manitobans who cannot afford to pay. And these programs, they help those people who are facing affordability crisis. What would happen to the children of those people who depend on such programs and their kids won't be able to access those programs anymore?

This is the impact of such programs when we move public profit to the private hands. And, as has been said, I would repeat it, in a bill briefing, the minister himself admitted that they have not done an analysis on what impact Bill 9 will have on MBLL sales. No analysis, no proper consultations. Then how do they know that this is going to help Manitobans?

I'm pretty sure the private vendors, which are also Manitobans serving us, we want them grow. We want better profits for them. But what would happen if there are people, rich people, investing in such outlets? They would be competing. Even—they would be competing with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries stores. Even if somebody is going to buy a bottle of wine or bottle of liquor \$5 cheaper, they would be actually making this decision against their kids' future because that profit is being taken away from our provincial revenue.

So, there are so many negatives that come with this bill. I was thinking the minister is new and the bill would be new, but unfortunately, only the name is new: Bill 9. It's a repeated effort after bill 40, bill 42 and now Bill 9 with the same goal, same objective, same intention of privatization of public services in Manitoba.

And I would like to share the fact from 2019. In a mandate letter to the corporation, the PC government told Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries board to exhaust all opportunities for more privatization, published on April 30th, 2019, by CBC. Shortly after, the PC Cabinet introduced bill 40—there is a link—which would enable provincially owned liquor sales by third parties, further privatizing liquor sales.

There is another fact from 2021. The Crown Services minister made things clear when he said he could not rule out closing or selling off government-run liquor stores as a result of bill 40's changes.

There is another fact that I want to share from 2022. So, after we successfully helped stop this bill from passing into law, the PCs came back with bill 42. Again, same intentions, same plan of privatization. This bill went one step further than bill 40 by allowing convenience stores, grocery stores and other retail locations to sell alcohol through a five-year pilot program. And now, under Bill 9, that pilot program is also gone. So the PCs are consistently pushing their agenda to privatize liquor sales in our province.

So, when we talk about jobs, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, they create approximately 2,000 jobs in Manitoba. And these people, they pride themselves on hiring talented and passionate individuals who are part of a diverse workplace that represents the vibrant communities we serve.

So, with this privatization intention and agenda, we would most probably lose many of those good-paying jobs. And the people who are laid off due to this choice, they would be forced to work on minimum wages. Think about those families. And they would not be able to invest or spend money as much as they do today in Manitoba on their daily needs, what to talk about luxuries.

And we wouldn't have enough money for health care. I have been going to so many seniors in my constituency this winter, and when I talk to them, they are unhappy about how this government is treating them. I'm linking this. I'm linking the impact of these decisions on cuts to health care. We have less revenue, we have less money, less money available for health care, education and recreational activities.

They are upset about our cuts to health care that this government is making. They are upset about wait times. They are worried about the state of home care in Manitoba. And those seniors say to me, we have invested our lives to build Manitoba, paid taxes for details—I'm sharing what they shared with me—before retirement, and now we are being treated in a way that was clear in today's QP.

* (16:50)

This is how Manitoba seniors are being treated. One of my constituents, who is a senior, uses a wheelchair. They tried to contact the Minister for Seniors. Their call was taken. No follow-up, no 'response'—no response. Not for days, not for weeks, for months. Then they came to me with that question. I wrote a letter in late 2022 to the Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care—no response so far.

I went to a friendship centre and I talked to the staff. I talked to the seniors there, had a cup of coffee with them. They did not know that there is something like a Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care in Manitoba. Their organization have never been contacted or they didn't even know about the existence of that department.

So, I am doing my job as MLA to listen what my constituents say and raising their voices to the relevant ministers on that side of the Chamber. Sometimes I get a response—I would say delayed response—and sometimes I don't.

So just think about somebody who has questions on how to get a new wheelchair. There were confusions in the policy. But to their surprise, no response, no compassion, no empathy, no sympathy from the minister. When there is no response, why could there—how could there be sympathy, right?

So, Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries generates millions of dollars of income, but this government is interested in privatizing. And privatizing liquor sales reduces government revenue, as I said earlier. These revenues directly contribute to programs to reduce addiction and invest in treatment. What would happen to such programs if we go ahead and pass this bill?

And this minister chooses to make decisions based upon no analysis, but if we look at research results—for example, in 2016, research done by CCPA on BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba found that Manitoba had the strongest position in retaining the revenues generated from alcoholic beverage sales. So why change this system which is working?

A lot has been said about the financial impact, the social impact, the security issues and we all know that these are the negative impacts going to happen after this change. That's why we stand against this bill.

In the question and answer session for this bill, minister was asked that—who will pay for the security measures at the private liquor stores. The minister had no answer. And the minister goes, I will not be overly descriptive.

Well, if the minister is not going to describe the details, who else would? What that means is either the minister has no information on this or they want to conceal what their plan is.

So we need to be very careful and stand against such moves which work against the interest of Manitobans, which work against good-paying jobs, because we stand for saving jobs and we stand for

saving of our public organizations like Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries. We don't want to see Manitobans working on minimum-pay jobs or in gig economy.

But I know—I had some hopes with this change. Again, I want to say this, that I'm hopeless now, as all Manitobans are. And the best way to address the issues that PCs create and Manitobans are facing, is to kick out PCs in next general election.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House today to put a few comments on Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Amendment Act.

Madam Speaker, this bill amends the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act and Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation Act. An existing retail beer vendor or speciality wine store operate—that want to expand the products, the seller may enter into an agreement with the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation and obtain a licence that authorizes the sale of other types of liquor from their current premises.

The holder of manufacturer's licence may obtain a licence that authorize them to operate a liquor store at the premises that are the subject of the manufacturer's licence or at a nearby location approved by executive and director of Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba.

Agreement between the liquor—Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation and liquor retail may include a provision respecting security measures to the—to be implemented by the retailers.

Madam Speaker, this bill, Bill 9, is another attempt by the PCs to privatizing the liquor. This is their third attempt. First they tried with bill 40, then tried with bill 42, and they brought in with Bill 9.

So, this is their third attempt to take the money away from Manitobans and give it to their friends, who are—they may open more liquor stores and may damage the bottom line of the current liquor stores there are.

Again, I have heard from so many members here: Has anybody come to us for asking this? No. Nobody came to us asking for more liquor stores. There's options. There's the express liquor stores, that is—the member from St. James has told us that's in the Superstore on Sargent Avenue. There's options—there's options available. We can expand on those options if Manitobans wanted, but so far I haven't heard anyone come to me or to our caucus or even my friend from St. Boniface, the same thing he said, like, nobody came to him.

So this is this—there's over \$300 million coming profit to the government which they will invest in education, health care. And currently, I think—I don't have much time, but I do like to tell the story, same as my friend from Burrows had told, how education freeze for the last seven years is hurting the residents in the Maples or the Seven Oaks School Division, how is it impacting the families that they may—there's about 25 teaching positions are cut and there's 50, maybe more, cut this year because of the funding freeze and funding not properly invested into—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 2, 2023

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