

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

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

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

Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 5—The Demise of the Crown Act (Various Acts Amended)

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I'm pleased to introduce a bill to the Legislature called the demise of the Crown act. As Canadians know, King Charles III—[interjection] Oh, sorry. I'm new to the Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 5, The Demise of the Crown Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read for a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll try this again.

Members of the House and of course Canadians know that King Charles III became the sovereign of Canada upon the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, and it's necessary for the laws of Manitoba to reflect the change of the sovereign.

The proposed bill amends several statutes to address these changes. For example, changing the name of the Queen's Printer to the King's Printer and Queen's Counsel to King's Counsel. In addition, it provides the ability in the future when these changes are necessary for them to be done by the Chief Legislative Counsel, as opposed to a new act.

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

#### Bill 6—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 6, the public insurance corporation amendment act, be now read for a first time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, that Bill 6, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Goertzen:** This bill amends The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act. It will protect claimants with impaired cognitive functioning, allow Manitoba Public Insurance to recover third-party payments in the cases of fraud, expand Income Replacement Indemnity to individuals 65 years of age and older and ensure that residents of other jurisdictions are compensated fairly.

These amendments can—will ensure that the Personal Injury Protection Plan continues to provide ratepayers and those who are insured the most appropriate supports that they need.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

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

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

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Moses:** I'm proud to introduce Bill 200, The Black History Month Act, which will formally recognize February of each year as Black History Month.

Black people and people of African descent have made important contributions to Manitoba throughout its history, including successfully fighting for human rights advancement and—that have benefitted all Manitobans. However, these contributions have often gone unnoticed and are not well known within the general public.

The hope is that by formally recognizing Black History Month, greater awareness will be brought towards the contributions of Black people and people of African descent within Manitoba and Canada. Black History Month is a time to acknowledge the past struggles and groundbreakers, celebrate achievements throughout Black history, educate all Manitobans and strive for greater equity for the benefit of future generations.

I look forward to debating Bill 200 in the House as soon as possible, and hope for unanimous support from all members of this Legislature.

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

**Bill 201—The Residential Tenancies  
Amendment Act**

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 201, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, now be read a first time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for St. James, seconded by—did I hear correct, the honourable member for St. Johns? [*interjection*] Yes, okay. Seconded by the honourable member for St. Johns, that Bill 201, The Residential Tenancies Act—sorry, amendment act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Sala:** I'm honoured to present Bill 201, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, to this House to

help better protect renters from above-guideline rent increases in Manitoba.

\* (13:40)

With the cost of living continuing to rise exponentially, it's so important that we protect renters here in Manitoba. Bill 201 will help to mitigate rent evictions and tenants being hit with large rent increases for work that is simply needed, ongoing maintenance. In situations where above-guideline increases are needed, Bill 201 will provide means to limit the immediate financial impact on renters by phasing the increases over a period of time to ensure greater affordability for renters.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Bill 202—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 202, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, be now read a first time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Johns, seconded by—[*interjection*]—the honourable member for Point Douglas, that Bill 202, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, be now read a first time.

**Ms. Fontaine:** I am proud to stand in the House and introduce Bill 202 yet again, Deputy Speaker. The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act establishes buffer zones or safety perimeters around any clinic, hospital or health-care facility offering abortion services. In addition to abortion zones around public schools, Bill 202 prohibits any protests, demonstrations or picketing within these zones to protect Manitobans, alongside health-care providers, against harassment, intimidation and persuasion on abortion.

Again, Deputy Speaker, anti-choice individuals have no business protesting and harassing citizens accessing health-care services or harassing children at our schools. They are more than welcome to protest here at the Legislature, and I look forward to the unanimous consent on Bill 202.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

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

Agreed and so ordered. Thank you.

**Bill 203—The Orange Shirt Day  
Statutory Holiday Act  
(Various Acts Amended)**

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I move, seconded by the member from St. Johns, that Bill 203, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Keewatinook, seconded by—*[interjection]*—the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 203, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

**Mr. Bushie:** I'm honoured, as an Indigenous MLA here in the Manitoba Legislature, to introduce Bill 203, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act, to recognize and honour the lives lost and the survivors of residential schools, their families and their communities by making September 30 a statutory holiday.

The orange shirt has become a symbol of remembrance for residential school survivors, and this day not only recognizes that, but it would also allow for public education on the history and legacy of the residential school system on Indigenous peoples and to commemorate the lives lost. It will also help to move Manitoba forward in the true spirit of reconciliation.

Miigwech.

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

And, just before going to committee reports, just a friendly reminder to all members, when those bills from any member is introduced, if you can fill in the seconder. There's lots going on up here and I don't always hear or perhaps, remember. So, anyway, just for future reference.

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

**Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before moving to members' statements, we have a few people to introduce.

Okay, we have got, seated in the public gallery, from Churchill High School—which group is that?

Oh, it's you guys. We have got 15 students, ages 17 to 20 years old, under the direction of Chantelle Cotton. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew). We welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

Also seated in the public gallery we have from River East Collegiate 20 grade 9 students—are you guys here? I don't see them yet. Okay, well, you know what, maybe we'll hold on to that one, see if they come in.

So, great. All right.

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Payton Zubec**

**Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would recognize the football team and supporters from Sturgeon Heights Collegiate joining us here today.

Today I rise to recognize the exemplary efforts of high school students within the Assiniboia constituency. Those école Sturgeon Heights Collegiate students have made great strides in philanthropy and have become role models to their fellow classmates and community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in both 2021 and 2022, Payton Zubec, the Sturgeon Heights Huskies football team student manager, was recognized as a true community hero. Payton was inspired when she saw a player kneeling in prayer before a game to his father that had passed to—from cancer. Payton remembered her own loss, a close friend who had passed away from cancer at the tender age of 10.

Payton realized that there was an opportunity to turn the school's homecoming football game into a fundraiser for CancerCare Manitoba, and with the support of the school, other team managers and the players they were able to raise over \$7,000.

These students campaigned for ten days door to door through the community, for donations, held BBQs, contributed funds raised through the 50/50 draws and sold used Sturgeon Heights Huskies jerseys. Admission to the homecoming game was a donation and everyone donating \$10 or more was entered into a draw to win prizes generally—generously donated by local businesses.

This year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Payton added a rose ceremony. Team members came forward with family and friends who had fought their own cancer battles and were honoured with a rose. This moment will be forever remembered by all those who attended.

As they listened to family testimonials, Payton watched the players and her teammates grow a deeper connection and understanding of loss, of cancer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like my colleagues to join me as I rise to thank Payton and her family, along with the team representatives and teachers for their awesome achievement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like their names all incorporated into Hansard.

*Team representatives: Jordan Bernshine, Vincent Campbell, Marley Dacquel-Javate, Chase Davidson, Tyler Fabbri, Liam Fischer, Ethan Gamblin, Ryker Gibson, Owen Glazier, Declan Hanley, Braeden Jacobucci, Benett Luke, Taylor Marchant, Brennan McCammon, Marley McKinney, Jonathan Paquette, Jarome Penner, Duncan Pickering, Dominique Rae, Chase Speirs, Belle Syrett, Mason Thorn, Rohan Tyagi, Eric Vincent, Payton Zubeć*

*Family members: Glynis Zubeć, Janet Zubeć, Matt Zubeć, Paul Zubeć*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I was aware the clock had run out, but there were a couple of applause spontaneously during the statement and the nature of the topic as well, so.

#### **NorWest Co-op Community Food Centre**

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, NorWest Co-op Community Food Centre is a local organization that empowers families and individuals struggling with food insecurity within the Notre Dame community.

The community food centre has five staff members, as well as dozens of volunteers every month who help to deliver the food programming at the centre, with 480 volunteer hours completed by 48 unique volunteers in October. This organization delivers food programming which engages the public and builds capacity within the community.

NorWest Co-op follows the food centre model, which is distinct from many other charitable giving programs. By doing so, they address underlying issues of chronic hunger, poverty and poor health. They do that by offering beautiful shared spaces where people can grow food, cook together, share and advocate for access to affordable, nutritious food.

\* (13:50)

NorWest Co-op Community Food Centre runs dine-in lunches three days a week as well as dine-in dinners on Thursdays.

They also run family cooking classes on Wednesday evenings, host drop-ins for coffee or tea on Thursday mornings and run a fruit and veggie market on Thursdays at Bluebird seniors lodge. NorWest Co-op also runs a variety of programs at Blake Gardens Resource Centre and NorWest on Alexander.

Through having programs such as dine-ins and classes, the community food centre can engage with people to better understand each individual and family's food security concerns and offer more personalized support and empowerment.

Earlier this year, the community food centre also broke ground on their community farm project, which offers the opportunity for volunteers and patrons to build skills in gardening in a collaborative environment.

Please join me in welcoming members of the NorWest Co-op Community Food Centre: Tyler Engel, Junie Omand-Penner, Rolly Abaga and Arcely Juan. We would like to thank you and the many volunteers at the CFC for your commitment to offering nutritious food in a dignified environment for Notre Dame community members accessing meals through your program.

Thank you very, very much.

**Glenn Nanka**

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I have the great pleasure of honouring Waverley constituent, Glenn Nanka, a 51-year-old epitome of health. Glenn currently works at J.H. Bruns—has been working with special needs kids in Manitoba schools for 28 years.

Glenn's experience is a story of resilience, community safety and motivation. On Sunday, August 21st, 2022, Glenn suffered cardiac arrest at the Foody Goody Chinese buffet restaurant. Luckily, an off-duty paramedic from outside the city who happened to be a patron at the restaurant that day immediately began CPR until the city paramedics arrived.

Sam Jafaar, the owner of the restaurant, his staff, as well as the other random patrons, also did not hesitate to jump and to do whatever they could do to help. Therefore, after, Fire Chief David Butler and his staff from the fire paramedic service station 21 arrived at the restaurant to assist the paramedics.

On the day following the incident, Sam, the restaurant owner, immediately registered for a CPR course. Glenn wants everyone to follow Sam's lead

and take to a CPR course and maybe possibly save a life one day.

Glenn would like to thank superheroes of our time: firefighters, paramedics, doctors, nurses and all the staff on the fifth floor in the cardiology ward of the St. Boniface Hospital. Thanks to them, Glenn can right—can get right back into coaching his teams, work with his special needs kids and enjoy his time with his family. He feels accomplished to be a role model to his teenage boys, Mathieu and Eric, and a loving husband to his wife Michelle.

He has been a director for the Manitoba Soccer Association since 2020. Since 2011, he's also been a volunteer soccer, basketball, volleyball and badminton coach. Glenn has been a model for the community service for his players by having them volunteer as bike valet attendants at the Winnipeg Blue Bomber games as well as ball retrievers at the Valour FC games at IG Field.

His goal is to make everyone he encounters feel safe, recognizing that each immigration story is a part of a legacy that can inspire generations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honouring Mr. Glenn Nanka for his dedication to service in developing the lives of newcomers, students and those with special needs through sports and community service.

Glad to have you here, my friend.

#### **Government Record on Reconciliation**

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** In last week's Throne Speech I noted two things from this government and this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) that should never have been spoken in the same sentence: my predecessor and advancing reconciliation.

But that was the exact words and context this Premier used to describe their work in regards to reconciliation here in Manitoba. Again, it just goes to show that this PC government's view towards reconciliation for Indigenous people here in Manitoba is still being driven by the Brian Pallister agenda. After all, the current Premier claimed to be working, quote: behind the scenes in Brian Pallister's government. That's almost like another word to say hidden agenda. Or perhaps Brian Pallister's thoughts and views towards Indigenous people was, in fact, brought forward by the people behind the scenes and in his inner circle.

And to be clear, Brian Pallister's inner circle is still sitting in Cabinet today. Further to that, Brian Pallister's hand-picked Minister for Indigenous Reconciliation and

Northern Relations is still in that position today and has done nothing to advance reconciliation here in Manitoba. But instead when the minister gets asked about reconciliation—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —he rises and reads the same scripted answer—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —to every question.

This government has no intention of advancing reconciliation in partnership with Indigenous people. Why else would the minister say he is consulting with Indigenous people on a framework for consultation policy when, in fact, he had already submitted one for Cabinet approval prior to further discussions with Indigenous people?

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is just another example of this government simply going through the motions and to make it look like they are working with Indigenous people, when, in fact, decisions on Indigenous issues have already been made by government and government alone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the First Peoples of this land, Indigenous people and Indigenous issues here in Manitoba deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and not viewed by government as afterthoughts, as this government does every day.

And we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is how Brian Pallister viewed Indigenous people. And it's clear that this government's agenda on Indigenous issues is still Brian Pallister's agenda, and that is shameful.

#### **Concurrent Care Option—Palliative Care Patients**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government talks of putting patients first, and yet time and time again the government fails to deliver.

An example is when a person in their last year of life has a form of cancer for which there is a treatment, though the chance of success is low, and they are given a choice of either having the treatment or of receiving palliative care. It is an ugly choice, because to receive palliative care, the person must give up the possibility of receiving a life-saving treatment.

Other jurisdictions use an approach called concurrent care in which a person in the last year of their

life can receive palliative care and receive active treatment. Concurrent care gives the patient a much better choice; it puts the patient first. It means the person can receive palliative care earlier.

Too often in Manitoba a person may choose treatment, and then when things don't go well, there is a hurried, last-minute attempt to provide palliative care. The Manitoba approach is not optimal.

First, there is a delay in the person receiving care from the palliative-care team. Second, as mentioned, it provides the person an ugly choice: either give up the hope of potential benefits of treatment or receive palliative care.

A careful study of concurrent care shows it's a much better approach. It gives the patient a choice. Experience in other jurisdictions shows there is much greater patient satisfaction with concurrent care. The palliative-care team is of much greater benefit when involved earlier, and early involvement of the palliative-care team has been shown to reduce emergency room visits by half and the use of hospitals and ICUs by 70 to 85 per cent.

Overall, concurrent care is less costly. Why does the government talk about putting patients first but not act to do it? It's one more reason why Manitoba needs a Liberal government instead of the current inadequate government.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We have seated in the public gallery, from River East Collegiate, 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Dennis—oh, I hope I say this right, Dennis—Dekleva. Is that right? *[interjection]* Hey.

This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Rossmere, who I know quite well, is a very close personal friend, and we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

Okay. Here we go.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Health-Care System Nurse Overtime

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Just like Brian Pallister, this Premier—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —is not doing anything to help those on the front lines of our health-care system.

We know that health-care workers on the front lines are feeling burnt out. They're feeling exhausted, and it's with good reason. New numbers out of the Prairie Mountain Health region show us just how bad this situation is.

Nurses worked 186,000 hours of overtime in 2021, and that's just in the Prairie Mountain region. That's more than 21 years of consecutive overtime. The situation is bad, and it's getting worse.

Why is the Premier failing to address the crisis on the front lines of our health-care system?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are addressing the surgical backlogs in the province of Manitoba that resulted as a result of the—came about as a result of the pandemic.

\* (14:00)

We've taken steps to address that issue. That's why we were able to get 66 spine surgeries completed at Sanford Health centre, 66 spine surgeries that took place that—because the NDP likes to put ideology over patient care—66 people that would've been denied their surgeries.

We will always put patient care first in the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary.

**Mr. Kinew:** The Premier should tell Manitobans how much those surgeries are costing in America. Meanwhile, back here in Manitoba, nurses are working—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —way more overtime than they ever have before. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** Not only did nurses have to work 186,000 hours of overtime last year, they're on track to work 200,000 hours of overtime this year. That's the equivalent of 22 years of consecutive overtime, and it's symptomatic of the cuts at the front line of the bedside, of our health-care system, that they have directed at the PC Cabinet table, just like Brian Pallister.

Will the Premier tell the House why her government has done nothing to address the overtime crisis in our health-care system?



**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we won't put a price on patient care. Patients deserve to get the surgeries that they need, when they need them.

We will continue to put patient care first over ideology in this province every single day.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Kinew:** We say Manitobans should get health care right here in Manitoba, and not America. That's why you need to invest in health care right here at home.

Last year, 186,000—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —hours—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —of overtime worked by nurses. This year, we're on track for 200,000 hours of nurse overtime. This is a symptom of the problem on the front lines of the health-care system that the PCs caused.

And now, this is why they now have to resort to sending Manitobans out of province, because we don't have the human resource capacity to care for people in our province since they started their cuts.

I will table the documents that prove the situation is dire.

Will the Premier finally explain to Manitobans why she continues Brian Pallister's legacy of health-care cuts?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** This is a Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who just stood before this House and basically stated that he would deny these 66 individuals from getting the spinal surgical procedures that they needed. He would've left those 66 people—and all of those members opposite, they would've left those 66 individuals in pain just because of their own ideology.

Well, I say that's wrong. We will stand up for patient care every single day in this province. [*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order, please.

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

### Manitoba Municipalities Operating Funding

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Let's correct the record: we would've given those 66 Manitobans health care here in Manitoba.

Also here in Manitoba, municipalities—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —have been dealing with so many 'crises' since 2016, whether it's floods, whether it's the situation with deteriorating roads or the public service response to the pandemic. And yet, since 2016, this government, just like Brian Pallister, has frozen funding for municipalities.

It's wrong. We think it would—it should stop. That's why, today, our team committed to ending the funding freeze for municipalities in Manitoba. We'd like to do that, should we get the—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —great honour of leading this province.

But in the interim—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —will the Premier match our commitment and commit to ending the municipal funding freeze in Manitoba?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Premier):** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was all over the map in his question today. But what I will address is what I believe and what members on this side of the House believe: that it's wrong to leave 66 individuals in pain, suffering.

But not only would he leave those 66 individuals waiting in pain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of his own ideology, he would have put 12,000—he would have denied 12,000 Manitobans who got access to surgical procedures in private facilities around Manitoba.

He would have denied those 12,000 Manitobans. He would have left them waiting in pain.

I will tell you, we will always stand for patient care to make sure that they get it when they need it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will not put ideology over patient care in this province.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary.

**Mr. Kinew:** Manitobans know that it's going to take years to fix the damage that the PCs have caused to health care, but—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —they know that our team is up to the challenge.

Now, to repeat, for the benefit of the Premier, the question was about her government's municipal funding freeze.

Again, just like Brian Pallister, this Premier has frozen funding for municipalities since 2016. Now, this puts farms at risk because ditches and culverts are not being maintained. This puts folks in the community at risk because roads are not being repaired. This impacts—[interjection]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —any number of public services in our province.

We say it's wrong, it should stop. And an NDP government will end the PC municipal funding freeze.

Now, the question is, will the PCs match this commitment? Will the Premier end the municipal—

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

I'm just going to take the opportunity to say, everyone, take a deep breath in and out and let's just cool it down a little bit, and we're hardly started here and it's already quite noisy.

So, the honourable First Minister.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for a question finally about our wonderful municipalities in the province of Manitoba. Why—I wonder why he's asking that question now and didn't ask it before. But that's okay, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to thank Kam Blight, the president of the AMM. I also want to thank Denys Volkov, the executive director, and all of the mayors, the reeves, the councillors right across this great province of ours who are doing yeoman's work for Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What I will say is, they recognize the fact that we doubled the Building Sustainable Communities fund—\$25-million investment into our communities across our province; \$100 million for an arts, culture and sports fund that is going directly into those municipalities, helping them, Mr. Deputy Speaker; and

\$15 million directly more than those funds to repair potholes in the spring of this year.

There's more work to do, we know, and we will work very closely with the association—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable First Minister's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Anyone who's driven on a road in this province this year has seen first-hand the impact of the municipal funding freeze. The roads are in a situation of disrepair. The PCs want to deny this reality when they all drive to work on potholed roads which are the result of their municipal funding freeze.

We've seen the situation with the overland flooding in the Interlake, we've seen the situation where community programs are being cut, where municipal workers and public services are being cut because they made the decision at the Cabinet table that, just like Brian Pallister, they're going to freeze funding for municipalities.

We've committed to ending the funding freeze: The question for the Premier is, will she do the same?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike members opposite who just seem to realize, you know, that there's municipalities outside the city of Winnipeg when there happens to be an AMM convention in the city of Winnipeg—that's the only time they care about what's happening in municipalities across the province—each and every single day, we stand up for our municipalities right across this great province of ours.

\* (14:10)

And I can tell you, we doubled the Building Sustainable Communities fund from 12 and a half million dollars to \$25 million. That's going to municipalities right across this great province of ours.

We have the arts, sports and culture fund, \$100 million that's earmarked for those—out in those communities right across this great province of ours; \$15 million to help with those roads that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about, went right to municipalities to help with those potholes and help 'clearn' those up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after a very harsh winter.

We will stand with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities each and every single day, not when it's just, like, convenient—

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

**Provincial Funding for Municipalities  
Request to Change Funding Model**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've just returned from the Association of Manitoba—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —Municipalities convention floor, where municipalities were giving the Stefanson government an earful all morning. And who can blame them? *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** While costs have gone up across the board, the PCs have frozen operating funding for seven straight budgets and counting.

It's clear this government just isn't listening. But we are.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Wiebe:** If given the opportunity, we will—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —end the funding freeze for municipalities in this province.

Will the minister just get on board and support our plan to end the municipal funding freeze?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The—*[interjection]* I'm just waiting.

The honourable member for—the honourable Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Acting Minister of Municipal Relations):** Thank you for that time for the House to settle down a little bit.

I just want to thank everyone who's participated in this AMM here. All the time that they take out of their personal life to donate their time to come here as a mayor and reeve and council, it's near and dear to my heart. As people in this Chamber know, I was with the RM of St. Laurent for four years, so I appreciate all the time out of your personal life that it takes to give back to the community. This is grassroots politics.

And it was great to see so many old friends and meet so many new ones.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, that minister was there this morning when the Minister of Municipal Relations (Ms. Clarke) admitted to AMM delegates that all costs have gone up but that she had done nothing to support those municipalities in seven years on the job.

She knows that municipalities deliver essential services to Manitobans that they rely on, like waste collection, road maintenance and so much more. But this government refuses to work with them and support them as it's forced them to cut those services and make hard decisions.

Will the minister simply do the right thing and commit to ending the municipal funding freeze in this province?

**Mr. Johnson:** Member opposite knows that AMM and their members appreciate the no-strings-attached funding. They had so much paperwork under the previous NDP government, they were happy to see that go under our government.

Building Sustainable Communities: \$25 million; \$20 million for the Manitoba Water Services Board; five-year backlog we knocked off in one year.

These are the things that Manitoban municipalities appreciate across the province, not to mention hundreds of millions of dollars for the COVID restart to help them get through the tough couple years that we had. I personally had thank yous from members of my community in all of that funding.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Wiebe:** The minister obviously wasn't listening to the delegates.

The consensus this morning, and all throughout this convention, is clear: municipalities want the PCs to end the municipal funding freeze. They've met those challenges, such as COVID-19 and high inflation, head on, and they've responded to these challenges without that adequate support from this PC government.

The PCs refused to build those strong relationships and partnerships with municipalities because they won't even come to the table and end the funding freeze.

I'm proud to say—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:**—this NDP team, if given the opportunity, we would end that freeze—absolutely, first thing.

So I ask: Will the PCs get on board, join us in committing to ending the municipal funding freeze today?

**Mr. Johnson:** As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the municipalities appreciate the no-strings-attached funding. Do you know what else they appreciate? They appreciate \$9 million in Green Team funding that never happened under the NDP government.

We realize there's more work to do, and what we're going to do is stay in government, stop the NDP from raising the PST, which takes \$3.1 million out of municipal pockets each and every year.

#### **PC Candidate for Kirkfield Park Credentials and Work History**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** When you apply for a job, you shouldn't lie on your resumé. Every Manitoban knows that—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. Please stop the clocks.

Colleagues: decorum, please.

Please restart the clocks.

The member for St. Johns has the floor, and I paused my stopwatch.

**Ms. Fontaine:** As I was saying, Kevin Klein, the PC candidate for Kirkfield Park, is not being honest with Manitobans. He publicly claims he's been the chairman of a Florida pharmaceutical company since 2017.

That's not true. Corporate records that I table today shows he's never been an officer or a director of that company.

Why does the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) think it's okay—

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

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** For many years in the province of Manitoba, when individuals were applying for the job of MLA, they didn't have to disclose any criminal record that they had. Because this government brought in legislation that requires people who are applying to be an MLA to disclose a criminal record, that is now open and public as of the last election.

Can the member opposite explain to me or tell us how that went for her party?

**Ms. Fontaine:** Here's the thing: either you're a member or—of a board of directors, or you're not. Kevin Klein claims he's been a board member—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:**—of a different Florida pharmaceutical company also since 2017. That's not true. Corporate records also shown he's never been able—he's never been an officer or a director of this other company.

I will table the documents.

Why does the Premier think it's okay for Kevin Klein to lie to Manitobans about his work history?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Here's the thing: either you have a criminal record or you don't. But for many years in the province of Manitoba, if you were applying to be an MLA, to be a lawmaker, you didn't have to disclose whether or not you'd ever broken and been convicted of breaking the law, up until our government brought in legislation to require that. That was since—a law since the last election.

Maybe the member opposite wants to disclose to all Manitobans—some people might not be able to go online—how many members of their party had to disclose a criminal record in the last election.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order, please.

**Ms. Fontaine:** Every Manitoban knows, when you apply for a job, you shouldn't lie on your resumé, but that's what's happening in Kirkfield Park right now, deputy speak—

\* (14:20)

Kevin Klein is not being honest with Manitobans. He said he was the chairman or a board member of two different pharmaceutical companies. All of that is lies, Deputy Speaker. It means voters aren't being given an accurate information on who their PC candidate is.

Why does the Premier think that it's okay that her candidate is lying to Manitobans to be an MLA in this Chamber?

**Mr. Goertzen:** The member opposite is right. To be an MLA in this Chamber is an honour and it's a privilege, and you should have to disclose things. Because

of our government, members of the Assembly or those who run to be members of the Assembly have to disclose their criminal records. That wasn't the case before the last election.

I wonder if the member opposite could inform the House not only how many members and how many charges members of her caucus had to disclose, but in the upcoming election, how many more members and candidates will have to disclose criminal records.

And maybe she could explain the nature of those charges and convictions as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. *[interjection]* Order. *[interjection]* Order, please.

### **Curling Centre of Excellence Project Update**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the pandemic first struck in March of 2020, the PC government told everybody that they were going to aggressively cut, and cut they did. They laid off thousands of people. They forced unpaid days onto Crown corporations. They told post-secondaries to present in-year cuts of 30 per cent.

This was also the same month in which the Province transferred \$15 million to a project called the curling centre of excellence, on which, by all accounts, nothing happened. This project was promised in 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Why hasn't this project materialized?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I believe the honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage is joining us virtually.

**Hon. Andrew Smith (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** That's correct.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister, please go ahead. *[inaudible]* I would just say to the minister—okay. What I'm going to—Minister, we cannot hear you for technology reasons.

Okay, please pause the clocks. We're going to just figure out the right way to handle this.

Minister, can you hear me? We cannot hear you. I'm just going to—*[interjection]*

Okay, we don't have a good enough connection to make this work. So, either another minister can stand in or we move to the next question.

Thank you, honourable Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** This is a government that has invested \$100 million into arts and culture and sport in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yes, there's more to do on broadband, but when it comes to arts, culture and sports, this is a government that's committed.

We're hearing from communities across Manitoba how much they appreciate that funding. In fact, we heard it again this morning at AMM. They appreciate the funding that's coming from this government for arts and culture, and we'll continue to bring that historic investment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** This centre was pledged in 2016. It's 2022, yet almost nothing appears to have been accomplished. It's just another broken promise by this government.

Rather than flow the money when activity was actually happening, they transferred \$15 million out of public coffers over two years ago, with nothing to show for it.

I'll table the department briefing note which shows that the government transferred \$15 million on March of 2020. Two and a half years later, next to nothing has been done.

Why did the minister transfer \$15 million for a project which hasn't been done?

**Mr. Goertzen:** So, I'm actually sympathetic to the member. I know that he's a part-time MLA, so he may not have noticed that there was a pandemic going on at the time and there are a number of projects that were delayed.

But what wasn't delayed was the commitment from our government to the arts and sports and culture communities across Manitoba—in Winnipeg, in rural Manitoba. They've been asking for many years. And, of course, they didn't get funding when the NDP were in government for 17 years. They asked for support from this government.

Not only did this government offer that support through a \$100-million program, but gave them record historic support to bring forward those important cultural programs in our rural communities.

And what did the NDP do when they saw that support? They voted against it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Well, maybe it's a little unfair to have this part-time minister answer this question, but while this government was cutting across the board, they transferred—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** —\$15 million out of the government's coffers in March of 2020, and they have got next to nothing to show for it.

It was promised in the 2016 election. It was included in the Manitoba's—sorry, in the minister's mandate letter in 2018 and 2020. But where is it? Next to nothing's been done.

Why did the minister transfer \$15 million for a project that hasn't been done?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, even Dolly Parton was working 9 to 5; this member shows up at noon at best.

This is a government that made a historic investment. The pleas of community saying, we want more money for sports, for arts and for culture, fell on deaf ears for 17 years when the NDP were in government.

This Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), that minister delivered historic \$100-million funding. All we heard from the NDP was, no, we're going to vote against it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

#### **Home-Care Scheduling System Malfunction Impact on Service Delivery and Workers**

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier this month I raised the concerns of home-care workers in the WRHA.

New tools have been deployed that cut the time that they can spend with their clients. It means less care. It's putting an enormous load onto workers who are already dealing with challenges in this pandemic.

Yesterday, it was reported that these new tools broke with a software malfunction, resulting in many people missing their appointments.

Why did this happen, and why has the government rushed a system that's not working for clients or workers?

**Hon. Scott Johnston (Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care):** To the member's issue that she brings forward, yes, there was a temporary issue, and

that was resolved very, very quickly, as identified by the health regent.

And, Madam Speaker, we—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we continue to review all of the situations and the protocols that are in place to ensure that things like that don't happen.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a follow-up question. *[interjection]*

Order. Order.

I'm asking the members who are chirping at each other, please, to quit.

**MLA Marcelino:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier this year, the WRHA reported a large increase in cancelled appointments—even worse than the early days of the pandemic.

The home-care system is already overloaded. There's not enough workers to keep up and the PCs are forcing home-care workers to spend less time with clients. And now, the software supporting the system broke, resulting in people missing more home-care appointments.

Why hasn't the PC government addressed workers' concerns and staffed up home care to address the needs of Manitobans?

\* (14:30)

**Mr. Johnston:** Our government is going to fix the flawed system that the NDP initiated. We're going to continue to work towards establishing a home-care system that fulfills the needs of Manitobans.

We have indicated on several occasions that aging at home is something that Manitobans are looking to do, and we are going to accomplish that by a renewed home-care system.

**MLA Marcelino:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans know that what the minister just regurgitated is completely untrue.

Manitoba used to be a shining example of what home care could be across our country, and it can be that again with this new NDP government coming in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, thousands of Manitobans are missing their home-care appointments. There are not enough workers to address the need, and, once again, this government's reliance on private health has not made the system stronger, it has weakened it. The scheduling tools that the WRHA has deployed are pushing workers out of this profession, and then the

software broke, resulting in vulnerable people missing their appointments.

Why won't this government make the necessary public investments to improve home care in Manitoba?

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

**Mr. Johnston:** As I'd indicated, our government will address the needs of Manitobans. And that's what the seniors strategy is all about, and that's what we're continuing to do, is identify and address the problems.

As I mentioned, the home-care system with no accountability that the NDP government put in place is absolutely ridiculous. But we will fix the problem. We will fix the problem.

And the member from Notre—or the member of Notre Dame continues to say, you don't need to review the problem, you don't need to review the study, according to what she says in Hansard. Well, I'm telling you what, we're reviewing it. We're going to come up with a plan that makes sense for Manitobans.

#### **Non-Disclosure Agreements RHA's Ability to Blacklist Workers**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I was recently contacted by a nurse in Manitoba who, after refusing to transfer an elderly patient—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** —is facing dismissal, a non-disclosure agreement and a multi-year ban on working or even volunteering in an entire health region.

They can work anywhere else in Manitoba because they've done nothing wrong except refuse to follow an order that would put a patient's safety at risk. They're being blacklisted for doing the right thing. And our—at our committee hearing on NDAs, we heard of RHA blacklisting more than once.

Can the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) or Health Minister explain why RHAs are allowed to blacklist as a form of retaliation at all and what they're doing to immediately end this practice?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** As it relates to non-disclosure agreements, the member opposite will know—and I appreciated the presenters who came to committee and gave their stories, very heartfelt stories.

But when it comes to non-disclosure agreements, the Law Reform Commission is seized of that issue. They intend to not only take public feedback, but also report in the new year in terms of a—the right way

forward for Manitoba when it comes to non-disclosure agreements.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a follow-up question.

#### **Mandatory Overtime for Nurses Request to End Practice**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I recently spoke with a nurse who said all they wanted is to be treated with the respect and understanding because of the meat grinder this government has put them through for the last six years: cuts, freezes, closures, waves of layoffs—and they all agree it's never been this bad.

The recruitment bonuses this government announced for nurses, of \$10,000 over 10-year service, is unlikely to ever be collected. That's because, with mandated hours, nurses are going to burn out and never collect it, because the intensity of ICU and ER nursing with long shifts and long, non-stop crises requires respite.

Expecting a nurse to work full time when they're going to be forced to work overtime to 12-, 16- or 20-hour shifts is unworkable.

Mandatory overtime is driving nurses out of the public system: When is it going to end in Manitoba?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health):** I was pleased to join our Premier on November 10th to announce the largest single investment in our public health system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$200-million investment.

And we are moving to end mandating overtime, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The incentives that have been rolled out thus far is just a glimpse into the discussions we are having with the Manitoba Nurses Union, the colleges and many other stakeholders.

We are around a table of solutions because we want to end mandating overtime in this province.

#### **Respiratory, Flu and COVID Cases in Children Request for Measures to Reduce Viral Spread**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Children's Hospital emergency room has large numbers of children coming in with respiratory syncytial virus, influenza and COVID infections. More measures are needed than have been used so far to stop the viral spread.

Will the Premier act today to (1) better protect children in child care and early-childhood education, at least ensuring the staff who are sick don't have to

come in by covering their salary for the days that they're sick; and (2) to consider protecting children in schools by mandating mask use by students and staff under conditions where there's significant evidence of viral spread; for example, with more than 10 per cent of children being absent with infections?

Will the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)–

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

**Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I'd like to thank the member from River Heights for the question.

As the members knows, and as everyone in this Chamber knows, we're working quite closely with our education and early childhood education department and all our educating–educator partners across this great province of ours, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We work quite closely, as well, with Public Health and all the stakeholders to make sure that our No. 1 priority is the safety and the success of our students and our staff.

We're following the advice of Public Health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's where we're going to continue to do.

#### **Provincial Nominee Program Improvements to Program**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is very proud of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program created by the PC government back in 1998. With time, this program needs modernization.

Can the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration expand on the actions he is undertaking to modernize the best provincial nominee program in Canada?

**Hon. Jon Reyes (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration):** In our recent Speech from the Throne, our government is focusing on making life more affordable for Manitobans, including newcomers, as we've welcomed more than 16,000 newcomers last year to Manitoba, the home of hope.

We are proud of our MPNP program, created by a PC government back in 1998, and now, under the leadership of this Premier, is modernizing the program to meet the labour market needs in Manitoba.

The Immigration Advisory Council hosted 14 public consultations throughout the province and received feedback from thousands of Manitobans on how to

improve and enhance the MPNP program. While thousands of Manitobans took part in these sessions and shared their feedback, I did not see the members from the NDP caucus take the time to show us and share their feedback. They didn't show up.

For 17 years, the NDP took no interest when it comes to immigration. They made newcomers wait for two to three years to have their applications processed–

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

#### **Indigenous Reconciliation Strategy Timeline for Development**

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** The Throne Speech was a missed opportunity to set firm targets to bring forward a reconciliation strategy by the PC government. The Auditor General found that the PC government failed to live up to their legal responsibility–and again and again, I say, a legal responsibility to do so–and that PC government have no plan for when they will implement one.

Can the minister tell us when he will put forth a reconciliation strategy in Manitoba?

**Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations):** I was taken back earlier today with the private member's statement by this member who said that, shameful, the path to reconciliation that we've done so far. That statement made by the opposition causes me a lot of concern.

When I look at all we've done with respect to reconciliation–he said yesterday in the House that most First Nations do not feel they are part of the political process. That's exactly what I found when I became a minister, and that started under the NDP. They did not feel they were part of the political process, and yet it was an NDP government that represented them and it was NDP MLAs who represented them in the House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister's time has expired. *[interjection]*

\* (14:40)

Order, please. *[interjection]* Order, please.

There's been a bit of burned time, here. I'm going to give the member for Keewatinook one last question. There was a little bit of time left.

**Mr. Bushie:** That answer was shameful.



Mr. Deputy Speaker, Brian Pallister did not take reconciliation seriously, yet a year into her premiership, the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has done the same. There's still no reconciliation strategy after six years, and the Province's duty-to-consult framework was sent to Cabinet approval seven months ago, yet is nowhere to be seen.

Will the minister outline a timeline for when his government plans on putting forward a reconciliation strategy, and when it might be implemented, or has the minister's consultation framework been refused by this Cabinet?

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** I want to state for the House that we are overwhelmed with requests right now from Indigenous and First Nations communities to sit down and talk with us. Everybody wants to be involved, when they felt previously they had no voice. They—there was no chance for them to ever be heard under the NDP. They're happy.

When I sit down with a First Nation community and I see tears in the—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** —eyes of the elders, that they're so happy that we have a government that is listening now, a government that is engaging, a government that understands—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** —and a government that is taking action, I am very proud of that. Those are very emotional moments for us and other members of this House.

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

## PETITIONS

### South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier

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

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

Residents of the River Park South community in Winnipeg are disturbed by the increasing noise levels caused by traffic on the South Perimeter Highway.

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

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.

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

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

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—Infrastructure to consult with noise specialists and other experts to help determine the most effective way to reduce the traffic noise and to commit to meaningful action to address resident concern; and

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

This petition is signed by Schee Park, Kris MacLaren, Keith Kaderle and many more Manitobans.

## Hearing Aids

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia, Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an otolaryngologist or audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analogue device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analogue programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800.

However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families.

In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive listening devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those for whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health.

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing loss has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental and social health and well-being.

Signed by Roy Gerylo, Nellie Gerylo, Diane Daignault and many other Manitobans.

### **Provincial Road 224**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 224 serves Peguis First Nation, Fisher River Cree Nation and surrounding communities. The road is in dire need of substantial repairs.

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

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

(4) Without repair, Provincial Road 224 will continue to pose a hazard to the many Manitobans who use it on a regular basis, and

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Ekosi.

\* (14:50)

### Lead in Soils

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In December of 2019, the provincial government's commissioned report on lead concentrations in soil was completed.

(2) The report found that 10 neighbourhoods had concerning levels of lead concentration in their soil, including Centennial, Daniel McIntyre, Glenem-Chambers [*phonetic*], north Point Douglas, River Osborne, Sargent Park, St. Boniface, West End, Weston and Wolseley-Minto.

(3) In particular, the predicted blood level–blood lead levels for children in north Point Douglas, Weston and Daniel McIntyre were above the level of concern.

*Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

(4) The Weston Elementary School field had been forced to close down many times because of concerns of lead in the soil and the provincial government's inaction to improve the situation.

(5) Lead exposure especially affects children aged seven years and under, as their nervous system is still developing.

(6) The effects of lead exposure are irreversible and include impacts on learning, behaviour and intelligence.

(7) For adults, long-term lead exposure can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney problems and reproductive effects.

(8) The provincial government currently has no comprehensive plan in place to deal with lead in soil, nor is there a broad advertising campaign educating residents on how they can reduce their risks of lead exposure.

(9) Instead, people in these areas continue to garden and work in the soil, and children continue to play in the dirt, often without any knowledge of the associated risks.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to take action to reduce people's exposure to lead in Winnipeg, and to implement the recommendations proposed by the provincial government's independent review, including the creation of an action plan for the Weston neighbourhood, developing a lead awareness communications and outreach program, questioning a more–requisitioning a more in-depth study, and creative–creating a tracking program for those tested for lead levels so that the medical professionals can follow up with them.

And this petition, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, has been signed by many Manitobans.

### 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 US homes and 400,000 schools and child-care centres as part of the America's job 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 the lead water pipe connections to the City water main, and they'll only disclose the information to the homeowner or 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 or-water pipes connecting to the City's watermain 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 Manitobans.

#### **Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools**

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

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

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

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

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

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available in other languages, including French, Ukrainian, Ojibwe, Filipino, Cree, Hebrew and Spanish. Punjabi bilingual programs for children and teens as well as

Punjabi language instruction at a college and university level could similarly teach and maintain Punjabi language and culture.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Amandeep Singh, Baljit Singh, Didar Singh and many other Manitobans.

#### **South Perimeter Highway Noise Barrier**

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

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

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

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

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

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

(6) The current barriers between the South Perimeter Highway and the homes of the River Park South residents are a berm and a wooden fence,

neither of which are effective at reducing the traffic noise.

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 the most effective way to reduce the traffic noise and to commit to meaningful action and address residents' 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 River Park South residents.

This petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay, I do believe we have a virtual member intending—the honourable member for Burrows. Please go ahead.

\* (15:00)

#### **Punjabi Bilingual Programs in Public Schools**

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** 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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 petition has been signed by Amandeep Brar, Gurbhagat Brar, Navjot Hundel and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

The petition—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 languages. Many Punjabi parents and families want their children to retain their language and keep a continued cultural appreciation.

(4) Manitobans have 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 to implement Punjabi language instruction in other levels of education in Manitoba.

And this has been signed by Pushpinder, Vishaldeep, Sukhanpreet Singh.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other petitions? Yes, I do see another petition.

The honourable member for Maples—The Maples.

Sorry, if I could just ask the honourable member from The Maples to unmute. We cannot hear anything that you're saying.

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** Can you hear me now?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** There we go, we can hear you now. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Sandhu:** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) Manitoba has many good bilingual programs in public schools for children and teens available [*inaudible*] 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 a multilingual professional.

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 Gagandeep Buttar, Shivrupreet [*phonetic*] Gill, Amandeep Kaur and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other petitions? Seeing none, orders of the day, government business.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Pursuant to rule 34(7), I'm announcing the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Federal Government to Strengthen Bail Provisions to Address Rising Violent Crime Rates.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that, pursuant to rule 34(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Federal Government to Strengthen Bail Provisions to Address Rising Violent Crime Rates.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Goertzen:** We're interrupting the Throne Speech debate today to call second reading on bills 4 and 3.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been announced that the—by the honourable Government House Leader that we will be interrupting Throne Speech today to call second reading on bills 4 and 3.

## SECOND READINGS

### **Bill 4—The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended)**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We will now proceed, as announced by the honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), with second reading of Bill 4.

\* (15:10)

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development (Mr. Nesbitt), that Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development, that Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The honourable minister—Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I—and the message has been tabled.

**Mr. Helwer:** I'm pleased to rise again to provide comments on Bill 4. This bill is part of the implementation of a planned increase of Manitoba's minimum wage to approximately \$15 an hour by October 1st, 2023, as was announced in August of this year.

In response to a period of extraordinary inflation and unusual economic circumstances, consultations on the minimum wage were held this summer with the Manitoba Labour Management Review Committee.

Now, we've heard from many others since then, both in business and in labour. A minimum wage that is reflected of the current economic realities facing Manitoba and other jurisdictions is appropriate and necessary, and a phased-in approach will ease burden on businesses adjusting to the change.

This bill brings the minimum wage to \$14.15 on April 1st, 2023. From there, the indexing formula that ties minimum wage increases to changes in the consumer price index, or CPI, for the previous year is anticipated to bring Manitoba's minimum wage to approximately \$15 per hour on October 1st, 2023.

Tying the minimum wage to economic indicators maintains purchasing power for both staff and provides stability for businesses. This bill, along with the pre-established indexing formula and recently created regulation-making powers for years of extraordinary inflation will help keep Manitoba's minimum wage sustainable in the years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

## Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Certainly, we've had these conversations previously with this government and with this minister about the minimum wage.

So, we know that the cost of living is growing beyond what the minimum wage increase can support. Why does the government not immediately raise the minimum wage so that workers can survive?

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** Well, we went through consultations with the Labour Management Review Committee and we heard from both business and from labour. They could not agree on a recommendation, and where we've ended up is part-way between their recommendations.

We also—we recognize that some members opposite want to see the minimum wage go much higher and, indeed, some of their friends are talking about 18-, 15-dollar wage in Manitoba, which would drive a lot of businesses out of business, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we recognize the hardships that business has gone through during the pandemic, and there is—there are supports in place that we put in place for this increase for small businesses under the number of 20 staff.

So, we recognize the impacts that it's had—we've had on—

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

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I note, as I did in my Throne Speech reply, that the number of people needing help at Winnipeg Harvest has essentially doubled in the last several years.

With this increase in need and, obviously, people on low income being important, one would hope, to the government, had—did you consult with people at Winnipeg Harvest with regard to this decision?

**Mr. Helwer:** So, the consultation role is the Labour Management Review Committee and we task them with consulting and with labour and with management, business, to see what the recommendation would be. These are wages paid by small business, large business and across the scale, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And when you understand that there has been several hardships throughout the pandemic, that's why this government moved on affordability package, that we made sure that we could get other supports to Manitobans, even though Manitoba is seen as a low-cost environment in which to live.

We understand that there have been impacts on the entire economy through the pandemic and more since then, and it is a challenge—

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

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** So, it's clear that this government only started its process of increasing the minimum wage after it was announced that Saskatchewan would raise its minimum wage higher than Manitoba's, and thus shaming the government into actually taking action on minimum wage.

They're on track now. They increased the minimum wage with this bill.

My question is: Why is it going so slow? Why did it take so long for this government to take action? Why are they moving so slow with increasing the minimum wage?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, it's up to the opposition members whether they hold the bill up or not. That's my—not my responsibility. We'd like to see this move through the Legislature.

And perhaps the member opposite is better than the Bank of Canada on forecasting inflation. I'm not sure. Perhaps that's what he's suggesting, is that he knew what inflation was going to be this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Obviously, we look at—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:** —what inflation is happening and we reflect that in legislation. Obviously, the members don't want to listen to anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They think that they know better than business—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:** —they know better than labour, obviously, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We listen to our—the individuals that we consult with, and—

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

**MLA Lindsey:** The minister talks about how he consulted with labour and with business, but he didn't actually consult with them; he consulted with the Labour Management Review Committee and he split the difference on what was recommended there.

But did the minister actually go out and talk to any people that are working for minimum wage? Did he actually listen to people that can't pay the rent, can't buy food? Did he talk to any of those people that his miserly approach to the minimum wage is directly affecting?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, I take issue with the member's words opposite. This is the largest increase in minimum wage in Manitoba history, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a reflection of the unprecedented times that we are facing in Manitoba.

And indeed, I heard from many Manitobans. I spoke to business owners; I spoke to labour; I listened to people that are, indeed, working for minimum wage, or used to work for minimum wage. I listened to all kinds of Manitobans as we went through and we listened to what Manitobans would like to see.

I heard from small businesses that expect that this is going to have an impact of \$150,000 on their salaries, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is, indeed, an impact on small business.

**Mr. Moses:** You know, when the minister proposes getting to \$15 by next year, I wonder if the minister really realizes that \$15 an hour was what people were saying living wage was back in 2015 or 2016.

I don't know if the minister would want his salary to go back to what it was, you know, back in 2015, '16, around then. But a lot of folks, with all inflation, know that \$15 an hour doesn't cut it in terms of meeting the living wage standard.



So, will the minister actually put forward a bill and raise the minimum wage to get up to that living wage level?

**Mr. Helwer:** You know, we reflect what we hear from Manitobans and what we hear from the Labour Management Review Committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

\* (15:20)

Manitoba is a province that tends to not have extremes. We tend to be in the middle of the pack on many circumstances, and that's where this will get us. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:** Obviously, members opposite don't want to hear any of these answers. *[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Helwer:** They don't like it. They know that Manitoba is a low-cost place to live in Canada.

We're very fortunate to live in Manitoba. We're very fortunate to live in Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is a process that we're following through after listening to Manitobans on how we are going to gradually increase the minimum wage without trying to put businesses out of business.

**MLA Lindsey:** I just want to pick up on something the minister just said: that raising the minimum wage will put businesses out of business.

Other jurisdictions—Alberta, BC—raised the minimum wage to \$15 quite some time ago, and yet we know that businesses didn't go out of business.

So, why does the minister get hung up on this myth that paying people a living wage will put businesses out of business? Why doesn't he pay attention to what's going on in other jurisdictions, where we know that business continues to grow, even though they're paying \$15 an hour for quite some time?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, I'd thank the member opposite to not put words in my mouth. This can—this may put businesses out of business; it may be the final straw for them.

I don't know if the member opposite has a spare \$150,000 floating around. Perhaps he does. He thinks that's small money. That's big money to these businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We're trying to find a balance here for people that are working, for businesses that employ those people, for labour, and make sure that we can continue to

value those employees and keep the businesses in business, providing the services that Manitobans need.

**Mr. Moses:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the cost of food, the cost of housing, the cost of transportation have all greatly increased over the past few years. This increase to minimum wage doesn't keep up with that.

And so I'm asking, when it comes to the affordability crisis, does the minister see a need to even further increase the minimum wage, just so that people don't fall through the cracks when it comes to this affordability crisis?

**Mr. Helwer:** That is why our government has stepped forward on our affordability systems that we put in place for Manitoba. We're helping Manitobans make it—make through this issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But perhaps the member opposite doesn't have those problems. I don't know. But we're listening to Manitobans and making sure that we can give them supports, and minimum wage is one of those things that we can do to make sure that they can weather this storm, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

These are unprecedented times. I've never seen them in my life. Perhaps the members opposite have; I suspect not. And we don't know if this will continue or where we're going from here, but we want to make sure that we have some stability.

**Mr. Moses:** Does the minister have information on—you know, obviously, the minimum wage would increase some Manitobans and it'd give them a boost.

Does the minister have stats on how many people this would take from, you know, working in poverty to working above the poverty line; that this particular increase to minimum wage would increase out of poverty?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at what happened in past governments, indeed, when we were opposition and the previous NDP government raised the PST—and they considered raising it twice—not just once, but twice—and the impact that that had on people that were on—low-income earners and people that were on minimum wage; that had a much bigger impact.

We're keeping things moderate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, making things more affordable for Manitobans, unlike members opposite who not only looked at increasing the sales tax by 1 per cent, by—but an additional per cent, and didn't care what that impact would be on Manitobans.

**Mr. Moses:** I think the reason the minister was unable to answer the question of how many Manitobans would be raised out of poverty by this minimum wage increase is that because, quite frankly, there's not that many, if any at all, because, quite frankly, this increase doesn't do enough to raise people out of poverty.

With this bill, Manitobans who work full time will still be living under the poverty line.

So I ask the minister: Will he consider making a change to minimum wage so it is high enough so that people who work full time won't have to live in poverty?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, I do take issue with what the member said. He said there's no Manitobans living in poverty. Obviously, we know that that was the case under the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have raised children out of poverty.

It's been the hard work of the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) to make sure that we can ensure that people are fed in Manitoba. That is the hard work that she has been doing to make sure that we raise those children out of poverty, unlike what we saw under the NDP, where they were driven into poverty and all of their supports taken away, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**MLA Lindsey:** The answer we just heard from that minister is simply astounding. He thinks that by more people accessing a food bank, that they're somehow lifted out of poverty.

Does the minister understand that people earning minimum wage today cannot afford to pay their bills because the price of food is going up astronomically, the price of gas has gone up, price of hydro has gone up, the price of everything has gone up substantially more than what this minister's willing to put the minimum wage up? Does he not understand people can't afford to live at the wage that he's proposed they live on?

Will he do the right thing—

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

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, again, the member putting words in my mouth. That is, indeed, not what I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We're working hard to make sure that we have an affordability package for Manitobans. Increasing minimum wage is one part of that affordability package

that we can ensure that Manitobans have some value, have some ability to lift themselves out of poverty.

We want to make sure that Manitobans are living in an environment where they have supports. And we have put those supports in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unlike what we saw under the NDP government, those dark days where those supports were taken away and not available to many Manitobans, and they were driven to food banks.

We did see that, indeed, and we're finding a path to help those individuals.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I'm just wondering, I mean, how did the number of \$15, how was that picked? It might seem like a pretty basic question. If I'm not mistaken, that was what the NDP committed to in the 2019 election. We committed to, I think, we believe—we collected to committing to \$15 in 2021, and moving beyond to a living wage.

So, I'm wondering—this is nowhere near a living wage; how was the number \$15 reached, or \$14.15?

**Mr. Helwer:** Well, the \$14.15 was a path that we found from the Labour Management Review Committee, somewhere between the labour suggestion and the management suggestion of where they would like to be. And getting to \$15 is something that we see when we do surveys looking at what other provinces have available for minimum wages.

And we can see that once we get to that \$15 range, we'll be in the third, fourth, fifth highest minimum wage in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And sometimes we lead the country in some things; some things we follow the country. In minimum wage, we tend to be somewhere in the middle, and this will get us back into that ballpark of mid-range for Manitoba and I think that's where most Manitobans—

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

The time for questions has expired.

### Debate

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

**MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** It's a shame that this minister and this government continues to disrespect working people in this province. Every chance they get, they take another swipe at working people.

We know, the research tells us—and it would tell this government, if they paid attention—that the minimum wage that they've presently got in place is leaving more and more Manitobans accessing food

banks. If they paid attention to so many respected anti-poverty groups, if they paid attention to groups that are actually trying to help lift people out of poverty, they would know that what they proposed here yet again falls far short.

\* (15:30)

One of the members asked earlier where the \$15 an hour came from. Well, it was actually the rallying cry of workers throughout North America quite a number of years ago. We know that \$15 an hour today is not the right answer. We know that \$15 an hour by 2023—by the minister's own admission, may or may not actually get there, might get close—we know that by 2023, that number is woefully insufficient.

*Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

The minister is quite happy to say that he's satisfied with Manitoba workers being the second lowest paid group of minimum wage workers in this country. The minister is quite happy to leave so many hard-working Manitobans behind.

What we've seen from this government is giving tax breaks that predominantly help their wealthy friends, probably their wealthy donors, certainly some of their wealthy MLAs. What we haven't seen is a government that actually cares about people, that cares about people that are struggling.

You know, we talk a lot about people on minimum wage working full-time hours not being able to survive on what's been proposed for minimum wage. The other problem that we never really talk a lot about is so many of those minimum wage workers aren't working full-time hours.

How does the minister think those folks are going to pay their bills? While he's very concerned about the business sector—make no mistake about it, we need to have healthy and strong businesses. He pretty much ignored them during the pandemic too, didn't he? In order to have a strong province, we need to worry about the people in the province as well, and this minister fails to do that.

We know that other jurisdictions raised their minimum wage to \$15 a number of years ago. The sky didn't fall. The world didn't shut down. In fact, believe there was a report I was reading, I believe it was out of BC, that the businesses didn't shut down; they kept going. Sure, there may have been a business shut down. Was it directly attributable to the \$15 minimum wage that they implemented? Maybe, maybe not.

But that's always the great fear mongering that right-wing governments like this Tory government have, is if we pay people more money, the world will end, businesses will shut down, the sky will fall. And it's just plain and simple not true, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. We know that. The science tells us that. The research tells us that, that it's simply not true.

What it does do is it actually—if you raise the minimum wage to an actual living wage, which is a wage that people can afford to actually get out of poverty, they can afford to buy groceries. They can afford to buy their kids new clothes. They can afford to live a decent life. They can afford that their kids get education.

So, we know that raising the minimum wage works. The other thing we know is that, as opposed to the upper crust, who takes their money and deposits it offshore somewhere or hoards it, doesn't like to pay tax on it, hard-working Manitobans that work for wages put that money back into the economy.

It grows the economy. It actually helps the very small businesses that this minister thinks are going to land up out of business. It actually helps them, because people that work for wages actually spend their money on things like food at the grocery store. They spend their money maybe going to a movie when they can afford it. They spend their money buying some new clothes when they can afford it. They spend their money fixing their house, if they're lucky enough to have a house.

Unfortunately, what this government's approach to minimum wage is is to stop home ownership for so many people. Not only does it stop home ownership, it actually drives more people into homelessness because they simply can't afford to make ends meet working for minimum wage, certainly when they're only working part-time hours.

What that does is leads to the whole gambit of other problems that we see in society. The crime, the drugs; a lot of that is all related to poverty. This minimum wage holds people in poverty. It does not allow people to get ahead, it does not allow people to ever progress.

It does not allow people to send their kids on to university, which this government doesn't want anyway. They don't want working people's kids going to university; they only want the elite's kids going there. So, they jack up tuition to ensure that, if I'm struggling to get by, I work two, maybe three jobs, my spouse may work a couple of jobs at minimum wage, trying

to pay the bills and put a little aside so that maybe, just maybe, one day, their kid can go on to university and get a better job than they had; this minimum wage ensures for so many hard-working Manitobans that that remains a dream. It's never going to be a reality.

When the only thing that a hard-working Manitoban can focus on is how they can afford to get their next meal, the dreams of a better life get squashed, and they get squashed by this government, by this minister. They stifle hard-working Manitobans.

You know, we know that they've supposedly got rent freezes on, but we know that all you have to do is ask for an above-guideline increase and you'll get it. This government doesn't back up affordable rents, which makes it harder for people earning minimum wage to maintain a place to live.

We know that they gave huge tax cuts to a lot of those rental property management outfits that did not pass that savings on to the renters; they took the money and run because that's what they do. They don't reinvest it in Manitoba, they've invested it in another jurisdiction somewhere.

We know that, right now, the price of everything is going up; and if the price itself doesn't go up, we know that the amount of cereal in the box is going down. So, while you may not notice that your minimum wage paycheque doesn't buy as much, it's the sneaky inflation that doesn't get accounted for in the measure of inflation.

So, while I used to be able to buy a box of cereal a week that fed the family, there's less in that box now, so maybe I have to buy two boxes a week. But that number isn't calculated. That's the sneaky inflation that this government refuses to recognize, refuses to do anything about.

We've heard about, potentially, somebody maybe at some point in time going to look into the way grocery stores, the way those multi-conglomerate operations are charging people more for their groceries. But nowhere has it said that we're going to look at how much people get for their money at the grocery store.

\* (15:40)

We know that—and we've known for years, this government has known for years—that \$15 an hour is not a sustainable living wage. We know that \$15 an hour, which it's not going to be with this legislation until maybe 2023, just before the election.

I hope the government doesn't think that people that work for minimum wage are going to be bought off by the increase that this government is proposing just before the next election. It would be crass to think that that's this government's plan.

But people know—people that work for minimum wage know that \$15 an hour is not the right number anymore. It needs to be so much higher than that. I've seen reports that have been done by people much smarter than me that talk about what the minimum wage is or should be in different jurisdictions across Canada, in different jurisdictions even within Manitoba.

And I know that people who work for minimum wage in my constituency face even higher costs than what we see in the city of Winnipeg. We know that those people, when they go to the grocery store, have seen exponential increases in the basic staples of a grocery basket.

We know that people in the North have seen their gas bills go up. People, for example, that have to travel between Flin Flon and Snow Lake for employment have seen that cost go up dramatically.

We know that a lot of people that work in the very stores that they can't afford to shop in know that what's been proposed here is insufficient to survive on.

And members can sit and think they've done the right thing by increasing Manitoba's minimum wage to, yet again, the second last. And I suspect the only reason they raised it at all is because Saskatchewan put theirs up and they didn't like to be beat by Saskatchewan. So, we're second last—whoopee. Good for us.

Not so good when you look at how the inflation rate has gone up prior to the government taking action, so people working for minimum wage were already that much further behind before this government actually did something. And I guess I have to thank them for finally doing something with minimum wage.

It's just so unfortunate that they've failed to listen to working Manitobans. They've failed to listen to the very people that a minimum wage is supposed to help. They ignored those cries for help. They ignored the pleas for people to be able to afford.

They completely ignored that to make sure that their friends that own the grocery store chains continued to make money, and continued to make even more money throughout a pandemic, where working

people, particularly those who work for minimum wage, found their hours reduced in a lot of cases.

We know that people that work for minimum wage couldn't afford to take time off when they were sick, so it spread the pandemic, it spread COVID to other workers. But we also know that it's not just COVID, that there's flu going around right now, that minimum wage workers still don't have paid sick leave.

So, not only can't they afford the basics of life when they go to work every day for minimum wage, now they can't afford to stay home when they're sick, because this government refuses to act yet again, because it's not their rich friends that have to stay home when they're sick; it's poor, hard-working Manitobans, it's women who are predominantly in minimum-wage jobs.

And, contrary to what this government spouts, it's not high-school kids trying to earn beer money. It's single mothers. It's immigrant Canadians. It's women. It's breadwinners for the family that are suffering with this government's miserly increase to minimum wage.

They continually talk about myths that—fear mongering that the world will end if we pay people a decent wage. And I said earlier, that's quite clearly just not true. Because actually, the people that earn those wages support those businesses. They shop locally. They spend their money on the basic necessities of life.

So, what could this government have done? Well, we know that they had a recommendation, although it wasn't unanimous, from the Labour Management Review Committee, because of course management wanted to limit how much money they had to pay. Labour thought the numbers should've been quite a bit higher than where this government settled, because organized labour still talks to working people. They still understand the basic needs of working people.

I asked the minister how many people working for minimum wage he spoke to as part of his process for developing this number. First he said, well, he talked to some; and then, well, it was some that used to work for minimum wage.

We talk to people that earn minimum wage. I talk to them on the street. I talk to them when they phone my office. I talk to them on the doorstep. I talk to them in the coffee shop. I understand where they're coming from, whereas this government doesn't hang out with those people. They don't understand the plight of

people that need to have a decent wage so that they can feed themselves, so that they can feed their kids.

What we've seen from this government is a lot of vote-buying schemes, where they issue a cheque to someone—maybe it's on their house taxes—when really and truly, the right answer would've been to just reduce the tax burden on those houses, rather than paying them money that they need, obviously. But they need it every month; they don't just need it once. And that's the part this government doesn't grasp.

So, in their Throne Speech, they failed to address the affordability for Manitobans. They failed to keep Hydro rates low. They failed to take meaningful action on the price of groceries, particularly when we look at the shipping costs for fly-in communities, communities that depend on winter roads. I'd like the minister to explain to me how he thinks that anybody that earns minimum wage in one of those communities can possibly afford to live on \$14-and-some-odd cents an hour.

Just—the minister has no concept of what food costs in those communities. He has no concept of what the Hydro bills are in some of those communities when people are forced to live in substandard houses, when people are forced to have 15, 20 people crammed in a house that's designed for four or five. This minister, this government, doesn't understand those people; it doesn't understand people that are struggling.

It doesn't understand, nor does this government care about, helping poor people out, which is quite clear when we look at what they've done with this minimum wage increase. Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$15 was the answer yesterday, but we're not going to get there until maybe sometime a year from now. Shameful.

\* (15:50)

You know, I could go on for a long time saying how bad this government is when they fail to recognize poor people, when they fail to recognize people working for minimum wage. You know, when this government came to power, Manitoba had the fourth highest minimum wage in the country. Thanks to this government's great management of the economy and everything else, once they introduce this legislation, Manitoba will have the second lowest minimum wage. And they're proud of themselves. Shameful.

So we've talked a lot about people trying to afford to live. We've talked about them failing renters. We've talked about them giving tax cuts to the rich, which

don't help people on minimum wage. We've talked about the myth that this—raising the minimum wage to a living wage will drive businesses out business. We know that's not true simply because other jurisdictions have done and it didn't drive people out of business.

So I think at this point that perhaps maybe I'll cede the floor to someone else who can have another perspective on how bad this government treats people trying to live on minimum wage.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** Before I recognize the next speaker, I'd just like to ask the House to keep the chatter down a little bit. It is getting a little—was getting a little bit loud in here, so please respect whoever has the floor.

**Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson):** I first just want to point out we do have some guests in the gallery that have been watching. I apologize to you for—you had the opportunity to listen to probably one of the most boring presentations ever, and it's not like the afternoon debates are normally particularly exciting, as you'll soon see, but question period is probably the most exciting. Unfortunately, you seem to have missed out on that good fun.

But today, I did listen to the member, despite my propensity to perhaps doze off while he's speaking, and I did hear a few of the things he had to say. I was a little bit bamboozled where he was going because in the question period he sounded like he was certain that \$15 was a living wage, and then he was very much certain that it was not, and then he became certain that our government was doing exactly what we'd been asked to do, and then also certain that that wasn't nearly enough, according to him.

So, although he keeps on contradicting himself, I think the—probably the funniest thing was when he claimed that he talked to people who make minimum wage everywhere he goes. And I assure you that I'd likely do the same, but I can tell you this: I don't ask people if they make minimum wage or not. And this seems like a very peculiar conversation for the member to be having on public streets and byways and in almost any context to say, hey, by the way, do you make minimum or are you—you know, making a little bit more than that? It's a personal question, it's not one that I'd recommend the member would have, unless, of course, the member's not really telling us what really happens, and he's just making stuff up for the House, I don't know.

But I can tell you that when we introduced—when we brought forward the plan to increase minimum wage to \$15—I speak to minimum wage earners all the time. In fact, several of them live with me. My own children are making minimum wage quite often, and I, myself, made minimum wage. And sometimes I talk to myself, too, try not to make too much of a habit of that.

But I did speak with people who are affected by this increase—this substantial increase to minimum wage, and invariably they were very pleased. They were very pleased that we had stood up for them in a way that they really appreciated.

Now, one thing I will say to the member opposite is that when I do speak to somebody and they talk to me about the job that they're in and that they're making minimum wage, the thing that I do—and I tried to have the member answer this question, but he maybe didn't hear my heckle—but the thing I do is I try to find ways for them to get better employment that's going to lift their circumstances, that's going to improve their circumstances.

That's what I do with my own children. You know, my daughter was at one time making minimum wage, and today she's full-time employed as a nurse, so her wage has gone up. And many, many other people have a capability. Sometimes they just need the encouragement. Sometimes they just need a little encouragement, they need somebody to believe in them and to recommend to them—*[interjection]*

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** Order.

**Mr. Teitsma:** —that they can—*[interjection]*

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** Order.

**Mr. Teitsma:** —ask for a raise; that they can go to a different employer and get a better wage. And that's the best way that you can improve financial outcomes for yourself and, in fact, that's going to help everybody in your province if you have a province filled with people who are committed to having those open conversations.

Now, one particularly interesting conversation that I know will be of interest to the members opposite that I did have, and I was quite surprised to have it, was I had somebody who worked for many years—and I'm not—because I don't want the person's—I don't have the person's permission to share their identity and to give away who they are working for, so I will be careful to avoid that.

But this individual came to me. Now, she worked in a unionized shop. And when I was a young man, I had always the impression that union workers—I think the member opposite would certainly try to claim this—union workers made living wages and that unionized members would be treated well by their unions, that they would make sure that their union members make living wages. I'm not seeing the member nod or shake his head, but I hope he thinks that that is what the purpose of unions should be; that there is not just a collective bargaining agreement but also looking out for the welfare of the member.

Now, this person, to my surprise—quite honestly, I was surprised—told me that the increases to the minimum wage were going to completely obliterate her collective agreement. They were going to completely obliterate all the seniority she had worked so hard to receive, and that by the time the full impact of the minimum wage increases were going to happen, she would have no benefit from her seniority in this unionized shop. She'd worked there for more than 10 years, and she's very capable at what she does.

Now, I wondered, like, how could that even be possible. So she shared with me the collective agreement and had me read the collective agreement. I was quite shocked to find out that essentially the entire wage scale, from walking in the door of that business as a first-day worker, to being there for 10 years, was all underneath the \$15 threshold.

Now, the member opposite likes to think, likes to tell you that unions have a positive impact; that unions can help workers in these circumstances. But I can tell you that that was not the experience of this worker. In fact, when I asked her what would the impact of unionization in her shop, what was the impact? What does the member opposite think the impact was? Her take-home pay went down.

Shame—absolutely shameful. It went down because of an increase in union dues that she had to pay exceeded the actual benefit that unionization got for her through the collective agreement process—of the collective bargaining process.

That showed to me, and it showed to her as well, and I hope to many of the other workers there, that the union's interests were in collecting dues for themselves; that the union's interests were ensuring that they had lots and lots of members and lots and lots of dues. But how those members are treated in those workplaces, that was of far less concern to those unions. And that was shameful. I was shocked.

I'm pleased that she's getting substantial wages, finally substantial increases from this legislation. That's what's going to actually give her raises that her union could never deliver to her. And, in fact, the other thing I did was I had a conversation with her about her skills, her abilities and where she might be able to take them into a job that would pay even more than what she's able to get at her current workplace and what she will get as a result of this legislation.

Those are the conversations that I'm more than happy to have with constituents. I'm always happy to stand up for Manitobans and for all my constituents.

I just want to share one more statistic that the Minister of Labour never did get to in his speech, and that's about, you know, the signs of a healthy economy. A healthy economy is one in which there's labour mobility, right? Where people who are poorly treated in a job can say, you know what? I don't need to work here. I'm going to go somewhere else. That is—promotes a very, very healthy work environment and that inverses also a very, very—side of a healthy work environment.

It's where an employer comes to the table and says, I'm prepared to pay more to get good workers; I'm prepared to pay more to get the right team assembled. That's what a healthy economy looks like. So, in a healthy economy, frankly, minimum wage shouldn't even necessarily be a conversation piece because the vast majority—in fact, all workers—ideally should be making more than that.

\* (16:00)

And so, when you ask yourself, well, how's Manitoba doing on that front nationally? I can tell you that—I believe it's around 12 per cent of workers—most of them are younger, mind you, like my daughters and son who used to make minimum wage—but about 12 per cent of all workers in Canada make minimum wage in whatever jurisdiction they find themselves. I think that's high.

I think it would be better for that number to be more closely aligned with just how many youth are working in the workplace, because starting at minimum wage, there's certainly no shame in that, but you don't want to be staying there if you can help it. If you can rise to a higher wage, certainly that's going to be better for you personally. It's also going to be better for our economy. It increases our GDP and it has a positive impact on that family, on that individual.

Now, the number for Manitoba isn't 12 per cent. It's not. It's only 3.6 per cent. Only 3.6 per cent of

Manitobans make minimum wage. The other 96.4 per cent of people are making more than minimum wage. That's a sign of a healthy economy. That's a sign of a good economy. That's what we want.

Nevertheless, this minimum-wage increases are necessary and, of course, it will have the impact of increasing that 3.6 per cent, at least for a time. It certainly is going to have the impact of affecting that worker who came to me, deeply concerned with the actions of her union and the inability of them to negotiate a living wage with her employer. She's pleased and I'm pleased, and Manitobans should be pleased as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** I'm really, you know, glad to have the opportunity to rebut some of the arguments made by the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), because, quite frankly, a lot of them were nonsensical and completely off base and, you know, really speaking about, you know, an economy that doesn't exist, right.

Like, there's not a land where everybody's making above minimum wage. Many employers in the province pay minimum wage. That's why it's so important to raise it.

The member also mentioned that, you know, 3.6 per cent of the—of workers are making minimum wage, so this is only going to help 3.6 per cent of people. That's far from the truth. If the member actually took the time to research this, he would know that many studies say that up to, you know, 16, 18, even 20 per cent of workers actually benefit from minimum-wage increases.

This is because that—in—this proposed increase to go up to \$14.15, anyone who's making, you know, 25 per cent above the current minimum wage will get a pay 'raise'. Anyone who's making 50 per cent above the current minimum wage will get a pay increase.

And so, it's not just the people who are exactly at minimum wage as well as anyone can see, anyone who's making below \$14.15 right now will also get a pay increase. And so, it affects more than just the 3.6 per cent the member opposite states. It helps so many more Manitobans.

And on top of that, there's often a spillover effect that the minister—that the member opposite described as such a terrible situation where a person, you know, with higher seniority was now—didn't get a pay raise because everyone—and everyone else did because of

the minimum-wage increase. Well, the reality is that many employers would also, when they see this happen, would also increase their pay scales. And that person with more seniority would be the first and next in line to get a pay increase.

And this is why there are many members, many people—many people—across the province who benefit from minimum-wage increases. And these are the people who often spend the most money in our economy to keep it moving, spend that money throughout our businesses, our small businesses in the community.

There's studies that also show that the reason why minimum-wage increases do not impact employment and small businesses as much as the opposite side there would have us believe—and fear monger us into not increasing minimum wage—the reason why it doesn't have that type of negative impact is because people who make minimum wage and people who get that increase often spend that money in those same businesses that might be affected by paying more for minimum wage.

They're far more likely to spend it at their local small business, at that shop that's paying minimum wage. And therefore those extra dollars into—that are spent on paying people a minimum wage are being put back into our economy, helping small businesses hire extra people, helping them move more of their product and provide more services to people. And therefore, it's actually helping to grow and move our economy.

Minimum wage actually does that. Increasing the minimum wage has a positive impact on our economy overall. But more specifically, it has a positive impact on the people in our economy who needed that help the most.

And I think some of the things that made it quite evident and quite clear about who gets this help and who needs this help the most and is impacted most by a low minimum wage, are women in our economy. That became completely clear in the course of the pandemic. That many people who are making minimum wage are women, are from—are gender-diverse individuals, are people in traditionally marginalized communities—people perhaps even in the BIPOC communities are—more often were earning minimum wage.

And that's why increasing the minimum wage not only benefits individuals and helps them to become raised out of poverty—increase their opportunity to face the affordability challenge. Not only does it grow



our economy and help to spur and move along more funds throughout our economic system, it also does it in an equitable lens, where you're actually providing more and more resources for those people who need it the most and have been traditionally disenfranchised from our economy. And that's why it's so important to make these minimum-wage increases.

Now, you say, well, we're debating a minimum wage increase here, so, you know, we should be applauding the government for their efforts, but, I mean, we have a government and by the, you know, by the minister's own words, they're, you know, shooting for the middle of the road.

You know, I'm a dad, and I've tried to lift up my kids and encourage them to do their best. I've been a coach; I've coached for a decade at basketball, and throughout those years, I've always tried to inspire people to bring their best when they're playing sports. And often a phrase that people use to inspire is something like, you know, shoot for the stars; maybe you'll miss, but you'll land on the moon. Or, shoot for the moon and you'll land among the stars. That's it—is that it? That's it. Shoot for the moon and you'll land among the stars. Right?

Now, with that saying be—in mind, I think the minister hasn't learned that lesson. I think what he's trying to say in this debate today as he brings this bill forward is shoot for the middle, and you'll land second to the last. That's what he's doing with this bill. He said in his statement that Manitoba's traditionally tried to be in the average, in the middle of the pack, so that's his goal. He's shooting for the middle. He's not shooting for the moon. He's not trying to improve Manitoba's economy to the best. He's not trying to improve Manitoba's affordability to be the best and have the best opportunities to rise out of the challenges that they're facing. No, he's just shooting for the middle.

But what happens when he shoots for the middle? He ends up being second last in the country. Second last in the country. And the—why is he second—and, frankly, the only reason we're not last in the country is because we were shamed into increasing our minimum wage because Saskatchewan increased theirs to be a little bit higher. That's the only reason why we're here today.

Quite frankly, the plan that the government had for increasing their minimum wage at, you know, economic levers, as the minister described, is a recipe for failure. It not only wasn't going to work, it was

going to be dooming so many Manitobans to consistently live in poverty.

As the minimum wage is currently set, and certainly as it was prior to the last increase, Manitobans who earned minimum wage and worked full time lived below the poverty line. They were in poverty. Get that right. If you worked full time and you were earning minimum wage in Manitoba, you're living below the poverty line. That's the policy under this PC government.

And what is their solution to this? Well, quite frankly, for many years, they didn't think that was a problem. They did not think that that was a problem. By pegging minimum wage increases to the rate of inflation was going to mean that consistently Manitobans would be living in poverty, below that poverty threshold. Consistently, year after year, this government's policy was: it's okay to work full time and live in poverty. That was their policy for years and years and years.

\* (16:10)

And suddenly, after being shamed into it, by not wanting to be the lowest in the country—and I hope after pressure by our side and by other, wonderful community advocates who have been pushing and telling this government that, look, inflation is at record levels; the economic crisis we're facing is unprecedented; the affordability crisis has never been heard of here. We need to do something to increase minimum wage.

And after that public pressure, finally, this government was shamed into increasing the minimum wage. We saw an increase in October and we're here debating the increase in April.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, does that increase actually solve the challenge that I have outlined, the challenge that many Manitobans, who are earning minimum wage, are still living below the poverty threshold?

The answer is no. Sadly, no. Sadly, this government has seen a problem. It's been made aware of the problem, made aware that there are thousands of Manitobans who are trying their best. They're working their hardest, and they're still living in poverty. They're asking this government for a way to solve their problems.

And what does this government do? It raises it up to \$14.15. In 2015 and 2016 we were talking about a \$15 minimum wage. That's seven years ago we were talking about \$15. And seven years later, they're still

just trying to get there? They're still proposing that in six months from now we'll be, what, 85 cents away from where we should have been in 2015.

You've got to be kidding me, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker. This government is not only a day late and a dollar short, they are, what, seven years late and, quite frankly, at least \$3 off of what a living wage ought to be.

This government is way behind the times, and I think, quite frankly, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are becoming more and more evident about this. They're seeing it with their eyes open. They're seeing it wide and clear about how this government does not prioritize the people of Manitoba, specifically the people who are earning minimum wage, the people who are oftentimes left out of the economy.

Now, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, I'd like to just raise one other point while I have a few minutes here with regards to the minimum wage, and specifically with regards to the member from Radisson when he said, well, you know, the best way for people to address, you know, low income or minimum wage, well, what's the best thing to do? The best thing to do isn't ask the government for help, in his opinion. It's not for—you know, ask the government to, you know, change their policies to improve their lives.

*Mr. Andrew Micklefield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

What's the way to do it? Well, the problem is you, he says. He turns it back and blames it on the worker, the minimum-wage earner. He says it's your fault that you're only earning a minimum wage, and the solution to your problem is just to get a better job. The solution to your problem is just to get a job. Don't blame me for having a minimum wage set so low that I'm forced to live into poverty. That's not the government's fault. He says don't blame the government for that; it's your own fault. You just need to get a better job, says the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma).

Can you believe that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? That he, instead of looking at himself and looking at his government's actions and looking at the policies that this government puts forward, where they legislate people who earn minimum wage for living in poverty; instead of looking at that policy and seeing how do we adjust our policies to improve the lives of Manitobans; instead of doing that, what does he do? He turns around and blames Manitobans and says it's your fault if you're not making enough money. You just need to get a better job.

Can you believe that? It's simply unbelievable that you would turn around and blame Manitobans for not earning enough money and just tell them, get a better job. Well, if the member really wants to go down that route and suggest that Manitobans just need to get a better job, well then why doesn't he—why doesn't his government, you know, why doesn't he talk to the Cabinet ministers, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), Minister of Advanced Education, Minister of Education, Minister of Economic Development, why doesn't he talk to them and tell them to make education free so that this person can get a—upscale themselves, increase their credentials, and go ahead and get that job?

But instead what did this government do? This government makes tuition more expensive year after year. They make it harder for that person to just get another job by increasing tuition. They make it impossible to do that, because it's just more inaccessible; it's more expensive each and every year. And so, the solution the member from Radisson proposes to this Chamber is just fanciful. It's not in reality with what Manitobans are living through right now. You—he wants a Manitoban just to get a new job.

How are they going to do that? You want them—I'm—suggest that maybe, if this government is serious about that, maybe they should make a more affordable education system. Bring tuition down so students can afford to get a certificate, get a diploma, get a degree, to change their careers. Make it affordable. Is that what the member for Radisson is proposing? If he is, he should be clear about that and really have conversations with his Cabinet ministers, because that's not the policy that they're bringing forward. They're bringing forward policies that have increased tuition by 18 per cent for Manitoban students.

Now, keep this in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker: that Manitoban students are often the ones who work minimum-wage jobs. These are the folks who are just starting their careers. Maybe, perhaps, they've graduated from high school and are starting on their college or university journey. Perhaps they're an international student who's come to Manitoba and is looking to earn some money to help them pay for the tuition—that is, by the way, many times—four times more expensive than domestic students—so they're looking to earn a little bit of money in order for them to pay for the schooling so they can call Manitoba home.

And what does this government do in terms of policy to help those folks? They've (a) raised tuition to unprecedented levels, raising 18 per cent since 2016, since they've taken office. And at the same time,

they've stagnated minimum wage for years, and it's only this October, since they were shamed into it, that they've now started increasing it a little bit higher. And so you see this trajectory where education becomes less affordable and minimum wage stays stagnant. The challenge for affording tuition gets higher, and they have less money in order to purchase that education.

And so, what are they setting up students in Manitoba for? Well, it's quite clear that under this policy of this regime, this government, that they are setting Manitoban students up for failure. They're setting them up for failure.

They're setting students up to either (a) being able to make that difficult choice of, you know, do I go to school or not. Can I afford to go to school or not? I have the drive, I have the talent, I have the want to go to school and educate myself for my future. I don't have the financial means to do so. And this government makes those people's lives more difficult with their choices. It makes that more difficult for those choices.

What's another option for a student? Another option for a student is to just take on more debt, right? Take on more debt. Take a loan, you know, take on that loan, which, you know, will have to pay off at a later date. Go further into debt, and we know the debt crisis that many Canadians are facing.

Many Canadians are facing added debt year-in and year-out. And so is this the path that this government wants students who are just trying to start out their careers and their lives in Manitoba to face, is more debt? Debt that they'll be paying off throughout the next, not even 10, but sometimes 20 years of their career.

Is this the path that this government wants, where there are students coming out of Manitoba institutions with not just thousands of dollars of debt, but tens of thousands of dollars of debt? And I don't even want to think of the day under this government's regime that they might be facing hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of debt after getting a university degree. That would be shameful. That's not the path that I want my Manitoba to be in, that we vision this province to go down.

We want a brighter future for Manitoba, one where students can work in our province, whether they're earning minimum wage or not, where they can earn a way to help them actually afford to go to college or university.

\* (16:20)

It would be out—wonderful thing if a student who graduated here from one of our high schools—say, Glenlawn or Dakota or River East, as we had students here in the gallery today—could graduate from one of those schools and say, you know what, I want to go to University of Winnipeg or I want to go to Red River College Polytechnic or I want to go to University of Manitoba, and choose one of those institutions and say, you know what, I'm going to work while I go to school. I'm going to be able to pay for my tuition and, when I graduate, I'm going to have no debt.

Wouldn't that be wonderful, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I think it would be a great system if we could have an affordable education system where people have the opportunity to pay for their education. But we need a better system to be able to do that.

We need a post-secondary system that's not as expensive, that has considerations for affordability, which I think this member and the minister and this Cabinet has, quite frankly, forgotten about. We would also need to have more jobs available for young people that would allow them to earn enough to cover the costs of their education.

And, of course, it's not just the students' lives who are depending on this type of beneficial system I'm describing; it's our economy. You know, given the challenges that we faced over the course of the pandemic, we—and the challenges that many businesses are facing when it comes to added—finding proper labour, skilled labour, trained labour in our economy, we need to make smart, strategic investments. And those investments need to take place in training and skilling up the young people in our province—those people who are going to be the workers of tomorrow. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, tomorrow's coming fast. We need to make these investments now. And every day we fail to make these investments is another day that we're putting ourselves behind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not a choice between—you know, between what we should do for our business community and what we should do for minimum wage and what we should do for students. These things are all related, and so when you fail to invest in one, you fail to invest in all of them. If we don't invest in students, our economy won't have the skilled labour to work in our businesses, and our businesses will be worried about their shortages in labour that we're seeing right now.

So, we need to make these smart and strategic investments in the people of Manitoba, because these people who we are trying to help and get that education—many of whom are earning a minimum wage, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are the people who we want to be working in our economy, and we hope one day will be the leaders of our economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I've been talking a lot about the importance and the challenges that members—that Manitobans are facing when it comes to minimum wage. And I've talked a lot—a bit about the affordability challenges that Manitobans face when it comes to minimum wage, and I think that's never been more evident than when we look at some of the critical things that Manitobans have to pay every single day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, many Manitobans, you know, drive to work. It's the truth. As much as I think many folks would want people to take rapid transit, you know, transit a little bit more frequently, as many—much as many of us would want people to walk, bike or use active transportation to get from here to there, the reality is that, right now, many Manitobans drive to get wherever they're going, whether it's to work, to school.

And with that reality comes the fact that gas prices have risen dramatically. And we all feel the brunt of it; all of us who drive feel the brunt of it. And even those who take public transit—and public 'transportation' is also susceptible to those rising gas prices.

And so, with those added costs that Manitobans are seeing, it's needed for us to re-examine how do we help Manitobans better afford to face that challenge? Minimum wage is a key and crucial part of that.

Folks who earn well above minimum wage per hour, like many of us in the Chamber here, have that flexibility within their personal budgets to be able to afford an increased cost of gas at the pump. But those right at the bottom—right at that threshold there—many people who are earning minimum wage or just above it are so hard hit by just a few cents' change to that pump.

And so, when the price of gas increases, it really puts them in a bind. It makes them have to choose. Do I make the choice to fill up the pump or is there something else I have to cut off of my budget?

Maybe I don't get a, you know, a new pair of winter shoes this year and have to suffer through the old ones because I know I'm going to have to pay a

gas bill and fill up my car. Maybe, you know, I just kind of tough it out and I won't, you know, get a new coat or pair of mitts for the cold winter ahead. You know, we'll just tough it out because we need to have that gas in order to drive to my job. These are real choices that Manitobans face.

The same choices are being made at the grocery store every week when families go and buy food for themselves and their families. And it gets harder every time we look at that grocery bill and see the amount of everyday items. And how are Manitobans supposed to tackle these challenges?

Well, what can we do as legislators, as people in this Chamber who are supposed to be working for the best interests of Manitobans? What can we do to address that affordability challenge when people go to the grocery store? Well, we can help to give them a raise. We can do that. This is happening with this bill by increasing the minimum wage, but it's not happening fast enough.

Quite frankly, the amount that this bill proposes to increase the minimum wage, which, by the way, won't take place for six months from now, in April, won't nearly make up for the amount that people are paying this very day in the grocery store.

So we'd love to see that this bill and this government take minimum wage far more seriously—far more seriously—when it comes to actually addressing the needs of raising people out of poverty, addressing the needs of people who are working full time and still earning below the poverty line. That needs to be addressed by addressing some of the challenges when it comes to young people trying to afford educating themselves through college or university.

All of those problems can be addressed by properly increasing the minimum wage up to a much higher level, approaching that minimum wage—that living wage level. That is what Manitobans are calling for. They're calling for the ability to work their job, work here in Manitoba, have—set down roots here in Manitoba and earn enough to not be in poverty.

I don't think that's a radical idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's not something out of this world. It's not something the opposite side should fear monger about. It's not something that they say—should say would be a job killer because it's not; research shows that. It's something that we should be taking very seriously because it's something that will obviously help Manitobans and Manitobans who need it the most, Manitobans who often work in the care sector,

Manitobans who are often most marginalized, Manitobans who belong to the BIPOC community, quite frequently, and young Manitobans, Manitobans who are trying to set their best foot forward for the future.

And that's why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only should this bill have already have happened, but so much more needs to happen, and minimum wage in Manitoba needs to increase far more than what this government is putting forward.

And I'll conclude my remarks by, once again, saying that this government needs to stop shooting for the middle and ending up at the bottom. That's their plan right now. We need so much more and so much better than this government.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I think I do just want to emphasize that this bill makes a very important point.

I think it is partly a cynical concession on the part of the government. But we need to be clear about what it means because the fact that this government was forced to pull a complete about-face, and after weeks and months of saying they wouldn't touch the minimum wage—it'll be wrong to change it; they weren't going to get involved—they changed their tune. And that is a 'fundamal'—fundamental recognition that government has to step in to protect workers because workers do not have the power to protect themselves.

So with respect to the comments from the member from Radisson when he was talking about a unionized worker, the fact that unionized workers can't get concessions from an employer without the help of government is a sign of the lack of bargaining power of the workers, not a problem—and not a problem with unions themselves.

\* (16:30)

And, look, \$15 minimum wage is not enough to live on. I know what that \$15 number was. I painted fight-for-\$15 posters for the Labour Day parade in 2019.

Ironically, the PCs are fulfilling—I believe, if I'm being accurate—the 2019 NDP election promise to bring the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2023, which, again, that would not have anticipated the kind of inflation we've seen.

And, you know, when we talk about the record of the Manitoba government, I agree, certainly, with—in principle and in many ways with the values of the

member for Flin Flon (MLA Lindsey) and his criticism of the PCs, because he said look, they've closed hospitals, they've cut provincial funding to schools, they delivered billions in tax cuts for businesses and some of the wealthiest in Manitobans.

And the funding for the arts and culture was frozen at one point, as well as post-secondary education. Their—they supported the Harper government's crime bill, urged tougher sentences and more jail time for young offenders, have focused on building jails instead of housing and covered up reports of high lead levels in poor areas and opposed unionization.

But that was also the record of the NDP in government. Every single complaint.

And look, and I know what it's like to be self-employed and unemployed and underemployed. I've had good jobs and bad jobs, good bosses, bad bosses, good wages and bad wages. There was a point, unfortunately, the early 2000s that there was a union that was charging union dues on minimum wage, which should not be happening. But this is not a reason—but, raising the minimum wage and recognizing that there are people who need protection shouldn't be an excuse to say that labour—the labour doesn't have a point.

But, the other reality is there are lots of people with incredible skills and qualifications in Manitoba who are stuck working—they're underemployed. They're underpaid. They—we are wasting their talents. Because we bring them here—and I've talked with folks, we've talked about Ukrainian refugee doctors who are specialists, who speak English, who could be working here, but they can't because we can't get our act together when it comes to certification. The same as people who are nurses. There are people who are trained as nurses who've been able to work in other provinces in Canada, but can't work here in Manitoba because we can't get our act together on certification, and so that they're having to work in home care instead.

But the other is that, when—look, we talk about the economic impact and the difficulties that Manitoba has faced in terms of growth, we are talking about a province that has had the deepest poverty, the deepest child and deepest family poverty. We talk about child poverty, but look, children live in families, and this has been—and this is something that has been largely ignored.

Manitoba has done the worst job of getting people out of poverty compared to any other province because these are all federal formulas that are calculated, that deliver, you know, similar amounts of money to

each province. So why isn't Manitoba succeeding? Why isn't Manitoba doing a better job?

I—well, first, I'll say, when we talk about the healthy economy and we're boasting about low unemployment, our unemployment that Canada's—and this is absolutely shameful—Canada's unemployment statistics from Statistics Canada don't include First Nations. It's inherently discriminatory. It's appalling. But it also gives us a false picture, because it means we don't recognize the things we should be doing to make sure that we're investing in First Nations and doing what we can, as an obligation of reconciliation, to lift them out of poverty. Because we've been—they've been forced to live in poverty. That's the reality. Forced to live in poverty by colonialism. That's the reality.

But the other is, and if you actually look at unemployment—at things like housing allowances, the housing allowance for people on EIA in Manitoba was frozen for 22 years. And from 1992 to 2014, it was \$285 a month, and it's—that's what it still is for people living in Manitoba Housing. Manitoba Housing allowances were actually higher in the 1980s than they were from 1992 to 2014. That's something I—and Brian Pallister was elected in 1992 and that was something he voted for. He voted to reduce the housing allowance rate and roll it back to 1986 levels and freeze it there. So, in 1986, a single parent in Manitoba caring for a toddler would get \$16,500; 26 years later in 2012, they'd get \$15,000. That's a \$1,500 cut over 26 years.

And the other thing about this is that, you know, I know that both the party—the other two parties, they're—sometimes they're ideological, sometimes they're not. When we talk about ideology, basically it's the idea that no matter what the question, you already have the answer up your sleeve.

The reality is is when we talk about a lot of people's opposition to minimum wage is based on bad math and bad models. There are people who just think, well, it can't possibly work, it's going to cause inflation, it's going to cause problems—it won't. We know that because there have been very carefully done studies.

There was a great study, basically you had Pennsylvania and New Jersey, you had one jurisdiction raise the minimum wage, the other didn't. Did it make a difference? They're right across the border from one another, and it was perfectly fine.

The reality is that we have a huge problem in Manitoba with the—with low wages and people who

are underemployed. And we've had an unfortunate tradition of selling ourselves short, of people selling our workers short and not protecting them. The—they're all—our—the difficult part about this is that it's a—is that it is a tremendous symbolic 'significance', but there are too few people who are covered by this in Manitoba, and there are too many people who could fall through the cracks.

You know, people have talked about things like precarious work. The fact isn't precarious work. There's all sorts of jobs where there are no wages attached anymore. It's all piecework. And that's a bit of scam, quite frankly, and it's really quite unfortunate. And the fact is that there've been all these ways in which deregulation has existed to undermine the number of people who can actually work.

And so now we're facing a situation where people might actually desperately, desperately need help, and we're not actually stepping up as much as we need to be. And I have to contrast this again with some of the other measures this government has taken.

So, in the last two years, and in the next year, by my calculation, I think it's about \$350 million this year, \$350 million next year and \$250 million last year that we are borrowing. These are unfunded tax cuts to cut cheques for property taxes, and they're overwhelmingly geared to people—the more property you own, the more—the bigger the cheque you're going to get; the smaller the property you own, the smaller the cheque. And for the majority of people who don't own any property at all, they will get nothing.

So this does not benefit everybody. It's a gift to property owners, 'including' commercial property owners. And lots of those people and commercial businesses, there's going to be zero economic benefit to Manitoba whatsoever, because we are borrowing money to give it to companies, many of whom aren't headquartered in Manitoba. It doesn't make sense. It makes no sense whatsoever.

And we are borrowing \$900 million. Imagine what we could do—if we were willing to borrow \$900 million and actually put it towards housing or put it towards jobs or making sure that we're actually getting people fed and putting people to work. We could be doing all those things.

But instead, we're borrowing money and it's going to be completely for something that is not going to deliver economic benefits, and we're all going to have to pay back. And we are all going to have to pay it back, not the people who are benefitting, because they're getting a break.

And this is it, is that this is—I see this as a—it's hard to believe that, you know, saying \$14.15 or \$15 an hour is going to be a token gesture, but that's what it feels like compared to what's actually required in order to engage people and make a difference in people's lives in Manitoba.

So, with that I have to say, we'll—I'll discuss this with my caucus, in all likelihood. We'll support this as long as there's not some poison pill in it. But, we have to recognize, we have to do—recognize that not enough people in Manitoba are working enough; they're not being paid enough; and we have to focus on high wage—on higher wages for people to get them out of poverty.

The number of people living in poverty in Manitoba is still shocking. It's over 50 per cent. If you look at the Social Planning Council, 50 per cent of the people need 12 or \$13,000 more a year to get up to the poverty line—to get up to the poverty line. And if you've been to places, it is just—it is fundamentally unjust.

We are—I mean, somebody has said this about other places, that, you know, the United States, someone said—cynically has said—the United States is no longer a rich country. It's a country with a few rich people living it, and everybody else is starting to be that—is starting to fall behind.

We have to recognize that we all have a shared interest in living here together in Manitoba, and a shared interest in each other's success. And that means being—people being able to pay their bills and to be self-sufficient and look after themselves. And—because fundamentally, that is a matter—an important matter of dignity as well as self-sufficiency. And we've been the—frankly, we've been denying it of Manitobans for too long.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** Alberta: \$15 an hour. BC: \$15.65. New Brunswick: \$13.75. Newfoundland-Labrador: \$13.70. Northwest Territories: \$15.20. Nova Scotia: \$13.60. Nunavut: \$16. Ontario: \$15.50—unless you're a student, \$14.60 an hour. PEI: \$13.70. Quebec: \$14.25, unless you work in an industry where you get gratuity; it is then \$11.40 an hour. Saskatchewan: \$13 an hour. The Yukon: \$15.70 an hour.

\* (16:40)

I say those so that everybody is quite well aware when we look at what this bill does here in Manitoba, as everyone is aware, the—I believe it was October 1st, the minimum wage in Manitoba went to \$13.50.

April 1st of next year, it will rise to \$14.15, and then October 1st, 2023, up to \$15 an hour.

I say that as an important fact, is, we could easily go over Hansard and over the last year, just the number of times the opposition has stood in the House and asked for \$15 an hour. *[interjection]*

And so now we get the opposition yapping from the loge, instead of being in her seat. So that's fine. That's fine. We'll let them yap because when we look at what's happening, I want to bring some attention to—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Isleifson:** —a business report by CBC back in 2003, from a 2002 NDP promise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I will table, I will table this as well, so that—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Isleifson:** —we have it. We could send one over to the member in the loge. That way she'd have something to read while I'm speaking. Because I do believe it is—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

The member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) has the floor, and he should have the respect of all of us listening, even if we don't agree.

**Mr. Isleifson:** Thank you very much for the clarification and the allowance on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you are right: it is my opportunity to speak.

So, as I just tabled, the NDP's election promise to implement modest annual increases to the minimum wage is being met with a chorus of boos from business and social groups alike. On Monday—and this is dated May 6, 2003—on Monday, the party released its platform, which includes small but regular increases to minimum wage.

So the justice income coalition, a gentleman by the name of Thomas Novak, asked if it would be raised to \$9, which was about 60 per cent above the average industrial wage, with regular increases tied to the cost of living.

Unfortunately, the time of the day, the increase on minimum wage went to a total of \$6.75 an hour. So the Manitoba chambers of commerce, on the other hand, says hiking the minimum wage is not the answer. Chamber officials want to see other supports, such as tax relief for people who earn the minimum

wage. I think that we've seen a thing—that we've done two of these already.

NDP leader Gary Doer says he expects to be criticized by both ends of the political spectrum. Doer says his plan is to compromise, that offers decent increases that Manitobans can afford.

So, again, I had tabled that document because it's important to see that what their leader back in 2003 was requesting is something that they failed to act on in their entire time in government, and yet, here we have a Conservative government who is doing what needs to be done.

Now, I'm going to make this really quick, because I know everybody's anxious to vote in favour of this. But there was a question earlier from the opposition that asked about—asked the minister about consultation. And I spoke—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I believe the floor is still mine.

But I do believe that I had an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the idea of increasing minimum wage came up, I spoke to 32 businesses—yes, 32 small businesses. And while I'm going to say 100 per cent felt it was a good idea to increase minimum wage, they could support \$15 an hour, the hardship was doing—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Isleifson:** —it all at once. Right? And so doing it all at once was the hardship.

But I didn't end there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did go out and talk to a number of people as well. I—unlike the opposition, I did not ask if they made minimum wage. But I did go out and ask people what they thought about a wage increase. And again, a lot of people—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Isleifson:** —in the business were in—that worked for other businesses, they had a couple concerns. One was hardly anybody makes minimum wage in the businesses anymore; they all make higher than that. And what actually happens to those who are making higher than minimum wage if—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Isleifson:** —the minimum wage goes up? So I guess I must have really hit a nerve because they want the floor. So the member from St. Johns can have the floor.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers?

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I'm going to keep my comments very, very brief.

I find it particularly grotesque to be sitting in here and listening to members opposite—to listening to members opposite as if they're the big champions of those workers that are making minimum wage. They're not. They had to be dragged here kicking and screaming to actually pay Manitobans what they're worth.

I want to remind Manitobans what every single one of these PC members did since 2016; they were so scared—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —of their boss, Brian Pallister. They couldn't say anything to him. But here's what they all did: In 2016—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —there was no raise, increase—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

It should be that a member can talk normally—passionately, yes—and not be shouted down to a degree that they have to raise their voice. So, I'm calling everyone involved. Please, let's—let this thing run as smoothly as possible.

**Ms. Fontaine:** In 2016, the PC caucus sat around, sat on their hands while Brian Pallister raised the minimum wage by zero; nothing. That's how little he thought about Manitobans.

The same caucus member here—the same PC caucus—sat on their hands when, in 2017, Brian Pallister raised the minimum wage by 15 cents. Then, in 2018, again they sat on their hands, they didn't say boo. They loved Brian Pallister so much that they applauded him when he raised the minimum wage by 20 cents. Then, in 2019, again they were just so in love with their leader that they sat on their hands. They didn't stand up for Manitobans when he raised the minimum wage by a mere 30 cents. And then in 2020, they raised it to \$11.90; not even \$12.

Then, in 2021, in the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of a global pandemic when people lost their jobs, when people lost their homes, when people couldn't work, when people on the front lines were putting their lives on the line every single day to serve us, to make sure that they could go to the store and get



their groceries, what did these people do? They raised it by a measly 5 cents. They couldn't even raise it in 2021 to \$12 an hour.

And now they're trying to act here. You have the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) shaming people who are making minimum wage, telling them that they've got to make more and get a better job. As if that's the way that it really works.

It's grotesque and disgusting to hear every single one of these members, who did nothing for seven years—for six years, while their leader, Brian Pallister, eviscerated families, didn't care about families, made families work two, three, four jobs just to make ends. They are not Manitoba's saviours. They were dragged here kicking and screaming to raise the bare minimum wage.

Miigwech.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other speakers?

Seeing none, the question before the House is second reading of Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

### House Business

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on government business.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, November 24th, 2022, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended).

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Thursday, November 24th, 2022, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 4, The Minimum Wage Adjustment Act, 2022 (Employment Standards Code Amended).

### Bill 3—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Name Registration)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** As previously announced, we will now proceed to Bill 3, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Name Registration).

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Reyes), that Bill 3, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Name Registration), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister for Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern—sorry, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, that Bill 3, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act (Name Registration), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

**Mr. Helwer:** I'm pleased to rise in the House today to talk to Bill 3, the—speak to Bill 3, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, name recognition.

Name recognition is a vital aspect of cultural survival. The amendments put forth in—forth in this bill will modernize The Vital Statistics Act to better meet the needs of residential school survivors seeking to reclaim their birth names. It will also ensure a new generation of Indigenous people will have a connection to their culture through traditional names.

And it has been pointed out to me by some of the consultations that we have done with chiefs and grand chiefs that it is not just the Indigenous community that requires us to accept the names that they wish to present as a part of their culture, and many others in Manitoba are looking to do that as we see more immigrants than ever coming to Manitoba.

This bill establishes additional characters and single-name options that may be used on identity documents when in accordance with cultural practice. Manitoba has worked for many months to expand the characters accepted by both The Vital Statistics Act and the vital events registry. And, of course, there may be other characters that we need to accept, and its particular importance in this bill is that it will be

allowed to add those characters that we discover, as we move forward, through regulation. We also know that survivors of residential schools have had their names taken from them, and this will enable them to reclaim those names as was recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action No. 17. But we needed to update the legislation to accept these characters.

As a caution, though, to Manitobans looking to do this, the federal government also needs to change their systems to accept our changes we are making here, and we are working with the federal government to make sure they can accept that. But if Manitobans wish to change their names to characters now accepted in Manitoba, it may be difficult to get such federal identification as a passport, a social insurance number, a status card, DND ID and veterans' 'benefits' and many other federal benefits like the child tax benefit and others.

So, a caution to Manitobans looking to change their name. Until the federal government comes on board, you may be able to do it here but it may not be recognized by the federal government.

I'm very pleased to move to second reading on this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think it'll be a great step for Manitoba.

### Questions

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates; 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. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I'd like to ask the minister: Bill 236 was brought forth in May to address this very issue. Just wondering why the minister did not signal their support for that bill addressing this very issue last spring.

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Labour, Consumer Protection and Government Services):** So, we had not completed the consultations. We're still not completed consultations. We have more that are ongoing, and we need to make sure that as evidence of how this

bill will work, we had to accept and make sure we had as many characters to give people comfort that their names would be accepted by Vital Statistics.

Also, in the bill that was presented by the member, it does not allow for any additions. And that is what this bill allows, is through regulation we can add additions. And then there's the concept of the single names, and we know that some people wish to be known by one name, and the government bill allows this to happen.

**Mr. Bushie:** So, up until—prior to the bill that was introduced in May, between then and today, exactly who did the minister consult with in drafting this bill?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we've met with all of the grand chiefs, except the newly elected grand chief. We met with the previous grand chief of AMC.

And we have met with many other communities, the Inuit, with Manitoba Métis Federation and listened to many other Manitobans, on telling them how—telling us how they wanted to see these characters and which characters we should accept. We are working with grand chiefs to expand that advice, and they will bring some of their experts forward to give us further advice on what type of characters we should also amend to the bill—or not amend to the bill but add through regulation as we would also, through various cultural groups and other—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Bushie:** I ask the minister: He had mentioned in his preamble about working with the feds to do and have this addressed in their system. Exactly how is the minister working with the federal government to address this issue?

**Mr. Helwer:** So we have had discussions with the federal government, telling them that we are working on this type of legislation and that it would have impacts on their federal systems, and we have identified all of the areas of the federal government that we think could be impacted by this.

And there is communication undertaken with those particular ministers that are responsible for those areas of the federal government, telling them this is happening in Manitoba. Should members opposite allow this to pass, they'd be thrilled to do that and that they need to be working on their systems to allow Manitobans to use these characters in federal identification.

**Mr. Bushie:** So, under the current system, what has the minister heard from Indigenous communities about the

barriers they have faced when registering their children through social aids today?

**Mr. Helwer:** So the barriers actually aren't there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have been accepting traditional names for several months, more than a couple of years, actually.

But the barriers are actually in educating people that help those communities fill out the application form. And they have been cautioned by a caregiver, a nurse, perhaps, in the birthing area, that's told them that, well, you'll have difficulty registering that name, so you should register this other one without the hyphen or without the character. That is actually not true, and we have been accepting those names.

So we have—part of our things that we have to do is educate all the Manitobans, especially the ones that are filling out the forms or assisting filling out the forms that—

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

**Mr. Bushie:** Previous appeals for the legislative changes to Manitoba's vital stats act to allow for more options for Indigenous names are properly addressed and updated as the minister just said. But then why did this government drag its feet on these changes despite knowing about this issue for years?

**Mr. Helwer:** We have been accepting those characters in registration for many years, and this changes it so that we can legally do that and add more characters.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, there will be 10 minutes and 30 seconds—oh, 10 minutes remaining in question period for this bill.

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

Have a good evening, everybody.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

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