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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
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STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 25, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, 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.

Please be seated.

On House business, the—orders of the day, House business, private members' business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****House Business**

Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk). The title of the resolution is Respecting Middle-Income Taxpayers.

The Speaker: It's been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Turtle

Mountain. The title of the resolution is Respecting Middle-Income Taxpayers.

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Mr. Jackson: I would ask that you call Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act, to resume second reading.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 202—The Community Foundation Day Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume second reading on Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended). It stands in the name of the member for Riel, who has nine minutes remaining.

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): Once again, thank you to the member from Spruce Woods for bringing forward this bill and for highlighting the great work that community foundations do right across our province.

These foundations are integral to our province. They are much more than simple financial institutions. They are to what many Manitobans—they are to many Manitobans the modern-day equivalent to what happened previously with barn raising, where entire communities would come together on these projects. The projects were concrete actions that we were, in fact, our brothers' keepers and our sisters' keepers, that your neighbours would have your back and that when you needed help, they were there for you.

This is who we are as Manitobans. It's what our government centres itself on—one Manitoba—where regardless of where you come from, your background, how you start, our province is a place of welcome, a place where you can raise a family and put down roots and feel a part of your local community.

The fact that we have the largest number of community foundations per capita in North America is remarkable. There's 57 community foundations. This allows local voice and the ability for each foundation to know intimately the needs of the community and the best way to address those needs.

On a personal note, I love the idea and the design of community foundations, where they're—where they are financed and arranged so that they can give grants in perpetuity. Having a community foundation day would put a spotlight on these organizations and I would hope that this would encourage all Manitobans across our province and in all regions to generously donate, hopefully, this leading to an even greater ability to provide for the people in those communities and to the local areas.

I would also hope, Honourable Speaker, that the local communities would be able to organize these drives, fundraising campaigns, volunteer drives and events that would showcase their local foundation. I would hope that a community foundation day would remind Manitobans of the need to give back.

We are a generous people; the most generous in the country, in fact. Some statistics on that: almost half of Manitobans volunteer across all age groups. That's remarkable. That contributes 63 million volunteer annual—sorry, 63 million volunteer hours annually, and that's from Statistics Canada. That is an incredible amount, and they contribute so much to our communities. In fact, I would recognize that the fine people of Steinbach and Winkler are some of the most generous and have the highest median donations in our country, and that's something to be very proud of, and I recognize the member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert).

So I would hope that this community foundation day would remind Manitobans to give back. I would imagine that the importance of highlighting foundations will only increase in the future with our increased needs and with an aging population and more and more projects that need to be funded. We recognize on this side of the House that governments can't do everything but we want to be a willing partner with these communities.

Community foundations can help 'bidge'—sorry, help bridge the gap and can help ensure that the next generation, Honourable Speaker, know what these foundations do and what their impact can be and why they should maybe consider contributing to these foundations.

As a teacher, I would often use commemorative days as teachable moments. These commemorative days, weeks and months would highlight important people, groups, causes. They included things like Black History Month, I Love to Read Month, Pink Shirt Day against homophobia and transphobia,

Orange Shirt Day for truth and reconciliation, amongst others.

I would hope that a community foundation day would serve in a similar manner as a reminder to young folks to give whatever they can, to contribute and give back to their community and overall gain a true spirit of generosity.

If the community foundation day serves in this regard, Honourable Speaker, then this act, Bill 202, the community foundations act, will undoubtedly move the needle for this next generation.

Having a community foundation day can foster a sense of unity and pride in our shared accomplishments, and it can be a shared celebration right across our great province, Honourable Speaker.

I'm going to conclude my remarks, Honourable Speaker, by clearly stating that I don't believe that the establishment of a community foundation day is simply a symbolic gesture. I know that sometimes people might suggest that these commemorative days are such things, that they are just a symbol, but I believe that a community foundation day is actually a meaningful acknowledgement of the absolutely tireless work of our community foundations and those board members and volunteers.

* (10:10)

I would urge all my colleagues to recognize the invaluable contributions of the community foundations and ensuring that we show our gratitude and that these community foundations can be celebrated.

I want to thank, once again, the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson) for bringing this forward, and I'd like to thank you, Honourable Speaker, for allowing me to put some words on the record.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): It gives me great pleasure, as well, to rise in the House today to put a few words on record in respect of community foundations.

Particularly, I want to talk about a few things in my own constituency of Lakeside with our own Interlake Community Foundation, which this year, in 2024, will be celebrating 30 years of the ICF, and be a big celebration, I think, in September for their 30th anniversary in Stonewall.

So the Interlake Community Foundation, also called the ICF, provides our residents of the RMs of Rockwood, Rosser, Woodlands, towns of Stonewall

and Teulon, with the opportunity to invest in a future of the community forever: foundation pools gifts and capital funds that remain in perpetuity. Your gift is never spent or used up. The income generated from the capital may be distributed as grants to registered charities in the region as part of our Community Grant program or scholarships to students.

So the 12 years I spent as a municipal councillor on the RM of Woodlands, we were huge supporters of the Interlake Community Foundation, and I'm proud to say that they continue; all of those RMs and town councils still contribute to these funds because they know the great advantages of it to their community.

The Community Grant program for the Interlake Community Foundation: For 2024, they're estimating there's going to be approximately \$37,500 available in grant funds amongst our communities.

In 2023, there was just over \$35,000 awarded to some of those community organizations. As well, in 2023, \$40,000 grant to The Joy Smith Foundation to fund for gender equality and the human trafficking. So just some of the great funds that—and grants that are given out.

Scholarship funds: Well over \$20,000 in scholarship funds to our schools for high school graduates in Stonewall, Teulon and Warren Collegiate from our Interlake community Foundation.

The scholarship fund—something that's very near and dear to me: Our family, many years ago, created the Ben and Marjorie King Memorial Bursary scholarship fund, and it's grown to three awards of \$1,000 this past year to the Warren Collegiate graduates. So something that my family is very proud of, that the Interlake Community Foundation has been a huge part of.

The fundraisers that go on. I'm—I know you all may be aware, some of you may have participated in the Ralph Eichler Charity Golf Tournament. This year—Ralph, of course, was my predecessor to this seat. Well, maybe not this particular seat, but probably a few throughout the House in the number of years that he's been—was here.

But this year, 2023, they are—or 2024, sorry, they're going to hold their 19th annual Ralph Eichler Charity Golf Tournament. And the funds, the proceeds from this tournament are in support of our South West District Palliative Care and the Interlake Community Foundation being held at the Teulon Golf & Country Club coming up in June.

Bryan Lefley Memorial Fund: Since 1998, Interlake Community Foundation has awarded \$56,000 in scholarships to 59 kids in our Interlake School Division. The success of this Bryan Lefley Memorial Fund is largely due to the generous support and participants of the golf tournament, which in 2023 marked 25 years for that tournament, and which the Lefley family had decided to make it their last one. So 25 years of building up funds for that particular memorial fund that people in our school divisions are allowed to apply for.

Just some—these are just a few of the great things that our Interlake Community Foundation is doing in our Lakeside communities. And I want to congratulate the Interlake Community Foundation along with all other community foundations in our province and Endow Manitoba for the great work that they do in supporting our communities and their members.

I'm looking forward to celebrating in the Rotunda this afternoon with many of the Interlake Community Foundation boards. I want to tip my hat to our board chair, Bob Beck, and the great members of his board: our executive director, Tracy Holod, and Murray Slagerman, who I hope to see in the Rotunda later today and celebrate that—this great commemoration of our Interlake Community Foundation.

And I also want to thank the member from Spruce Woods, my colleague, for bringing this bill forward to commemorate these foundations on April 26 of every year.

I want to thank, also, colleagues opposite for the nice things they have to say about community foundations in our province as well. I think we all realize how important they are to—the word foundation really means something in our communities. It's something that holds them together.

So thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to put those words on the record.

The Speaker: No one else wishing to speak—oh, sorry.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Well, that's a great start, Honourable Speaker. It's only going to go downhill from here.

I want to thank the member from Spruce Woods for bringing this important act. We don't honour volunteers enough in Manitoba, and every chance we get, we need to do that.

And, you know, if that was all this bill was about, you know, that's still great, but I actually think it's

more than that. We know, in Manitoba, that we have 57 community foundations. That is the largest per capita in North America. We know, and I think I have this right—and somebody can correct me if I'm wrong—Winnipeg Foundation, over 100 years old. I think it was the very first one started in Canada. I'm getting head nods, so I do have that right.

So it's not just about people coming together and giving back to the community. It's actually an integral part of our heritage as Manitobans; that this is who we are, this is sort of the best of us. And what I love about this act is that we're starting to recognize that, and we're starting to, in a confident way as a providence, say to others: This is who we are, this is what we find valuable and this is what we find important, and we want to honour and recognize these people in our laws.

And that's sort of key. And foundations—community foundations, I should say, because there's a big difference between them and private foundations, often are referred to as the banks for non-profits, and in many ways they are. And you have a lot of volunteer community organizations that would not be able to exist without the work of community foundations.

That's where they get their resources. Often, they can get technical help, as well, and they're really the backbone of non-profit organizations in Manitoba. And we would sure miss them if they were gone. We would notice if they weren't here. And so they're critical, and it's time that they get their due.

One of the things that, you know, as legislators, we have to sort of keep—be cognizant of is that 100 years ago, when these organizations started, governments didn't do a whole lot, right? They maybe built roads and that was about it, but they didn't actually provide any sort of social supports for Manitobans. So there was a need from the community to get together and to fill the gap about government—when government hasn't actually responded to the needs of their community.

So they have a very interesting role in the policy world, is that when we don't get it right, they step in and bail out the government. And that's a good thing. It's a safety valve for our community that we don't have all the policy making and decision making concentrated in the hands of 57 people, that it is the collective responsibility of all Manitobans. And when Manitobans see a need and they're not seeing it being addressed, it's that sort of Manitoba do-it-yourself

attitude, they get together and they get it done. And I'm very proud of that.

* (10:20)

But the other advantage of these community foundations and the work that they do is they can be innovative. They can be little, sort of labs of innovation. They can fund brand new ideas and brand new policies and programs that the government hasn't adopted.

And it gives the advantage for the Province of Manitoba to actually see these experiments in the community, see how they work, evaluate them and hopefully, you know, take them and run with them and make them provincial policy when they see that they work. That is an invaluable incubator, social incubator for Manitobans; and it allows us to experiment and to try new ideas in kind of a safe way. And all Manitobans benefit from that.

So with those positive words, I'm now going to be that irritating guy you sat with next to the dinner party who wants to talk about Bitcoin, all right? And so I apologize at the beginning about this. Since—

An Honourable Member: It's early in the morning.

Mr. Wasyliv: That's right. So in my four and a half years here, we have passed many of these sort of commemoration laws. And there used to be dozens and dozens of these on the books. And to the credit of the MLA from Steinbach, one of his legislative moves, which, you know, very in the weeds and nerdy, but I liked it, was he consolidated all of these into one actual act. And it seems like a small thing. But it actually is quite impactful. And so this bill, I assume, at that point will get added to the list. We saw yesterday the firefighter's recognition one getting added to the list.

I pulled up the current act—it doesn't have the firefighters—we are now over 40 commemoration—official commemorations in Manitoba, and growing and growing. It is. That's not the issue. And Lord knows, we could commemorate so many more people and you know, symbolism matters in politics. And I know, I come from an ethno-cultural minority that when we get recognized in this place, it matters. People feel seen. And there's so many Manitobans that right now don't feel seen. And if, in our small part, we can elevate them up with these types of legislations, then I think, you know, it's good on us, and good on the people of Manitoba.

Here's the but, okay? The problem is, is that when we've passed these motions then it just ends. And oftentimes, there's no system in place to actually formally recognize these 40-odd-and-growing commemoration days in an institutional way. So if you have certain organizations that have been recognized, they have to sort of take it upon themselves to do something, to make a big deal.

Many—like, I would challenge anybody in this Chamber: could they name five 'recognition' days that are in the act, and for bonus points, can you say when they actually come up? I would hazard a guess that most could not. And, you know, and that's sad.

Like, in my—going through this list of 40 that we've recognized, I haven't heard of most of them. And I haven't seen, in the four and a half years that I've been here, any sort of official recognition of those dates.

And so that's my concern, is that we not just pass these recognition days, but we breathe life into them, that we have some formal institutional response where it is non-partisan, probably from the Protocol office, that would organize these events yearly, so that there is some official recognition here. Sometimes you'll get a ministerial statement, but if you look at that list of 40, most of the 40 do not even get a ministerial in this Chamber. Most of that 40 don't get sort of a Rotunda or a staircase reception.

Most of them go, after passage, just go unheard of. You know, we have a grandparents day in September, I learned. I've never seen any sort of actual recognition. And so I think we do a bit of injustice to these, that we get the first part right but then we're bad with the follow-through.

So my message to my Chamber colleagues today is that I think we need to do more on these type of recognition days, and think this is just the start. And I know there's a lot of good will in this room for that. And hopefully, better things can come.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Seeing no more speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 202, The Community Foundation Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, is it the will of the House to make it unanimous?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to declare the motion passed unanimously? *[Agreed]*

The motion is passed unanimously.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Thank you to my colleagues for that.

Would you now please call Bill 201, The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act, to continue second reading.

Bill 201—The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone)

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now call Bill 201, The Manitoba emblems act amended, for second reading. Standing in the name of—all right, so it's been announced we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 201, standing in the honourable—name of the honourable Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, who has four minutes remaining.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I'm happy to have a chance to continue my thoughts on this bill. I think it's important that we, you know, finish our debate and, you know, get a good response and get a good opportunity to make sure that all Manitobans are very clear about all the different perspectives on The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act and the impact that it would have throughout, you know, different walks of life.

It will be the Minister responsible for Natural Resources and particularly the mining sector. I can't help but reflect and remark on the amazing event we had yesterday here in the Rotunda, which was for Manitoba, the association for mining, which obviously has a huge impact on the geology and the rock formations in Manitoba.

And so, you know, thinking about that event where we brought together some of the largest and some of the smallest mining companies and exploration companies, explorers, folks who are concerned and particularly have a vested interest in creating jobs and growing our economy and helping to advance our net-zero future through the use of critical minerals.

And these types of rocks and geological formations are really important, not just from the economic standpoint of Manitoba's future, not just from the environmental protection, environmental opportunity we have for Manitoba to be a leader in the space of a net-zero economy, not only because of those important things, but because also having this really unique and geological foundation as part of Manitoba is, quite frankly, Honourable Speaker, something that I think a lot of Manitobans can take pride in. This is something that is not found in other regions across the world. It's not found—many regions across Canada.

And knowing, Honourable Speaker, and having the opportunity to learn a lot more about the geology in Manitoba and the uniqueness of it, it's remarkable that we have 29 out of the 31 federally recognized critical minerals right here in Manitoba. This is astounding.

* (10:30)

Now, this is a story that is particularly relevant in this day and age, when we have the opportunity to not only be a leader in the development of critical minerals, but certainly do so in partnership with a lot of the friendly nations who are seeking to use critical minerals to power their clean energy economies of the future.

We know that battery tech, we know that solar glass panels, we know that all the electrical needs of jurisdictions that—within Canada and that are within our allies rely on these very critical minerals. And we want to be able to not only say that we can deliver for the world through that critical mineral strategy, but do so with the highest environmental standard, do so with the highest respect for human rights. And that's what I think we want to not only have as our legacy for our economy through the growth of critical minerals but also for our legacy as—that we can be proud of as a people in Manitoba.

And so I wanted to ensure that I was able to get those words on the record, reflecting on the MAMI event that we hosted just here in the Rotunda yesterday, where there's so many people who are passionate about the geology and rock formations that exist across Manitoba, just putting honour and recognizing the work that they do and saying that our government takes very seriously the rock formations and the geology and the potential that that has for Manitobans now and into the future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): It is such a pleasure to speak up today and talk about The Manitoba Emblems Amendment Act (Provincial Stone), and I've been waiting to get up and talk about the special rock known as—my colleague can say it a lot better than I can—'fossifilerous' dolomitic limestone, belonging to the Selkirk member of the Ordovician Red River formations that is quarried near Garson and Tyndall as the official stone in Manitoba: Tyndall stone.

And my connection, I guess, to Tyndall stone in the last decade is I worked within the walls of Tyndall stone, not here—just here in the Legislature—but at the Winnipeg Remand Centre. That building is made of Tyndall stone, and so, when I look around and see Tyndall stone in this great Legislature, I am brought back to my time at the Remand Centre and seeing the beautiful Tyndall stone that solidifies the walls there.

Almost half a billion years ago, Lake Agassiz covered much of Manitoba. A combination of biochemical processes formed a vein of dolomitic limestone on the lakebed, which is really cool because I guess you can find fossils and whatnot in there. Many creatures that lived in this lakebed were embedded into the rock as it formed, which created 'fossifilerous' dolomitic limestone, and I totally got that wrong, but I'm sure maybe next time I'll get it right.

So Lake Agassiz, when it dried up, a prominent vein of 'fossifilerous' dolomitic limestone was raised to the surface. I think I got it right that time, Honourable Speaker.

An Honourable Member: You've got eight more minutes to try.

Mr. Oxenham: Yes. Got eight more minutes to try.

A little bit of the history of this stone: It was used in construction of the Lower Fort Garry, one of the most important Manitoban landmarks, and I love going down to Lower Fort Garry with my family and seeing the historic buildings and just how prominent this Tyndall stone is in this province and here—right here in downtown Winnipeg.

The stone was also used in the construction of the St. Andrews Anglican Church, known as the oldest stone church in western Canada. And I had a opportunity to go into St. Andrew's Anglican Church and listen to some beautiful music being played inside the church, and I was really taken by just the sound in that church and just how beautiful it picks up the vibrations of the singers and the instruments, and it really reverberates this beautiful music. And, so, as a

musician, as a songwriter, I really appreciate those qualities and buildings, for sure.

And this limestone was critical to building across Manitoba in the late 19th century. And 90 per cent of all stone used in construction was sourced from the quarry near Tyndall and Garson.

I remember—I recall my colleague from Seine River was talking about her family connection to working with Tyndall stone and it had quite an impact on me, and it made me realize just how many families rely on this stone to—as a source of income for their families and how generations of families really worked with this stone in Manitoba.

This limestone was designated a Global Heritage Stone Resource at the beginning of this year by the Subcommission on Heritage Stones, which is part of the International Union of Geological Sciences. It is the only Canadian rock on the list, a list that 'incudes' Carrara marble, which is beautiful; Carrara marble, I think that's used in a lot in different kitchens and different surfaces.

I know that—I believe a friend of mine installed a Carrara marble backsplash in their kitchen, which is beautiful, and used in the construction of Pantheon; and Makrana marble, used in the construction of the Taj Mahal.

And it's really cool that this stone has been part of many buildings throughout the world, and it's really important, and we should be really proud as Manitobans that we can export this stone and that it can really form some beautiful pieces of architecture. And people around the world can look at this art and really appreciate it. And we can be proud to know that that comes from our great province.

And I'm so proud. I'm really looking forward to—this summer, I'm hoping that my mom can come and visit me from Alberta. And she's never been in the Legislature before. And I'm looking forward to bringing her in here and showing her just how magnificent this building is.

And it's a true honour and privilege, it's the honour of my lifetime to serve in this building. And I'm looking forward to pointing out, maybe, a few of the fossils in the Tyndall stone and pointing out this building and how it has beautiful stone carvings. I mean, we've seen them all throughout here.

It's—I can only imagine the hours and the intense labour. I mean, you can imagine the hands of the workers and how they just crafted this building, it's

super impressive—and its stone carvings. And this building, it's really Manitoba's building. This building belongs to all Manitobans, and I'm so proud to be part of a government that's opened the doors again to this Legislature and let folks come in and be a part of government and to talk to their officials, which I love doing, meeting people.

That's why we've begun to—you know, we've—I like I mentioned, we've reopened the building to the public, starting with the holiday open house. And again, like, we had beautiful choirs on the steps inside the Legislature here and—singing, and the reverberation of their voices throughout the entire building, and you can hear just people. The people moving throughout the building and the chatter, and it's just the building felt alive on that day. And I look forward to doing that more here in the Manitoba Legislature.

I'm very much looking forward to bringing my mom here and, you know, there's other commemorative symbols which I—when I moved here, I learned the prairie crocus is our flower.

And we have many amazing symbols in Manitoba that bring us together as a province. Over 100 years ago, we chose the prairie crocus as our provincial flower. And we have beautiful lapel pins that we can wear with our crocus symbol on there.

And the bird—I mean, we have the great owl, and that's our avian provincial emblem, which is the great grey owl. When I first moved here, I lived just outside of Winnipeg, close—in between Ile des Chênes and Lorette, and for me, that was the country. It was about 15 minutes from Winnipeg, but as a city slicker, it was the country for me.

* (10:40)

And I recall going to sleep at night, and we had lots of trees on the property, and we had owls that would come and kind of sing us to sleep at nighttime. And it was beautiful and something that—something about Manitoba that really helps me appreciate this province for what it is.

And it's full of diversity, diversity in our minerals and our rocks, diversity in our creatures, all of our lakes, and especially diversity in our people. The diversity of people that came together to build this beautiful building here, I think that's something that we should be very proud of as Manitobans.

So in closing, Honourable Speaker, I just would like to say that this is, again, quite an honour to come into this building every single day to represent the

good people of Kirkfield Park, and thank you for bringing this bill forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Yes, me again, Honourable Speaker, it's all me, all the time today apparently.

An Honourable Member: Bitcoin.

Mr. Wasyliw: Bitcoin, yes. I'll tell you my thoughts about Bitcoin.

I'm really honoured representing the good people of Fort Garry and there's a number of schools in my community, and they're really engaged with the Province of Manitoba and our politics. And I do a lot of meet-and-greets because my schools come here on visits, and there are sort of like, you know, three sort of big topics that the young people want to talk about the building.

The first one, of course, is the ghost. People, the children want—love the ghost stories in this building. I don't know, I've already had a ghost story in this building. It happened about a week after I first got elected in 2019. I imagine some of the other long-serving members have their own ghost stories. And of course, you know, past members of this building are haunting it still today.

And so—that's right. And—well, you know, relevance, right? So you know, if you scream it, you got to live it.

So the second thing—you know, issue that the children really like is the bison. And if you don't know that story, you got to find out how they got the bison in the building. It is a great story and if you have your meet-and-greet, you know, it is a hit with your students that come visit you.

But the third one—and this is the relevant part—is the limestone walls with the fossils. And there's nothing more that captures the imagination of young students when they have that kind of living history in this building. The building literally comes alive, right? It's not this, like, you know, mausoleum, museum-type building that's cold and sterile; it actually has life and it has stories to tell. And when they're walking through the hallways, they can discover things for themselves.

And all members can, too. I imagine it's one of those things that's overlooked and underappreciated. I know in my young days when I was a tree planter, I was tree planting next to the Alaskan border and you

just get into a routine with daily life and you just working hard and you're exhausted after 14-hour days and you just eat and go to bed. And my last day, when I'm about to be driven out of the wilderness to come back to civilization, for the first time I looked up and I saw the mountains, the trees and everything and really appreciated where I had been working for an extended period of time.

And I think, you know, this building's the same way. When we walk through, we probably miss a lot of the beauty that's here, especially the limestone rocks and the fossils. But I can tell you the students of Manitoba don't. And it's interesting seeing this building through their eyes and the excitement and the wonder and the magic.

And all this is to say that—and again, I spoke briefly about this earlier—we are all proud Manitobans. We would not be in this building if we weren't. And I absolutely believe that Manitoba is a very special place and a very unique place, and it has so many interesting stories to tell. And one of the responsibilities as a legislator is to help tell that story. And it sounds silly, but it's part of our story: We have a provincial rock. We have something that has shaped our culture and basically tells us who we are.

In 1832, this rock was used to construct Lower Fort Garry, one of the most important historical landmarks in our province. Honourable Speaker, 1845, it was used to construct St. Andrews Anglican Church, which is the oldest stone church in western Canada—again, part of our collective history.

Honourable Speaker, we know that across Manitoba in the 19th century, 90 per cent of all stone used in construction was sourced from quarries in Tyndall and Garson. So the settler Manitoba was literally built on the foundation of this stone.

And, of course, we know that this building was made out of this stone. We have our beautiful Law Courts Building across the street. We have the Centre Block in Parliament in Ottawa that uses this stone.

So this is our gift to the nation. This is our contribution to our national culture, and, again we don't tell our stories enough. And these bills may seem small. It certainly isn't going, you know, change the lives of Manitobans, but I think it certainly adds to it. It's another piece of the puzzle for us telling our stories, being proud of who we are, showing what makes Manitoba unique and different and, I would say, interesting. And we can do more of that here.

And I'm told that limestone was designated a global heritage stone resource at the beginning of this year by the Subcommittee on Heritage Stones. And one thing I've learned, Honourable Speaker, is you do not argue with the Subcommittee on Heritage Stones. They're authoritative body—part of the International Union of Geological Sciences. So it's the only Canadian rock on that list. *[interjection]* Right. So if it's good enough for the Subcommittee on Heritage Stones, it is certainly good enough for the people of Manitoba.

And—*[interjection]* Yes, yes.

So the limestone rock—our humble little limestone rock—is now in the sort of annals of rock hall of fame along with Carrara marble, which has been used in the Pantheon and the Makrana marble, used in the construction of the Taj Mahal. So our stone is up there with such other luminaries as marble—or specifically, Carrara marble, because I know we have marble in Manitoba too.

So, you know, all this to say is that we have a lot to be proud of. And so stones, you know, again, it might at first glance be just overlooked and underappreciated, but when we actually take the time, like our young students do, you actually can see the magic, and something as simple as a rock has a lot to say, has a story to say and becomes a symbol of a growing Manitoba and who we are, both strong and beautiful.

So, with that, Honourable Speaker, I'll allow my colleagues, who I know would love to talk more about the Subcommittee on Heritage Stones. I seem to have sparked some interest in that.

So thank you very much.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Well, I guess I just have to be patient and wait for the clapping. But, you know, we all have our faults, and so I've got to focus in. That was a pun. Thank you for catching it. Thank you for catching it.

* (10:50)

On a less lighthearted note, I do want to just bring attention, to remind the Chamber that, you know, this was the first bill that the PCs decided to bring forward as the opposition. At a time where our province is in a health-care crisis, an affordability crisis—*[interjection]* I'm being heckled by the members opposite because they know it's true. And when we could be talking about the next resolution coming up that's actually about health care, that I'm so excited that we get to, they're stalling by talking about rocks.

And so here we are, again the first bill that they choose to introduce here in this House. I know that 2023, members opposite had so many more hopes and dreams for the legislation that they'd be putting on the record, but, you know, we had a chance to talk about health care this morning and they chose to talk about rocks instead.

You know, if they chose to give more time to health care instead and prioritize health care over rocks, affordability over rocks, then you know maybe they would have gotten elected. But you know, that's something that you must never take for granite. *[interjection]* Thank you, thank you.

And so, when it comes to this beautiful bill ahead of us, the bill that recognizes the stone geologically known as mottled and 'fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone—*[interjection]* thank you—belonging to the Selkirk member of the—oh, this one's hard—Ordovician Red River formations that is quarried near Garson and Tyndall as the official stone of Manitoba, I do actually think that it is really important that we have emblems here in this province.

You know, my family comes from the Philippines. My dad came here when he was 13 years old. My mom came here after she was pen pals with my dad. We still have all the letters; it's a very beautiful story. But all this to say that newcomers that come to Manitoba, that choose to call it home, you know, there's such a beautiful way that emblems help bring attention to the history of our province.

Even in my home constituency of Radisson, when it comes to the environment and all the way to our subdivisions, we've got such a way to honour our emblems. In my constituency alone, only a minute or two down from where I currently live, there's a beautiful neighbourhood called prairie Crocus Meadows. Well, actually the former member for Radisson lives in prairie Crocus Meadows, and here I am today instead.

And so, I think it is a beautiful neighbourhood. It's right across the railroad tracks from myself, and I used the opportunity over the summer to use that as a talking point, actually, a conversation starter. You know, thinking about what prairie crocus actually is and, you know, why their neighbourhood was named that in the first place. Of course, I live in the neighbourhood of Harbourview South and that's a little bit more geographically self-explanatory.

Though when it comes to prairie crocus, I think it's beautiful that we are actually talking about it today

because, as we know, the snow is gone for now and prairie crocus actually is the first hue of magenta that we are able to see as soon as the last snow melts. It's the first flower to bloom in the spring. And I think it's, you know, it's symbolic. It's a sign of new life. It's a sign of re-energizing our communities and starting each day on a positive foot, positive enough to hopefully talk about health care eventually.

But talking about rocks today, I took this opportunity to also just, you know, educate myself on what exactly 'fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone is. And I'm so glad that I chose to because really, again, it's all about making sure that we're not taking what's around us for granite. For granite.

And this building is one we certainly should not take for granite. It is an honour to be here in this building and walk through those doors every single day, walk up the quote, unquote big stairs, so to speak.

And just see how grounding it is that we have elements from the earth, elements from our beautiful province, that are holding us up and, you know, holding the ideas that we bring into here with us.

And the history is rich. In 1832, 'fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone was used in the construction of Lower Fort Garry one of the most important Manitoban landmarks. You know, just about—just over a decade later, it was also used—'fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone—in the construction of St. Andrews Anglican Church, known as the oldest stone church in western Canada.

'Fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone was critical to building across Manitoba in the late 19th century; 90 per cent of all stone used in construction was sourced from the quarry near Tyndall and Garson.

It was also used in the construction—like, you know, members before me, alluded to and so explicitly said, as well, and have taught me—used in governance buildings such as the Centre Block of Parliament in Ottawa, the Manitoba Law Courts and this building itself, the Manitoba Legislature, largely constructed of mottled, dolomitic limestone.

Throughout the building, of course, you can see numerous fossilized organisms in the walls, such as sponges, snails, cephalopods and trilobites. And I think it's—it is another, you know, symbolic, beautiful thing that—it is a living building. And there is history continuing to be written every single day, going down in the record.

And when it comes to the work that's happening within, again, Manitoba is such a beautiful province, and there's so much to be proud of when it comes to—you know, when it comes to our resources, our exports, just the beauty that is within our natural resources as a whole. And mining is actually a critical component of that economy, and that pride.

The dolomitic limestone continues to be a part of that industry and it's really important too, that we take into account sustainable practices when it comes to mining. And so while we're talking about mining, we also have to acknowledge that unions have played in industries across Manitoba, especially in the mining industry, ensuring that our environment is taken care of; ensuring that workers are safe amid mining extraction; the development of safety equipment and regulations; sufficient breaks for workers; and labour laws that protect the health of miners, were all driven forward by union organizations. And I'm sure we can thank them for the harvesting of Tyndall stone otherwise known as 'fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone.

Honourable Speaker, while I can on and on for days about rocks, again, I don't want to take our time in the House for granite, I do just want to bring light to some of the amazing events that happen here in the Legislature that allow all of us here in the Legislature to hear. Well, it—you know, it is actually the work of the acoustics and the work 'fossiliferous' dolomitic limestone that allows us all to hear what's happening in the Rotunda, elsewhere in the building.

You know, just last week, we were—or actually, earlier this week, we were all wearing our Jets jerseys, and chanting go, Jets, go. We could hear that echoing all because of the acoustics created by this beautiful stone; children singing; choral groups coming in and, you know, making our days. Pretty soon we'll hear chatter in the Rotunda as there's a reception with community foundations.

And, you know, immediately after this bill was first introduced, you know, maybe last November, or December—I'm blanking now because it's been introduced so many times—we actually opened up the Legislature for the first time to—for the first time in a long time to Manitobans for our holiday celebrations.

And, again, you could hear the joyous celebrations ringing through the entire building, children singing, MLAs singing, and we have a lot to give thanks for when it comes to this limestone that is allowing this—the beautiful acoustics in this building.

And, again, Honourable Speaker, I could go on and on about rocks, but I can't wait until we get to health care and affordability.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The honourable member for the Burrows—oh, one minute please.

* (11:00)

The time is now 11 o'clock, so we'll move on. The debate shall remain open.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 11—Calling on the Provincial Government to put Patients Over Politics

The Speaker: We'll now move to private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is resolution 11, Calling on the Provincial Government to put Patients Over Politics, brought forward by the honourable member for Roblin.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert),

WHEREAS there are thousands of Manitobans suffering right now who are on waitlists for surgeries and diagnostic procedures in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS dozens of constituents from across Manitoba are reaching out and expressing concern regarding the waitlists they or their family members are on as well as overall surgical capacity; and

WHEREAS one of the first things this Provincial Government did when they took office was fire the surgical and diagnostic task force, who provided over 80,000 additional surgeries and procedures that otherwise would not have been funded; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has cut surgical capacity in Manitoba by taking away out-of-province surgical options when waitlists in Manitoba were too long; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has not allocated funding to address short-term surgical capacity in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS as of April 1st, 2024, dozens of agreements signed to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity with public and private clinics in Manitoba were allowed to lapse by this Provincial Government; and

WHEREAS no immediate alternative solutions for Manitobans currently waiting for surgeries and diagnostic procedures have been provided; and

WHEREAS any progress on surgical and diagnostic wait times will require a plan to attract, train, and retain health care workers that the Provincial Government has thus far failed to present; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has a responsibility and duty to provide timely care for people in pain waiting for surgeries and diagnostic procedures.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately address short-term surgical capacity issues by providing more options for patients in need right now, re-sign all agreements intended to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity in Manitoba and create a real plan to attract, retain and train more health-care workers in Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Cook: I'm pleased to rise and put a few words on the record today for this, my first private member's resolution as a newly elected MLA.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And I think it's very important that we have this debate in the House today because we need to talk about what we've seen and also, very importantly, what we have not seen from the NDP so far, since getting elected.

It's no secret that in health care, one of the biggest issues, from a patient perspective, are long wait times for surgeries and diagnostic tests. That's why it's so troubling that we've seen the NDP do almost nothing to address it. In fact, the steps they have taken have actively made matters worse. That's a fact that's backed up with evidence.

The evidence is in, first of all, the wait-times data. Wait times for knee replacements are up eight weeks. Cardiac wait times are up 45 per cent. Wait times for MRIs are up and cataract wait times are up across the board as well.

The evidence is also in the number of cancelled surgeries: 1,300 surgeries cancelled from October to December alone. And the evidence is also in the anecdotal data that is shared with us as MLAs and shared with the media. Manitobans, who have shared their stories of waiting for surgery, only to have their surgical options taken away by this NDP government for purely political reasons.

Manitobans were languishing on wait-lists because the NDP has decided it's more important to keep their political allies happy than to centre the needs of patients.

The NDP's performance so far is a disappointment to Manitobans, who watched this NDP go through an election campaign promising nothing less than to fix health care. They said they had all the answers and they gave Manitobans false hope.

Then, Manitobans have watched the NDP get elected and do little but dodge and deflect and blame or, depending on the day, take credit for PC initiatives, all while failing to put forward a real plan of their own. This all-talk-and-no-action approach from the NDP has a devastating impact on patients—patients, who are supposed to be at the centre of the health-care system.

I want to start with the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force. The NDP vilified the task force from the start, and within two weeks of being sworn in, the Minister of Health fired them all.

It's important to note that the task force was created as a solution to a problem. The problem was a massive backlog that had been created as a result of a global pandemic that started four years ago. The task force was co-chaired by Dr. Peter MacDonald, an internationally recognized and respected physician that we are lucky to have in Manitoba. He worked with other medical leads, university professors, Doctors Manitoba representatives, nurses and Indigenous representatives, on the DSRTF steering committee.

Before the NDP took over and disbanded it, the task force was successful in getting over 80,000 surgeries and diagnostic tests performed for Manitobans and eliminating 90 per cent of the diagnostic backlog and 69 per cent of the surgical backlog. And how did they do this? They were innovative. They looked to partners in the public and private systems. In fact, as one highly regarded surgeon, who the minister stood next to just the other day, told CBC at the time, quote: I do the exact same procedure to the exact same people on the exact same wait-list whether I park my car at Victoria Hospital or at Western or Maple surgical centres. End quote.

And it's the same payer too: Manitoba Health. But the NDP cried foul and they called it privatization even though it wasn't. It was a way of expanding capacity within Manitoba to get patients the care they needed sooner.

And another tool the task force used to get patients the care they needed as soon as possible was

to send people out of province for care when the wait-list here was simply too long. For many people, including some of my own constituents, this process was an incredible relief.

I remember door knocking in the summer of last year, and I came to the door of an elderly couple. A lady named Louise came to the door and invited me to sit on her front porch for a short chat. Shortly thereafter, her husband, Bruce, came hobbling over with a post-surgical knee brace on and joined us.

I commented on his knee brace, and he told me he'd just had a knee replacement done in Fort Frances, Ontario. I asked how that process had gone for him. He told me it was seamless and easy. Manitoba Health had taken care of everything. He was thrilled to no longer be waiting for his surgery and looking forward to a full recovery and getting back to the activities he enjoys.

But others among my constituents were not so lucky. I've talked in the House before about Mr. Miron Kereluk. Miron is in his early 60s. He's active. He was still working. He was suffering from severe spinal pain. He was told by his specialist he'd be an excellent candidate to go get surgery in Fargo, but the timing was not in Mr. Kereluk's favour. Before he could even fill out the paperwork, the NDP came to power and cancelled out-of-province surgeries, pulling the rug out from under him.

Still in severe pain, his wife had to retire early to stay home and help take care of him. He was told it could be two years before he got a surgery date. After a few more months of agony, Mr. Kereluk couldn't wait anymore and took matters into his own hands. He went for surgery in Calgary, and he's now doing much better. He's attending physio, and his recovery is going very well.

Unfortunately, he's out thousands of dollars. He had asked Manitoba Health to cover these costs but was only successful in getting about 10 per cent of the cost of surgery covered. Patients should not have to go out of pocket to be out of pain.

Out-of-province surgeries and, indeed, the whole task force itself were only intended as temporary measures while capacity was rebuilt here in Manitoba. That work was well under way and, indeed, we're now seeing the fruits of that labour today at announcements that the NDP shamelessly take credit for.

But in the meantime, while wait-lists here remain long, the task force was working every day to get

Manitobans the care they needed as quickly as possible. And for nothing more than political reasons, the NDP fired them. They were not prudent and responsible about it. They did nothing to first ensure that there was adequate capacity here. They didn't think it through, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

For example, they ended up actually firing the folks who update wait times data. And let's talk for a minute about how that panned out. With no one to update the data, the NDP took down the online wait-times dashboard. They got called out publicly for it, and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stood up here in the House and said, oops, I shouldn't have done that. And then they put it back up. But they waited months to update it until they once again got called out publicly. Then the data magically appeared.

I digress. We were talking about the many ways that the NDP puts politics over patients, though the firing of the task force is the most egregious example.

But another related issue is the way that this government let agreements with private and public clinics simply expire at the end of the fiscal year on March 31st. Those agreements had been signed by the task force, and they were serving to expand surgical and diagnostic capacity here in Manitoba. Those agreements covered things like cataracts, endoscopy, orthopedics, gynecology, urology and many other procedures and diagnostic tests.

But this NDP is terrified of the word private. Even though governments have been partnering with private service providers under the publicly funded system for decades. Somehow the minister just let these agreements lapse. Clinics were reaching out after April 1st to say they'd heard nothing from Manitoba Health about the future of their contracts. And, again, it wasn't until they were called out publicly that the minister acted.

Patient care was at stake. So were jobs. Health-care workers were being actively recruited by other provinces to go there, and clinics were going to have to let them go because this minister didn't do their job.

Just as troubling as what this NDP government has done since coming into office is what they have failed to do. I remain genuinely astounded that the NDP could run the campaign they did and still seven months later have failed to produce any kind of achievable plan to address staffing shortages.

* (11:10)

Most of the issues that trouble patients, including wait times, all go back to staff shortages in our system. ERs, acute care beds and long-term care facilities do not staff themselves. You can hold all the pre-emptory ribbon-cuttings that you want, but without staff, it's never going to come to fruition.

And targets, like those put forward in the budget, are just numbers without a plan to achieve them. And it's not clear if the positions that the NDP have committed to are net-new positions or not. And where are these people going to come from? Manitobans deserve to know. We are competing with every other jurisdiction in Canada for these workers.

A letter to a new graduate and a listening tour are not going to cut it when other provinces are streamlining training pathways, offering incentives and making their provinces an attractive place to come and work.

And not only are there—is there no plan to address these shortages, the NDP are actively shooting themselves in the foot. We've heard repeatedly from health-care professionals that known vacancies are not even being posted.

And finally, I want to take a moment to say a few kind words about Manitoba's health-care workers. We saw on Tuesday, in an NDP resolution titled, respecting front-line workers, absolutely zero mention of front-line workers.

So I want to stand up here on behalf of my constituents in the communities of Charleswood and Headingley and say, thank you, to everyone in Manitoba who chooses a career in health care, for everything that you do for our province.

And as I close, I want to reflect briefly on what this resolution is actually calling on the government to do. It's simple. It's calling on us as an Assembly to urge the government to address short-term capacity issues, provide more options for people in pain right now, re-sign agreements to increase capacity and create a staffing plan. These are things Manitobans want and expect from their government.

It should be an easy resolution for all members of this House to support.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question

may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Manitobans are smart. They know they can't trust a word the PCs have to say on health care. After seven and half years of cuts and chaos, they were done with their mismanagement. Were they fired? We're hiring on the front lines.

So my question to my colleague across the way is, does the member opposite think that her PC colleagues firing 300 nurses was a good idea? Or was that putting politics over patients?

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Thank you for the question. It gives me an opportunity to put a few words on the record about the NDP's record on health care. With 17 years in government, the NDP closed one ER for each year of their government. They closed 17 rural ERs, including ERs in Emerson, Pembina-Manitou, MacGregor, St. Claude, Gladstone, Vita, Erickson, Rossburn, Wawanesa, Birtle, Rivers, Baldur. There's more, let me flip the page: McCreary, Winnipegosis, Whitemouth and Teulon.

Not only that, but here in Winnipeg, the Grace Hospital saw the worst ER wait times in the country—

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

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I'm going to ask my colleague over here: the NDP ran an election, as you mentioned, almost entirely on health care, yet in their first six months, they've had numerous decisions that have made it clear, they are willing to put politics over patients in Manitoba.

Could the member please share for the House the flagrant examples of the NDP making decisions in our health-care system entirely based on their ideology?

Mrs. Cook: I'd like to thank my colleague for that very good question. I spoke at length in my opening statement about the firing of the diagnostic and surgical task force, which was perhaps the most egregious example. But it's certainly not the only one. I didn't get a chance to talk about the Filipino health-care workers who want to come to Manitoba to practise here, who had their job offers ripped up by the NDP Minister of Health.

I have been contacted personally by nurses in the Philippines who are undergoing the process to come

here. When they couldn't come as nurses, they asked to come as health-care aides: We just want to come to Manitoba and work in health care. And this minister said no, we're good; ripped up their job offers and told them not to bother. That's shameful, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I think the member opposite really needs to do her homework on that particular issue. I actually take deep offence to those comments. To state that we would ever do such a thing is deeply offensive.

The reality of it is the previous government designed a contract so poorly that folks who do want to work in Manitoba aren't able, based on the parameters of her previous government. And so I take offence to those remarks because those are real people affected by their failed approach.

She didn't answer my colleague's previous question: Will she address the fact that her previous government fired hundreds of nurses and forced them to look for other jobs in the tunnels under HSC?

Mrs. Cook: I see the minister misses their time in opposition and is enjoying having an opportunity to ask questions again. I wanted to ensure them that—they'll be back over here soon enough. This gives me an opportunity to talk about some of the NDP's record thus far since taking government in October. So far, we've seen over 1,300 surgeries cancelled from October to December alone. Back when they were in opposition, the NDP cried foul about this. Now that they're in power, it seems not to be a problem.

We've seen, similarly, 78,000 hours of nursing overtime worked in a three-hour–three-month period alone. That's something that the NDP and the minister specifically railed against when they were in opposition, going so far actually as to introduce legislation twice—

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

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Could the member please share with the House some of the incredible work the world-class doctors who managed the diagnostic and surgical task force, which the NDP fired, did to expand surgical and diagnostic capacity in Manitoba?

Mrs. Cook: Thank you to my colleague for the question. I—it gives me an opportunity to thank those doctors, like Dr. Peter MacDonald and like

Dr. Ed Buchel, who did such good work with the task force to improve health care for Manitobans.

In fact, the task force provided over 80,000 surgeries and diagnostic procedures that would otherwise not have been funded. Among their accomplishments, we can talk about how they opened a fifth operating room at Concordia Hospital, expanded the anesthesia assistant program. They expanded endoscopy services within the provincial system, in Winnipeg and rurally; expanded the spinal assessment clinic at HSC, which the NDP were taking credit for just the other day; dramatically expanding MRI capacity and operating hours and signing dozens of agreements with private—

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

MLA Devgan: Honourable Deputy Speaker, the PCs had a two-point plan for health care and that was to cut and privatize. They did it in Hydro; they did it in other Crown services. Had they had another term, Manitobans would have been on the hook for higher medical costs.

So can the member opposite explain why she thinks paying \$7.6 million in salaries for a task force without a single medical professional, with no accountability, builds capacity in our province?

Mrs. Cook: I just want to point out how ironic and, in fact, bold it is for members opposite to stand up in this House and denigrate the work of doctors like Dr. Peter MacDonald and Dr. Ed Buchel and then turn around the next day and go stand next to them at announcements. It's strangely bizarre.

But it does give me an opportunity to talk about the campaign that the NDP ran which was promising the moon, promising—giving false hope to Manitobans that they're never going to be able to fulfill, and I've got lots more to say on this, but it's going to have to wait for my next answer.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Despite claiming to listen to health-care workers, the Manitoba Nurses Union is currently running a campaign stating they are not feeling heard by this NDP government.

* (11:20)

Can the member please outline some of what those concerns are?

Mrs. Cook: And as—and Manitobans can see from MNU advertisements that are starting to pop up all over the city and all over the Internet, nurses are not feeling heard by this new government. I'll quote from

a Instagram post MNU posted: When this government was elected, I was full of hope. Hope for better working conditions. Hope for announcements to retain nurses. Hope for changes in leadership and changes to the current culture like they promised to do. I have waited and I have watched and I have seen no change. This government promised to listen to the front line, but we don't feel heard at all. In fact, we feel more devalued. When is this change they spoke of coming?

Those are the words of MNU, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): The previous PC government deleted thousands of jobs in health care including my mom's. And now they want to say that they would like to put people over politics. Many of us on this side of the House are here because our lives became inherently political because of them.

And so my question is, can the member opposite please explain why her PC colleagues overspent on for-profit health services instead of investing in our public system here at home?

Mrs. Cook: I'm not sure what the member is driving at when we see nursing overtime hours higher than they were in three months prior to the NDP getting elected—when we see 1,300 surgeries being cancelled. Agency nurse hours—there was a story in the Brandon Sun this morning about agency health-care-aide hours.

This is a government that fired recruiters whose job it is to get people working in Manitoba. They fired the task force. They ripped up job offers from Filipino health-care workers who want to come to Manitoba.

The member opposite has no credibility on this issue.

Mr. Khan: I've got to ask my colleague here just to share maybe a personal story or a moment of when she has met a constituent, and either—and the constituent has talked to her about the treatment that she—that they have received, the surgical diagnostic task force maybe sending them out of province and what that effect has had on their personal life and how that's affected her as an MLA by putting patients over politics.

Mrs. Cook: I am fortunate to represent a community that has a growing population of seniors. And often as we age, we become more frequent users of the health-care system.

This actually gives me a chance to table an email that I was going to save for later, but I'll quote from it now: Will this province ever understand that timely appropriate health care isn't about unions. It's about whatever is the optimal way to deliver what the population needs. As per European models, more government contracts with private providers can be effective and still publicly funded. And it still employs tons of good qualified people. Unquote. I'll table that for the House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: So with that, question period has expired.

Just a reminder to all honourable members, if we could keep phones and earpieces away from the speakers, that is really helpful for our translators and for folks in Hansard.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: And, with that, the floor is open to debate, and it goes to the Honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): First, I'd like to start by thanking my colleague, the MLA for Radisson—turn this way—because it takes a lot of courage to share personal stories in this House, and certainly when a member opposite brings forward a resolution that is rooted in absolute hypocrisy, it takes a lot of courage to stand up and share a personal example of how the PCs cuts to health care and firing of health-care workers directly impacted you and your family. So I want to commend you for that and say thank you.

And you know, it's disappointing because the member opposite had an opportunity in that moment to reflect on the impacts of the previous government's approach, to maybe acknowledge what the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) was putting on the record as being deeply personal, as being a lived experience and an example of the harm the previous government did by firing hundreds of health-care workers.

You know, the reality of where we are in health care today is not separate from the reality of where we were in health care in 2016 and '17 and '18 and '19 and '20 and '21 and '22 and '23 under a Conservative government that made it a priority to cut health care to the point where we couldn't respond to a global pandemic and saw some of the worst outcomes in North America here in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

And I won't be heckled. I won't be heckled by an anti-vax member about the impacts that we saw in Manitoba. I will not be heckled. I will not be heckled when during a pandemic Manitoba was all over the news, international news, because we had some of the worst outcomes here in our province. Why did we have some of the worst outcomes in Manitoba during the pandemic?

I'll tell you why. It is because the previous PC government put politics ahead of people every single day of their administration. Putting politics ahead of people is exactly how you make decisions, like closing the three largest emergency rooms that our province depends on. That's how you end up cutting over 70 critical-care beds across the province. That's how you end up cutting over 500 beds—and we know beds aren't just beds, we know that beds represent and reflect people, staffing. Putting politics ahead of people put Manitoba in a position where we saw wait times for surgeries, for diagnostics, in our emergency departments and urgent cares increasing since 2019.

Back in 2019, I recall, because I'm old enough to remember, that we could barely respond to flu season in 2019. A government that puts people ahead of politics would have spent time planning for the most predictable illness that we know rears its head across the country. But the previous government didn't see value in that. They were too busy putting politics ahead of people and didn't plan for flu season—not in 2019, not in 2020, not in '21, not in '22. And this past fall, we saw one of the worst respiratory illness seasons we've seen in two decades here in Manitoba. The other thing that we saw are the consequences, the ongoing impacts of cutting critical-care capacity to the point where not only can we not respond to a pandemic, but we have a hard time responding to illnesses that we know are seasonal.

You know, the member opposite talks about a diagnostic and surgical task force. She doesn't talk about the fact that chief medical officers across this province all called for this task force to be concluded because of how disruptive the approach was, because there was no accountability with that structure, because they'd make a decision and pull staff from one region in one area and then move them to the other; neither of them able to communicate, resulting in gaps in care that directly impact people. Spending \$7.6 million on salaries for people who aren't providing care at the bedside? Not providing direct clinical care in under two years: \$7.6 million.

We're spending \$12 million to establish our province's first-ever spine program in this program—the first-ever provincial spine program.

Putting politics ahead of people created nothing but chaos, resulted in historic wait times across many areas of health care. That is the legacy of the previous government. The legacy of the previous government is putting politics ahead of people in narratives, not just in cuts, not just in firing, but in narratives that were harmful.

* (11:30)

Putting politics ahead of people, the previous government's approach to health care, resulted in so much harm. Putting politics ahead of people—we saw that in the most recent election, didn't we. We saw what happens when you put politics ahead of people. You lose an election, but you hurt a lot of people too. Manitobans made the right decision, but they made that decision in the midst of a whole lot of harm that never should have happened.

You know, I've stood outside this building before I was a minister, and I've watched the impacts of the PCs putting politics ahead of people in the form of tears streaming down a young person's face because they were terrified of what might happen to their access to health care—health care that had never been invested in or strengthened by the previous government.

There are real consequences to that approach, which is why our government has focused from day one on putting people first, listening to front-line health-care workers, investing in them having someone's shoulder on their left and the shoulder to their right, on the front lines of the health-care system.

That's why we've invested money that otherwise would've been sent to San Francisco, to Cleveland, to North Dakota, right here in Manitoba, so that folks don't have to leave their communities to get the care that they need. They don't have to recover away from their loved ones.

And, you know, I have to say—I said it in my question earlier—I do take deep offence to the member opposite referencing the Philippines, a recruitment effort of the previous government, and claiming falsely, intentionally putting false words on the record, that we on this side would ever tear up job offers.

The previous government invested millions of dollars to dash the hopes of folks who want to work in

Manitoba. But the previous government decided to put politics ahead of people yet again and design an agreement that didn't put people first and that has resulted in challenges for folks who do want to come to Manitoba.

And I don't rise in the House because I want to point out the challenges people are facing, nor do I even enjoy pointing out their failures and the impacts of it. On this side of the House, we're invested in trying to help those folks, in trying to improve those processes, and trying to explain to Manitobans that when they elected a PC government in 2016, I'm sure not even they expected the level of dishonesty that came from that—to go out and tell Manitobans that that recruitment mission would result in 300 health-care workers—nurses—being in Manitoba by July. By the time we were sworn into office, there had been zero. By November, there had been six. Their commitment was 300. My goodness.

Manitobans deserve a government that invests in them, that invests in improving the capacity here in our own province. And our government is going to continue to do just that.

It's interesting the member opposite references Dr. Peter MacDonald, the same doctor who pointed out very astutely that the wait times for surgeries were increasing under the previous government before COVID-19 ever reached our borders. And I'm thrilled to be able to work with Dr. Peter MacDonald, with Dr. Buchel, with physicians and experts across the province who expressed to me that they're excited to work with the government that wants a vision for Manitoba, that addresses wait times—something the previous government never did. They sent people out of province. They didn't invest in capacity in Manitoba; therefore, wait times were never actually addressed. That's a fact. That's a reality.

On this side of the House, we will take no lessons from the same people who broke relationships with health-care workers, cut health care to the point where we could not respond and continue to show nothing but disrespect and no appreciation for the value of what these experts bring the front lines.

On this side of the House, we will invest in health care, invest in putting people first and invest in bringing people together. And I hope that somewhere along the way, members opposite decide to join up in that effort.

A unified province is a province that works for everyone. That is our focus in health care. That is our focus for the people of Manitoba.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the next member, I'll just remind all honourable members that using phrases such as intentionally putting false information on the record skirts very close to the line of—it's not allowed. So no skirting; just not allowed.

So I would all—caution all members.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): It gives me real pleasure to rise today to speak on this. And I'm going to take a bit of a different angle on this.

If we simply look at what this resolution actually calls for—and I'm going to read it for the members that haven't, and it's going to get into what I'm going to speak about: Address short-term surgical capacity issues by providing more options for patients in need, right now; re-sign all agreements intended to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity in Manitoba; and create a real plan to attract, retain and train more health-care workers in Manitoba.

How can anybody possibly disagree with that? The title of the resolution is people over politics. And I get it; we're all politicians in here. We all have partisan lines, but this resolution is grounded in people over politics. How can we possibly not agree with this resolution in any possible way?

Members opposite, as I'm reading this are like yes, yes, we agree, we agree. Well, how can we not agree with this resolution in what it stands for? In my eight minutes and 39 seconds, I'm going to do my best to not make this partisan at all because this is not a partisan issue.

This is an issue of people—of people. I'm not going to take my shots at the NDP. I'm not going to talk about previous governments. But what I want to talk about is people. For the love of God, why are we politicizing this when people need to come over politics?

I want to thank my—the member here for Roblin, for bringing this forward. In its truest sense—and it did not take the Minister of Health more than 30 seconds to take their first shot—30 seconds, 28 seconds was a partisan shot. The very first thing the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan) did was take his partisan shot. The very first thing that the member for McPhillips did was take their shot. Not one mention of the people—of the people, Honourable Deputy Speaker—and it would serve them well, and members

on our side, as well, because this is not going to be a partisan one, to talk about the people that are affected by the decisions being made by the government.

It is people over politics. When you want to help people, it doesn't matter what colour of stripe they are. People need help. We need to get them the help. Were there mistakes made in history? Of course there were. Throughout history there's been mistakes, whether it's the NDP government, whether it's the PC, whether it was the Liberals for a short stint. It doesn't matter. Mistakes will be made. But we're talking about the people here in Manitoba.

We are talking about getting people health and the Minister of Health himself cannot help but take shots across partisan lines. Not one mention, in their 10 minute preamble, of the people. Previous government did this; previous government did this; previous government did this. Sure, previous government did a lot of things.

What are we doing to help the people? That is what we need to ask. And further to that, it is so toxic when partisan politics get into it, that the minister cannot help but attack a member in this House within two minutes for the medical choices they have made; for the choices that they have made, within two minutes, this minister attacked them. Why?

An Honourable Member: Shame.

Mr. Khan: Shame. Hate. Disgusting. Division. Why? What gives this minister the right to attack somebody for the choices they've made if we're putting people over politics? It's clear. I'm not referencing NDP. I'm not referencing PC. I want to be clear on this. This conversation is about people.

What gives somebody the right, especially the Minister of Health, to attack somebody for their medical choices when they don't even know all the facts? This shows you their true colours. This shows you about the ideology that is corrupted themselves, about putting politics over people.

* (11:40)

If they cared about helping people, they would support this resolution unanimously because every one of them, as I read this resolution, agreed and nodded their head—that address short-term surgical capacity issues by providing more options for patients in need right now.

Does the Minister of Health disagree with that? Does the member from McPhillips disagree with that? The member from Transcona—sorry, apologize, Radisson—

as they got up to speak on this? Sounds like they do. If they've read the resolution: Therefore be it resolved more options for patients in need right now. What is wrong with that?

Forget about all the politics before. Forget about who closed what ERs. Forget about who cancelled what diagnostic surgical task force. Forget about what happened to the nurses—let's leave all that aside. Leave the partisan politics aside of the—of what's happened historically. Who's opening what hospital? Who's closing what hospital? Who's hiring what doctor? Who's—we're not talking about that.

My talk is sheerly focused on helping people, and if we want to help people, why would members opposite not support this resolution? You want to re-sign all the agreements intended to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity in Manitoba. Yes, this is a good thing. We have letters and emails and social media from members opposite where they just want medical attention, they can't get it here.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, what are we supposed to tell these Manitobans? Without making this partisan politics. Sorry, your surgery is not warranted? You don't matter?

Now I get it. They don't like certain ideas on the task force or the way it was done. Okay, sure. But what is your plan, Honourable Deputy Speaker? You can't just cut things and not have a plan. What are they going to—the diagnostic—the backlog is larger now than it was seven months ago. The overtime hours working now are larger than they were. No reference of government, no reference of political stripes, just the simple facts. If we want to put people ahead of politics, why are we not supporting this resolution?

Seven minutes have gone by, haven't taken a shot yet, and I won't take a shot across party lines, because that's not what this resolution is about. It is about getting Manitobans the help they need. It is about helping people. It is about not shaming people for their medical choices, as the minister has done. It's very ironic that, you know, when the Minister of Health wants to bring something forward that supports their ideology, you are not allowed to say anything that may be contrary to that. And yet, if it doesn't fit with theirs, if decisions are made on this side, it gives them the right to attack us. Why?

It tells you that they don't care about the people. They care about their narrow ideology.

That minister should apologize to the member for trying to dispel—trying to inseminate hate and fear and

shaming them. They should apologize as the Minister of Health. It is not their right to do that. That is putting politics over top of people and it's disgusting.

Members opposite want to heckle now. Exact proof of what I'm saying. Politics over people.

Now, if we want to help people, how are we going to do it? We got to retrain, you got to train, you got to attract, you got to staff. I only have a minute and a half left, but if we want people to come here, how do you get them to come here, leaving politics aside? You got to pay them maybe more money. You got to maybe not charge them more money in taxes. You got to make affordability measures that work for them. All things that are not happening right now in this province.

Taxes have gone up on the middle class. Education property taxes took the largest increase in educational property taxes in the history of this province are happening right now. How are we going to attract people to this province? We need people here, we don't need them to be cut. It is simple. I have had constituents who have reached out to me, constituents reach out to me, calling me, crying that they were going to get it done and now it's been cancelled. They're not going to get it done, and what is the answer?

And what do I tell them? I'm sorry, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that there is no plan? That politics outweigh your right, your health, your choices?

It's a shame. I hope that this resolution sheds some light on members opposite and on our side that we don't always need to be partisan. We can put people first. I hope we can. I hope in eight and a half minutes or nine and a half minutes, that I haven't taken any shots politically across the aisle, because this is about people.

In closing, I want to thank all the health-care workers. I want to thank you for what you're doing. I want to thank you for making Manitoba better. I want to thank you for sacrificing so much of your time, of your life, of your health to make sure everyone in Manitoba is healthier.

Thank you.

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today representing Fort Richmond and put some words on the record.

I want to thank the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) for providing this opportunity so I can talk about a

milestone announcement that our NDP government announced yesterday.

Yesterday, I was honoured to stand alongside the Premier (Mr. Kinew), Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) and a number of my colleagues to announce a major investment in Fort Richmond: opening a new emergency room and reopening the Mature Women's Centre at Victoria Hospital and building the Anne Oake family recovery centre.

Since the previous PC government closed the emergency room in 2017, for too long, people in Fort Richmond and south Winnipeg have gone without emergency care in their community. In Fort Richmond, I have heard from numerous people that having emergency care closer to home is an important to them, especially Victoria Hospital, which is known as the community hospital for long-term residents in south Winnipeg.

People in Fort Richmond, including many seniors residing in my community, have been in contact with my office regarding the state of health care. They want positive changes, not just for themselves, but for their entire community. My role as their MLA has always included advocating for the community, and I want to ensure that everyone in south Winnipeg has accessible and timely health care.

Our Manitoba NDP team has been working hard to make that happen, and yesterday's announcement on Victoria Hospital's new ER and reopening the Mature Women's Centre is truly the—important step forward. We are bringing back life-saving health services to south Winnipeg.

Rebuilding our health-care system also means staffing up the system and changing the culture in health care. Improving the environment for health-care workers has the—has a direct impact on the care patients receive. I am personally acquainted with many health-care aides.

Many health-care aides are visible minorities who tirelessly do critical front-line work and are often left out of the discussions about the importance of health-care work. I want to acknowledge all of the hard work that health-care aides and all support staff do in the medical system and thank them for their steadfast dedication. I acknowledge the dietary aides, home-care attendants, housekeepers, unit clerks, porters, tradespeople and all the others who are so important as the pillars of our health-care system.

Just like in the school system, school support workers are critical to keep schools running every day. In health-care system, hospitals cannot run without health-care aides and support workers.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to make a personal note today. My mother-in-law is in Victoria Hospital right now. I want to personally thank all the hospital staff at Victoria Hospital who take care of my mother-in-law and all the other patients every day. The staff are very professional and kind. Thank you very much.

And thank you to our entire NDP team for making health care such a big priority for the entire community. Again, these investments in south Winnipeg make it clear that our NDP government not only listens to Manitobans, but acts to make life better for everyone.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I'm very pleased to rise and speak on the legislation brought forward from my colleague.

I represent the area of Selkirk and St. Andrews. The area is a vast area reaching many distances and serving the people of the Interlake, so not just those communities.

* (11:50)

And in that area, prior to 2016, we had an older decrepit hospital that had tremendous issues from foundation issues, respiratory issues where there was mould in the ductwork and the air that the people would breathe.

And this was not—just happened in 2016, this happened many years prior. And this affected a lot of people that were employed in the health-care system—the doctors, the nurses, the front-line staff. It affected the patients and the care that they received. It affected everything from the dietitians to the people who cleaned the hospitals.

And this was going on for a number of years, where all these groups were getting sick by going to work. They were calling on the government at the time, the NDP government, to help them. To help them move forward and get a new hospital, to get something done so they could have a good-quality environment for people to come for emergencies, to come for surgeries, to come for recovery, to come and get well, and then themselves would be in a safe environment where they can conduct their duties on a daily basis.

Back at that time, there was one surgeon for the area, a very busy surgeon, with phenomenal staff that were dedicated and show up every day. And it's our health-care workers from the front lines to the people who clean the hospital rooms, to the people who do the linens, every member that walks through those doors of the organization is truly valued in my heart. They are the true heroes of our health-care system that show up every day and work tirelessly.

And after many, many years of pleading, begging, small Band-Aid repairs, some different ductwork brought in, it was deemed that the hospital, yes, was not safe, and there would be one moving forward. Everybody was extremely excited. There was ribbon-cutting ceremonies and sod-turning events, and there was news across the local papers, and the media was out discussing this wonderful hospital to be built in Selkirk.

And I remember witnessing there, as my private business wasn't that far away, I drive by the hospital site every day. And I remember the days that the concrete piles were being pounded into the ground. We stopped and we took some pictures. I have family in the health-care industry, and we talked about how this would be such a boost for Selkirk, such a boost for the Interlake, how people now won't have to travel to Winnipeg, they'll have a first-class health facility right in Selkirk that they can attend.

And we watched for months as those massive concrete piers were pounded into the ground, and they're sticking out of the ground all over the place. And then nothing. Nothing happened for years. We had a project beyond shovel-ready. It was approved. The funds were there. It was moving forward, and nothing happened for years.

In 2016, when the Pallister government came in place, they had a couple of choices to make. Do we move forward with a number of projects? And they said Selkirk is definitely a priority. But it wasn't partisan politics, it was just doing what was right for the people. The right—what's right for the people in the industry, what's right for the patients that are going to be attending there.

And I know; I'm one. My children have been born in the Selkirk general hospital. Wonderful, wonderful people there attending to my wife and to my children. And I've been there for different emergencies along the way, and they do a phenomenal job, and now we're going to have a facility. But the facility didn't address any future needs. The facility didn't add one bed,

didn't add one emergency room station, it didn't add anything for the ambulances.

So the government had a choice: Do we stop the project and try to get it right, or do we just move forward? They said, let's move forward and let's adjust as we go.

So when I look at Selkirk and what we do to recognize the patients and the amazing caregivers that we have in our health industry, we do a phenomenal job. We got the hospital built. And if you haven't been out to Selkirk to look at that hospital, please, come for a trip. We'll take you for a hot dog over at Skinner's and we'll go there, and we'll take a look at this gorgeous hospital. It is state of the art. There is elements in that hospital that are just calming and they bring about a sense of health and wellness for the patients.

The staff of the hospital are very excited. They talk about what this has done for the community. But we're—we didn't stop there. The PC government said, that's not enough; let's add on. They expanded on the hospital. They made it larger. This is an amazing facility that takes care of thousands and thousands of people. We have two MRIs in there now. We have full diagnostic imaging happening. We have not one surgeon; there is half a dozen surgeons living right in Selkirk.

And what do we do for these health-care workers? Now we're sticking some of them back in the old hospital to work. We're saying, you know what? We've got a great facility here, but you're not welcome here anymore. We're going to stick you back in the old facility with the mould, with the foundation issues. We need to take a look at what's right for the people in our communities, our provinces, our health, our seniors, our children, people being born and make sure that we address it and put patients over politics. This is what exactly this was about.

Thank you.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I thank the members opposite for the opportunity to continue to talk about health care because, you know, we spent the morning so far talking about rocks, and it's about time we got to something that Manitobans, you know, really do rely on every single day.

I am being heckled by members opposite.

I asked a question earlier today to the member that brought this resolution forward; brought attention to the fact that oftentimes, and actually more often than

not on this side of the House, the personal is political. Many of us don't have the privilege to ignore how political the personal really is. You can't separate the two. That's why the folks here on this side of the House are here. That's why Manitoba elected our government.

And that's why I'm here to stand against people who think that the care sector is an industry. It's not an industry. There are people who work within the care sector to care for people that should not be viewed as commodities, should not be viewed as a bottom line, should not be viewed as merely a position that needs to be cut.

And I'm continuing to be heckled by members opposite who stripped international students of their health care. And now they want to say that health care is not political. Lives are political. Keeping human beings alive is a political thing, and people don't have the privilege to ignore that.

Patient care doesn't become a non-political issue simply because it doesn't match their politics, Honourable Deputy Speaker. Manitobans know that; that's why we're in government.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, thousands of jobs were deleted under the previous government; thousands of jobs. And health-care workers tell us to this day, verbatim, we are still hurting because of what the PCs did in the '90s and the hole that they dug even deeper when they were in government, these past seven and a half years.

And while they continue to heckle and say that what I say is not true, it demonstrates just how out of touch they are with what is actually happening on the ground, Honourable Deputy Speaker. There is real work that we have to get done and our government is doing it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister of—oh, okay.

When this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

The hour being 12 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 25, 2024

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