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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| ADAMS, Danielle | Thompson | NDP |
| ALTOMARE, Nello | Transcona | NDP |
| ASAGWARA, Uzoma | Union Station | NDP |
| BRAR, Diljeet | Burrows | NDP |
| BUSHIE, Ian | Keewatinook | NDP |
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| WOWCHUK, Rick | Swan River | PC |
| <i>Vacant</i> | Fort Whyte | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 14, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

As a reminder to the House, as previously announced, I will be interrupting debate at 10:50 this morning to put the question on the third official opposition selected bill, Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Will you please call for second reading Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, to be divided from 10 a.m. to 10:35 a.m., and from 10:35 a.m. to 10:50 third reading and concurrence of Bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, from 10 to 10:35, followed by concurrence and third reading from 10:35 to 10:50 of Bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 207—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore call second reading of Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), that Bill 207, the abortion buffer—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Johns, seconded by the honourable member for Union Station, that Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm pleased to get up this morning and put some words on the record in respect of Bill 207, the protest—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act.

Madam Speaker, Bill 207 is the third attempt at trying to create legislation that would protect Manitobans accessing reproductive health care and protecting those individuals that are on the front lines of providing reproductive health care from anti-choice protestors.

I first introduced similar legislation back in 2018: bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act. We had a vote on bill 200 on December 6th, 2018, and members opposite stood in this House during the recorded vote and stood against protecting Manitobans' right to access health care safely—each and every one of the members here.

I again introduced the bill—bill 216—in 2020. Of course, that bill died because of—we're in the midst of a global pandemic and there were bills that died.

I introduced Bill 207 this year, Madam Speaker, with the hopes that the members opposite, that the PCs of Manitoba will actually get on the right side of history and actually will stand in support of Manitobans' right to access reproductive health care and stand in support of Manitobans who provide that service, that they get on the right side of history and that they stand today in support of Bill 207.

Governments have a responsibility to protect their citizens and governments protect their citizens in a variety of different ways. And we've seen other Canadian governments across the country take a stand to protect citizens accessing reproductive health care, including abortion services. We've seen provinces—BC, Ontario, Alberta and Quebec—institute legislation meant to protect their citizens in accessing reproductive health care and their citizens that are providing that health care by establishing abortion buffer zones in their provinces.

And, you know, for the purposes of those that may not know or understand what a buffer zone is, they're intended to limit how close anti-choice protestors get to citizens that are accessing these spaces.

And I'll remind Manitobans and I'll remind the House that there are currently four facilities that offer abortion services here in Manitoba.

And right now—actually, as we speak—for the last several weeks we've had anti-choice protestors stationed outside the Women's Hospital, and it's some, they're called—what are they called here—voice or forty—40 Days for Life. And so it's a group that for 40 days will stand outside the Women's Hospital, including the Women's Health Clinic, which weeks ago these same individuals, these same anti-choice protestors, parked themselves right outside the doors of the Women's Health Clinic and in a similar fashion at the Women's Hospital are, you know, protesting and walking back and forth and getting in the way of citizens accessing that particular health care—or any health care, in the circumstance of the Women's Hospital.

In fact, a couple of weeks ago at the Women's Health Clinic, these anti-choice protestors actually got in the way and tried to prevent a citizen from getting into the doors of the Women's Health Clinic so that they wouldn't, you know, do whatever they think that they were doing.

I think it's important to note, as well, that the anti-choice protestors that stand in front of the health—the Women's Hospital are getting in the way of citizens accessing a whole bunch, a whole array of reproductive health. Not every single Manitoban who is going through the front doors of the Women's Hospital is there to access an abortion. They are there to maybe have a baby. Maybe they're there because they've had a miscarriage. Maybe they're there because they're visiting their relative who just had a stillbirth. Maybe they're there accessing reproductive tests. Maybe they're there for a Pap smear. Maybe they're there for a whole host of reasons that Manitobans try to access the Women's Hospital, and they have to make their way through these anti-choice protestors.

*(10:10)

Again, you know, buffer zones around facilities that offer abortion services are meant to prevent the obstruction of accessing health care, vandalism, picketing, harassment, intimidation and, in some cases,

violence against—again, I want to stress the importance of this—citizens accessing health care. Whether or not members opposite understand it or appreciate it or care about it, I, as a citizen, have the right to access abortion any time I want, however I want, as many times as I want, without being harassed by anti-choice protestors.

And, Madam Speaker, this is what Bill 207 is about—207. We amended 207 when we introduced it, you know, from the previous bills because, actually, what we've seen as well, is anti-choice protestors targeting schools.

And, in fact, I shared briefly here that my son called me one day after question period and he said, Mom, do you know what happened at school today? And I said, no. And he said there were anti-choice protestors that had parked themselves right at the McDonald's, where everybody goes to go get lunch, and he says they had these really gross signs. And he said there ended up being a fight between students and these anti-choice protestors.

Madam Speaker, keep in mind, these anti-choice protestors are grown adults. And they're here at schools harassing 12-year-olds and 13-year-olds and 14-year-olds about not getting an abortion. And so we changed the legislation to include schools, that anti-choice protestors would have to stay within, you know, 50 to 150 metres of any school. Adults have no business going to harass students at schools.

In my last couple of minutes, let me say this—and I've said this many, many times in this House—and this message is to all of the anti-choice protestors: You are more than welcome to protest at the Leg. any time you want. Leave Manitobans alone who are accessing health care, who it is their right to access health care, no matter if you agree with whatever health care they're accessing. That's none of your business. Manitobans have the right to access whatever health care they need and deem appropriate for their own bodies.

I ask the members in this House to consider Bill 207. I ask them to seriously consider whether or not they want to get up in the House this morning and vote against Manitobans' right to access health care. If they want to continue to be on the wrong side of history in a debate that actually shouldn't even be a debate, I ask them to consider this. I ask them to get up on this vote—on this bill and vote in favour.

Miigwech.

Questions

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

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I want to thank my colleague across the way for bringing in this legislation. I think it is a fundamental right of any woman in this province to access any reproductive services that they wish to, at any point. But specific to that, the issue with the legislation—and I only ask this for the member, in order to ensure that its applicability goes to her intent—and that is Charter issues.

So, whether or not—the member did reference that this is available, I believe, modelled after BC, Alberta and Quebec—whether or not the member has any constitutional analysis so that we can ensure that if this legislation would be passed, that it is going to be effective to protect women and their partners during this difficult time?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So I do want to just respectfully remind every member in the House that it is not only women that choose abortion or access abortion. It is all Manitobans. And so I just want to be very cautious with the language that we use so that we use language that is more inclusive, Madam Speaker.

Again, this bill is not saying to Manitobans that you can't protest. We're not infringing on the right to protest. What we're saying is, you can't protest right here. You can't get in the way of an individual who's accessing health care. You're more than welcome to protest 15 metres away.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley.

Does the honourable member for Wolseley have a question?

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Yes, thank you.

I want to thank my colleague for bringing forward this important bill. As someone who has had to walk through protestors in order simply to get to work in a health-care facility, I really appreciate it.

And I'm wondering if she can tell us if there's similar buffer zone legislation in other parts of Canada.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech to my colleague from Wolseley.

Yes, there is other governments across the country that have stood on the side of right and instituted legislation that will protect citizens in accessing health care and staff that are going to work. Again, I remind folks that that is British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta and Quebec. Those governments stood on the side of right and said that we're going to protect our citizens accessing health care.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I thank the MLA for St. Johns for bringing this forward. I support this effort. I think it's really important. Our caucus supports it.

Madam Speaker, I do have one question just for clarification. Clause 8(3) says that the earlier clauses don't apply to anything done in the cause of—course of person's work at a school site. I presume that would mean that it wouldn't apply to teachers teaching in the school and doing their ordinary work?

Ms. Fontaine: No, it does not.

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Last week the member opposite introduced Bill 239, which would create protest buffer zones around all medical facilities.

Why call this bill when you could create protest buffers around hospitals and all public health services provided with bill 39 which you plan on bringing forward?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, again, it's important to recognize that I introduced this bill before we actually saw anti-vax protestors, something that I don't—and I've said it before—I don't think any of use would have imagined that we would have seen a day where anti-vax protestors would have protested in front of a hospital.

And so, you know, I think that Bill 239 is an important bill, and if 239 is—comes into force, then certainly that will also mitigate some of anti-choice protests that we see in front of hospitals and other facilities.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I thank the member for St. Johns for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward.

We all know, or we should all be aware, that Black and Indigenous and people of colour are disproportionately impacted by barriers in our health-care system. And as such, it would be folks who would

be even more so disadvantaged by the barriers put in place to accessing health care by these protestors.

Can the member explain the significance of this bill as it relates to the impacts on Black, Indigenous and peoples—people of colour?

Ms. Fontaine: I thank the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) for their question.

We've seen recently, particularly in response to what we've seen in Texas and other US states who have instituted incredibly archaic, repressive legislation effectively banning abortion, we've seen that, fundamentally, those impact directly more on Black, Indigenous and POC individuals. And if you take out the factor of anti-protest—anti-choice protestors who stand in the way of accessing health care, it certainly will go a long way to ensure that BIPOC are able to access that health care.

* (10:20)

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): In the recent federal election, all party leaders stated that the issue of abortion was settled in Canada.

Would the member agree that the hyper-politicization of this issue is triggering to women and individuals who have required this service?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, I'm glad that the member brought that up. I will remind the member and everybody in this House that it was only just in June that a bunch of Conservative MPs brought forward anti-abortion legislation and, actually, that's the seventh time that Conservative MPs have brought forward anti-abortion legislation since 2007. So, while men will say the debate is over, we still have individuals that sit in these buildings who would like us to not have that right in here in Canada.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) have another question?

Ms. Naylor: I would like to ask the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine): Why does she think the government would oppose such sensible legislation that simply seeks to protect Manitobans of all genders who are seeking health care?

Ms. Fontaine: I think that's a really good question from the member for Wolseley.

You know, the only thing that I can understand—or the only thing that I can come up with, is why members opposite would stand in the House and not support a bill like this, is because they're capitulating to their base. And instead of standing for the rights of

all Manitobans, they would prefer to capitulate to their base and hopefully ensuring their next election.

Politicians who only care about the next election don't do well in the history books of our country.

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the member for St. Johns has already spoken to this, but I would really appreciate her expanding a bit on the fact that gender-diverse peoples, people of all identities, do in fact require access to reproductive health services and are also disproportionately impacted by barriers that are put in place in their efforts in accessing those services.

So I'm wondering if the member for St. Johns has any message she'd like to share specifically to gender-diverse folks who are accessing reproductive services?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech to the member for Union Station for that question.

Everybody has the right to access health care, and I think that we have seen, even this morning, the language is not inclusive to ensure that our health care responds to the diverse needs of Manitobans. And, you know, my hope would be that we would change, as a start, the language that we use in this facility, in this Legislature, which goes a long way to ensuring that there's equity and inclusion and respect within our health-care system.

Madam Speaker: I see the member for Wolseley might have another question.

Ms. Naylor: Just one final question for the member for St. Johns.

Can you tell us of any incidents in the past in Manitoba or other places in this country that suggest this bill could help protect those seeking health-care services and service providers from violent attacks?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for that, and, again I think I noted it in my previous speech that even—and I was just speaking with someone from the Women's Health Clinic just this morning who indicated that a couple of weeks ago there were anti-choice protestors in front of the Women's Health Clinic and that one of the Manitobans that was trying to access the Women's Health Clinic was actually physically being stopped and harassed from accessing health care.

And, again, this bill is about ensuring the protection of Manitobans, that they can freely, respectfully and safely access health care, no matter whether or not people agree with it. Again, it's nobody's business.

And so, I hope that members will stand up today and get on the side of right.

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

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): It is my pleasure to rise this morning and make a few comments on Bill 207, the abortion protest buffer act.

Again, I applaud the member for bringing this issue forward, in terms of highlighting some of the challenges that Manitobans face when accessing legally accessible reproductive services here in our province. I don't think any individual should have to face any kind of harassment when accessing any service, whether it is educational, whether it is medical, whether it is government.

And so I think it is incumbent upon us as a government and as MLAs to work together to look at this situation to determine how can we best address the two opposing issues of the Charter of right, in terms of freedom of speech and freedom to protest, as well as, obviously, the very, very legitimate right of an individual to access health-care services—in this case, as the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) highlights, abortion protestors or reproductive rights.

I do know that the member opposite has said, and I will quote: We know that Manitobans have the right to protest and have the right to dissent. End quote.

And another quote from the member of St. Johns, quote: Manitobans have a right to protest peacefully, without fear of punishment. End quote.

I only put those on the record, Madam Speaker, not to dissuade the member from pursuing this legislation, but to highlight the fact that this legislation, when—any instance where we're talking about Charter issues, does become difficult.

However, I do agree with the member that any individual that wants to highlight their perspective—whether it is on health-care services, whether it's on education, whether it's on infrastructure, whether it's on rabbit ears—can come here to the Manitoba Legislature and protest to their heart's content. This is the people's building. This is where those protests should be occurring.

I look forward to working with members opposite to see how can we make sure that this legislation not only protects those individuals seeking medical

services in terms of reproductive services, but how can we take a look at this legislation to expand it to all medical services, whether it is a child simply attending a hospital for chemotherapy, whether it is a—whether it is the individual going for a hip replacement surgery—all those individuals. Whatever capacity you are entering or engaging in the medical system, that right has to be protected in terms of free from harassment and free access to those services.

So with those brief comments, Madam Speaker, I thank you, and I thank you for your time.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on debate.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): No, Madam Speaker, I don't have any debate.

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

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): This bill zones in on the fact that there is a public safety need to enforce women's access to reproductive health centres. Common forms of anti-abortion protest include the distribution of leaflets exaggerating the risks of abortion, public prayer, hymns, chanting, displays of posters including images of aborted fetuses, verbal harassment of patients and health professionals.

Here in Winnipeg, in 1997, unspeakable violence hit home when abortion provider, Dr. Jack Fainman, head of gynecology and obstetrics at Victoria hospital, was shot at home by a sniper. The shooter was a hired professional assassin who had been stalking and laid in wait for Dr. Fainman, who hid and camped near the water for days near Fagie and Jack's riverfront home in St. Vital. Jack was watching TV and happened to move to change the channel just as he got shot.

I happened to know more about these details about this terrible incident because the Fainmans are close family friends. Jack delivered my younger siblings and Fagie was a good friend of my mother's, involved in solidarity and social justice movement issues. We would go to their house for a potluck lunch every Boxing Day and Fagie would make her signature dish: soy sauce, ginger salmon steaks on the grill on their deck. Jack's favourite part of his job was helping to deliver babies. He estimated that he helped deliver about 10,000 babies. And after Jack got shot, he never worked again.

* (10:30)

Opponents of buffer zones around abortion clinics often cite the importance of freedom of speech and the right to protest. The former premier, Brian Pallister, has said in the House that he opposes buffer zones because it would lead to an infringement on the freedom of speech. But having the right to freedom of speech does not mean a person has a right to say whatever they want, whenever they want, without consequence. While protest activity is a sign of democratic health, the right to protest is not boundless. We know you can't yell fire in a crowded theatre, and you can't protest in the gallery of the Legislature. These are reasonable limits to the right of free speech. And they help other important rights such as the right to access health care.

Consider an analogy illustrated by Dr. Arianne Shahvisi: I am opposed to the existence of private education and would like to see private education sector abolished. However, loitering outside private schools attempting to rouse feelings of guilt or fear in children and their parents is morally problematic even though I maintain that their choices are morally troubling. The most effective place to take those grievances is to those with the power to determine whether or not private schools exist, politicians or independent schools associations.

Now, I have been participating in many protests. Protest action is meant to be loud, defiant and disruptive. Our objective in protesting is for the authorities to pay attention to us and for us to be difficult to ignore. Protest is distinguished from harassment by its focus on influential individuals and institutions whose power renders them reasonably invulnerable to intimidation and makes them good strategic targets for demanding change. An example of this was when the Child Care Coalition protested near then-Minister Stefanson's constituency office last summer; other types—the Minister of Families—I'm sorry.

The staple tactics of anti-abortion activism fit neither of these models. Their target is specific. They seek interactions with individual pregnant patients or health professionals. Women and health-care professionals are regularly demonized and called murderers. Combined with the inevitable distress of an unwanted pregnancy, this makes abortion patients vulnerable, and intimidating them and their health-care providers is not protest, it's bullying. If they'd like to see reform, anti-choice protesters should focus their efforts on lobbying those who hold power, like the government or medical professional bodies.

This government should be protecting patients and health-care providers. All patients ought to be able to access medical treatment without intimidation and with their confidentiality upheld.

This past weekend, I read a Winnipeg Free Press article commemorating the Winnipeg health clinic here in Winnipeg—the Women's Health Clinic here in Winnipeg. Health-care providers described incidents of women being photographed entering or leaving clinics. This is a patent violation of confidentiality and has been cited by patients as the primary reason why they oppose the presence of anti-abortion protesters outside facilities.

The tactics of anti-abortion activities should not be classified as protest; rather, they are intent on capitalizing on vulnerability. It may be that anti-abortion protesters recognize their poor odds in lobbying a government elected to represent a public that is majority pro-choice. A majority of the Canadian public are satisfied with the country's abortion policies, a new poll says.

The DART & Maru/Blue Voice Canada Poll released in December 2019 says 75 per cent of Canadians were satisfied with Canada's abortion policies. And when it comes to the issue of abortion as a whole, Canadians largely find abortion acceptable at 70 per cent, and only 10 per cent of those surveyed find abortion unacceptable, with 11 per cent not caring either way and 10 per cent saying they didn't have an opinion at all.

And, Madam Speaker, when asked if the government should reopen the issue for discussion, Canadians largely said, no thanks, with 71 per cent indicating that things should be left as that they are and only 10 per cent indicated the opposite.

If buffer zones are introduced, they will not affect anti-abortion activists' right to protest. They remain welcome to fight, to take their fight to the Legislature, medical associations, their various media platforms. Buffer zones around abortion clinics would remove rights that they never had to start with: to intimidate patients and to treat women as incapable of making decisions about their own bodies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hour being 10:35, I am interrupting debate on this bill, and, as noted earlier, the question will be put at 10:50.

**CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 232—The Emancipation Day Act**

Madam Speaker: As previously announced, we will now consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 232. So I will now call concurrence and third reading of Bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I move, seconded by the member from Union Station, that Bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act; Loi sur le Jour de l'émancipation, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Moses: It's my pleasure to speak on third reading on The Emancipation Day Act. I'm very excited about this bill and what it means for Manitoba, and what it means for, specifically, for the Black community here in our province.

First, I just want to take a minute—moment to thank those who have been supporting this bill in the community for the past several months. I've worked with wonderful community members who've brought this idea forward, who have been pushing for this.

People involved in Black History Manitoba as well as people involved in ACOMI and other—many other institutions and individuals have reached out and been—shown very positive support in this bill which is not only heartwarming but it's also inspiring that people can rally around a bill, rally around a cause to educate all of us that—that aims to educate all of us, that aims to celebrate an achievement of freedom, that helps to educate all of us on it and helps to ensure that we have opportunities to provide better living conditions, more equitable living conditions for so many of us in Manitoba.

I especially want to thank the individuals who spoke at the public committee just the other night; mainly, Rosemary Sadlier, who has been a key advocate for Emancipation Day across the country for over 25 years. Rosemary's been—worked in Ontario to lobby and advocate for the recognition of Emancipation Day in Ontario as a province. She started in 1985 and worked regularly on this through her various groups that she's been associated with, until it finally came—became law and passed in Ontario in 2008.

She also worked and was one of the key advocates in helping the national—the federal motion be passed just in this spring of 2021. And the work that she's put

in has been noteworthy and very special because she's taken on a lot of the legwork and voiced a lot of issues, and the thoughts and the feelings of many Black Canadians. So I thank her for supporting and speaking toward this bill on Tuesday evening.

I also want to thank 'Segun Olude, who spoke very passionately in supporting this bill, who spoke about the way that we can use this bill to educate those around us and use it as a way to reflect on the history, even though it might not be so good, even though it is something that we would often be shameful of and try to hide, but recognizing that it is as important to acknowledge, to talk about, to understand and to share that history as it is any other part of our Canadian history and that only by doing so, can we ensure we have a better way forward—a better path forward.

And 'Segun Olude was able to connect that also with our future, painting a picture of how we can live as a future and how we can use Emancipation Day in Manitoba to allow ourselves to have a better and brighter future. So I wanted to thank some of those individuals as well as many other individuals who have supported this bill.

* (10:40)

I also want to just thank those who tuned in to the Emancipation Day celebration that I held this past August 1st. This past August 1st, we held an online virtual Emancipation Day celebration which was a—you know, I think a wonderful event. Some powerful speakers spoke about the history, Black history here specifically in Manitoba, who spoke about how this can be used to show the strength, the resilience of the Black community in our province, and really showed us how it can be a path for us to achieve greater things moving forward in our future. So I thank those all who took part in that, and who also watched it. And I think that that sets a good tone and a good platform for us to expand and evolve our celebrations for Emancipation Day in the coming years.

Again, I've made this comment before, but I want to reiterate again that Emancipation Day is for me really a celebration of freedom, a celebration of breaking away from slavery. It's a celebration of us learning our history, our complete history, one that includes the stories—often forgotten stories—of Black Canadians, of Black enslaved Canadians. And one that now needs to be told, now needs to be understood, so that we can better reflect a more inclusive future.

And I hope that that future includes more discussions of ways that we can ensure the interests

and the rights and the conditions—both economically and socially—for Black people in our province are dealt with and addressed in this Chamber by all legislators. I want to ensure that that is kept in mind as we discuss this bill. And by making this Emancipation Day an annual bill, it allows us to always have that thought process in our mind, not only as legislators but as Manitobans who are looking at ways to make our communities more inclusive.

And so I'll leave my comments there right now, Madam Speaker, and just conclude by saying that I am excited and hopeful that by passing this bill unanimously, we can set ourselves at embarking on a brighter future, more inclusive future, and a future that understands where we've been entirely as a country and as a province, and that can use Emancipation Day as a tool to better the lives of all Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It is a pleasure to speak to this important bill. I commend the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses) on bringing it forward and appreciate his work on it and his contributions to this House, and reflect on the election of 2019 which saw three Black members of the Legislature elected: the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), the member for St. Vital and the member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon). And, obviously, their contributions have been very important.

I think this day is important and I appreciate, as the member for St. Vital said, that this is really about freedom, and it acknowledges the—our stained past as a country. The slavery that existed on this soil many years ago but nevertheless has ramifications even today and yet looks forward with hope to a future where our generations will be able to love one another as we're supposed to, to recognize that we are all made in the image of God—we're all equal—and to take a stand against racism. So I think that's what this day does is it's a marker. And I'm very happy to support it.

I'm obviously someone who loves history, I don't know if that's obvious but I do love history. And I spent some time just reflecting on Canada's Black history. And of course Black history is Canadian history. And reflecting on the contributions made by Canada's Black population, by Blacks as well as some of the discrimination, the racism and the institutional harm that was inflicted on them. And so I learned that and it was King Louis XIV who authorized slavery in 1709 when he permitted his Canadian subjects to own slaves. And the British when they conquered New France in 1760 in the articles of capitulation continued

this legal recognition, or this—the practice, of Blacks and Pawnee Indians remaining slaves.

And despite that, there were voices, obviously, who saw that slavery was unconscionably wrong, and so you see how that in the American rebellion—the American Revolution, how that Canada developed a reputation for being a safe haven and actually they were promised land, freedom and some other items by the British if they would come to the British side. And so you saw actually it was British commander-in-chief Sir Guy Carleton who guaranteed that all slaves would be formally requested—who formally requested British protection would be freed. And so an estimated 100,000 Blacks fled to the British side during the American Revolution.

And this reputation grew again in the War of 1812 when Blacks again came to Canada to fight before—for their freedom and against the institution of slavery which was very active and very much alive in the United States at the time. So some interesting elements, some, obviously—1793 is when the governor, Simcoe, instituted a—he took the job on the condition that he said, you know, slavery was discrimination, he wouldn't stand for that, and so when he came in in 1793 instituted a gradual prohibition on slavery.

And so our past as a country is mixed. We certainly must acknowledge those elements that are egregious and intolerable. We can't let those elements happen again. But at the same time I think this bill also, as I said, sets that marker for us to remember these things but also to remember the contributions that our very multicultural and diverse population makes to this country, and to celebrate that and celebrate people of different backgrounds and cultures and ethnicities.

And so I'm happy to support this bill. I would just want to reflect to on some of the discourse around systemic racism. And, of course, our institutions, which in some cases are many hundreds of years old, have evolved over time and they need to continue to evolve. And as we see, of course, we acknowledge we're not perfect and there's many things about our country that need to change and some of that is coming to light. And, of course, we need to continue to ensure that our institutions do change, that there is no systemic racism, that there's no racism that's perpetuated by our—or harmful practices, racist practices that are perpetuated by our institutions on minorities or members of any cultural background.

But at the same time I think the issue goes much deeper, and I think of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was a French philosopher who in many ways inspired the French Revolution, who said that man is everywhere in chains. And I as a Conservative philosophically believe that the problem actually goes much deeper than that, that yes, there are harms that our institutions inflict—may inflict on us, but also I believe it's a matter of the heart. And you see that where we've abolished—slavery has been abolished at—from this continent and we've been free from the institution of slavery for about 160 years—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. In accordance with rule 24 and as previously announced, I'm interrupting this debate to put the question on the third official opposition selected bill.

* (10:50)

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

(Continued)

Bill 207—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act

(Continued)

Madam Speaker: The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion, agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

As a reminder for all members about recorded votes, for virtual sittings of the House, we are required to conduct votes in a different manner than during normal sittings of the House.

For members of the House, the vote will be conducted in a manner similar to our previous practice. For this part of the vote, those in favour will stand to be counted first, followed by those against.

I will note for members that we have modified this system in one respect: once the page states that—the name of the member standing to be counted, the Clerk will acknowledge that the member has voted by repeating the member's name, rather than saying aye.

Once the count in the House is complete, we will conduct an alphabetical roll call of members participating virtually. For this part of the process, the page will call each remote member's name alphabetically, and then each remote member must audibly state their vote, responding clearly with either I vote yes or I vote no. The Clerk will then respond with the member's name, followed by yes or no.

Finally, after the bells stop ringing for any vote, the moderator and the table will need to take a moment to verify that all members listed as remote are actually present on screen and in their seats and are therefore eligible to vote.

This delay should be brief but is necessary to confirm who can vote because, for remote members, being seated before the camera is the equivalent of members being in their assigned seats in the Chamber when the bells stop ringing.

The question before the House, then, is Bill 207, The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Adams, Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Fontaine, Gerrard, Kinew, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Moses, Naylor, Sala, Sandhu, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Friesen, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 20, Nays 30.

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Madam Speaker: In accordance with the Sessional Order passed by this House on October 7th, 2021, I will now put the question on concurrence and third reading of Bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

(Continued)

Bill 232—The Emancipation Day Act

(Continued)

Madam Speaker: The question before the House, then, is concurrence and third reading of Bill 232.

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

I declare the motion carried—passed.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, please.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 232, The Emancipation Day Act.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Adams, Altomare, Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cox, Cullen, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Gordon, Guenter, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamont, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Moses, Naylor, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Sala, Sandhu, Schuler, Smith (Lagimodière), Smook, Teitsma, Wasyliw, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk.

Nays

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 50, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare that the motion is accordingly passed.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 30—Calling on the Provincial Government to Implement a Consistent Vaccine Mandate at the Manitoba Legislative Building

Madam Speaker: The hour being past 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions, the resolution before us this morning is the resolution on calling upon the provincial government to implement a consistent vaccine mandate at the Manitoba Legislative Building, brought forward by the honourable member for Concordia.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine),

WHEREAS COVID-19 vaccinations are safe and effective and can keep Manitobans from getting the—and spreading the virus; and

WHEREAS COVID-19 vaccines reduce serious illness from COVID-19 and are highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death, including against variant strains of the virus; and

WHEREAS stringent public health restrictions are in place that do not allow unvaccinated people inside public buildings such as restaurants, movie theatres, sports stadiums, and other Manitoba businesses; and

WHEREAS other provinces have implemented stringent and effective vaccine mandates or testing requirements for anyone entering their legislators—legislatures, including Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario; and

WHEREAS there is currently no official requirement for—or process for confirming the vaccination status for anyone entering the Legislative Building; and

WHEREAS there are new and stringent security measures in place for entering the Manitoba Legislative Building, but no measures ensuring that the hundreds of people entering the building every day, including Members of the Legislative Assembly, are vaccinated against COVID-19; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government should mandate that all people, including every member of the PC caucus, be vaccinated to enter the Manitoba Legislative Building; and

WHEREAS not requiring vaccinations for people entering the Manitoba Legislative Building undermines the authority of Manitoba Public Health and their efforts to keep Manitobans safe.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to implement and enforce a vaccine mandate for all people entering the Manitoba Legislative Building, including PC caucus members, to ensure the safety of Manitobans.

Motion presented.

* (11:10)

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I appreciate the opportunity to spend some time debating this here today, but it does still—I have to say—surprise me that we are at, you know, in this place, in this debate, in this province.

Because, you know, when I go out and I talk to constituents in my neighbourhood, they have been following the rules from day one. You know, they have been listening to public health, they've been listening to Dr. Roussin, they've been listening to the science across the board and from around the world. They have been following the rules because they understand that if they follow the rules, if they listen to the science, if they listen to the good advice of public health, that they are actually not just helping themselves, but they're doing a service to their family members that they love and to their community.

And that's where Manitobans have been, right from day one. They have stood together to say: I am willing to do what I need to do, I'm willing to stay in lockdown, I'm willing to miss out on important family events and life events, I'm willing to make that sacrifice, I won't go to a restaurant and get my favourite meal, support a local business, I won't go see a sporting event; they did that for a year and a half. And so when those vaccines were available to them, what did they do? They also listened to the science and also listened to the public health and went and did their duty as citizens to make sure that they were protecting themselves and their neighbours. They did that every step of the way.

And, you know, I'm so thankful for those people who have made those sacrifices. You know, I can say in my own life, you know, there have been some family events that we've missed and some milestones for my kids, but you know what, that pales into—in comparison to some of the sacrifices that have been made by our health-care front-line workers, that have been made, you know, by people who have lost loved ones and haven't been able to go to funerals. Like, it is—the sacrifices are almost immeasurable, and I do think that it's going to take a long time for us as a province to digest just, you know, the pain and the hurt

that we've gone through, the stress that people have gone through. But we've done it.

And so what a slap in the face it has been for this PC caucus to not ask a very simple thing of their members, and that is to stand with Manitobans, to ensure you get your vaccine and to show leadership to this province. How unbelievably disrespectful can you be to your constituents, to every single Manitoban, by saying, well that's—we're going to make rules for you, we're going to make you, you know, have restrictions at your business, we're going to restrict what you can and can't do, we're going to ask that you don't attend a funeral or don't have your wedding, but in our caucus, come on in. Come on in. We're going to have a meeting in this building, you're going to sit in that caucus room, you're going to come to a Cabinet meeting and you're going to sit with all your colleagues; you're going to put them at risk.

And now, when we have the vaccine and we have the ability to make sure that everyone in this building is vaccinated and safe, this PC caucus continues to not only put themselves in danger but now invite other civil service public servants to come into this building and say, oh guess what, now not only do I risk myself and my caucus, we're going to risk everybody who's sitting around this table and I'm going to put your health and safety at risk. That's shameful.

You know, this Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) in particular—I sat in Estimates just this week or just last week—I'm starting to forget which week we are—but the minister sat there, clearly in his office, clearly with officials in his office. And that is disrespectful to them but it's also dangerous. And it's dangerous to all the Manitobans across this province who are doing their part.

Now, I do think I understand why it's happening. And it's happening for crass political reasons, and that makes it, maybe, even more disgusting, I want to say. Because, you know, these members opposite, they want to say, we're following Dr. Roussin. They want to say the public health authorities are the be-all, end-all, but then they make different rules for themselves because they're speaking to a different group of Manitobans. They're speaking to a very small group of Manitobans, who, all of a sudden, have a lot of power and influence.

Because we know that the PCs across the way are in shambles. They're going through a leadership contest. They don't know who's going to be the leader, and they're worried. They're worried that there's a group of Manitobans out there that are going to say,

you know what? We write you off. You guys don't represent us. We're going to, you know, maybe start our own party. Maybe it's the People's Party or the Manitoba Party or the—you know, I don't know, the prairie crocus party. I don't know. It could be anything.

And maybe they're worried that that's going to hurt them politically, so they're making a political calculation. They're making a decision about people's health based on politics, based on which—who can appeal most to that small group of Manitobans who are hesitant that we need to continue to talk to, that we need to continue to encourage and put incentives to allow them to come out and get vaccinated.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Instead, now, the PC caucus is catering entirely to them. And you've got members who are fully in support of the activities of those who are spreading disinformation and not following the public health rules. Well, you know, we could go all morning here, but I see our time is fairly short.

I do want to point out that as much as they're in shambles, and as much as they're, you know, they're clinging on to the legacy of Brian Pallister—and that's pretty much all they've got right now—there actually is an opportunity right now. There are two leadership candidates—only two—well, and I guess you've got an interim Premier (Mr. Goertzen) who potentially could also have some influence on his caucus but has totally stood down and won't have any—and won't make any kind of statements about this requirement.

But two leadership candidates, and so the hope would be that—okay, they're in shambles, it's every man or woman for themselves over there—but it would be nice if one of those leadership candidates would just come out and say, you know what, I'm putting my foot down. I don't care if I'm going to lose some votes in this leadership contest because the health and safety of Manitobans is more important. And we are going to show leadership. We are going to make sure, as the NDP caucus has, that we show leadership. We're going to get vaccinated. We're going to follow the public health rules. We're going to wear our masks when we should. It seems like a pretty simple thing to do, I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But even that step—would those two leadership candidates take that very basic step to ensure that the health and safety of the people entering this building is protected? No, they will not. So, not only do we have, you know, one member who's—one potential

leadership candidate who's trying to play both sides, who's being a bit wishy-washy, who had every—well, almost every—member of the Legislature stand behind her at her leadership contest announcement. She has some—potentially—some control over this caucus. Could she not say that? No, she said—you know, she's trying to play both sides. She's silent.

But even worse, maybe, is we have another leadership contestant who's actively courting those people who are pushing for misinformation and disinformation in our society, who are rejecting the science and rejecting the words of public health. It is disgusting.

People often look at politicians and they say, you know, that politics clouds the morality and the good judgment that we should have. I like to believe that's not true. But sometimes, when I look across, I see that playing out, and I see how people could think that. And it is disgusting. It is unfortunate. And so now we have an opportunity—this morning, we have an opportunity—if this is the only forum that the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) has to set the record straight or the member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), for her to set the record straight, then I invite them to do that.

* (11:20)

Deputy Speaker, they have the opportunity this morning to stand up and say, no, I stand with the science. No, I understand that the health and safety of my fellow Manitobans and, in particular, the public servants that are made to come into this building to work with these members, I see that as a priority. I'm going to set the record straight.

I invite them to do that. Because you know, when I'm in my constituency office, I'm dealing with the public, I want to make sure they understand where I'm at on this issue, I'm proud to bring this PMR, this private member's resolution here today. I know members on our side are going to be proud to say that they're vaccinated and they're protecting other Manitobans. I implore the members opposite to show some leadership, stand up, and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held. And questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question be asked by a member of another party, any

subsequent questions being followed by rotation between parties, and each independent member may ask one question. And no question shall—or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): I think it's interesting that the member opposite keeps talking about the importance of following health orders.

I'm wondering where his moral outrage was when the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) hosted a rally that publicly flouted health orders. That's something that that side is guilty of. I'm curious what the member has to say about that.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Well, again, the members are clinging to the legacy of Brian Pallister, who says, you know, the rules apply to you and not to me. If I'm in an airport with no mask on, doesn't count—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —I'm totally, totally exempt.

But, you know, I think he's got the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) sitting right in front of him, so I'm sure they're having the discussion right now about how exactly he's going to apologize for leaving—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —in code red out of the province, travelling when public health was telling them not to. Maybe he should get the member up to explain that one.

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

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So, you know, we see these members opposite trying to deflect and do everything, but could the member from Concordia explain to us why it's important to bring in a vaccine mandate for the Legislative Building itself?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I mentioned, I think there's a specific responsibility as leaders in the community. But even just on a practical level, we sit down with members of the community all the time—or at least, we do on this side of the House—in our constituency offices, and, you know, it—we have exposure in terms of who we're talking to. That's what we need to do as legislators, I'm happy to do that.

But if we're coming back into this building, it's our—it's incumbent on us to protect these young pages

that are in this building, the clerks, the members that—of the public service that have to come in. There's a lot of people that we need to protect in this building. It's up to us to step up and do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Morris—I mean, the honourable member for McPhillips.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I thank the member for bringing forward this motion today.

I am aware that there's similar circumstances with the City of Winnipeg. I'm wondering if the member has spoken with Mayor Bowman to find out how the city council has addressed this issue when it comes to mandatory vaccines for councillors, whether or not there—he feels that there's any applicability towards the situation we have here in Manitoba or in other municipal councils here in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, you know, I mentioned the two current PC candidates, but I would be remiss if I didn't point out that we have other failed candidates here in this Chamber. And so, you know, I'm asking for them to stand up too. Maybe they still have some influence, maybe they had one member of caucus that said, maybe I'll support you, maybe, I don't know. You know, maybe they have some influence over some of those members that they signed up—all half dozen of them—but they could be leaders here today as well. So I ask him to do that.

The City of Winnipeg is pushing back on this issue. We need to do the same and we need to be leaders here in this Chamber.

Mr. Lindsey: Deputy Speaker, it's good to see the member from Concordia suggesting that members opposite show some leadership.

So can the member from Concordia explain to us why he believes it's so important for everyone to get vaccinated and the effectiveness of the COVID vaccines?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I mean, as I said, I listen to public health and I listen to science. I'm certainly not, you know, well-versed in these issues, but I do listen and I do trust in the words of Dr. Roussin. And we've done this right from the beginning, you know. When Dr. Roussin was clear that we needed to wear masks at all times in public spaces, we wore masks here in this caucus.

And so when the first opportunity to get vaccinated was offered to every member of this caucus, we did that. And we know that from the

science, it shows that it's safe, and it's effective and it's one way that we can get out of this pandemic. Why wouldn't members opposite take this opportunity to protect fellow Manitobans and do the right thing?

Mr. Smith: Deputy Speaker, just yesterday, I heard the NDP criticizing security procedures here in the Legislature. And now, we have the member from Concordia saying it should be more restrictive. I ask the member from 'cordia,' which one is it?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, you know, since the member raised it, I'll put on the record that I do believe that we need to open this building up when it's safe to do so and that we need to ensure that members of the public have access—free and fair access—to this building at all times. I do think that we have to be very careful about balancing our safety with access to the public.

But this is one of those steps that we could take in terms of making sure that COVID-19 isn't the factor that keeps this building closed. If we can ensure that everybody shows their vaccine card, it does help show us a path about how we could get people back into this gallery, back into their house of democracy and get them more engaged with what we're doing here in this building. I am definitely in favour of that.

Mr. Lindsey: I think the member opposite missed a goodly portion of the conversation about security at this building yesterday.

Does the member from Concordia believe that if we bring in a vaccine mandate for people to enter this building—whether it's MLAs, staff or visitors—that we could, in fact, provide a safer workplace for everybody, and maybe could, in fact, open the building up for the public, if we had a vaccine mandate here?

Mr. Wiebe: Deputy Speaker, I appreciate this question coming, in particular, from the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) because he knows about workplace safety. He knows about the importance of that. And this is a new frontier, certainly, when it comes to a disease and a pandemic like we're facing with COVID-19. But for him to understand that this is one of the important steps that we need to take, I think, shows his attention to this issue, and his experience when it comes to these kinds of concerns.

He's going to stand up for the people of Manitoba, as will I. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was the member for Dawson Trail is next, for the question.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Member opposite, I mean, he is rightly correct in being concerned about the undermining of public health and its orders.

Will they commit no longer to holding events that break these very public health orders, and disregard these orders like they did earlier this year?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, this perfectly demonstrates the disconnect and the disarray that the other side of this House is in, that the government of this province is in. Because here you have a member who's saying I'm correct—I'm correct that this is a major public health concern. We should be listening to the science. We should be listening to public health officials.

And yet, the leadership on the other side isn't standing up and doing that, and certainly his own ministers aren't doing that. If the Minister for Infrastructure won't get vaccinated to come into this building, I think he needs to have a discussion with his caucus, with his Cabinet and say, hey, wait a minute, the member for Concordia is right, why aren't you vaccinated?

Mr. Lindsey: You know, we've heard Premier Ford in Ontario, another Conservative premier that has mandated that members of his caucus must be vaccinated or he'll kick them out of caucus. We've seen Saskatchewan—even though they call themselves something different—another Conservative government that kicked one of their members out for not being vaccinated and misleading the public about it.

So does the member from Concordia believe that even if you're just an acting premier or temporary premier, or whatever the correct term is for the current placeholder—does he believe that he should show some leadership and demand that his members show up and tell people—

* (11:30)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, that's a really good point that the member for Flin Flon again makes. And that's because this isn't a right or left issue. This isn't—this shouldn't be about politics. And so when you have, you know, the far-right governments in Alberta or the far-right governments in Saskatchewan who are showing leadership on this, I mean, it doesn't take much to see that you could have a Conservative Party in Manitoba that would support this.

But we don't have a Conservative Party in Manitoba. We have a Brian Pallister government in

Manitoba. And this Brian Pallister government is against mandates—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —and that's why—and they're against vaccines and they're catering to a very small base. They should take some lessons from their friends in Alberta. They should take some lessons from—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Smith: I'm just curious why members opposite believe that rapid testing is adequate for other Manitoba government employees and continue to do their job, but it's not for those who enter the Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I think that the member knows that in just a week or so public servants have been asked to step up to get their vaccines. And we're seeing across the board public servants who are front-facing or dealing with vulnerable populations, they're doing the right thing.

You know, as I said, we are all first and foremost MLAs who represent our communities. We meet with those—we should be, anyway, meeting with those communities, and so it's just it's the absolute basics that we should be asking of ourselves in the same way we're asking of our public servants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate is open.

Any speakers?

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): I appreciate the opportunity to take some time to put some words on the record with respect to this resolution.

I, of course, always like to start off by thanking the good folks of Lagimodière and the residents of Lagimodière for entrusting me to continue to represent them in this great Legislature.

Deputy Speaker, the rollout for the vaccine has been remarkable in this province. And I'd like to thank Dr. Joss Reimer and the Vaccine Implementation Task Force. I know it's been an incredibly complicated process to get these vaccines out and jabs into arms, and I understand that, you know, moving at the pace that things did, that was anything but easy.

And so I do want to commend her and her entire team, of course. I know they worked diligently to make sure that now we have over 80 per cent uptake in this province. Deputy Speaker, I think that is something, a testament not only to Dr. Reimer and her folks but also Manitobans on a whole. I think it's quite remarkable. And being one of the provinces that have a very high uptake, I think we should all be proud. And I understand that most of colleagues, certainly on our side of the House, have talked about the great work that Dr. Reimer's done and doctor—or, rather, Dr. Roussin. So I do appreciate that.

I know, when the vaccines first became available, I know many of us have constituents who were readily willing to roll up their arms and take the vaccine. And it was quite nice to see all that, especially, you know, the lineups outside some of the vaccine clinics. Although sometimes that's a bit frustrating to wait to get in, it is a good sign. It shows demand for the—for this vaccine, and I know that many of my constituents and friends, family were so readily to post that on social media.

It was like a sense of relief knowing that this tumultuous time of COVID-19 that started rather unpredictably last year in March of 2020, and I think we all remember sitting in this Chamber when this started to happen and, you know, we didn't—weren't sure what the future was going to hold for us and how this was going to unfold. And here we are a year—over a year later, a year and a half later and we're looking at 80—over 80 per cent vaccine uptake. And I think that's something that we can all be very proud of.

You know, in the question-and-answer portion of this resolution, I did ask the member about his thoughts on, you know, vaccine—or not vaccine but rather the health orders and flouting public health orders and wondered why that his boss, his—the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) chose to organize a rally that blatantly flouted the health orders at the time. I think that was incredibly disrespectful. So for this to come forward as a resolution, I think it's somewhat disingenuous from the members opposite, of the whole caucus in general. I know I hear members opposite trying to defend their record on breaking health orders, but I guess perhaps that's what happens when you're found guilty and get caught for doing something you shouldn't do.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that just yesterday the member from Fort Garry actually seemed to believe—disagree with the self-isolation requirements and, unfortunately, during question

period, he asked a question that seemed to hint that he didn't agree with the self-isolation requirements, that they're perhaps too long and some Manitobans have spent more time isolating than they had to.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask, who's the expert? Is it Dr. Roussin and his team, or is it the member from Fort Garry or perhaps the member from Concordia? So, again, we see a bit of a disconnect between what's happened in this resolution, what's being stated in this resolution, and what the actions are of the NDP caucus.

I know we have quite a few things we can talk about with respect to our vaccine rollout, and I'd just like to talk a little bit about some of the achievements that we've made—or rather Dr. Reimer and her team has made—but certainly very proud of the work that they have done.

So our province has been at the front of the pack when it comes to vaccine rollout across Canada. Our achievements include overseeing the largest vaccination campaign ever seen in Manitoba history, with less than 1 per cent vaccine wastage. Over 2 million vaccinations were administered. This led to 85.8 per cent of eligible Manitobans receiving at least one dose and 82.1 who are now fully vaccinated. We worked collaboratively with 63 First Nations and 50 Northern Affairs communities, in partnership with the Manitoba First Nations COVID-19 Pandemic Response Co-ordination Team.

We brought in over \$1.2 billion of COVID-19 funding in Budget 2021; we've frozen the Pharmacare deductible to help provide COVID relief for Manitobans; provided \$60 million to regional health authorities to offset COVID-related costs to protect Manitobans; \$205.3 million to personal-care homes, community-health agencies, service-delivery organizations to offset COVID costs; helped expand vaccine eligibility to all Manitobans aged 12 or higher; implemented hundreds of pop-up clinics to vaccinate Manitobans closer to home, as well as FIT teams ensuring that every personal-care home in Manitoba had the ability to vaccinate their residents.

And I know I'm not the only member from this House who's attended a pop-up clinic. I know I did actually in my riding, my constituency, was the—at the Hindu temple on St. Anne's and I know I went to help there. I also helped promote it on social media, and I know it had tremendous uptake not only from the Hindu community but the community at large. People that live in the area came to get the vaccine there and it was quite impressive to see that.

And I know that the organizers at the temple were just so happy to see the uptake, and not only for the fact that they could have COVID-19 vaccinations administered in their own facility, but the fact that people from the community who may not have interacted with the temple have now had a chance to visit it. And it brings more of a sense of community, and I think that's something that was an added benefit to it.

And I know that, to this day, folks from that organization still talk about and are still incredibly proud of doing their part in helping encourage in the rollout of vaccinations but also reaching out to the community in general and knowing that there is—you know, folks can have access to their facility—of course, within the health orders that are provided, of the day—but that it's open to the community. And I know that they were very appreciative of it.

Also, I know the Punjabi cultural centre was another facility that actually hosted a pop-up clinic, and they did it twice, if my memory serves me correct. And the first time we went—and again, I helped them promote it, we did a social-media promotion for it. And, you know, watching people from all walks of life and all parts of the different communities come together and actually get a vaccine there was quite inspiring. And again, that's another project that this particular community was—community organization was very, very proud of.

And I know that there's many stories like that right across the province, and I know many of my colleagues here—on both sides of the House, I'd say—had that opportunity to do that and either attend or at least help with some of the logistical organization of it.

Further to that point, we as a government expanded vaccine distribution to nearly 500 doctor offices and pharmacies; raised eight vaccination supersites, two in Winnipeg and sites in Morden, Brandon, Selkirk, Steinbach, Thompson and Dauphin, with over 3,000 staff helping vaccinate thousands of Manitobans every week; partnered with five urban Indigenous community organizations in Manitoba to create Indigenous-led immunization clinics, three of which are open in Winnipeg, Brandon and Portage to help vaccinate at-risk urban populations as well our homeless populations; prioritized the most at-risk—our health-care employees, Indigenous peoples, PCH residents, police officers and, of course, first responders; expanded the eligibility into geographic areas of concern in Manitoba.

* (11:40)

We even partnered with North Dakota to ensure that 2,500 essential truck drivers were vaccinated, allowing Manitoba to keep moving. We've partnered with Manitoba's businesses and critical services to launch a COVID-19 rapid testing screening program that helps limit the spread of COVID-19 through early detection and screening; implemented the Fast Pass pilot program which offers dedicated asymptomatic testing to teachers, educational support staff, licensed child-care centres, nursery schools, family group child-care homes; launched a new partnership with the United Way's 211 Manitoba to help connect seniors and people with mobility issues to transportation services that can get them to their COVID-19 vaccine appointments; partnered with doctors of Manitoba and Pharmacists Manitoba to help combat hesitancy; and expanded third doses to PCH residents and staff, health-care personnel, immunocompromised individuals and for use in travel.

Now, these are some of the things that our government have done to not only encourage but help facilitate the uptake of vaccine. I know that, myself included—I mean, I was one to get the vaccine almost, I wouldn't say as soon as it became available, but as soon as my age category became open, I was very eager to get that, as well as my wife. And, unfortunately, my son is not quite three years old, so he's not eligible for it, but everyone in my family—immediate family, and folks that I'm—at least that I'm aware of, have been vaccinated and we've been very proud to do that.

And I do encourage any Manitobans that are somewhat hesitant to get the vaccine. It's—I know sometimes it can be a bit of a process that not everyone's comfortable with—not everyone likes needles. And there's all kinds of reasons why. But at the end of the day, let's, you know, a vaccine does help prevent the spread, and certainly, helps prevent the risk of serious outcomes for you and your family.

Thank you.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I appreciate the member from Lagimodière in his last 30 seconds of his rebuttal there, encouraging the members of his caucus to actually go out and get the vaccine. So, he spent nine and a half minutes kind of contradicting himself. In the last 30 minutes—the last 30 seconds, actually bringing it home. So kudos to that.

One of the things that you constantly hear is, do your part, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do your part. Do your

part. Do your part. That's been asked of Manitobans throughout this pandemic. So they have been doing our part. I, as a Manitoban, my vaccine card, right here. And I'm proud to say that I am vaccinated. I have no qualms about that. No issue with making that public. The jab in the arm did not hurt, both times I took it.

I've also had COVID tests to travel to my communities, to travel to my vulnerable communities. So it's not a matter for me of do as I say but not as I do. I'm out there practising what I preach. And when I talk about getting the vaccine, I'm not telling everybody else to get the vaccine and not getting it myself. It's very important to lead by example, and this government is failing to do that on all kinds of fronts.

You've heard the mention of the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) and whether or not he's vaccinated or not. Who knows? He really doesn't want to disclose that, and for whatever those reasons are. But lead by example. I've heard the minister out there talking about the importance of the vaccine. And I've heard members opposite speak constantly—constantly—about the importance of vaccine and how vaccine and believing in the science is the way to get us out of this pandemic. But yet, they're not leading by example.

Is it perhaps because they want to prolong the pandemic? They want hold onto that pandemic. They want to keep us in this state of emergency. And is it to avoid accountability, because that seems to be exactly what's happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There's a lack of accountability. There's a lack of, let's get out there and do your part. Because they're not doing their part.

So—and there's been sacrifices made by all kinds of Manitobans, all across this province. Vulnerable, more vulnerable, less vulnerable—every demographic of Manitoba has stepped up to do their part. But yet, members opposite, as an entire collective, will not get out and do that. They will not encourage—and I'm not saying force—I'm saying strongly encourage their members to get vaccinated to truly lead by example.

When we talk about coming to this Chamber—and here I am sitting virtually from my office—I'm sitting virtually from my office here in the Legislature, similar to what the Minister of Infrastructure is doing, still in the building, still talking to staff in the building. And to those staffers in the minister's office, in particular the Minister for Infrastructure's office, you're welcome; you're welcome for us bringing forth your concerns, which I'm sure you've been told or felt like you can't raise those concerns.

If you feel like you're not safe in your own work environment and there's a double standard for you, you're welcome. You're welcome for the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) bringing forth this resolution that truly speaks for you and is helping to represent you and is helping to bring equity across—where it shouldn't be where my boss can do what he or she wants to do and the rules don't apply because the rules have to apply. There shouldn't be a double standard. There shouldn't be a double standard between who you are in this building or who you are in Manitoba, especially when it comes to a global pandemic.

It is important for all of us to do our part, all of us to believe in the science, to act upon your words. If I'm going to encourage somebody to get the vaccine and not get it myself, I'm a hypocrite if you do that. So members on this side of the Chamber are not hypocritical; we do not say one thing and practise another. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you do that and you're constantly going back and forth on those issues—and it was interesting, it was last week, so that is the true definition so the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) who gets out there and talks about get the vaccine, it's important to get the vaccine but I'm not going to get it myself. That is, I believe the term was fish on the dock. So when we go out there and we refer to that, that's exactly what he's doing. He's flip-flopping on that issue. Do as I say, not as I do.

So I've listened to members opposite when they've spoken about grabbing some obscure incident whenever it may have happened and saying they have tunnel vision, so that's the incident that did this, that's the incident that prolonged the pandemic. What's prolonging the pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is issues just like this where we have ministers, we have leadership, we have MLAs, we have people in positions of leadership not promoting the right thing to do, not promoting what we need to do, not showing true leadership. And that's truly what's happening here today. We're not seeing true leadership out of members opposite.

I've heard responses to questions in question period about, well, what do you want us to do? We're in the middle of a pandemic. Well, you know what I want you to do? I want you to do more. I want you to truly lead by example. So when we see this resolution about mandating and keeping a consistent message here in the Manitoba Legislature, that's what needs to happen across all members, both sides of the Chamber. And that's what we're about doing. We're about promoting that. And practise what we preach and do as we say because we believe in this. And if

I believe in something, I'm going to wholeheartedly get behind it. I'm going to wholeheartedly speak to it. I'm not going to say one thing and go behind the scenes and change my mind and say this isn't something that I believe in. Because it is something you have to believe in.

So when we have members opposite not promoting that and being in a position of leadership and trying to get towards anti-vaccination messages, that's prolonging this pandemic, that's keeping us in this pandemic. And perhaps that's what they want to do. Perhaps there's a base of support for members opposite that want to see us stay in this pandemic.

There's so many Manitobans that have made the ultimate sacrifice, that are still sacrificing today. I think of my communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to the vaccine mandates and them having to do them, their part. And I think to just imagine feeling that isolation—and let alone feeling that isolation in an isolated community. So it's almost tenfold that isolation you'd feel. And you want to do whatever you can and you do your part. As soon as you're eligible to get vaccinated, people have done their parts and done that.

So who do I feel for? I feel for the people that have to work—have to, have to, have to—for fear of losing their job, work with people that will not get vaccinated for whatever reason, and it's even worse if the ultimate reason is I just don't feel like it. If that's the ultimate reason to not be vaccinated, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then it's unfortunate.

And I think when we talk about this PMR and being able to bring that back and keep that consistent vaccine mandate across Manitoba, across this Legislature, that's important for all of us to do. There are people within Manitoba that can't do that. They can't do that whether they come to the Chamber, or whether they come into this building, or whether they're not allowed to come to this building, because of mandates and vaccine mandates that are a double standard.

* (11:50)

We think of five-to-11-year-olds that don't have that ability—they don't even have that choice right now. Because of Health Canada, the vaccines that are not applicable to them right now. They don't have that choice. But they can't wait. I know a number of people—in my own family, mind you, even—that can't wait, that fit in that five-to-11-year-old category that cannot wait to get their vaccine so they can do their

part. And them, to this day, still can't believe that there's members in leadership and people in positions of leadership that are spreading this message of an almost anti-vaccine message.

You know, when I see things out there and messages that are raised and brought about by this government—and then their actions speak different. You know, the Minister of Health talked about it's about protecting our vulnerable populations and our children. And that is their focus, that everyone comes onside and buys into ensuring that vaccine–vaccination rates are increased. But yet they can't even increase vaccination rates on their own members, which is totally unfortunate to be able to do that. So think about those children that can't do that.

This wasn't a difficult piece of identification to get. You know, that jab in the arm didn't hurt. That jab in the arm ensured I did my part.

So I ask members opposite, do your part. Do your part and show true leadership and support this PMR that is brought forward by the member from Concordia, because it is the right thing to do.

Miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We do support this motion. It is, basically, a question of fairness and common sense.

I just want to say that since the beginning of this pandemic there have really been two very dangerous and parallel pandemics. One is a pandemic of a deadly virus, the other is a pandemic of misinformation. And since the very beginning, even in April of 2020 there were people who were resisting basic measures, and they cast doubt on everything that works. Basic simple measures, people cast doubt on whether COVID was serious or not. We know that it has killed over 1,000 people in Manitoba. They cast doubt on masks. They cast doubt on social distancing. And they've continued to cast doubt on vaccines. We have a way out of this pandemic, and vaccination is the way out.

The other is that they've cast doubt on the law. And this is something that I think not enough people have defended. It is—in any democratic society, in a state of emergency, it is reasonable to ask people to behave differently, because in a state of emergency, the things that we normally do—whether it's standing in an elevator together without wearing a mask, whether it's spending time together in a room—can suddenly become deadly. And if a church were on fire, if it had a deadly gas leak, or if it were about to fall down, civil authorities would be perfectly allowed—it

would be perfectly reasonable to say, we don't want you to take—to go into that church or that place of worship right now because it could kill you, or it could kill the people you love.

And that's ultimately what this is about, that this is—and I've had lots of people emailing me, as I'm sure you all have, asking for changes, and some of the changes make sense, and are good, and some of the changes don't make sense. And, ultimately, what I tell people who've been objecting is, like, I've—this is—we're not asking people to make these changes because we want to control you or because we want you to live a certain way. We don't want you to die.

And that's ultimately what it is: we don't want you to die and, more specifically, we don't want you to kill us, because it is easy to catch this disease that is deadly. There is no cure for it. We have a—we can prevent it with vaccines, but there is no cure.

And this is something else that people need to understand, and that as public figures in the greatest public health emergency, there are all—we've all had to make sacrifices. And one of those sacrifices is to say, look, I'm going to say—I may have to sacrifice a little bit of my privacy to take a picture of myself in a clinic wearing a cowboy hat getting the Moderna vaccine because Dolly Parton helped to pay for it. And look, if Dolly Parton helped pay for it, there can't be—I'm just saying it. I'm putting it right out there. If Dolly Parton was involved, it's got to be good.

I'm saying it: The Moderna vaccine was paid for with money from Dolly Parton's vaccine foundation, and it's—and look, the vaccines are safe. Get them. And we should be able to make sure that everybody in this place can work safely. If it's the key to the end of the—it's the key to the end of the pandemic.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will not sing vaccine, vaccine, vaccine.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): As always, it's a pleasure to participate in the democratic process. I think today's resolution, I think, is very, very timely, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Oftentimes, when I rise in the House and speak, I remind all of us as MLAs and as—

An Honourable Member: Can't hear you.

Mr. Martin: Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you hear me? Okay. Sorry, there was some heckling, so I had trouble.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, we need to ensure that we practise, obviously, the fundamentals—whether it's a mask, whether it's washing and whether it's keeping social distance—but, as noted by members opposite, the No. 1 thing that we can do, as individuals and as the Manitobans who are eligible to receive the vaccine, is to be vaccinated. Vaccinations—as approved by Manitoba's health system, by the Canadian health system—is an opportunity for us to return a new normal, and so we need to work together.

Now, I reject some of the member's comments, their dark web comments about, you know, that somehow this government is wanting to continue a pandemic. I think that is abhorrent to suggest that any government wants to impose limitations on anyone that wants to attribute or contribute to any situation to the detriment of any individual's health.

With that being said, we need to work together, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The members opposite talked about, you know, the necessity to work with individuals that have not been vaccinated, and I agree wholeheartedly. I know, myself, that I am fully vaccinated. I've been vaccinated as a child, obviously, as everyone else in this House has been. Whether it's mumps and smallpox and so on and so forth, these are all shots and vaccines that we've all gotten in our lives.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember just a few years ago, when my partner and I received information from our school indicating that our daughters were now eligible for the HPV vaccine, we didn't hesitate because, again, I think it is incumbent upon us, as elected officials, to work with our medical community to make sure that we have the best information available and that we're applying that information to our own lives. And so with—in that instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my wife and I, we spoke, and, obviously, our children—our daughters were recipients of the HPV vaccine.

Obviously, during the pandemic, when it became my opportunity to get the shot, I had no hesitation whatsoever, and neither did any of my three children. Even my youngest daughter, who was just on that

'cust,' that 11-, 12-year-old cusp, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had no hesitation whatsoever in receiving the vaccination.

So I thank them. I thank my family for stepping up and—to be vaccinated. More importantly, I want to thank Dr. Reimer and the entire medical team that continues to give our government and Manitobans the advice that is necessary to protect ourselves as we move forward through the fourth wave, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think we need to work together, and as we've hit, and as my colleagues have formerly noted, I believe we're almost at 86 per cent of eligible Manitobans who've received their first shot and I believe it's about 80 per cent of eligible Manitobans have received their second shot. I think these are tremendous, tremendous numbers that we need to celebrate. But we do need to look at the remaining 15 per cent.

Absolutely, we need to work together. How do we encourage these individuals? How do we make sure that they get the information? This is not about shaming any individual for any reason. And you see these stories and they're remarkable, some of the stories that are going on in southern Manitoba.

I follow one pastor who constantly posts, and he posts from his community in southern Manitoba, and his perspective is not one of shaming his community and highlighting the anger and divisiveness in his community, but instead, what this individual is doing, he's actually highlighting those individuals—those hundreds of individuals, and the numbers obviously have come down, but these are hundreds of individuals every day that continue to get the information to fight through—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for McPhillips (Mr. Martin) will have six minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 14, 2021

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