

Appointment of labour minister welcomed

MANITOBA Federation of Labour president Kevin Rebeck welcomed the appointment of Brandon West MLA Reg Helwer as minister of labour, consumer protection and government services, noting the creation of the portfolio was “long past due.”

Manitoba has been an outlier for nearly six years without a dedicated labour minister, he said in a statement. “We are glad to finally have someone to work with on important issues that matter to working people in our province.”

Rebeck said the minister must focus on fixing chronic labour shortages in health care and the public sector, introducing permanent paid sick leave and increasing minimum wage.

Manitoba Government and General Employees’ Union president Kyle Ross said the appointment of a labour minister is a good first step to show front-line employees the government is committed to resetting its relationship with workers.

“The new minister will know there is a lot of work to do to restore confidence in this government after years of cuts, privatization, wage freezes, strikes, and contracts that have been ignored for years,” Ross said.



Manitoba Teachers’ Society president James Bedford congratulated Lac du Bonnet MLA Wayne Ewasko on his appointment as minister of education and early childhood learning.

“As a former teacher, the minister knows that teachers are the biggest advocates for public education,” Bedford said in a statement. “It is my hope that minister Ewasko will make it a priority to ensure that the voices of teachers are heard and reflected in the decisions made about the future of public education.”



Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba executive director Jan Legeros gave credit to the province for establishing a ministry dedicated exclusively to seniors and long-term care.

Legeros said the sector is a critically important and complex program requiring a provincial lens and dedicated portfolio.

“We look forward to working closely with (Assiniboia MLA Scott Johnston) the minister of seniors and long-term care,” Legeros said.

Larry Baillie, a member of the Families Voices Coalition, said he hopes the new minister will be willing to sit

down with families of long-term care residents to discuss concerns. The coalition was formed in the wake of the deadly COVID-19 outbreak in Winnipeg at Maples Personal Care Home, where Baillie’s father died, in late 2020.

However, he does not expect substantive changes to conditions in long-term care any time soon.

“It’s the same old, same old,” Baillie said.



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Grand Chief Garrison Settee said he was reassured to see some continuity in cabinet following the shuffle, and welcomed the return of Agassiz MLA Eileen Clarke (minister of municipal relations) to the executive council.

“MKO had a productive relationship with... Clarke in her past role as minister of Indigenous and northern relations,” Settee said in a statement. “As we have ongoing concerns with the provision of health services in the municipality of Leaf Rapids, my office will be reaching out to her to seek assistance on this matter.”



Wilderness Committee Manitoba field office director Eric Reder said regular changes to the environment

and climate file amounts to the Tory government using the portfolio as “a training gig for rookies.”

“The government is six years old and this is our fourth minister on conservation, it’s our third name change for the ministry, and it’s our fourth minister with zero background on the file,” Reder said of the appointment of Red River North MLA Jeff Wharton as minister of environment, climate and parks.



The association representing Manitoba pork producers congratulated Interlake-Gimli MLA Derek Johnson on his new role in cabinet as minister of agriculture, while commending former minister Ralph Eichler.

“It cannot be overstated when it is said that minister Eichler is a champion for agriculture, both here in Manitoba and across the country, and his commitment to the agriculture industry is something that all Manitobans should be proud of,” a statement from Manitoba Pork read.

Keystone Agricultural Producers president Bill Campbell also congratulated Johnson and wished Eichler well: “Minister Johnson understands the challenges facing Manitoba’s agricultural industry and we look forward to working with him.”