

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 7, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: So just before I recognize the honourable member for Fort Garry, I want to remind the House that the member has chosen Bill 210, The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act, as his selected bill for this session. As per subrule 25(3), an independent member does not require a seconder to move each reading motion for their selected private bill.

Thank you.

Bill 210—The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I move that Bill 210, The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act; Loi sur la protection des propriétaires contre les offres d'achat non sollicitées, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: This bill provides Manitoba homeowners with protections from high-pressure sales tactics used by real estate speculators engaged in the practice of real estate wholesaling. Our current laws protect buyers of property but do not protect the sellers of property.

This law will create protections from unsolicited purchase offers, create a cooling-off period for transactions and provide procedural safeguards from predatory sales tactics.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other bills?

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: I guess I will table a report first.

I am pleased to table the Reports of Members' Expenses for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

The honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk).

An Honourable Member: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to table the following two reports: Annual Report of Manitoba Agriculture for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, and the Annual Report for the Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024

The Speaker: Just for clarification purposes, the honourable member was and is the honourable Minister for Agriculture.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I am pleased to table the annual reports for the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission for the fiscal year of 2023-2024; the Department of Consumer Protection and Government Services for the fiscal year of 2023-24; Entrepreneurship Manitoba for the fiscal year of 2023-2024; the Manitoba Education, Research and Learning Information Networks for the fiscal year of 2023-24; the Department of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure for the fiscal year of '23-24; the Materials Distribution Agency for the fiscal year of 2023-24;

the Public Guardian and Trustee for the fiscal year of 2023-24; the Manitoba Residential Tenancies Commission for the fiscal year of 2023-24; and the Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance Agency for the fiscal year of 2023-24.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the following annual reports for Manitoba Justice: the '23-24 Annual Report for Manitoba Justice, and the '23-24 Annual Report for the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority of Manitoba.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we get to ministerial statements, I want to acknowledge that we have seated in the public gallery from École Rivière Rouge 45 grade 4 students under the direction of Nicole Trottier. And they are the guests of the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott).

* * *

The Speaker: And just for the information of all those present, we need to have leave to return to tabling of reports to correct a procedural error.

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Honourable Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the following two reports: Annual Report for the Manitoba Agriculture for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024; and the annual report for the Manitoba agriculture service corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

* (13:40)

The Speaker: Thank you.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

October 7th Attack in Israel— First Year Anniversary

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Jewish people around the world celebrated the new year just a few short days ago. To commemorate that holiday, many wished family, friends and acquaintances a sweet and healthy new year. Hope for a better year is important, because this past year has been a challenging year for many Manitobans.

The Jewish people are resilient, and so are we, as people of this good province. It's been a very difficult year for you, your families, friends and also relatives in Israel.

Here at home, we've seen a sharp and sudden rise in reports of anti-Semitism in too many of our communities, threats to places of worship, community centres and, notably, at university campuses in our province. It pains me to hear that Jewish Manitobans have felt threatened and singled out in their everyday lives. We have heard from Jewish people who are afraid to display their identity in public for fear of suffering attack or abuse. Here in Manitoba, that simply isn't right. All of this is unacceptable, and it must be condemned.

Today, we commemorate one year since the terrible and brutal attack on innocent civilians in Israel. They were people of different nationalities and religions among the dead. We can also say definitively that October 7, 2023, was the deadliest day for Jewish people since the Holocaust.

A year ago, I joined the Jewish community immediately after learning of the attacks to support you and all Manitobans as we tried to wrap our heads around the unthinkable. I reiterate what I said last year: Israel has a right to exist and a right to defend itself. The hostages should be immediately released.

Manitoba is an exceptional province. It is a beautiful and welcoming place, and the Jewish community plays an important role in welcoming people to this great land. As Premier, I am committed to ensuring that it remains that way. So we must publicly and loudly reject anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred, including Islamophobia.

I stand with your community to ensure all people can display their identity, including their Jewish identity, proudly. As we mark this somber anniversary, I show my solidarity with you, as does our government.

Over the last year, we've established ongoing consultations between our government, myself as the leader of that organization, and the leadership of the Jewish community. This strengthens us by building safe spaces and reaffirming that there is no place for hatred in this wonderful province.

I am committed to ensuring that your government works to bring communities together all across this great land. You are not alone, and we reject all forms of hatred.

Thank you, miigwech, shalom and shanah tovah [*good year*].

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Shanah tovah [*good year*] 5785. Hoping and praying that the upcoming year is far better than the previous.

Honourable Speaker, one year has passed, and today marks a tragic anniversary: one year since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, the largest attack on Jews since the Holocaust.

There were many lives lost that day and in the year since.

I want to share my deepest condolences and wish peace for everyone experiencing that loss deeply, not only for the Manitoba—from the Manitoba PC caucus, but from all members on all sides of this Chamber, Honourable Speaker, and I know that many Manitobans do, as well.

These are our friends and neighbours, and because of their heritage or other deep and personal reasons, they are affected as individuals and communities, not only by the faraway conflict, but also by the way it manifests here at home in Manitoba.

In a cruel continuation of the horrific injustice of October 7, 2023, the evil witnessed that day has set off a wave of anti-Semitism around the world. Manitobans have seen an increase in anti-Semitism, hate, vandalism and protests that many feel condone the same tragedies the world witnessed in horror on this day last year. There's absolutely no place in Manitoba for these such behaviours.

As Manitobans and Canadians, we must support our allies and stand united in condemning attacks on Israel and the kidnapping of innocent civilians.

Shalom. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Asian Women of Winnipeg

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): It is an honour to rise today to recognize a Seine River resident, Sharan Tappia, the president and founder of an incredible organization here in Manitoba, the Asian Women of Winnipeg. Since its inception in 2014, AWOW has been a space where Asian women can come together to uplift one another, share their stories and celebrate their diverse cultural heritages.

Like our government, who believes in one Manitoba, this group strives to empower women from all walks of life. Through their many events, fundraising efforts and boards, AWOW creates opportunities to connect and for women to grow and thrive.

Sharan has created a place for women to share their experiences and to learn from one another in a community that strengthens the voices and confidence of Asian women in Manitoba. The women involved in AWOW are not just celebrating their heritage; they are building networks of mentorship, leadership, and understanding. This kind of empowerment strengthens the whole province, inspiring young generations of Asian women to create change in our communities.

Sharan's hard work and vision has made this group an essential institution here in our province. AWOW hosts many events throughout the year, each one beautifully celebrating different aspects of womanhood and Asian culture. Desi fest, their newest celebration, is a powerful reminder of the incredible diversity in our community, and their Mother's Day event is a heartwarming celebration of motherhood.

By creating these events, AWOW continues to enrich the lives of all Manitobans. The work of Sharan and AWOW is vital. It reminds us of all the importance—it reminds us all the importance of diversity, of cultural richness and the beauty and power of community.

I ask that the names of the AWOW members present here today be added to Hansard, and I invite my colleagues to please join me in congratulating Sharan and the Asian Women of Winnipeg on their last 10 years and wish them the best of luck in the future.

Thank you.

Monika Bhutani, Narinder Kalkat, Dimple Kumar, Polly Pachu, Chahat Sharma, Sharan Tappia

Nelson Little

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to recognize Nelson Little, a talented recording artist based in Portage la Prairie. Since moving to Portage la Prairie in 2010, Nelson has embraced the community while co-raising his three beautiful children.

Born in Thompson and raised on a family farm in Pine River, Nelson's roots are deep. His mother is a hard-working First Nations member from Peguis, and his father is Métis from Cormorant Lake and Winnipegosis.

Nelson picked up his guitar at the young age of 13 and has used his music as a source of healing through two tragic accidents, which resulted in the loss of a relative in a car accident. He has truly descended—transcended adversity through artistry.

This past year, Nelson was honoured for a number of awards. His single *Just Make It Happen*, released in February 2024, co-written with Dave Rodgers and produced by Dave Wasyliw of Doc Walker—joined us here today—reached No. 1 on both the Canadian independent country countdown and the Indigenous Music Countdown, all extremely talented artists who wanted to share a piece of art that encourages others to chase their dream and take on challenges. Their song *Just Make It Happen* is cheerful, energetic and lively.

* (13:50)

Their contributions to art are not only celebrated their heritage, but also enriches the community.

I encourage all fellow members and Manitobans to stream and support this talented artist. I ask everyone to join me in honouring Nelson Little for his artistry and his commitment to family and community, as well as Dave Rodgers and Dave Wasyliw for their collaboration in creating such an outstanding song, *Let's Just Make It Happen*.

Louis Gagné

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): L'Honorable Président, c'est le cœur lourd que nous partageons le décès de notre grand ami Louis Gagné, dit Sergent LaFosse, premier sergent de la Compagnie de La Vérendrye depuis 30 ans et grand passionné de notre histoire française du Manitoba.

Translation

Honourable Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that we share the passing of our great friend Louis Gagné, known as Sergeant LaFosse, first sergeant of the Compagnie de La Vérendrye for 30 years and a great enthusiast of our French history in Manitoba.

English

It is with heavy hearts, Honourable Speaker, that we share the passing of our great friend Louis Gagné, dit Sergent LaFosse, first sergeant of la Compagnie de La Vérendrye for 30 years and a great enthusiast of our French history in Manitoba.

Entouré de ses frères d'armes, notre sergent a été pris d'un malaise pendant une sortie de la Compagnie lors des Journées du patrimoine au parc provincial du Fort Carlton. Il est décédé entouré de sa famille le 26 septembre.

Translation

Surrounded by his brothers in arms, our sergeant took ill during a Compagnie outing at Fort Carlton Provincial Park heritage days. He passed away surrounded by his family on September 26.

English

Surrounded by his brothers in arms, our beloved sergeant fell ill during a Compagnie outing at Fort Carlton Provincial Park heritage days. He passed later with family at his side on September 26.

Déconcerté par cette perte subite, ses frères d'armes se réconfortent dans la pensée que notre bien-aimé Louis était dans son élément préféré avant de nous quitter, soit celui de partager sa passion et la richesse de notre patrimoine auprès des jeunes élèves sur un site historique. Figure iconique du Festival du Voyageur, Louis a aussi été bras droit inséparable du Capitaine de Bonneville.

Le Sergent LaFosse était l'ami de tous et d'une générosité sans bornes. Toujours prêt à aider son prochain, rien n'était à son épreuve. Son tir était toujours juste et il savait prodiguer de sages conseils à son capitaine et à ses soldats.

Aurevoir, cher Sergent LaFosse. Tu seras toujours dans nos pensées. Vive le roi, per mare et terras.

Translation

Distraught by this sudden loss, his brothers in arms take comfort in the thought that our beloved Louis was in the midst of his favourite activity before leaving us: sharing his passion and the richness of our heritage with young students on a historic site. An iconic figure at the Festival du Voyageur, Louis was also the inseparable right-hand man of Captain de Bonneville.

Sergeant LaFosse was everyone's friend, and his generosity knew no bounds. Always ready to help his fellow man, nothing stood in his way. His aim was always impeccable, and he knew how to give wise advice to his captain and his soldiers.

Goodbye, dear Sergeant LaFosse. You will always be in our thoughts. Long live the King, per mare et terras.

English

Honourable Speaker, I ask for a moment of silence for our dear friend, Louis Gagné.

The Speaker: Is there a moment of—leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

International Peace Garden

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain): This summer, I had the distinct pleasure of attending and speaking at the citizens' ceremony at the International Peace Garden in the heart of Turtle Mountain.

Now, I am sure that even the newest members in this House are aware of the amazing institution that is the peace garden. For those at home that do not know—didn't have the pleasure, I highly encourage you to take a trip. You won't be disappointed.

While every citizenship is incredibly important, I cannot think of a better date or venue than Canada Day at the garden. As a second-generation Canadian, all four of my grandparents immigrated to Canada. My paternal grandparents came from Ukraine and my maternal grandparents came from England. I'm so grateful that they chose Canada for their new home in the last century.

This Canada Day, I joined over 50 individuals originally from all over the world as they received their Canadian citizenship. Originally from the Philippines, India, China, Jamaica, Pakistan, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Ukraine, Nigeria, Sudan and Namibia, these individuals were united in their choice to make Canada their home.

These newest Canadians are making amazing contributions to communities throughout Manitoba, and it's incredibly heartwarming to later meet some of them when touring local businesses.

We have a duty as legislatures to ensure that Manitoba is attractive as possible for—to immigrants to continue this incredible growth.

I want to thank each and every attendee at the ceremony for sharing not only their important landmark of their—in their lives but also their stories with me.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Brandon University 125th Anniversary

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the 125th anniversary of Brandon University. For those of us from Westman, we know how important this institution has been in shaping the history of our region and city while charting a course for future progress.

Although Brandon University is technically on the other side of the under-construction 18th Street, its impact on Brandon, Westman and our province is

unmistakable. BU provides opportunities for students from our corner of the province to access higher education closer to home.

I stand in this Chamber as a proud alumnus of BU. People often ask how someone ends up in politics. For me, it was a combination of English, education and religion courses that helped me find a career in education. I know that for several other members of this Assembly, both past and present, BU has had an incredible impact on their careers and service to their communities.

A key part of Brandon University is the camaraderie and community fostered on a small but familiar campus, a campus where you know your professors and build long—lifelong bonds with your colleagues. I want to thank Brandon University for the positive impact it has had on Westman.

As we celebrate BU's 125th anniversary, I also want to acknowledge the incredible advocacy of its president, administration and faculty but also by the larger community.

BU has reached 125 years due to the support nurtured within the community, and the next 125 years look equally bright because of the vital role that BU plays in Brandon.

On behalf of all honourable members, I congratulate Brandon University on its 125th anniversary, and I hope all members will join me in saying, Go Bobcats.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Camila Gomez, who is the guest of the honourable member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

D'Arcy's ARC Thrift Store Reason for Store Closure

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Today, Honourable Speaker, I start with a quote: After 16 years of serving our community, we regret to announce the closure of our thrift store effective December 21, 2024. End quote.

This was the public notice placed on the door of D'Arcy's ARC Thrift Store last Friday, ironically, at the same time as the Justice Minister was busy patting

himself on the back for being tough on crime. Rising operational costs, retail theft and customer-staff safety were all noted as reasons for this closure. All these reasons fall within the responsibility of this government to action.

Unfortunately, they don't—didn't only fail Starbucks, 7-Eleven, but now Darcy's ARC Thrift Store, to name a few.

Why has the Kinew government ignored the safety needs of the staff and customers of Darcy's ARC Thrift Store?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Since our election a year ago, we've come to work each and every day, working hard for you, working hard to make this province safer.

I was very pleased to join my colleague, the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe), on Friday, as well as folks from law enforcement, folks from the business community and the leadership of the Retail Council of Canada because while there's still much more work to do, what we have been doing so far is starting to make a difference.

A direct quote from the head of the Retail Council of Canada: We're all sitting at the table trying to find a solution. Manitoba is the first province that has done that in a very progressive way. End quote.

So much more work to do, but the efforts to date are starting to produce results. In fact, everyone's willing to sit around the table, so much so that even the PC Justice critic was there participating in our event. I'll note that when it comes to meetings on the other side of the House, he says that it's difficult for them to get any work done there, and all I say for the Leader of the Opposition is maybe they should get down to work—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

* (14:00)

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

Retail Crime and Business Closures Request for Resources to Address

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Three paid employees and six volunteers are now without work. A community has been denied a store that offers low-cost clothing, footwear, housewares and animal supplies.

What's even more alarming, Honourable Speaker, is that—the silence by their local MLA for Point Douglas, who seems more interested in the political junkets to Texas than helping struggling local businesses.

Does this minister have a threshold of how many businesses he is willing to close before he takes action and gives the police the resources they need? Or is he going to just behave like his leader, the member for Fort Rouge, and watch the Starbucks close in the—own backyard?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, before you interrupted me so wisely to remind that I'd run out of time, I was going to point out that instead of letting the caucus meetings drag on and on, they might want to review some invoices from time to time on their side of the House.

But when it comes to the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith), what she has been able to do in just a year's time is remarkable. She's forged a consensus. She's forged a consensus not only with business leaders and community groups, but also different levels of government, all buying into one plan. The members opposite couldn't even sit in a room with the mayors of the big cities around the province in order to get things done, so focused were they on their own internal, petty differences.

A new day is here. We're focused on not the internal infighting that we continue to see flaring up from the PCs over the weekend, but rather, we're focused on you. We're focused on making communities safer and helping those out on the streets to live with more dignity.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Our party is committed to transparency and accountability, and we will co-operate with anything as we continue to move forward. Compare that with the NDP government, whose members just last week voted—they all did, they voted to cover up the abusive behaviour of their leader, the Premier of Manitoba. Matter of fact, every single member across the way are complicit in the cover-up of toxicity, dysfunction and, for many of them, were around in the past to see what has happened in the past.

Retail crime is up double digits under this minister, and his solution to the hollow-out communities and burn out police officers. I guess if there's no retail businesses, there will be no retail crime. Since the local MLA doesn't want to advocate on their constit-

uents, it is left to our side of the House to advocate for them.

Will the minister today announce the necessary funding for the hiring of 78 additional police officers to meet the skyrocketing demand?

Mr. Kinew: So proud of the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) because he is funding permanent police positions. He's also funded a successful initiative to help respond to what we're seeing over the summer.

I do have a news flash for the Leader of the Opposition though. We're not going to be able to fix all the problems that they caused overnight. It is going to take years of working together. They might want to try that before the leadership situations devolves on the other side, more than it did this past Sunday.

But what we've seen from the WPS, again this is Winnipeg Police Service Superintendent Cam Mackid, saying that compared with the same four-week period in 2022, property crime dropped by 38 per cent in the West End, 23 per cent in Osborne Village and 16 per cent in the Exchange District. Honourable Speaker, 2022 was when they were in charge; the quote refers to when we are in charge.

Again, much more work to do, but things are getting better in Manitoba thanks to a government that puts you first.

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

Crime Increase and Public Safety Request for Government to Address

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'll tell you one thing that the government is doing all together. They're all getting together behind closed doors and they're covering up the abusive behaviour of this Premier.

Honourable Speaker, the Premier spent the last seven years in opposition, but developed no plans. When he campaigned last year, he made truth a victim and talked a big game about crime. One year later, no progress on bail reform, the NDP has taken credit for many PC initiatives they didn't cut and everything including crime has gotten worse.

Why has the Premier failed to advance bail reform, efforts that Progressive Conservatives led on when we were in government, or take any substantial action to make our communities safer, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Sounds like the member opposite is trying to take credit for Justin Trudeau.

The only thing about his trips to Ottawa that I don't understand is, where did he rent the car that was used to go take that trip?

When we're here in Manitoba, focused on the issues that matter to me, we can see what is making a difference. I mean, what the Attorney General has implemented alongside city leaders, leadership from the WPS and from many other community organizations, just in a matter of a few weeks, led to hundreds of arrests for shoplifting, led to 1,100 engagements in storefronts, almost 500 individual engagements, \$9,000 in recovered goods, 610 crime prevention engagements.

And, again, you don't have to take our word for it because it's the people in the community who are saying that we feel safer, we see a difference.

Now, again, on the other side of the House, they continue to focus inward. They continue to ask, what have we done wrong? On this side of the House, we're focused on you. We're focused on making communities safer, working with law enforcement, working with mayors, working for you, each and every day.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, on that side of the House, the government side, the NDP side, they're busy behind closed doors, trying to cover up the serious allegations of assault brought forward by the MLA for Fort Garry. That's what the Premier should be focusing on.

Last Friday, the Premier spoke at a retail summit, designed to draw attention away from his inaction and lack of planning. He told people he's now taking a long-term view.

Manitobans can't wait for him to figure out what is included in that long-term view. They're already paying the price for his severe lack of vision today.

Since the NDP took government, more Manitoba businesses are being broken into more often. Random, unprovoked attacks are more frequent, and the police—Winnipeg Police Service is facing an unprecedented challenge with more than 53 per cent increase in overtime costs and a shortage of 78 officers.

Does the Premier have any plan besides reannouncing Progressive Conservative initiatives and burning out hard-working police officers, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: The members opposite are in a tough situation. The leader of the party wants to talk about transparency, but we know that the president of the PCs reported over the weekend, and I quote, can you imagine if donors knew their funds were used to pay for this? End quote.

Further correspondence shared publicly over the weekend says, and I quote, recording this transaction as a car rental would be falsifying the financial record. End quote.

Now, the member opposite responded in the media; he did not dispute the veracity of any of these allegations. I'll note that his name was spelled wrong in the newspaper that was reporting this story. But I would like him to stand up today and to address these very, very concerning allegations as to whether or not his party broke election financing law in the last campaign.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Premier should be careful throwing stones in glass houses when we start talking about scrutinizing their own expenses, especially his own failing to disclose those.

Honourable Speaker, the Premier has known about worsening retail crime, property crime and random violence crime for months. We spoke about the closure of his own Starbucks in his own backyard. He had briefing notes, he had data, he saw the trends and the shocking news stories.

But he took real no—he took no real action. He'd rather stage his usual photo ops than stage a real defence against the rise in crime.

One year into the NDP's tenure and they still have done nothing. With the kind of turnaround time, it'll be 2026 or later before attendees of last week's crime summit hear about any real action.

Will the Premier admit that his image-obsessed government has done nothing productive for a year and just commit to shift his priorities onto public safety for Manitobans, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: A question about political strategy from a political organization with questionable accounting practices. It's a direct quote from within their own ranks, and I'll leave it to the members opposite to debate who the well-known politician that that article makes reference to.

* (14:10)

But what I do know is that what we're doing on this side of the House is working. After years of funding cuts to cities and to the WPS under the PCs, we took a different approach. We decided to invest.

Not only has this resulted in a dramatic reduction in the amount of property crime in the West End, in Osborne Village and in the Exchange, but the improved mood in the province is palpable. For all the folks in the room on Friday, the idea that we do real things when we work together was creating a buzz in the room.

And that's why not only was the PC Justice critic present there, but so was the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan). What we're doing is working so much that even PC politicians want to show up.

Can the member opposite say the same—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Crime in Rural Manitoba Police Resources Needed

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, we've seen growing rural crime across Manitoba and in my normally quiet constituency of Lakeside, of criminals stealing anything and everything to resell, from tractor batteries to snowmobiles, vehicles and ATVs.

Just last week, a car was stolen in East St. Paul, driven to the town of Teulon where it was driven through the front doors of a brand new renovated retail store that had only been open for a week. The store was then lit on fire, destroying the building, its artwork and all the contents.

We're seeing this kind of crime happening constantly across the province, and it's hurting all Manitobans and businesses.

What is the government's plan to stop this crime epidemic and hold these criminals to account?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Of course, we did spend Friday having a successful opportunity to meet with retailers from across the province, not just the city of Winnipeg but all parts of this province, who are coming together with us looking for solutions and looking at ways that we can continue to work together.

But, ultimately, they understand that, as a very first fundamental step in that project, they need to ensure that they have a partner at the table in the provincial government. And that's a government that's going to partner with municipalities across this province and

actually fund them in a way that they can continue to deliver public safety with law enforcement.

That's something that members opposite never did. This government's going to get it right.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, car thefts and property crime are costing Manitobans dearly. Whether it's the loss of the property or higher insurance rates with MPI. The RCMP have been having recruitment shortages, and that has left much of rural Manitoba vulnerable to crime with not enough police resources.

What does this minister have to say to these store owners in Teulon who have just had their livelihood destroyed by criminals and for their lifelong dream go up in smoke? What will this minister do to ensure there are enough police resources in rural Manitoba to stop the crime and put these criminals behind bars?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, the member opposite needs to chat with his caucus, and he needs to talk with the members of the former Stefanson government who still control the caucus here in the Legislature. He needs to ask them the tough questions.

Why did the members opposite freeze funding to the Winnipeg Police Service, to the Brandon Police Service, to the Altona Police Service, to First Nations police service, to law enforcement across this province for seven years straight? And why is it that when this government comes in and we budget, in Budget 2024, a 28 per cent increase for law enforcement, why is it that members opposite voted against that budget?

That's what they need to answer to their constituents and all Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Lakeside, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, residents of rural Manitoba are fed up with the crime and the theft that has only grown under this NDP government. There is hardly a resident who has not experienced theft from their rural property in Lakeside.

Manitobans should be able to feel safe in their homes and businesses. This government is failing to keep their promises on bail reform and has no plan to stop rural crime. We should not be seeing businesses being burned to the ground by car thieves.

Will this minister stand up today and commit to more police in rural communities to stop the crime?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, I had the opportunity over the last number of months to travel all corners of this province to listen directly from constituents who are telling us that they're concerned that the cuts that they saw under the PC government have made a real impact in their community.

They understand that we are the government who's going to partner with them, work with them and we're going to come up with solutions. And that's why our bail plan was so well received across the province.

But we're not done, Honourable Speaker. We're going to make sure that we, when we're talking about our public safety strategy this fall, that we're talking to all people across Manitoba.

I'm happy to continue that conversation, but it's also about action, and that's what this government is doing.

Crime in Rural Manitoba Constituent Concerns

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is sending a message loud and clear to rural Manitobans that we are on our own.

In my constituency, there have been far too many frequent examples of homes and businesses vandalized and being broken into, like McGee's Original Grill in Carman, which was broken into not just once, but four times until they were forced to close their doors this summer. They have security cameras where they show the criminals walking away on to their next target. A few weeks later, another break-in.

When will this minister take rural crime seriously, stop propping up Trudeau's catch-and-release policies and start providing real supports to rural police officers?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, I want to start by standing up and thanking our incredible Minister of Justice for the work he's doing in making Manitoba safer.

Also want to take a second—we know the members opposite are trying to change the channel here and do everything they can possible to not talk about this story from the Winnipeg Sun this weekend, but I think it's important we go there.

The member should explain why a PC Party accountant has shared emails that shows senior party

officials falsifying financial records in the last campaign. I'll table those emails for the House now.

The member can clearly see senior officials approving a \$3,800 invoice for a car rental despite legitimate and shocking evidence that the invoice is inaccurate. The accountant says, quote, recording this transaction as a car rental would be falsifying the—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: We had a vehicle stolen from our driveway last night. Three guys stole my truck, trailer, snowmobiles from my shed. I chased two criminals in my stolen car across field near 305. Heads-up, there was a break-in two nights ago where power tools was stolen. Ventura's new show home, another house broken into. Got security footage of someone breaking into my house last night.

What does the minister say to homeowners who feel they need more supports than just security cameras?

MLA Sala: Again, Honourable Speaker, I'm proud of the work that our government's doing and we're going to continue doing the important work of making Manitoba safer, but we're also going to focus on the concerns that we've seen from the members opposite.

We saw that same Winnipeg Sun article report that, quote, there were several invoices paid by the PC Party which raised suspicions of quote, questionable accounting practices, end quote.

The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) refused to provide any information about what these other invoices might be for and how much they were worth. It's critical he share that information, given the fact that Manitobans would have to pay for them as part of the election rebate.

The PC Party, we know, has a history of not following the rules. In fact, we know there were so many errors in Heather Stefanson's leadership contest, the results from that were challenged in court.

Will the member tell Manitobans how many invoices their party has—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: My constituents have very real concerns about the increase in crime that they are seeing in their

communities. Throughout the province, communities feel they have to take their own safety upon themselves, like the quotes I read in my previous question.

On community talk pages throughout my constituency, you see warnings of thieves and vandals in the area, security camera footage, licence plates of suspicious vehicles or pleas to keep an eye out for stolen vehicles, yet this minister is completely ignoring the calls from rural Manitobans where crime is increasing, but we're sharing fewer RCMP officers across our communities.

When can southern Manitoba expect to be prioritized by this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and see stronger supports for businesses, homeowners and policing?

MLA Sala: Appreciate those are real concerns and we are responding to those very real concerns, but there are other very real concerns, Honourable Speaker, that we also want to ensure are raised in the House and that the members opposite are held accountable for.

Perhaps the most concerning part of that Winnipeg Sun article is that reporting of these falsified invoices, some were from a, quote, a company affiliated with a well-known politician, end quote. The identity of that politician is absolutely critical. The members opposite need to share today who that is and what those—what invoices were falsified.

* (14:20)

It's clear Manitobans would have never known about this disturbing behaviour within the PC Party if the accountant had not shared it with media. At every opportunity, Honourable Speaker, it appears senior party officials knowingly approved records that were false, and then used those records to get a public—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Municipality of Riverdale Disbandment of Police Services

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): After over 120 years of municipal policing in the town of Rivers in the municipal—the municipality of Riverdale, earlier this summer the Minister of Justice unilaterally shut down that police service.

With crime rates on the rise, why is this minister shuttering municipal police services in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I would suggest, honourable member—Honourable Speaker, that the member opposite spend

more time in his constituency and more time speaking with the good people out in Riverdale.

That's what I did, Honourable Speaker, is made sure that the line of communication between our office and the situation that the municipality finds itself in after seven years of cuts, which is that they are working—trying to work with our government to ensure that the people in that municipality have the police services that they need and deserve.

That's what our government has done. That's what I've done as minister. I'm happy to meet with the members out there, the reeve and the mayor, at any point, and I'd encourage the member opposite to do the same.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Of course, I meet regularly with my municipal councils, and when this decision, this unilateral decision from the minister became public, he decided to tell the Brandon Sun that the municipality had asked for their police service to be disbanded.

I table correspondence today, and I quote, at no time did Riverdale municipality request dissolution of the Rivers Police Service or the Rivers Police Board. In fact, recruitment efforts and candidate interviews were postponed and cancelled due to the Province of Manitoba notifying the municipality that they no longer had jurisdiction to hire replacement officers.

So why does this minister have one story for the Brandon Sun and another story for the people of Riverdale?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, I'm surprised that the member opposite is so confused. Perhaps he could pick up the phone, he could spend some time with the mayor, as I said, as I did just this last week, where, of course, we reviewed the letter that the municipality sent back in March 19, where they specifically asked, please accept this letter as our request for interim supplementary coverage for the Rivers Police Service.

That's because, Honourable Speaker, the members opposite cut the municipalities to the bone, and they were asking for help as a last-ditch effort, because members opposite wouldn't take them seriously. We're going to work with them. We've increased the funding, and we're going to work with them to ensure that police and law enforcement is adequate for all people in the Riverdale municipality.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: Well, it just keeps getting better from this minister, Honourable Speaker, because he wants to talk about cuts. I'll table another piece of correspondence from Riverdale municipality, where it outlines that not only did he unilaterally disband the police service, effective the end of May, he cut their urban policing grant, effective April 1, despite the municipal police force operating until the end of May and still being operational while one officer remains on staff to transfer files to the RCMP.

So why is this minister cutting municipal police service funding for Riverdale municipality and shuttering that service after 120 years of service to the good people of Riverdale municipality?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, the member opposite is confused and he's just wrong, and he should spend more time in his constituency, less in downtown Winnipeg.

Honourable Speaker, it's about working together. That's what this government is all about. It's about working as one Manitoba towards keeping our province safer. I'll make sure that I table this letter for the member opposite so that he's very clear about the request that the position that his previous government put the municipality of Riverdale in.

We're going to work with them. We're going to ensure that they have the resources that they need going forward.

Violent Incidents Using Machetes Request for Legislation to Address

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): NDP MLAs have publicly and privately stated how under the, and I quote, dysfunctional and toxic leadership of this Premier (Mr. Kinew), legislative and regulatory action that could improve safety for Manitobans have fallen by the wayside.

A perfect example of this is the dysfunctional delay can be seen by this Minister of Justice talking about regulating machetes but failing to go beyond talking and actually introducing any legislation.

So my question to the minister is simple. How many more victims of crime have to have life-altering injuries until he's ready to take action?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Once again, the member opposite, you know, took the time to spend all of Friday listening from the incredible retail council and the speakers that we had arranged to talk about solutions. And one of the things that this government heard loud and clear, going back months now, is that we need to do better

in keeping our streets safe when it comes to weapons, and that's what—the action that we're taking.

I've been very clear about that. I was surprised as minister, when I came into this office, that action hadn't been taken to this point. We moved on bear spray. We're going to get it right when it comes to long-bladed weapons, and I'd just ask to member opposite to stay tuned.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, I thank the minister for appreciating the work done by the Retail Crime Task Force, a task force which I sat on for many years.

This minister has had the entire summer to prioritize the regulation of machetes. Instead, he spent his summer badmouthing defence lawyers. Surgeons needed more than 20 hours to save the life of a 15-year-old machete attack victim after another brutal and random assault.

We on this side of the House are prepared to work with the minister to expedite this needed legislation.

If surgeons took 20 hours to save a machete attack victim, then surely this minister can spend just a few hours, this afternoon, introducing his bill. We're prepared for it, is he?

Mr. Wiebe: So let me get this straight, Honourable Speaker. During their time in office from 2021 to 2023, shoplifting went up by 6,000 reported cases. There was a 12 per cent increase in violent crime. Robberies went up by 22 per cent; youth crime, 23 per cent. Youth violent crimes went up 23 per cent and this Stefanson government did absolutely nothing during that time. I never heard this member's voice once on this issue.

We're not going to take that approach, we're going to take action. That's what our government is committed to. And I hope the member lives up to it; not the way—not in the same way that they blocked the unexplained wealth act when we brought it forward in this Legislature in the spring.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Balcaen: I'll allow my record to speak for itself for advocacy for safer streets for Manitoba. From 15-year-old children to 80-year-old seniors to newcomers who have been here only a few months; all have been victims of this random machete violence plaguing our communities.

If the phrase life-altering injuries isn't a call for action to this minister, then nothing will be.

I'm simply asking the minister to put the same level of urgency that the surgeons did saving this child into his legislation, or is he too busy making apologies on behalf of his boss?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Very proud of our Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe). He's taking action, and what he's doing is working. Not only is it me, it's people in the community and civic leaders, it's law enforcement who say that the things that he is doing are working.

What could we say after this weekend's media coverage of the PCs? Well, we already knew that they were morally bankrupt after the 2023 election campaign; now we can also add financially bankrupt to that list of qualifiers as well.

But when it comes to public safety, the most significant thing over the long term that this government has done so far: the universal food program in schools. For generations to come, people's lifetime incomes are going to improve, people's high school graduation rates are going to improve, our streets are going to be safer, not just this year, next year, five years, but we're talking 10 years, 20 years from now.

* (14:30)

We need to maintain a long-term commitment to ensuring that every young person in Manitoba has a pathway to post secondary instead of a pipeline to prison.

Minister of Housing's Trip to Texas Size and Cost of Delegation

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): This past summer, our Housing Minister took a 26-person delegation to Houston, Texas to learn about the Houston model approach to end homelessness.

Can the minister share with us why 26 people had to attend in person, why she has yet to disclose the cost of this trip, and does she foresee anymore trips?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Miigwech to the member for that question, and I'm very proud of the delegation that went to Houston. We learned a lot. Lot of front-line organizations that are doing great work.

And I look forward to releasing our plan going forward: \$116 million our government has committed to standing up housing, to fixing and maintaining

social housing, something that the previous government never did.

Stefanson government sold off housing. They cut the maintenance budget by 87 per cent. We see the—what's happened as a result of that: people in encampments; people, you know, sleeping in bus shelters.

Our government is a compassionate government. We're listening, we're collaborating and we're working with organizations to help the fine people of Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a supplementary question.

Houston Model to Address Homelessness Manitoba Advocate's Recommendations

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): According to a Winnipeg Free Press article on August 1, 2024, which I table, the minister said: We all learned from the Houston model, and we focused on the elements that will be beneficial to incorporating into our made-in-Manitoba approach.

Will the minister share with us the specific beneficial elements she learned in Houston that she could not have learned from here in Manitoba?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I'm looking forward to releasing that element of what we learned in Houston. That will be coming out. So I invite the member to watch out for that.

But what I will tell the member is we committed \$37 million in funding to over 17 projects, with 525 social rent-geared-to-income units. That's 525 new units here in our province, something that the previous Stefanson government didn't focus on.

It was not on their radar to house people that needed truly rent geared to income. In fact, they were selling off housing. They sold, in one single transaction, over 300 units of housing. Shameful on them.

That—result of that? People living in encampments—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Lamoureux: We have met with local homelessness advocates, and one can't help but wonder if the funds for the Houston trip could have been used more directly to support housing initiatives right here in Manitoba throughout this past year.

Why do we not utilize made-in-Manitoba solutions that advocates have been studying, have been recommending, have been lobbying all of us politicians for decades, Honourable Speaker? Even when, notably, when the NDP were in opposition, why have these recommendations not been brought forward?

Ms. Smith: Well, let me tell you some—another exciting projects from rent-geared-to-income units. Market Lands: \$1.8 million for 48 units. From the—Transcona: \$3 million for a capital—or 31 units. Balmoral: \$2.2 million, 15 units. Family Dynamics and New Journey Housing, and the list goes on and on.

And, again, I look forward to letting the member know about our trip to Houston, because I'm super excited about it, I know that front-line organizations are super excited, and I know members across are super excited.

And we're going to get people in Manitoba housed, something that members opposite never did.

Minor Injury Clinic New Facility in Brandon

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, our government promised to improve access to primary care across this province, and last month we took the step in fulfilling that promise with a new minor injury and illness clinic in Brandon. This is great news for Brandon and the Westman region.

Can the Minister of Health please expand on the benefits that having a minor injury and illness clinic in Brandon will have?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleague from Kirkfield Park for that excellent question.

Accessing primary care, no matter where you live, is vital for Manitoba families. This clinic is great news for parents when their kids need stitches or a cast, and it's great news for patients who need to see a doctor in a non-urgent-care setting and don't want to wait in an ER.

For seven and a half years, the Stefanson government refused to work with the front lines or take any meaningful steps at all to address ER overcrowding and wait times. But it's a new day here in Manitoba. Our government is tackling this issue head-on, working with the front lines and bringing better primary care to Manitobans.

Health-Care Support Workers Impact of Possible Strike Action

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, 25,000 health-care support workers who are the foundation of our health-care system may be off the front lines tomorrow morning. This strike will have major trickle-down impacts on each and every aspect of our health-care system. Cancellations will occur, patients will be impacted, families will have to step up where this government refuses to.

How many elective surgeries are going to be cancelled? How much longer are wait times going to get? And how many home-care patients will be left with no support to bathe as a result of this NDP government's inability to manage this negotiation?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, certainly the best outcome that our government and Manitobans are wanting here is for a deal to happen at the negotiating table. It's important to be clear that our government has brought forward a deal that is two and a half times what the previous Stefanson government brought forward for workers.

It's also important to note, Honourable Speaker, that members on that side of the House, that member froze the wages of health-care workers in this province for years. They refused to even get to the bargaining table.

So on this side of the House, we respect workers. We're going to stay at the table and bargain in good faith for workers in this province.

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

Mrs. Cook: When Ten Ten Sinclair workers were on strike earlier this year for almost three weeks, the NDP left patients to lie in soiled bedding with no support to bathe, eat or even turn on their lights.

Family members were forced to take time off work and worry every day about the conditions their family members were in. Once again, the NDP is expecting family members to step in and make up for their own bad governance.

I'll table the letter sent to home-care clients and their families last week, stating families need to, quote, bridge any gaps in service themselves.

How many home-care patients will be left like this, this time around?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, as I stated in my previous response, the best outcome is a deal that is negotiated at the bargaining table.

I want to be really clear that patient care is our top priority as we navigate this. We've been working very, very hard with our regional health authorities, with leaders, families, organizations across the system to make sure that we're doing everything that we can to limit the impacts on families, patients, residents who depend on this care.

We're going to continue to do that work as we move forward, and we're going to continue to be at the table to negotiate a fair deal with workers.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

* (14:40)

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption

to all forms of home heating, the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is the one—is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

This petition is signed by Nancy Sinclair, Paige Stelmack, Brendan Cunningham and many, many more fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption

to all forms of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadian home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from their home heating bill.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them with much-needed relief.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Thanks to an investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way.

The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine. An MRI machine is a non-invasive, medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is to—it is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud health authority. Currently there is only one MRI in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients, as well as reduce the burden on stretcher services and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nation reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada dis-

proportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is Southport Aerospace. This aerodrome has a length—a runway length that is more adequate to support medical air-ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait time for Manitobans to receive an MRI is currently 6 to 8 months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

* (14:50)

FortWhyte Alive

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) The community of Fort Whyte has over 22,000 residents and the RM of Macdonald has over 8,000 residents, many of them using McGillivray Road and PTH 3 as a means of transportation or commute to and from the city of Winnipeg. PTH 3 is a major traffic corridor that services many communities including Oak Bluff, Sanford, Brunkild, Carman, Morden, Manitou and Killarney, to name just a few.

(2) Thousands of vehicles travel down McGillivray and PTH 3 each day, and with the growing industrial park in this area and the connections to the Perimeter Highway, many transport vehicles, large trucks and farm equipment need to travel down these roads each day.

(3) In the past—in the last three years, under the previous PC provincial government, two new sets of

traffic lights were installed along this roadway. Local officials praised these initiatives, stating that it was greatly needed to help reduce traffic incidents.

(4) FortWhyte Alive (FWA) is located in this area, which is a reclaimed wildlife preserve, recreation area and environmental education centre in southwest Winnipeg that attracts 100,000 visitors each year. This 660-acre park is located along the migratory path of Canadian geese and is named after the surrounding community of Fort Whyte. A failure to install traffic lights poses a significant safety risk to all those who frequent the area.

FortWhyte Alive has been undergoing renovations along 2505 McGillivray Blvd across from Brady Road and is to be transformed into a new building called Buffalo Crossing, which will attract many more visitors to the area by vehicle, transit, bicycle and by foot.

(6) The City of Winnipeg has been slated to install a new crosswalk at the intersection of Brady Road and McGillivray Boulevard by the summer of 2024. The previous PC provincial government committed to working with the city and FWA to complete this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to assist the City of Winnipeg to address serious safety risks for all that frequent the FWA area by twinning and installing a traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of McGillivray Boulevard and Brady Road as it transitions into Provincial Trunk Highway 3.

This petition—this has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable member for fort—no—the honourable member for Fort Whyte.

Breast Screening

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background of this petition is as—sorry. I'll restart, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces

and territories to lower their starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every year.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intention to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because the cancers that are caught early are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition is signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illness to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

* (15:00)

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

And this petition is signed by Gisèle Solon, Ron MacKenzie, Belinda Walker and many other Manitobans.

Breast Screening

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival in less-severe cases. Women in their 40s who have had access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast-cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast-cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast-cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system, because cancers that are caught—or because cancers that are caught early are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and immediately put forward a plan to increase breast-cancer screening capacity and lower the breast-cancer screening age to 40.

This has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would just caution members that the generally accepted practice is to only use two manys, not three, not four, so please restrain yourself from having too many manys.

FortWhyte Alive

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I would like—I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

The community of Fort Whyte has over 22,000 residents, and the RM of Macdonald has over 8,000 residents, many of them using McGillivray Road and PTH 3 as means of transportation or commute to and from the city of Winnipeg.

Highway 3 is a major traffic corridor that services many communities, including Oak Bluff, Sanford, Brunkild, Carman, Morden, Manitou and Killarney, to name a few.

Thousands of vehicles travel down McGillivray and PTH 3 each day, and with the growing industrial park in this area and connections to the Perimeter Highway, many transport vehicles, large trucks and farm equipment need to travel down these roads each day.

In the last three years, under the previous PC provincial government, two new sets of traffic lights were installed along this roadway. Local officials praised these initiatives, stating that it was greatly needed to help reduce traffic incidents.

FortWhyte Alive is located in this area, which is in—is a reclaimed wildlife preserve, recreation area and environmental education centre in southwest Winnipeg that attracts 100,000 visitors each year. This 660-acre park is located along the migratory path of Canadian geese and is named after the surrounding community of Fort Whyte. A failure to install traffic lights poses a significant risk to all those who frequent this area.

FortWhyte Alive has been undergoing renovations along 2505 McGillivray Blvd, across from Brady Road, and is the—transformed into a new building called Buffalo Crossing, which will attract many more visitors to the area by vehicle, transit, bicycle and by foot.

The City of Winnipeg has been slated to install a new crosswalk at the intersection of Brady Road and McGillivray Boulevard by the summer of 2024. The previous PC government—provincial government com-

mitted to working with the City and FWA to complete this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to assist the City of Winnipeg to address serious safety risks for all that frequent the FWA area by twinning and installing a traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of McGillivray Boulevard and Brady Road as it transitions into Provincial Trunk Highway 3.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans: Crystal Heinrichs, John Heinrichs and Maria Heinrichs. Thank you. And many others.

Provincial Trunk Highway 2

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 2, PTH 2, is a 315-kilometre, 196-mile highway that runs from the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border to Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway.

(2) A significant portion of PTH 2 runs through the constituency of Spruce Woods, from the border of the rural municipality of Pipestone and the rural municipality of Sifton to the border of the rural municipality of Victoria and the rural municipality of Norfolk-Treherne.

(3) This route is historically significant, as it follows the original path taken in 1874 by the North West Mounted Police in their march west from Fort Dufferin to Fort Whoop-Up; and

(4) PTH 2 is a significant commuting route for Westman families and is also utilized by those in the trade, commerce, tourism, agriculture and agri-food industries.

(5) The condition of PTH 2, from the east side of the town of Souris straight through to the hamlet of Deleau, is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(6) The newly appointed Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has confirmed the department has no plan to refurbish this stretch of road until the 2028-2029 construction season.

* (15:10)

(7) The minister outlined that the current 2028-2029 construction plan does not include the stretch of PTH 2 that runs through the town of Souris but instead starts on the west side of town.

(8) Communities in the area have been clear that any reconstruction of PTH 2 must include the stretch that runs through the town of Souris.

(9) The minister and the Premier have a duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to immediately prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Trunk Highway 2 in the upcoming construction season.

(2) To urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Trunk Highway 2 that runs through the town of Souris in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Ashley Williams, Ben Williams, Cory Crampaing and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high efficiency furnace, carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada but has indicated that they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available

to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

Manitoba—or, No. 7—sorry. Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

Honourable Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much needed relief.

And this petition has been signed by Ken Yule, Jolene Osbak, James Lazinski and many, many Manitobans.

Breast Screening

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, CCS, is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast cancer screening to 40.

Based off the 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

After non-medical skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have

access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from 'bess' cancer than those who don't receive screening.

Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered their breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health system.

Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 113 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, is now functionally obsolete, and therefore more subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

In—(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to the new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(9) The City expropriation process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 113-year-old bridge is complete.

* (15:20)

(10) The new City administration has delayed the decision on the Louise Bridge for a minimum of one year, and possibly up to 10 years, unless the Province steps in on behalf of northeast Winnipeg residents and completes this overdue link—or the overdue link.

(11) The Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping the old bridge open for active transportation in the future.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Child-Welfare System—Call for Inquiry

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) On Sunday, February 11, 2024, Manitobans witnessed an unimaginable tragedy when five individuals were murdered.

(2) The victims ranged in ages from two months to 30 years.

(3) Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate partner violence among Canadian provinces, at a rate of 633 per 100,000 people, according to police-reported data from Statistics Canada.

(4) Public reporting indicates that on December 9, 2023, Myah-Lee left a voicemail for her Child and Family Services worker in which she pleaded to—and I quote—to be removed out of her home in Carman.

(5) Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth noted: This case highlights the failures of the government to respond to our recommendations.

(6) On March the 6th of 2024, the Minister of Families, the MLA for St. Johns, indicated on public record that she was too busy to discuss issues surrounding children in care, including calling a public inquiry into this unprecedented tragedy.

(7) The last inquiry held in Manitoba was for the death of five-year-old Phoenix Sinclair in 2008.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Families to develop better policies to protect youth in care from potential physical or psychological abuse.

(2) To urge the provincial government to immediately establish a public inquiry to identify the failing of child-welfare system and ensure that no call from a child ever goes unanswered or ignored again.

This petition is signed by Harlan Perchotte, Reed Sutherland, Gerald Sawatsky and many other Manitobans.

Breast Screening

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): To this Legislative Assembly, I do—the background of this petition is as follows:

Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age of breast screening to 40.

Based on the 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at the age of 40 will save Canadian health-care system over \$460 million annually.

After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. This is of 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year with 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

Early—(4) Early detection for breast cancers will lead to better outcomes in patients with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada have already lowered their breast cancer screening age or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work in expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into the health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and no former—formal plan has increased its screening capacity or lowered the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening at age 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the province—provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening to age 40.

This has been signed by Maria Stynick [*phonetic*], Susan Brown, Taylor McMullan and many other Manitobans.

Hearing Aids

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent

of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

* (15:30)

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

There have been reports of unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide-prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide-prevention counseling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental-health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one loaf of bread worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and to get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuel cost farmers and consumers more each and every year.

In food production—(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition is signed by Ashley Rechuk, Leah Zenbaek [*phonetic*] and Guy Lagimodière, along with many, many other Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance; and

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

* (15:40)

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to Legislative Assembly.

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

The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce the carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

The federal government—four, sorry—the federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

This is signed by Terry Jenson [*phonetic*]—Jaenen, Murray Jaenen, Paige Jaenen and many, many other Manitobans.

The Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call and resume debate on second reading of Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act?

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now resume debate on second reading of Bill 38, enact—*[interjection]* My mistake.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

The Speaker: We will now resume debate on second reading of Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

The debate is open.

Are there any speakers?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to BITSA; however, this is not just a budget and stacks—tax statutes bill. The NDP has decided to include a long list of legislative changes that have absolutely nothing to do with the budget.

We are seeing right now that there are significant changes to labour legislation, environmental legislation and even bringing back the NDP vote tax. These are not minor changes. These are not minor amendments within this omnibus bill. These are major legislative changes that the NDP is undemocratically forcing through in this budget bill to avoid accountability to Manitobans.

They know that these bills are controversial. They know that there will be backlash from the business community. They know that this labour bill is only about supporting their union-boss friends at the detriment of Manitoba workers. Nine pieces of legislation, and the NDP is dropping them into schedules in the BITSA bill.

Manitoba has a democratic process for reviewing bills that go to committee that allow for public input and public consultation.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

This is for all ninth–non-financial bills. Yet, the NDP is bypassing this.

I have to ask for the record: What is the NDP scared of? Why do they refuse to face Manitobans over these controversial bills? Are they worried about the backlash? Are they worried what Manitobans are going to say about them? Because why else would they put major, major pieces of legislation and hide them in BITSA.

Significant changes to labour, environment, election financing should absolutely be in separate bills and should go through the due democratic process with public input. This is a key part of our democracy, and Manitobans deserve to face this NDP government and say what they really think about these bills. This is shameless, this is undemocratic and this is not transparent.

The NDP are hiding. They are hiding from Manitobans, and they are hiding from their true agenda.

What is their agenda, and why are they hiding from Manitobans with these pieces of legislation? If they were actually proud of these bills, then they would face Manitobans. They would go to committee. They would hear public input and public consultation on this.

Manitobans deserve better from this NDP government.

I'd like to speak now about the fuel tax in the BITSA bill.

Cabinet is giving themselves sweeping powers to set these rates. We already know that the fuel tax is going up by 14 cents on January 1—but no, we don't know that because they're allowing them to set their rates at the Cabinet table. It could be 14 cents, 20 cents, 30 cents, 50 cents. We don't know because they are not being transparent to Manitobans. It is now up to Cabinet to decide, and Manitobans do not get a say. These are sweeping powers that the minister has given not only himself but the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this Cabinet.

There is no accountability to Manitobans on their hard-earned tax dollars, and the NDP needs to be reminded of that. These are not—this is not their money. This is not their dollars. This is Manitobans' dollars, and Manitobans deserve to have a say about how their hard-earned dollars are being spent by this NDP government.

The Income Tax Act. That's also included in this piece of legislation. But now, what do we really know this bill to be? It's a doctors tax; it's the engineers tax; it's the small-business owner tax; it is a lawyers tax; it is the union bosses tax; the farmers tax; the school board superintendents tax. Many of these skills, jobs and careers make over \$200,000 in income. This bill takes away money from a significant number of Manitobans that we not only need to keep in Manitoba to keep the economy going, like engineers and small businesses, but what this does is it deters people that we are actually trying to recruit.

We are in a doctor shortage right now. We need doctors. Well, this is a deterrent for doctors to come to Manitoba, purchase a house, raise their families here, because the NDP wants to tax them.

They want to remove basic personal exemption for people who are earning over \$200,000 in income. Well, that is a lot of specialties that are we trying to recruit here in Manitoba.

We have a short of engineers. Many of those people make over \$200,000. We need those people to work in manufacturing, in the trades, in transportation, in infrastructure.

* (15:50)

I'm pretty sure the Minister of Infrastructure has a vacancy rate in projects right now for road and bridge construction. Well, that's what engineers do, but what this bill does and these changes to income tax, it deters people from coming into Manitoba.

We need to be tax competitive as a province with other jurisdictions. We don't just compete against communities here in Manitoba for people; we compete against every other province in this country. We compete against the US. We compete against other countries in this world. We want to attract people here? Well, we need to make sure that we are a tax-competitive province, and what this bill does and these changes that the NDP are making on income tax do the exact opposite.

One of the pieces of major legislative changes that are included in this bill is the labour. This is so incredibly valid and concerning right now considering we are about to be on the cusp of a labour strike here in Manitoba. When disability support workers struck back in March, it was the clients that suffered, not the business or the workers.

Now 25,000 health-care workers are on the cusp of a strike—cancelled surgeries, cancelled appointments—

and they're going out and telling individuals to bridge any gaps and support themselves as family members. The NDP, with this bill, are putting their own ideology above patients and above people who need these services, and they took away the ability for Manitobans to go out of province to get the surgeries that they desperately need.

There is no accountability with this NDP government, which is exactly why they are forcing through major pieces of legislation through this BITSA act. Not only are they trying to give themselves sweeping powers to set the fuel tax at the Cabinet table, but they also want to bump up their own NDP coffers by bringing back the NDP vote tax—The Elections Act. The minister are seeking to 'enrich' themselves at the public's expense yet again.

We saw this happen 10 years ago, 15 years ago, under the previous NDP government. But they did not run on increasing political subsidies to their own parties. I certainly didn't hear that during the election campaign, Manitobans didn't hear that during the election campaign, and there could've been a very different outcome if the NDP was actually honest about the decisions that they were making to Manitobans.

But what did they decide to do? They decided not to be transparent with Manitobans, they've decided not to be accountable to Manitobans, and they are forcing through these changes that should otherwise be at public committee.

Why are they hiding from Manitobans? What other agenda do they have? Why won't they face Manitobans? Why won't they be accountable to Manitobans?

It says a lot that one of the first orders of business by this NDP government is slipping this into legislation. The minister needs to do the right thing and send this to public committee so we can hear from Manitobans. What is he so afraid of?

Another sweeping power that the NDP is giving themselves through this legislation is through the Hydro amendment act. This is an entire piece of legislation that the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) failed to get onto the Order Paper in time because she was too busy gallivanting around at the public's expense.

Hydro's debt was driven up by the Doer and Selinger NDP governments, and has reached a point where debt-servicing costs are observable in the provincial budget. Moving away from strict requirements

to get ahead of this debt so we don't saddle our children and grandchildren and future generations is absolutely vital. This is a sweeping power that the NDP has now given themselves yet again.

Manitobans are struggling under this NDP's leadership. Manitobans are starting to pay more but get less under this NDP government, and people are starting to realize wait times, wait-lists, have not gotten any better in health care, and their schools are not getting built, yet they're trying to ram through a piece of labour legislation, right at this time, right as workers are about to go on strike. Like, the timing of this could not be more concerning.

And I have to question and ask the NDP why they are doing this through the BITSA budget bill and not at public committee with Manitobans, who I would assure you would be very concerned, especially with the strike that's about to happen.

It is ironic that this government is looking to change essential services and replacement workers on the cusp of this massive strike, regardless of labour negotiations. Manitobans deserve basic services, and as I already spoke about, as we saw back in March, patients and vulnerable Manitobans should not be bearing the brunt of these labour actions.

But what this bill does, it essentially makes Manitobans feel that brunt. We had folks left in their own filth, as my colleague the MLA for Roblin spoke about in question period today, and family members coming in to supplement, to afford people basic dignity.

We need these health-care workers, and the NDP has failed at their negotiations to make this possible. This truly shows the government's priorities, and it isn't Manitobans. It is their own agenda; it is hiding from Manitobans by putting major pieces of legislation not through the due process like public committee. They're trying to push it through now without allowing the public to speak—speaks volumes as to what they're truly hiding and what their agenda really is.

Another thing that was added to this bill is the seniors advocate, an entire bill just stapled to the back of this omnibus legislation. Not only did they get rid of a minister of Seniors, but they have now just added an entire seniors advocate onto a bill without public input, without committee.

As we saw earlier this year when the fuel tax went to committee, well, what did we notice? The NDP forgot; they forgot about farm implements; they forgot about snowmobiles; they forgot about side-by-sides.

Well, had it not been for that committee, then recreation and farmers would have been paying a lot more, and that is a glaring example as to why the importance of committee when you're discussing major legislative changes needs to take place. It took our side of the House to even draw attention to this glaring removal and also took the public presenters to indicate how obvious it was that they had left this out.

Now, I'm pleased that they finally did do the right thing and make those changes, but what if we had not been at a public committee? What if the public had not presented those concerns to the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala)? What would we have?

This is why we have public committees. This is exactly the reason: because the government makes mistakes. They forget things. They are not the expert on every single little detail within a piece of legislation. That's why the public should have a say, because the public might be. You might have an expert come and present, make some good suggestions, present some good ideas, and that is why we have that: for the government to consider, for the government to actually take Manitobans seriously enough, to the point where they actually want to hear their concerns. But that is not what they're doing.

This minister is setting hydro rates at the Cabinet table. Where's that hydro freeze that he talked about? I haven't seen it. Three billion dollars in election promises and a promise of a hydro freeze; well, I haven't certainly seen that. He is going to set hydro rates at the Cabinet table to 4 per cent every year, and his budget bill removes the requirement that Manitoba Hydro make efforts to rein in its massive NDP debt.

Let's go back 10 years. The last time that the NDP government interfered with Manitoba Hydro, what happened: \$24 billion in debt. The NDP maxed out the Hydro credit card, and now with their \$2-billion deficit this year they're maxing out another credit card.

Well, pretty soon, when you're maxing out two credit cards, the bank is going to come knocking and Manitoba is in big trouble with \$57 billion in debt as a province, once you include Manitoba Hydro. This is—should be concerning for all Manitobans.

As I mentioned, this bill is anti-democratic. It reduces transparency and accountability for all the reasons I talked about.

* (16:00)

They're not going in front of the public to see what the public thinks about some of these controversial pieces of legislation. These are—*[interjection]*

You know, the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) is quipping back and forth. These are major, major legislation. These are stand-alone bills that they have stapled to the back of the budget bill. These are not minor amendments. These are major pieces of legislation that deserve accountability, transparency and due public process.

What else does this budget bill do? Not only are they hiding their true agenda from Manitobans, but they're increasing taxes. They're promising to raise the taxes on Manitobans. That's what this bill tells us. I already spoke about the doctors tax, the engineers tax, the small-business owners tax.

An Honourable Member: Property tax.

Mrs. Stone: This—the property tax: \$148 million in increased property taxes this year. We've already seen school divisions across the board increases 17 per cent, and now the NDP is raising property taxes too. This is the largest property tax increase that Manitoba has ever seen.

The undemocratic NDP are raising your taxes as Manitobans, and they're ramming through an omnibus bill full of new, untested measures. They are feathering their own nest with future subsidies to the NDP at Manitobans' expense. They are removing transparency and accountability for Manitoba Hydro by watering down the powers of the Public Utilities Board. This is what the Public Utilities Board is there for. It is there to provide accountability and transparency and to be removed from government and NDP interference.

Hydro will no longer be accountable to Manitobans for Hydro's debt, which is incredibly concerning considering the last time the NDP government interfered with Manitoba Hydro, they landed with \$24 billion of debt. They're watering down the powers of the Public Utilities Board. They are no longer being accountable for deficits and borrowing. This bill will absolutely lead to higher hydro rates for Manitobans and a dire outcome for Manitoba Hydro.

As I mentioned, \$24 billion in debt with Manitoba Hydro on top of the \$33 billion in debt as a province. We are almost \$60 billion in debt as a Province of Manitoba, and \$24 billion of that is completely attributed to the previous NDP's mismanagement and interference of Manitoba Hydro.

The NDP didn't campaign on any of these measures. Let's remember that. They campaigned on \$3 billion worth of spending promises, but they did not campaign on a vote tax. They didn't campaign on increasing their coffers as a political party. This is not what the Manitobans voted for. The NDP are clearly not as advertised.

The NDP are letting down seniors and have failed to introduce any new significant or substantial legislation for seniors. Like I said, they got rid of the minister of Seniors, and now they're just stapling this seniors' act onto the back of a bill, not even giving it the importance that it deserves.

There are no funds. There are no funds even attached to this bill for seniors, so why is it in a budget implementation bill? The budget bill is supposed to be for budgetary and tax statute items. So what is a seniors act doing being stapled to the back of this bill like an afterthought?

Because that's what this NDP has proven, is that seniors are an afterthought. They got rid of the minister of Seniors. They didn't think that was important. They haven't had a stand-alone piece of legislation for the seniors advocate, which should also be important. Manitoban seniors deserve to have this importance placed on them by this NDP government. But the proof is that they are not. Seniors have become an afterthought by this minister and this NDP government.

The NDP did campaign on raising taxes. We have seen numerous increases of taxes: \$148 million in property tax, changes to the income tax and basic personal exemption. Now they're increasing their own vote tax for their own political party. Manitobans are paying more and getting less under this NDP government. And what are Manitobans paying for? They're paying to prop up the NDP's ideological agenda, union-boss friends and their own political party. Why?

Not only are they doubling the subsidy to their own political party with this bill, but they are watering down the summary budgeting rules and we need to flag this for the Auditor General to review. The NDP's numbers just do not add up in the budget, and now they're making changes to the summary project as a reflection of the Estimates. Why? Why is that?

I have so many questions as it relates to this bill; I cannot wait to get into Estimates to find out truly what the NDP has spent their money on, because quite frankly, they have taken seven years of credible fiscal

performance by the former PC government and squashed it in the matter of months. They're hiding their true agenda for Manitobans and the question is: Why? Why are they watering down transparency to help them fudge the numbers on their borrowing, deficit and debt for years to come?

Debt servicing costs over \$2 billion now, one of the fourth—what is that—third or fourth highest government department. There might be a minister of debt under the NDP now, because that's what it's going to take to get this under control.

Now I want to talk about electric vehicle subsidies. This bill creates a subsidy for rich people to get a \$4,000 subsidy for a new electric vehicle. But it only capped it to a few precious Manitobans that just happen to be lucky enough to get that subsidy. Only 1,350 Manitobans can get this expensive subsidy.

At this rate, it would take 1,000 years for all Manitobans to get a chance to use this subsidy to purchase a car; even if everyone bought a used EV and took the lower \$2,500 subsidy, it would take over 500 years for every Manitoban to get help with their vehicle purchases. So why did the NDP cap this?

Another piece of legislation that the NDP is ramming through in this omnibus bill, while avoiding accountability and transparency with Manitobans, is an environment bill. They are creating more bureaucratic red tape that won't actually help. Instead of using leadership on the environment, they want to use a stick, and I look forward to my colleagues for speaking about this later on.

But instead of helping municipalities, citizens, departments keep our lakes, rivers, streams clean, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, clean our air and improve our lands and forests, the NDP is just going to hand out tickets and fines that will accomplish very little for the environment but to help fill the NDP government coffers.

I want to go back to seniors for a moment because I find this absolutely despicable: the fact that the seniors advocate was just stapled to this bill. My parents are seniors, my friend's grandparents are seniors, and they truly deserve more from this government. This is actually really, really unfortunate and disturbing.

Where is the seniors act? That was promised. All that's here is a few clauses to establish a new seniors advocate; that's it. Just a few clauses stapled to the back of a budget bill. It's not a budget bill, but I mean, that's what the NDP are ramming here. There's

nothing new here for personal-care homes or commitment to undo the cuts to the PCHs that were previously announced by this NDP government.

Where is our seniors and long-term strategy? Seniors are important, so where's your seniors bill? Where's your minister of Seniors?

This measure is barely a footnote in their budget plan and in this BITSA bill. There is no money mentioned for the new seniors advocate here, so why exactly is this in BITSA? BITSA is a budget bill. Is this seniors advocate a budget bill? If it is, then how much? How much is being allocated to it?

Is the environmental legislation that's also been stapled to the back of this a money bill? Well, then how much? How much is being allocated to it?

What about the NDP vote tax? That's going to their own political parties, has nothing to do with the financial operations of this Province, yet they're increasing their own coffers for their own political friends.

The NDP, they're going to be using this fuel tax holiday, increasing it by 14 cents on January 1. Oh, but wait: is it going to be 14 cents, 20 cents, 25 cents? We don't know because they're letting themselves set the rates at the Cabinet table.

*(16:10)

They are not only increasing our rates, which will be the largest fuel tax increase in the province of Manitoba in its history. We saw them increase it under the NDP Greg Selinger; well, might be a new quarterback with the NDP but it's the same playbook—and there's a line for my colleague, the MLA for Fort Whyte.

They are stringing people along three months at a time with this fuel tax holiday. Three months. How many people actually budget in three-month increments? I know with my family, I certainly don't. People can't afford to be strung along by this NDP government on their finances, but that is exactly what this NDP is doing. They are undemocratically using this bill so that they can raise your fuel taxes without bringing legislation before the Assembly. Let's just let that sink in.

They will be able to raise your fuel taxes without bringing in legislation before this Assembly. Manitobans should be concerned about that. We already know that they've created a \$2-billion deficit for themselves, and now they want to give themselves sweeping powers to be able to raise your taxes, raise your hydro rates, because they need to pay for their

\$3 billion worth of promises and the \$2-billion deficit that they have created for themselves.

The NDP want Manitobans to give them a blank cheque to raise taxes on fuel whenever their piggy bank runs dry. All the financial revenue tax changes and expenditure changes should be brought before the Legislature before being implemented. This is why this bill is undemocratic. This is why there is no accountability. These are major, major changes that Manitobans will be concerned about and Manitobans deserve to have a say, and this Chamber deserves to have a say and have our voices heard on this.

Does this mean that we're going to get 30-cent or 40-cent fuel excise tax as of January 1? What happens if they decide that they need to support their \$3 billion worth of election spending; is it going to be 20 cents? Like, we don't know. Manitobans don't know.

What is the true agenda of the NDP? What are they hiding? They're implementing increase of taxes on fuel, increased hydro rates, increased property taxes, their new tax on doctors, engineers, professionals with this bill, by making them all pay more in income taxes as well as the taxes on their homes. They're taking away the basic personal amount from crucial workers that we need to attract in Manitoba.

And I know I only have a couple minutes left, as I could go on this all day. Manitoba absolutely needs to be tax-competitive as a province. What this bill does, increasing taxes on middle-income earners and the exact professions that we are trying to recruit to this province, is a detriment. We absolutely need to keep the economy going. The only way we can keep the economy going is if we have those professionals in those skilled trades to keep that economy moving.

I don't want to see engineers leave this province. I worked in manufacturing, super reliant on engineers. Incredibly important. I don't want to see doctors leaving, doctors fleeing to the US. Well, then why, exactly, is this NDP government putting on a doctors tax on the exact professions that we are trying to recruit here to Manitoba?

We saw under the previous NDP government businesses fleeing to Saskatchewan and Alberta. We saw those jobs leave. Well, now we're seeing the exact same playbook by this NDP government.

We need to keep our businesses here. We need to keep our economy moving. And the only way to do that is to ensure that this province maintains tax competitiveness.

Thank you.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): When we're looking at a big omnibus bill like this, there's a lot in here. And I'm going to try to go through as efficiently as I can, but there is obviously some good to this bill, some bad to this bill and some things that are just downright ugly.

So I'll start with the good: the seniors advocate. Credit where credit is due. We've been talking in this building before I got here in 2019 about a seniors advocate. We obviously know our population is aging, and I'm actually surprised that there isn't sort of unanimous support for this.

This is a neutral independent office of the Legislature that's going to focus on the needs of the senior population. And they're going to do it in a, you know, systematic way, trying to prevent people from falling through the cracks. And they're going to provide neutral policy-based recommendations for all parties here, and it won't matter who's in power. And it will be better policy for, at times, a very vulnerable population, one that many live in poverty or ill health or have problems with isolation and loneliness and mental health. And I think this is a really—a big step forward, and I'm glad to see it.

Another—I think give credit where credit is due—is that the education property tax is getting fairer in this bill. We're basically starting to help people that actually need the help the most. I mean, the previous version of the bill benefited people that had, like, basically villas or mansions. It benefited large commercial landlords. And the bulk of that money went to those people, and literally cheques were getting sent out of the province to out-of-province billionaires; that money didn't stay in the Manitoba economy.

When you cap it at \$1,500, it is sort of reaching the people that need it the most, and that money stays in Manitoba and circulates in the economy. So most Manitobans didn't get a million-dollar rebate cheque like Cadillac Fairview. They got, you know, three, four, five hundred dollars back from the government. This is going to make that a lot more fair.

But it's not totally fair because 40 per cent of Manitobans rent, and they're not going to see any benefit from this at all. And, in fact, in—they saw the rental tax credit reduced, and this government is going to bring it up by \$50 this year, but they end up losing more than they gain. And in places like Fort Garry, where 50 per cent of my constituents rent, they're going to basically be worse off instead of better. So if the government is serious about tax fairness and trying to get resources to who they need it, we really should

be concentrating first and foremost on renters and then on those that have modest home ownership.

Capping the basic personal amount for high-income earners, again, applaud the Finance Minister. I know this was his idea. This is something that really moves the needle in Manitoba. It makes us much more fair than we were, and I think that we need our tax policies to reflect this.

The basic personal amount distorts our tax system. Those that earn more get more, to the point where the people that actually need the help the most get literally dollars or pennies as opposed to thousands of dollars for a high-income earner. So this is a way to make things right and to rejig the tax system and to make it more fair for Manitobans.

What it'll also do, it'll be a boost to the economy. If you give high-income earners tax breaks, well, they often will import luxury products from out of province, the fancy cars, they go on luxury trips out of province; none of that money stays here. If you get money to low-income and middle-income Manitobans, they will spend every single penny of it here and it will circulate in the economy and it will grow small business and keep money flowing here. And so this tax measure in a modest way helps that.

And then raising the renter affordability tax credit, that's also an incredibly important initiative, and I know the Finance Minister strongly believes in this. And, again, I want to give credit where credit is due. This is going to help. This is going to make a real impact on people's lives. Yes, it's \$50, but it is going to go up, at least we're told, in subsequent years, but to a family that's struggling, that \$50 is actually going to mean something.

We know rents in Manitoba are skyrocketing, and we haven't seen any sort of significant investments in affordable housing, and many renters are struggling and having a hard time finding affordable places in Manitoba. We are second fastest jurisdiction in Canada for rental increases. So this is something—this is a blind spot with the government that needs work.

And again, the gas tax holiday, you know, a lot of people who rent don't own cars, and they're not going to get any benefit from it.

* (16:20)

And so if you look at who will get a benefit from the gas tax holiday, it's much more than \$50 a year that renters get. So again, this government needs to go further when it comes to tax fairness. It needs to make

sure that the tax breaks that we give go to the people who can use it and therefore, you know, keep things moving in Manitoba.

The other thing I've heard from constituents, and this, like, hits people right in the heart, and it is such—it feels like a small thing but it is life-altering and changes a family's trajectory. And that's, of course, raising the maximum fertility tax credit from \$8,000 to \$16,000. For those who use this, it is amazing, and I think Manitoba now has the most generous tax credit across the country. These types of treatments are exceptionally expensive and it creates barriers for some families from actually starting a family. And so doubling this tax credit will go a long way to make reproductive health care more accessible. And I've—certainly have heard from constituents about this.

My only concern about this is the government brought in EV tax credits for vehicles and they allowed them to be, you know, retroactive for a set period of time prior to the actual announcement in the budget so that people who, in the lead-up to the budget ended up purchasing these vehicles, they wouldn't be punished for being sort of early adopters. We haven't done that for the tax—for the fertility tax credit. And many families, you know, in the last year, put out ten, twenty, thirty-thousand dollars and will not get the benefit of this tax credit. So I'd—certainly would ask the government to take a look at that. I think, out of fairness' sake and to be consistent, if we're allowing EV owners that benefit, we certainly can allow families that use these types of treatments that same type of benefit. It certainly wouldn't cost much to Manitoba.

And giving MPI the power to administer EV rebate program, this is a small initiative, but it's important one. Manitoba's lagging behind other provinces in EV ownership. Everybody says—I think there's a consensus—that we have a car culture in Manitoba—and for us to realistically transition to a post-carbon economy, EVs are going to be a necessary step. What it—that should happen is we should be pairing this with free transit in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and Selkirk; we absolutely can afford it. With the gas tax holiday, we could afford it for a couple of years. And it certainly would go a long way, again, to get the help to the people who actually need it the most.

But that being said, you can't leave out, sort of, people that do live in the suburbs and can afford these vehicles. We want them to have better consumer choices that are not based on carbon. It's not a silver bullet but what it will do, and it's shown in other juris-

dictions, that it starts building up a market for these vehicles.

And like anything, there'll be a tipping point. At some point, you know, everybody knows somebody that owns an EV. They don't seem strange or, you know, inefficient because they have friends that can speak to their lived experience with it and then they become adopters themselves. And you will see, at some point, more Manitobans switching to that option, but it has to start somewhere, and so this policy is helpful.

It's a minor initiative. This government really hasn't shown any commitment to climate change or combatting climate change or, from any sort of real policy stance, to try to get us off fossil fuels. And that's been one of the most disappointing things that I hear from many former party members and constituents: that they feel disappointed about this government and betrayed, especially on environmental policies, that this government just turned its back on them. And they thought that this was going to be a very different government than it actually has become.

The other sort of good thing to talk about is rental housing construction initiative. I've spoken to some builders about this, and when it's sort of paired with the federal tax credit, this will end up building more rental units, including more affordable units. We've seen a massive influx of newcomers into Manitoba. Rental housing stock has not kept pace.

And, again, probably one of the biggest affordability crises in Manitoba is the lack of affordable housing. And not just for, you know, those that can't pay market rent, but those that can where, you know, with their wages, their rent is more than 30 per cent of their income, which is the test.

So Manitoba had an economic advantage for years, and that was our cost of living; it was cheaper to live here than elsewhere and people would actually move into Manitoba because of that. And we're losing that advantage; we're losing that. Our grocery prices tend to be higher than other parts of the country, and our housing prices now are getting higher than other parts of the country. So that sort of economic advantage that we had to keep life affordable, it's disappearing. So it's certainly—I hope this government sees that and works on it because it certainly can be fixed.

Capping hydro increases to 4 per cent a year—again, this is another Manitoba economic advantage. This province is, you know, owns a major energy

company. We compete with Hydro-Québec for having the cheapest hydro rates in all of North America. Again, that is a competitive advantage for our businesses. Businesses come and relocate to Manitoba because of lower costs, and it attracts high-energy-use businesses.

We also export billions in surplus energy to outside markets, create thousands of good, unionized family-supporting jobs, and if you look at a comparison of a province that doesn't do this: privatized hydro of Alberta, where they have energy shortages leading to blackouts, sky-high energy prices, and it becomes a drag on their economy. It makes life less affordable for citizens there.

And so, yes, Hydro has a large mortgage, but you don't pay a mortgage off in two, three years; you pay it off in 20 or 30 years. And the experts certainly see Hydro having a manageable mortgage in that it's affordable to pay it down, so I think this is a good balance. It helps Manitobans pay down the mortgage while maintaining our economic advantage and keeping things affordable. So these rates are going to be low for Manitobans, and we have to keep it that way and this bill will do that.

So that brings me now to the bad of this bill. So—and, of course, my concerns are with The Labour Relations Amendment Act. Many in this Chamber know that the version of this bill that's currently before the House is not the intended or original version of the bill. The previous bill that had been drafted looks very different than what actually got to the floor of the House.

It was modified—we know it was modified by the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) office, and we know it was modified without the input of either Cabinet or the caucus. We know that it was modified and without any discussions about that bill either at Cabinet or caucus and that the Premier's office drafted this bill on their own and put it forward without consultation.

And one wonders: well, why would a premier keep a signature bill from being discussed in Cabinet or in caucus? This is no ordinary bill; this is a bill that Manitoba NDP prides itself. It's definitional; it's telling Manitobans what our values are and what we believe in, and obviously, the opposition has a different world view and a different take on these type of bills; so it's a stark contrast.

So why would such an important bill like this not be discussed openly and why would it be changed in secret? Well, you know, the original bill was a copy

of a similar bill from the federal government and the Province of Quebec. And what happened in this new bill is that a major loophole got inserted into this bill that wasn't there before. The idea behind anti-scab legislation is to make the bargaining process more fair. You want the parties to be in an equal position so that they can negotiate in good faith and actually work out their differences and not sort of try to use power politics to try to get their way. And so, to do that, you take away an employer's ability to hire replacement workers, because then they can't starve their workers out. They can't just sort of sit back and say, you know what, we can wait and until the strike is over.

* (16:30)

And, of course, workers only have a certain amount of money and they got to pay their bills and often-times, if they're under financial stress, they have to come back to the table and accept a terrible deal that they wouldn't normally have accepted, but for the fact that they were under financial duress.

So by taking away the ability of an employer to bring in replacement workers, it evens the playing field. The employer now is going to be just as financially harmed as the employee. There is now, it's sort of like the nuclear option: you're not going to press the button because everybody gets hurt. It forces companies to work together, it forces companies not to see their employees as opponents but as partners, and as stakeholders in the business, and it brings people together to work out their differences and avoid costly and destructive strikes before they even happen. Right?

So that's the idea behind this bill and it is a good idea. And this bill allows outside bans on replacement workers, meaning you can't bring in new people in the company to replace a worker, but it doesn't allow what are called internal scabs: middle managers who will take over your job and do your job while you're out on strike.

And if you're dealing with exceedingly large companies, because that's who would benefit from this loophole, that have an army of middle managers, they can keep the enterprise going long enough to starve out their workers.

So on whose benefit is that? It's certainly not Manitoba workers. Nobody has asked for this loophole, and it certainly doesn't benefit. So why—I think the Premier needs to explain to Manitobans why he inserted this loophole into this bill, and why he is basically challenging labour on a signature bill and,

you know, watering down protections for Manitobans when there's absolutely no policy reason to do it.

I think he needs to come clean and explain to Manitobans why he had the ability to bring in a strong bill, one like the federal government bill or the Quebec bill, and he has brought in a much, much weaker bill. So this isn't in the interest of Manitobans. It's certainly not the interest of workers.

So whose interests are being served here? And this is certainly a wrong that needs to be fixed in this bill. And it's truly something that makes me very uncomfortable, especially about how it got here, and I certainly know more of the backstory about what happened, which is even more cringe-worthy.

So then that brings me to the ugly of this bill, and there is something truly, truly ugly about this bill. And, of course, that's the gas tax holiday. And it's both bad public policy and even worse politics.

Manitoba is facing the largest non-COVID deficit in its history. Almost \$2 billion are interest before all this. Was at \$900 million when I first started and I was the finance critic in twenty-nine–2019. Our interest payments now, on our debt, is \$1.8 billion.

That is a huge sum of money. So for all those, you know, members out there who have children, going to school in a hallway, just to put that in perspective, the \$340 million from the gas tax holiday, that would pay for eight brand-new schools in Manitoba. We could do that this year. This year.

That \$340 million that we're losing from the gas tax holiday—we could pay a fair and living wage to 25,000 low-wage home-care and health-care aide workers that are about to go to strike just hours from now. They are some of the lowest paid health-care workers in Canada. They get paid a buck 27 more than minimum wage, and we're about to put them on the street because we've spent all the money in the gas tax holiday and we haven't put it to where it needs to go, which is front-line services and respect and fair treatment of workers.

And \$340 million, that's not actually the bill, right? This is borrowed money. This is money we don't have, which means that it's going to take probably a generation to pay it back, and it will be tens of millions of dollars in interest. So that 340 is actually much higher.

So it's about priorities with this government and who they look to raise up. Not everybody's included in their one Manitoba, and we're seeing that with this

strike tomorrow. Apparently, we have money for doctors and nurses—as we should. But for the lowest paid health-care workers, we don't have any money for them. We're going to make them go on strike. We're going to put them—families into financial crisis because we want to give a \$15-a-month coupon on your next fill-up. That's not my party. That's not the values of my party. That's how much this government has strayed. And Manitobans are increasingly alarmed at what they're seeing.

So 57 per cent of the money for the gas tax holiday doesn't go to people; it goes to businesses and corporations. Only 43 per cent actually gets down to those who drive, and a lot of people don't drive. There is an estimate that about 20 per cent of our population does not drive, and they're not going to see any benefit at all from this.

So \$193 million is going basically to subsidize corporations and businesses who never asked for it. So if you drive a large heavy truck or a luxury SUV, you are going to get the lion's benefit here. And that's fine. But who is not getting a benefit? And it's a flat tax; it doesn't help those that need it most. In fact, it's going to reward high-income earners who drive large, luxurious, gas-guzzling vehicles.

So again, this government is making a choice. Can we help people who are struggling, that need this tax break the most, or are we going to give a tax break to corporations, businesses and wealthy luxury vehicle owners because we think they need the help more?

Well, this government made its choice, and I hope they reflect on it.

So Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimate the average driver will save \$15 per month.

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg says with this kind of money—\$340 million—you could pull 30 per cent of Manitobans out of poverty. There's a choice: \$15 coupon or pulling 30 per cent of Manitobans out of poverty. And, of course, if you really want to help people, you could pay for free transit, and that is more money than you would need to have free transit for multiple years in Winnipeg, Brandon, Selkirk and Thompson.

So the Premier (Mr. Kinew) promised that this was going to reduce the price of groceries. It didn't. Groceries at an all-time high. In fact, this government has done nothing to make grocery store prices more affordable.

The Speaker in the Chair

In fact, a conservative political commentator described this as fiscal madness. I think that's an understatement. This is reckless; it's irresponsible; it does very little to help Manitobans, especially those that need it most. And its real purpose is to grab headlines. And that's probably the saddest, most cynical thing about this is that this is a very, very expensive press release for this government. And for the amount of damage that it does, it just—it shows a Premier (Mr. Kinew) without a vision who's not serious, and, you know, he's turned his back on helping Manitobans.

So if you had given Manitobans a choice, do you want a coupon off your next fill or do you want your kids to go to a modern, functioning school—they will take the school every time, right? If you give Manitobans the choice of do you want a coupon off your next fill or you want to, you know, work and get paid at a living wage, they will take the living wage every single time.

* (16:40)

You know, and if you give Manitobans a choice about whether or not they want to wait 12 hours in an emergency room to be seen or they get a coupon on their fill-up heading to the hospital, they will take a functioning ER every time.

So thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I'm sorry to hear the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) isn't excited to hear that I have more to say today but, alas, I'll try to impress him with this speech.

You know, perhaps he's had some time to review those documents I tabled earlier and realized that he's a bit behind on the status with the Riverdale municipality and police service, but nonetheless, I digress.

We're here to talk about Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and what a bill, Honourable Speaker. My goodness, is it long with all those extra pieces of non-financial matters tacked onto the back of it. Oh, it's really a shame to see the NDP resort to undemocratic processes in order to get their legislation through because of a failure to plan.

You know, if you heard them talk prior to October of 2023, they thought they were the government in waiting. They were ready to go day one with a big, bold vision for Manitoba. And we know where that landed them: panic, chaos and dysfunction.

And never was that more clear than when their own House leader, someone who's been in that role for many years, failed to get her own government's legislation introduced in time to get it done. She just couldn't get it across the finish line.

And, you know, it doesn't take long to make a first reading introduction speech, Honourable Speaker. I think we're having discussions about even putting a time frame on that to make sure it's done efficiently. But, nonetheless, the minister couldn't get those bills introduced, and so she's tacked them onto a budget bill with no financial matters relating to them whatsoever.

So I think Manitobans see through that. I think they're going to have a few things to say about that at committee as they come over the next couple of days here, because of course, as you know, Honourable Speaker, with BITSA, they have no ability to present to committee when a budget bill like this is introduced. There's no accountability in that sense with the Manitobans from every walk of life able to come to one of our committee meetings, share their views. And so they may just have to take other opportunities coming as soon as this week to be able to do that, and we strongly encourage Manitobans to do that. To make sure that they can share their views on these bills being tacked onto the budget implementation amendment act.

Couple of pieces of legislation that were tacked on here that we have concerns with that, you know, were highlighted by our friend from Fort Garry for various different reasons, that we come from it for our different perspectives: the ratio for apprenticeship and the anti-scab legislation. These are big concerns; big concerns when we're in a housing shortage. And we've got a bill that is going to reduce the amount of apprentices that are trained in this province.

Anti-scab legislation, you know, this has a big impact on employers, on businesses across the province. You know, we saw just last week, they rammed through another bill, you know, requiring government contracts—people who bid on government contracts—to be unionized. That's some serious meddling in our economy from an NDP government. And now, with this bill moving forward, there will be further meddling by them in our economy.

We've heard loud and clear from businesses, business advocacy groups, chambers of commerce, that they have serious concerns with the impact of these provisions on our local economy, on the businesses that they represent. You know, I look forward to them coming forward and sharing these views with the

NDP government at committees that are scheduled to come perhaps as soon as this week, we're not sure. Because the NDP need to hear what these folks are saying.

And, you know, lots of folks on the government side now, when they were in opposition, were very critical of non-financial or budgetary policy items being included in BITSA. And it's interesting to see, now that they're in government, that all that hyperbole, all that language that they've put on the record is out the window because they have to catch up from their House Leader's inability to get their legislative agenda introduced and through this Legislative Assembly.

So perhaps a shuffle's in the works. Who knows, Honourable Speaker. We will stay tuned. But there's no doubt that just because of NDP dysfunction, that is not a good enough excuse to not have proper accountability and scrutiny for this government's bills.

We know that BITSA introduces major tax changes that result in homeowners, farmers, property owners and renters paying more to this government than they would have under a re-elected PC government, and even more than they paid—which is difficult to believe but it's true—under Greg Selinger for education property taxes and school taxes.

This government has chosen to introduce many non-budgetary items related to unions, seniors and elections financing—can't wait to get to that one. By including these non-budgetary measures in BITSA, they are doing a disservice to the democratic process, processes in this Chamber, giving a short shift to accountability, transparency and poorly serving all Manitobans with the measures included in this bill.

And I do want to get to the point of the very, very interesting move to raise the elections financing rebates in this bill. Because where was that in the NDP campaign platform? I don't remember the minister for Finance or the member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen), or the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) running around saying, gosh, you know, it's an urgent priority of Manitobans for us to increase the rebate that we're going to get back after this election wraps up.

Don't remember hearing that on the doorsteps in Spruce Woods. You know, the members opposite made some comments earlier about being in my constituency; well, I was at the doors in Holland, Manitoba, on Friday; was at the doors lots in 12 to 14 months in Riverdale. Never heard them being concerned about

the bottom line for the member for Concordia's (Mr. Wiebe) bank account. Not many concerns about that and yet, he seems to be concerned about it, which, you know, not surprising. He's a little self-interested there, wants to make sure he's got lots of campaign funds to run what I'm sure will be a very tough re-election campaign in three years.

But, nonetheless, Manitobans are not asking for this. They're really not. And so who is asking for it other than the treasurer of the NDP party, of course. Nobody. Nobody is the answer. No one is asking for the NDP to take precious tax dollars and pad their own pockets of their constituency associations, and yet nonetheless, that is exactly what they are doing with this bill.

They're feathering their own nest with future subsidies at Manitobans' expense. We think that's wrong, Honourable Speaker, and we will be voting against this bill, specifically for that reason. There are a number other items that we disagree with that I'm going to get to, but that alone is enough to vote against this bill over. And, again, we would encourage all Manitobans who think that when inflation is very difficult on people's pockets over the last number of years, when crime is up, when they're not building any schools, that their priority is padding their own constituency associations' pockets, I would encourage all Manitobans who have an issue with that to write to the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and every other member of the NDP caucus.

We know that they're also making Manitoba Hydro less accountable and opening the door for higher hydro rates for Manitobans. We're concerned that a significant portion of every dollar that you pay in Hydro bills goes to just servicing Hydro's debt.

And yet, the NDP have said no to partnerships with the private sector to build more generating capacity. They're refusing to build more generating capacity because we're concerned that, you know, there's budgetary issues over there. We—there are, there are budgetary issues at Manitoba Hydro, but that doesn't take away from their responsibility as the new government to build generating capacity in this province.

So how are they going to do that? Well, we're not really sure. We're going to build some more wind farms, which, you know, after the Minister of Finance came out and said he wasn't going to partner with the private sector, now he isn't building generating capacity himself, he's partnering with First Nations.

We're glad to see that he's backtracked on that promise. We're glad to see that he has actually figured out that he does need to build some generating capacity somewhere.

* (16:50)

But it remains to be seen the reliability and the real impact of adding wind power in a significant way to our power grid. Whether that's reliable, whether it will significantly increase the amount of power we're generating enough to supplement the need that we're going to experience over the next five to six years, we'll see. The verdict is still out on that.

And so it's the same old NDP over there, Honourable Speaker, racking up the debt; not planning properly for generating capacity. You know, the members opposite want to talk, yes. There was significant debt taken on in COVID years. I'm curious, are they suggesting that we spend less during a global pandemic? Is that the solution from members opposite, that we should have bought less personal protective equipment for health-care workers and those working, you know, in essential services at-across the province? Is that the argument that we're hearing from the members opposite?

I would have loved for them to campaign on that, and for them to put that on the record rather than just heckling it across because I think that health-care workers need to hear that.

And so, you know, we don't hear a whole lot of that coming out from members who are going to speak after me, I'm sure, to this bill and put their record to the test.

And so, you know, also on the topic of accountability, Honourable Speaker, they're watering down the summary budgeting rules. Who's asking for that? No idea. Silence now, finally, from the members opposite. They seem to like to heckle when I get up to speak, except when they, you know, have no idea what I'm actually talking about because they haven't read their own BITSA bill.

They're watering down the summary budgeting rules in this bill, and we will flag this and have flagged this to the Auditor General. Because I would think that the Auditor General would be very concerned that they are watering down accounting processes that he is subject to review on an annual basis.

And so, you know, what is the purpose of this? Well, we don't know. We hope that somebody over there will get up and enlighten us. Maybe it's the MLA

for St. Boniface who's got the inside track on why they want to be less transparent about how they're spending money in the budgets of each department. We're not sure.

You know, my—our colleague from Fort Garry mentioned some very interesting points about, you know, the environment, and real protection for the environment. And the fact that, you know, he has significant concerns with the gas tax holiday and what that money, in his view, could have been spent better towards. You know, we certainly have issue with, you know, where that money is going, that the province, you know, has, you know, where is he paying for roads from now?

That was the whole purpose of the gas tax, was that is was supposed to go back to better infrastructure for Manitobans. So while we know that the minister for infrastructure cut over \$100 million from their capital budget this year; we know they cut \$100 million from the education budget and cancelled the construction of nine new schools. So I think Manitobans, if they follow that a little closely, they'll understand what they impact of that is. And, you know, to the member for Fort Garry's (Mr. Wasyliv) point, you know, I'm sure Manitobans who are driving every day to work appreciate the holiday from the gas tax, but would they have rathered a new school down the street from their neighbourhood?

We'll leave that for Manitobans to relay to this government about whether they think they've got their priorities straight. We certainly have concerns. But, you know, instead of an—introducing an environmental bill, or taking action, the NDP are creating more bureaucratic red tape that won't actually help the environment at all.

And we saw just last week that they gutted the red tape reduction act, which this province was a national leader in terms of getting rid of red tape so that businesses and non-profits, et cetera could function better, could understand the provincial government rules and regulations and timelines better. Now that's, you know, out the window. Not a priority for these folks, I guess.

And so, you know, there are many stakeholder groups that have concerns, and rightly so. Why would we want it to be more convoluted. Why wouldn't we want to review. You know, when we took government in 2016 there were some regulations that were so old and out of date they didn't even make sense any more. Legally, in the regulations, you were still required to have frost shields on your 'winso'—I mean, on your car window.

That is how outdated policies had been—come under the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Kostyshyn) and many others who served under the Doer and Selinger governments. They just didn't give a whim about looking these things up and trying to modernize our systems.

And so we had to do that hard work, and we did it. And I think the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was awarded the golden scissors for shearing through all of that dead weight of the previous governments that never got anything done.

I think that's—*[interjection]*—no, no. The member for—

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The government bench will come to order.

Mr. Jackson: I seem to have touched a nerve over there with that comment.

You know, I would love for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business to see what a joke this government thinks of their highest award that they give to governments. I hope that our critic for Economic Development and Finance will share this clip of the NDP laughing at the most prestigious award that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gives out to governments across the country.

You know, it's—the Minister for Justice is still laughing, and I can't wait for Dan Kelly and the rest of his team to read that and figure this out, because this is who they're dealing with. These people do not have any interest in supporting small businesses or making it easier for your small business to get ahead; and that is wrong.

And so, while we made real progress with real programs on environmental legislation—you know, for example the Efficient Trucking Program. I bet you most members over there have no idea what that even is, because they have no interest in paying attention or reviewing.

But this is a program that we partnered with the Federal Government with to reduce the emissions of the trucking sector here in Manitoba, which was a—which is one of our most significant emitters.

They were fuelling conversions to electric semis, they were fuelling charging stations and enhancing our charging grid, and this government has no interest—no interest in proceeding with that program. What a shame. They should talk to the folks at Gardewine about the innovative freight-liner, all-

electric powered semi that they are driving there thanks to the Efficient Trucking Program reducing the emissions from that vehicle to zero.

The GROW Trust, the Conservation Trust and the Conservation and Climate Fund; you know, the GROW Trust and the Conservation Trust, they provided steady, consistent funding to watershed district across the province. These were donations given to The Winnipeg Foundation by the Province of Manitoba, investments that never go away. The principal is never spent, only the interest, on furthering programming, encouraging and providing financial incentives for farmers to leave wetlands and watersheds in—and natural habitats in their farmland, untouched rather than draining them away and sowing them.

And this government, they would have done away with that. They would have done away with those trust funds if they could, but thankfully, we tied those up with the Winnipeg Foundation so they can't drain those funds. But they have no plan—no plan to enhance the work of those initiatives, and they have no plan in this budget to expend any real funds towards reducing emissions in the province of Manitoba.

And so we've got—where have we landed, Honourable Speaker? We got no schools, a \$2-billion deficit, no investment in real environmental measures, no PCHs, no sign of slowing down on spending.

You know, this budget implements their—this bill implements their budget while the first quarter financials have already been released and in the first quarter of this financial year alone, they spent \$800 million. In one quarter. One quarter, and so how are we supposed to believe any of the initiatives that have come up in this bill when that is the track record of this government?

You know, the first budget year, yes, they came in partway, they wanted to pass the blame over here. You know, they need to do some scapegoating, that's fine. I understand that being in government's tough and it's been a steep learning curve for most of them over there.

But the reality is that from April 1 to June 30, they were solely in the driver's seat. This budget was written by the member for St. James (MLA Sala); or if the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) is believed, it was actually written in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) office and the member for St. James just showed up to introduce it.

But the reality is, they are in charge from April 1 to June 30, and so how can they justify spending

\$800 million in a single quarter, and what are the next recorders going to look like, that are supposed to be on a path? If this—

* (17:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is next before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes remaining—11 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned, and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 7, 2024

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Crime in Rural Manitoba	
Bill 210—The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act		Stone	2623
Wasyliw	2615	Sala	2623
Tabling of Reports		Municipality of Riverdale	
Lindsey	2615	Jackson	2624
Naylor	2615	Wiebe	2624
Wiebe	2616	Violent Incidents Using Machetes	
Kostyshyn	2616	Balcaen	2625
		Wiebe	2625
Ministerial Statements		Kinew	2626
October 7th Attack in Israel—		Minister of Housing's Trip to Texas	
First Year Anniversary		Lamoureux	2626
Kinew	2616	Smith	2626
Ewasko	2617	Houston Model to Address Homelessness	
Members' Statements		Lamoureux	2627
Asian Women of Winnipeg		Smith	2627
Cross	2617	Minor Injury Clinic	
Nelson Little		Oxenham	2627
Bereza	2617	Asagwara	2627
Louis Gagné		Health-Care Support Workers	
Loiselle	2618	Cook	2628
International Peace Garden		Asagwara	2628
Piwniuk	2619	Petitions	
Brandon University 125th Anniversary		Removal of Federal Carbon Tax	
Simard	2619	Ewasko	2628
Oral Questions		Balcaen	2629
D'Arcy's ARC Thrift Store		MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility	
Ewasko	2619	Bereza	2629
Kinew	2620	FortWhyte Alive	
Retail Crime and Business Closures		Byram	2630
Ewasko	2620	Breast Screening	
Kinew	2620	Khan	2630
Crime Increase and Public Safety		Medical Assistance in Dying	
Ewasko	2621	Cook	2631
Kinew	2621	Breast Screening	
Crime in Rural Manitoba		Wowchuk	2631
King	2622	FortWhyte Alive	
Wiebe	2622	Hiebert	2632
		Provincial Trunk Highway 2	
		Jackson	2633

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax King	2633	Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices Wharton	2637
Breast Screening Lagassé	2634	Medical Assistance in Dying Guenter	2638
Louise Bridge Nesbitt	2634	Removal of Federal Carbon Tax Johnson	2639
Child-Welfare System—Call for Inquiry Perchotte	2635	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Breast Screening Piwniuk	2635	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Hearing Aids Lamoureux	2636	Debate on Second Readings	
Medical Assistance in Dying Stone	2637	Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 Stone	2639
		Wasyliw	2645
		Jackson	2649

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>