

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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
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	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Tuxedo	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 6, 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, 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 that we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline 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.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I think that if you were to canvass the House, you would see that there's agreement if we can recess the House for 15 minutes with a two-minute bell ringing—warning for—to call back in the members.

The Speaker: Is there leave to recess the House for 15 minutes with a two-minute warning bell to call the House back into session? *[Agreed]*

We're now in recess.

The House recessed at 1:33 p.m.

The House resumed at 1:48 p.m.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The House is now back in session.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

The first order of business before we get to routine proceedings is I must inform the House that

Heather Stefanson, the honourable member for Tuxedo, has resigned her seat in the House, effective May 6, 2024.

I am therefore tabling her resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy in the House membership.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Further, before we begin, we have some guests in the gallery.

First, in the public gallery, we have, from Oakville elementary, 80 grade 4 to 8 students under the direction of Ashley Tully, and they're here as guests of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza).

And in the Speaker's Gallery—I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today: the Honourable Philip Lee, former Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, along with his wife Anita; and Niki *[phonetic]*, who's the founder of the Asian heritage; and Julie, who's the vice-president of Asian heritage.

* (13:50)

Welcome.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 212—The Asian Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), that Bill 212, The Asian Heritage Month Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Chen: Honourable Speaker, I rise today to introduce The Asian Heritage Month Act, which will designate the month of May as a time to celebrate the history of Asian-Canadians in Manitoba. It is the recognition of 150 years of Asian-Canadian contributions to our province, right up to today.

And I acknowledge the attendees in the gallery today from the Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Filipino, Indian, Tamil, Iranian, Bengali, Chinese and the Yazidi communities, members of the

Asian Heritage Society of Manitoba and the Honourable Philip Lee, the first Chinese-Canadian Lieutenant Governor in Manitoba, who are here to witness the introduction of this important act.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Further—

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

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister for Economic Development, Investment and Trade, that Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2024 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: I'm proud to introduce Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, that will implement our government's first budget. It's a budget that will deliver help for Manitobans and for those who need it most. It's a budget that rebuilds health care, with funding to recruit and train staff, build a new Victoria ER and expand primary care for Manitobans. And, Honourable Speaker, it's a budget that puts this province on a responsible path to balance.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): First, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow the following ministerial statements despite the fact that the proper notice was not provided as per rule 27(2): (1) a statement on Red Dress Day from the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine); (2) a statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day from the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Simard); (3) a statement on Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day, from the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith).

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow the following ministerial statements today, despite the fact that the proper notice was not provided as per rule 27(2): (1) a

statement on Red Dress Day from the Minister of Families; (2) a statement on Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, from the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism; (3) a statement on Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day from the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Red Dress Day

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): Yesterday was Red Dress Day, a day we honour and recognize missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited relatives.

The red dress is a powerful symbol of remembrance and action. It's a visual declaration, a poignant reminder of MMIWG2S and their loved ones; along the ongoing slaughter of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited across our territories.

The red dress has become a symbol, fluttering in the wind, hanging from trees, adorning city streets and beautiful ribbon skirts, even on our vehicles.

To date, MPI has sold 3,234 red dress MMIWG licence plates. This visual activism compels us to confront an uncomfortable reality and challenges us to commit to making meaningful changes.

When we took office, we committed to action. One of our first actions upon assuming office was to reinstate the position of special adviser on Indigenous women's issues, a critical government position promptly deleted under the former PC government.

Next, I established the first of its kind Matriarch Circle, made up of phenomenal and powerful Indigenous women and gender-diverse folks charged with guiding our prevention and empowerment work for the Province of Manitoba.

We took more action on May 3. I was pleased to join Minister Anandasangaree, MP Leah Gazan, Sandra DeLaronde, Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, to announce Manitoba as the first jurisdiction across the country to pilot a Red Dress Alert.

This signals to all Manitobans, Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited lives matter, and should they go missing, we will respond in a co-ordinated, tangible manner collectively as community and as government.

And we took further action yesterday. I was so honoured and pleased to realize a dream that I've had for the last 10 to 15 years. Yesterday, we gathered at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, with the

National Inquiry's sacred bundle, which is currently housed there. We stood in solidarity and love with MMIWG2S families and those communities on the front lines. I was honoured to be with my colleagues—including my soul sister and MMIWG2S family minister—to announce the establishment of an MMIWG2S Healing and Empowerment endowment fund.

Our government's investment of \$15 million will generate grants for years to come. Managed by The Winnipeg Foundation, our initial investment is expected to generate up to \$750,000 a year.

These grants will be used to support MMIWG2S families and Indigenous-led organizations working directly to prioritize the protections of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

For years, Manitobans have asked myself and my colleague, what can we do for MMIWG2S? The MMIWG2S Healing and Empowerment endowment fund will be accepting donations from citizens, from corporate entities and the like.

While our government takes tangible actions, I want to remind the House that only a mere seven months ago, the PCs built their 2023 provincial election campaign off the murders of four Indigenous women, not to mention trans kids and Black Manitobans. They expected Manitobans not to care.

Manitobans rejected that hate and division and instead showed in a very concrete way Indigenous women's lives matter. And now we're able, as government, to get to work and put that in motion.

Finally, when we wear red, we declare our unity with Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited and MMIWG2S families.

And while some believe in standing firm against Indigenous peoples, our government believes in standing in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, including MMIWG2S and all Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

* (14:00)

Miigwech.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland—my mistake. The honourable member for Agassiz.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I rise today to address Red Dress Day, which takes place every year on May 5.

Today, I am calling for all members of this Legislature, and all Manitobans, to join together and raise awareness of the horrible and sad acts of

violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people.

Red Dress Day first took place in 2010, following the REDress Project by Métis artist Jaime Black. Since then, this day serves as a reminder for every member of society of the epidemic we are currently experiencing in Manitoba and across Canada.

This important day is one that we must use to speak out against the thousands of Indigenous women and girls that are tragically taken too soon, honour the healing journeys of survivors and help families and communities in every way possible as they grieve the loss of loved ones.

Honourable Speaker, we know that in Canada, Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people are disproportionately targeted for violence more than any other group. According to Statistics Canada, Indigenous women and girls are six times more likely to be murdered than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

When hearing facts such as this, it is imperative that we remember the unsettling truth of the matter: these are people. These are our daughters, our children, our friends and family members. This is a crisis, a national tragedy that should not be happening, and as we members of the Legislature must, and indeed have the duty, to work together and take the necessary steps to remember victims who are no longer with us.

These steps include one of our 2021 initiatives that introduced amendments to The Path to Reconciliation Act and established the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as a key component of the Province's approach to advancing truth and reconciliation.

Of course, we must recognize that no initiative, regardless how efficiently it may be developed, is going to solve this issue alone. And that is why we must take today to commit to collaboration—with organizations, with Indigenous governments, with law enforcement, with social groups—and use all our efforts to stop this ongoing crisis, prevent it from occurring in the future and ensure that those who commit these heinous crimes are held to account with the fullest extent of the law.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I encourage all members of this Legislature, all Manitobans and all Canadians, to use Red Dress Day to reflect on what we can do to create change, and commit to taking the necessary steps to combat gender-based violence in all forms.

Thank you.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park have leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, every year we mark May the 5th as a solemn day for raising awareness around missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people. We are symbolically reminded by the red dress representing those murdered and missing that there is still so much work we need to do.

Yesterday, communities all around our province gathered, handed out food, shared experiences, sang, drummed and prayed together.

Our reality is that Indigenous women are still six times more likely to end up dead in Canada, and three times more likely to encounter violence in their lifetime. And many people feel that those numbers are highly underestimated, because not everything is being reported.

It's important that people are educated and become engaged, and in doing so realize the importance of community and culture. It's truly sad that people are hurt every day and don't feel safe enough to come forward or to talk. Gatherings like these give voice to the victims and give strength to the community and families of the missing and murdered.

Honourable Speaker, Red Dress Day was created to honour missing and murdered Indigenous mothers, daughters, aunties, sisters, grandmothers, nieces and cousins. It's important that on Red Dress Day, and every day, we recognize and honour those lost and support the community that they've left behind.

Thank you.

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Yom HaShoah, also known as the Holocaust memorial day, which stands as a stark reminder of the atrocities of the period, where 6 million Jews were murdered by the Nazis. The Holocaust was a terrifying chapter of human history, an example of the extent and history of anti-Semitism run rampant.

As Manitobans, we can come together to remember the 'innumerali'-innumerable lives taken, the brave resistance and the many families globally, including

those in Manitoba, whose lives have been forever altered by the Holocaust. Six million innocent Jewish people were murdered because of the actions of the Nazis. Many others were murdered because of their ethnicity, their race, religion, sexual orientation or for mental and physical disabilities.

The first commemoration of Yom HaShoah took place in 1951, six years after the end of the Holocaust. For those who survived the Holocaust, many chose to make their home here in Manitoba, and have continued to make their mark in the community.

In 2000, the provincial government established an annual day of commemoration for Yom HaShoah, and unveiled Manitoba's Holocaust monument on the Legislature's grounds, the first of its kind in Canada. I encourage members of the Assembly to take the time out of their day to visit the monument and to reflect on our shared responsibility to ensure that history doesn't replete itself.

On Yom HaShoah, we not only remember those who were murdered, but we also remember the perseverance, bravery, chance or something simply, the kindness of the strangers that protected those to ensure who survived, often putting their lives on the line. We remember those who did not 'stind' idly by, who put their own safety at risk, to give those escaping the tyranny of genocide and anti-Semitism a chance, a fighting chance, of survival.

Unfortunately, as the years continue to pass, fewer and fewer survivors are still with us to stand witness to the horrors of this time, as well, to share their stories. On this day, we say, never again. It becomes incumbent on us to continue to share their stories, to ensure that the lives lost are remembered and not forgotten. And we have heard and seen that there is an increase in anti-Semitism not only in our province, but across the world.

I was fortunate to attend several events marking Yom HaShoah, and I was honoured to join members of the Jewish community and survivors of the Holocaust at a community commemoration yesterday, in addition to several events today, where members from this House were pleased to participate. Through the dedication of community groups, volunteers and teachers, people across Manitoba, regardless of their heritage, are provided the opportunity to learn about Jewish history, anti-Semitism and the history of the Holocaust.

As a teacher myself, I was incredibly pleased to hear and be part of a government that will enshrine education around the Holocaust in our provincial

curriculum. This is an important step that we must all take to make sure that we are working together to combat anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred that may arise.

Our government is committed to making sure that these atrocities are not repeated and we—and that we continue to share these stories and remember those lost in the Holocaust. I stand, once again, to say, never again.

I ask for leave for a moment of silence.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence after the other members have spoke? *[Agreed]*

The honourable member for Midland–Roblin.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, today I rise in solemn observance of Yom HaShoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Yom HaShoah takes place on the 27th day in the Jewish calendar's month of Nisan, a week after the seventh day of Passover. It is a day to commemorate the approximately 6 million Jews that were murdered in the Holocaust.

* (14:10)

It is also a day in which members of the Jewish community and their supporters can come together to reflect on the immeasurable loss they've experienced as a result of the Holocaust, but also the enduring resilience of the Jewish people.

Many communities observe Yom HaShoah with presentations from Holocaust survivors and their children, providing living reminders of the world's never-again promise. It is only by listening to their stories that we can begin to understand the unfathomable horrors that the Jewish population worldwide has endured and its lasting impact.

This morning many of us in this House attended the Unto Every Person There Is a Name Holocaust memorial program at the Congregation Etz Chayim building here in Winnipeg, where we read the names of many Holocaust victims. The act of remembering these people by name is powerful and necessary to honour Holocaust victims as individuals, as parents, as spouses, as siblings, as friends and loved ones. And it's also necessary to prevent a tragedy like this from ever occurring again.

Unfortunately, there's been a very troubling increase in anti-Semitism in Canada, particularly since the events of October 7. The attacks on Israel by Hamas are a stark and grim reminder that the promise

of never again is not actually guaranteed. It is only through vigilance and educating the next generation about the atrocities of the Holocaust and keeping the memories of these people alive that we can combat the scourge of anti-Semitism.

I want to take a moment to thank B'nai Brith Canada, the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, the Jewish community foundation and all of the other organizations working on behalf of the broader Jewish community here in Manitoba. Thank you for all of the work that you do.

And I would encourage all members of this House and all Manitobans to truly reflect on the never-again promise that is our duty to uphold, not only for the sake of Holocaust survivors and their families, but for all future generations.

Thank you.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I seek leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park have leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

MLA Lamoureux: I rise this afternoon to recognize today, May 6, Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah. Beginning yesterday and throughout the day today, we solemnly remember the over 6 million Jews who were systematically and senselessly murdered during the Holocaust. It is heartbreaking that so many of Jewish descent in our world and society not only continue to live with the trauma of what occurred, but are reminded daily with terrorist attacks abroad and overt anti-Semitism both here at home and elsewhere in the world.

The remembrance of unimaginable loss and inhumanity faced during one of the darkest chapters in human history must never fade away from our minds, and the vow never again must be top of mind as we all have a responsibility to work together for peace and understanding in our troubled world and to never forget.

Honourable Speaker, I join with the many voices in the world praying for peace and an end to violence and divisiveness. I add my voice to the call for freedom, for everyone to live free of fear wherever it is in the world that they live, and to step up and speak out against anti-Semitism, and in doing so, honour the victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Would all honourable members please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): On May 5, we acknowledged the second annual Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day in Manitoba. This day of recognition encouraged all of us to reflect on the life lost due to drug-related deaths across the province.

Many of us know and love someone who has struggled or is struggling with drug use, and too many of us have experienced the heavy loss of losing a loved one. In our shared grief, we must remember and carry on the legacies of those who have passed. Their gifts, their smiles, their talents, their skills, their incredible accomplishments and the lives they led amongst us.

Today, I want to recognize Arlene Last-Kolb and Janis Gillam of Moms Stop the Harm. Arlene and Janis both lost children to drug-related deaths.

Arlene's son, Jessie, and Janis's daughter, Phoebe, are deeply missed by their families and our community. Arlene and Janis have been dedicated advocates for families across the country.

I also want to acknowledge Barbara Mercredi, Ashlee Mercredi, Stephanie Paton, Tamara Taillieu and Antoinette Gravel-Ouellette, who are also family members and here in the gallery today.

There are also many amazing organizations who are also joining us in the gallery today that are doing amazing heart-saving life work, and I want to uplift and acknowledge the work that you're doing for our relatives.

I also want to acknowledge Mike Pierre who, today, honoured us with a smudging ceremony. Arlene brought in over 400 ribbons that represented one of the—one of somebody's loved ones who lost their lives to a drug overdose. And Arlene has been carrying those ribbons in her home and it's been a heavy—a heavy—load to carry for her, and she asked for those to be smudged today.

So I want to thank you, Mike, for doing that ceremony for all of us today.

I was honoured to work on bill 233 with Moms Stop the Harm, which passed in this House unanimously to mark this important day, and I also want to thank the colleagues across the way for helping to make that a reality.

Arlene and Janis and the many families who do this work: our NDP government lifts you up for all of the amazing hard work over the years that you've done to raise awareness around drug-related deaths.

The impact of addictions is felt across socio-economic statuses, neighbourhoods, professions, cultural backgrounds. The harms caused by judgment, shame and punishment of Manitobans living with addictions has no place here.

Last year alone, we lost over 445 Manitobans to drug-related deaths. These were Manitobans who were deeply loved and now are deeply missed.

Our NDP government is investing over \$4 million to expand addictions treatment beds, support harm reduction services across the province and establish our first supervised consumption site here in Winnipeg.

It's a top priority for our government to ensure Manitobans can access the supports they need when they need them. We are committed to ensuring our community organizations and health-care facilities become places of healing and hope for all who walk through their doors.

Honourable Speaker, our government mourns and stands alongside Manitobans who have lost loved ones to drugs or who are currently supporting a loved one who is living through addictions.

To all the families and communities who are touched by addictions: we see you, we uplift you, we love you and we will continue to work tirelessly to provide you and your loved ones with the supports that you need.

To all those who have lost their loved ones to substance use: we've—we will forever remember you.

I love you, Dad. You'll never be forgotten.

Miigwech.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Today, May 5th, we gather to remember those we've lost as a result of drugs and addiction, and to raise awareness and to advocate for change on their behalf.

Drug-related bereavement is a solemn reality that many families across our province face every day. Many of us have lost our mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers and friends.

I want to acknowledge your loss. The—those in this Chamber and also those in the gallery, those in our communities and our province, we hurt with you. I hurt with you.

During these difficult times, there's an opportunity for reflection and action. Drug-related bereavement is a day not just about mourning; it's about recognizing the need for inclusive support systems, effective policies and compassionate initiatives to prevent further tragedies.

* (14:20)

Thank you to all those that have volunteered and given of themselves to help those left behind and those still struggling.

We must acknowledge that addiction is not a moral failing, but a complex health issue that requires a multifaceted approach. It's about understanding the underlying factors driving substance abuse and addressing them with empathy and care.

Many members across all parties have bravely shared their stories of loved ones and their struggles. It's important to talk candidly about our-these hardships because it might help someone recognize their own struggle before it's too late.

As a community, we must strive for better access to addiction treatment and mental health services. We need to break down the stigma surrounding addiction and create environments where individuals feel safe seeking help without fear of judgment and discrimination. Moreover, we must advocate for mental health strategies and drug education programs that empower our youth to make informed choices, avoiding the pitfalls of substance misuse.

Today, let us remember those we've lost with love and reverence. But let us also channel our grief into action, committing ourselves to creating a future where no family has to suffer the pain of drug-related bereavement. Together, we can build a compassionate and supportive society for all Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Members' statements—oh, sorry.

Ms. Smith: Sorry, can I ask for a moment of silence to honour those that have passed due to drug overdoses?

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

All rise, please.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Acknowledgement of Indigenous Organizations

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): We know that building healthier and stronger communities starts with meeting basic needs and providing meaningful services and supports. The base—this base starts with the home.

Today, I would like to acknowledge the amazing work of community and Indigenous organizations who are committed to working collaboratively to support those facing many barriers here in Manitoba. In recognizing the intersectional issues of poverty and homelessness, I want to lift up the following organizations in Point Douglas and across Manitoba: Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre; Brandon Neighbourhood Community Renewal Corporation; End Homelessness Winnipeg; Ka Ni Kanichihk; Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre; MKO; Mount Carmel Clinic; Siloam Mission; south—SCO; Sunshine House; and West Central Women's Resource Centre.

Some of these organizations partnered together this past winter to address the needs of our relatives experiencing homelessness through a collaborative action circle. These groups are building bridges, increasing access to resources and are leading in prevention work to support those who are made most vulnerable across in-vulnerable in Manitoba.

Every Manitoban deserves a safe place to call home. Not-for-profits, municipalities and Indigenous governments are coming together to address housing needs and ensure our relatives have a safe place to call home. These organizations exemplify the epitome of community leadership, and their collaboration symbolizes the power of what is possible when we lead with compassion.

To all of those who are investing in supporting our relatives, I extend my sincerest thank you, and I'm so grateful for your unwavering williness to work—wandering willingness to work collaboratively, build relationships and for the love and support that you give each and every day to our relatives. When our relatives are doing well, we are all doing well.

Thank you and I love you and I uplift you for all of the work that you're doing.

Miigwech.

The Speaker: The—just need to remind ministers that when they're doing members' statements, they cannot reference government programs.

Isaac Gordon

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I'm honoured to recognize a constituent of mine, a young man who has proven dedication and hard work really does pay off. Today, I would like to recognize Isaac Gordon of Landmark, Manitoba, for the achievements he has made in his hockey career so far.

Isaac started playing hockey at the young age of four with the Wawanese Wild. At the age of five he moved to Landmark with his parents, where he continued playing minor hockey with the Landmark Blues. He played in Landmark all the way up to the Eastman Selects rank. After high school he made his way to the United States Hockey League, playing with Sioux Falls, and has just completed his first season with Michigan Tech.

In his 2021-2022 season with the Eastman Selects U18 AAA team he has an astonishing 43 goals in 41 games, totalling 72 points, plus eight points in the playoffs. It is no surprise that he has been named the Central Collegiate Hockey Association rookie of the month in November and in March, and now, Isaac was just named C-C-H's Rookie of the Year.

In an interview, Isaac speaks about how this journey was not an easy one. It took a lot of hard work, a lot of commitment to get to where he is today. During the pandemic he spent all of his time outside with his brothers and his friends, playing hockey. Isaac said, the work I put in helped me go where I was able to go. Isaac also said, keep working, keep pushing and if the love of the game stays the same, there's nothing you can't do.

It was this hard work, this dedication, I believe, that got him to where he is today. Isaac, I truly believe that no matter where you go from here you will accomplish everything you set your mind to, and that there's nothing you can't do. You are really a wonderful role model and an inspiration to many. You should be incredibly proud of your accomplishments, as well, as we are eager to see where you are going.

Wayne Gretzky once said, you miss a hundred per cent of the shots you don't take. Keep taking those shots, Isaac.

Please join me in welcoming Isaac and his family to the Legislature, and I ask for leave to have his family members that are here with him added to Hansard.

Jaxson, Kim, Priscilla, Spencer, Spike

Holocaust Remembrance Day

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to solemnly mark Yom HaShoah, also known as Holocaust memorial day. Yom HaShoah, which began last night at sundown, honours the lives and heroism of more than 6 million Jewish children, women and men, who between 1933 and 1945 became victims of the Holocaust.

My constituency of River Heights is home to many members of our province's thriving Jewish diaspora, who have tirelessly worked with Manitobans of all backgrounds to build stronger, more inclusive, more welcoming communities. We honour that legacy today as well.

I've been humbled to take part in a variety of Yom HaShoah services, including the reading of the Megillat HaShoah during the interfaith service at Temple Shalom, and here at the Legislature a short time ago. Both were powerful events.

But, Honourable Speaker, the most personally moving event occurred this morning at Etz Chayim, during which the names of victims of the Holocaust were read aloud. I am deeply privileged to have been one of those readers.

When considered together, the reality of 6 million Holocaust victims is almost incomprehensible. So instead, to truly understand the scope of that human tragedy, we must consider them one individual's name at a time; unto every person there is a name.

At a time in history when so many forces seek to pull us apart, when we see a surprising and shocking rise of anti-Semitism, we need to now pull each other a little bit closer. Understanding the suffering of others enables us to move forward together as a community. Today is one of the days on which we must commit ourselves to doing so, and solemnly pledge: never again.

Shalom and thank you.

* (14:30)

Recognizing CFB Shilo Service Members

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Recently, I have been privileged to spend time with the incredible people who serve at CFB Shilo at both the inaugural CFB Shilo spring ball, and the annual Teal Up parade in support of military kids. Both events were a resounding success due to the dedication of our CAF personnel.

I am pleased to recognize a few of these inspiring service members today: Private Caleb Zwicker, who regularly volunteers above and beyond his duties,

representing the best of our next generation in the CAF; Private Angele LeBlanc, a proud member of the Métis nation who serves on the base Indigenous Advisory Council; Master Corporal Stephanie Bisset, who volunteered her own time to assist during the 2022 Minnedosa flood; Sergeant Fraser Ashmead, a red seal certified cook who I'm told has dramatically improved the quality of the CFB Shilo main dining facility; Warrant Officer Sylvain Leblanc, a proud member of Nipissing First Nation and chair of the base Indigenous Advisory Council, recently named eagle staff carrier at the national Remembrance Day service in Ottawa; Captain Tanner Kavanaugh, recently named aircraft ground security specialist for the Prime Minister's aircraft security team; Major Kirsten MacFayden, who was instrumental in developing the Afghan national army nursing service.

Finally, two outstanding individuals: Chief Warrant Officer Eric LeClair, 32 years of service, four overseas deployments, during the last of which he was struck by an IED, suffering a potentially career-ending injury. Eric persevered through physical and mental rehabilitation and returned to duty where he continues to inspire military members to reach their full potential, and Lieutenant-Colonel David Cronk, who, as base commander, has re-engaged with surrounding communities, recognizing the importance of this relationship with the CAF in Westman. His prior service at NATO headquarters in Poland, focusing on deterrence operations in the face of Russian aggression on the Polish and Lithuanian borders, is an inspiration to all.

What a humbling privilege it is to represent these truly great Canadians in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

They join us here today. I would ask all my colleagues to rise and recognize their service to Canada.

Celebrating Orthodox Easter

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Today we join those who are celebrating Orthodox Easter, a time for hope, gathering, gratitude and new beginnings. In the Christian Orthodox faith, Easter is the holiest holiday of the year and is celebrated in a multitude of ways including delicious meals and religious services. Today is also an opportunity to recognize and acknowledge the incredible community of Orthodox Christians within Manitoba.

Seventy-nine years ago, my family immigrated to Manitoba as World War II refugees. Upon our arrival, they were embraced and supported by our province which helped them find success in their new home. Manitoba continues to do the same for our new refugees.

Over 25,000 newcomers in the past two years are Ukrainian and many of them are Orthodox Christians. Manitobans have opened their homes, their workplaces, and the churches to the refugees who are transitioning to their new life under difficult circumstances.

While Orthodox Easter is celebrated by people around the world, the significance of this holiday is amplified by the current conflict in Ukraine. I remind Manitobans to keep Ukrainians in their thoughts, as many are spending their first or second Easter away from their families. Mothers, wives, children are observing the day without their sons, husbands and fathers, who are at the front lines of the war.

Know that we stand with you and continue to provide steadfast support.

Orthodox Christians are a diverse community, brought together by morals and ideals many Manitobans also share, and Orthodox Easter is a—symbolic of hope, joy, kindness and generosity. As we celebrate, we strengthen unity within our diverse communities. We are one Manitoba, a province that celebrates our unique perspectives and contributions.

So, as many extend their weekend celebrations into Easter Monday, I wish all who celebrate a happy and blessed Easter.

Khrystos voskres. Voistynu voskres. [*Christ is risen. He is truly risen.*] Christ has risen. Indeed he has.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economic Development Board Concern for the Provincial Economy

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Hopefully everyone had a great constituency week reconnecting with not only their constituents but Manitobans across this great province of ours.

Honourable Speaker, the economic development board had contacted more than 64 unique business opportunities for Manitoba before this NDP Premier shut it down. Since then, Manitoba has lost out on billions of potential investment and tax revenue.

I table an article for the House detailing how a Japanese electric vehicle battery supplier that was eyeing land in Winnipeg for a \$1.6-billion plant has chosen to build its facility in Ontario.

The previous premier had a vision: economic development; funding health care, education and social services. On this side of the House, we think that sounds pretty good.

Why does the NDP Premier insist on cutting funding and raising taxes instead of growing our economy?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Province of Manitoba to say to those in active service who have joined us here today, thank you so much for defending our homelands. Thank you for defending our freedom. Thank you for standing up for Canada each and every day.

I also want to share that I think I've been in the sweat lodge with a couple of the folks who are joining us here in uniform, so that's always an honour, to be able to pray with people in active service.

We have a vision for economic development. We took business leaders to strengthen our most important trade relationship with the United States of America down to Washington, DC, just a few weeks ago.

Heather Stefanson left this province with a multi-billion dollar deficit and no plan to pay for it.

We're hard at work fixing the damage, and we're going to grow our economy, creating good jobs every step of the way.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Factually, it was a quarter-billion dollar surplus left for this NDP Premier, who continues to squander it away each and every day, Honourable Speaker.

The economic development board had a plan for economic development, guided by the vision of that previous premier and our PC team. Just a dozen of the potential projects on the table represented more than \$24 billion in investment and would have created thousands of jobs across Manitoba.

I did say, would have, Honourable Speaker, because the NDP tax environment and attitude towards businesses is driving those opportunities away.

Why is this NDP Premier so intent on driving away business and investment, and what's his plan? No plans once again, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Kinew: My plan is to focus on the people of Manitoba and to build businesses right here at home.

That's why on January 1 of this year, we cut the provincial gas tax to save every Manitoban money, but also to save businesses money so they can reinvest and create good jobs right here.

The members opposite, however, supported Heather Stefanson. Each and every day, they wanted to send money out of the province to Bay Street. They wanted to make life more expensive here at home.

And, of course, the only money that they did want to spend when it came to the economic development board was on high-price office space at Portage and Main. Zero investments came out of that.

We're focused on what matters: the people of Manitoba, who are the ones who actually grow our economy.

Why don't the PCs get on board now that Heather Stefanson is gone?

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

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, deflecting and dodging the question.

What was the first one—or the first thing the NDP did, Honourable Speaker? They borrowed almost \$10 billion. I know that the wannabe Deputy Premier is agreeing with me that that was a misstep by her Premier.

And where is those interest rates going? To those Bay Street moneylenders, Honourable Speaker. That's who this Premier is considering representing. No one can trust this NDP Premier from not keep raising taxes or to be—come to the table as a partner.

Of the 12 projects worth more than \$24 billion in investments, we've already lost three.

Can the Premier share which other projects will be next for this Premier to escort out of the province?

Mr. Kinew: My focus is on the people right here in the province of Manitoba.

* (14:40)

Our economic development initiatives are going to put people to work in Transcona. They're going to put people to work in Swan River. They're going to put people to work in the oil patch of southwestern Manitoba.

The PCs, on the other hand, they would send millions of dollars out of province each and every single year, in fact, to Cadillac Fairview, a company worth \$20 billion on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Each and every year, they sent them \$1 million by cheque. Their re-election platform was to double that to \$2 million.

We're correcting the mistakes of the past brought in under Heather Stefanson and the PCs, and it's all about creating good, blue-collar, middle-class jobs for you, the people of Manitoba.

Food Prices and Carbon Tax Relief for Agriculture Industry

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): The Premier and federal NDP leader met over the weekend to plot more bad news for food producers and consumers.

The NDP are doing nothing to help reduce food costs. This government is increasing the taxes on energy needed to heat barns and to store, transport and market our food products.

Will this Premier stop propping up the federal NDP-Liberal coalition, stand with the seven other premiers and call for relief for our food processors and consumers?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): First thing we did upon taking office was to freeze rents for agricultural Crown land producers. The PCs wanted to raise production costs for our beef producers in Manitoba. We put a stop to that.

The second thing that we did was we cut the provincial gas tax. That saves money for all the folks who have to drive to work on the farm—money each and every single day. Our fuel tax is zero. Their fuel tax was 14 cents a litre for the entirety of their two terms in government.

Now, when we talk about the investments that we're making in Budget 2024, I have to point out that we have a headline here in the Winnipeg Free Press saying that agricultural group praises the provincial budget. I'll table this for the Ag critic to take a look at and he can explain why he disagrees with Keystone Ag Producers.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, there are farms wanting to convert propane barns to electricity to help reduce emissions, but there's no relief for the growing costs from the NDP-Liberal coalition and this NDP government here.

It costs \$125,000 per mile for every mile to install hydro infrastructure necessary to convert a barn. Where are these farmers' carbon tax rebates? Consumers are paying more for groceries than ever before.

Why is this Premier not interested in helping families buy groceries in Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: I cut the provincial gas tax to put money back in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans, and they're able to use that to help with groceries and many other costs that they're facing, costs that were always increasing under Heather Stefanson and the PCs.

I'll point out to the Ag critic that Jill Verwey from the Keystone Ag Producers was actually part of that delegation to the United States of America. I was so honoured to have Jill there to make the case about how ag is the backbone of our economy when we're meeting with the USDA, when we're meeting with senators, from—people from the House of Representatives. They all agreed that Manitoba's ag industry is a tremendous contributor to the North American economy.

The only problem that's been standing in the way is the PCs increasing the costs of production year after year. The good news: Manitoba now has an NDP government, and we're making life affordable for you, as well as everyone in the ag industry.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: Honourary Speaker, meeting with concerned citizens last week, grocery inflation was top of mind. In fact, when we're talking about 14 cents a litre, how about we talk about the 21-cent-a-litre increase in milk that we're seeing?

Will this Premier—and the NDP leader met over the weekend, on—grocery prices have reached new heights in Manitoba. Families can no longer afford their weekly grocery bills under this NDP government.

Families can no longer afford their weekly grocery bills under this NDP government.

Why did this Premier and his NDP party not even debate the rising food price and carbon tax at their weekend strategy with the NDP leader?

Mr. Kinew: I want to be able to have time to address the separate issue, but first I want to explain to the member opposite that it was Heather Stefanson who signed off on the increase to the price of milk here in Manitoba. She did that while she was in office. However, we're taking action to save you money here in Manitoba.

However, there's another PC leader—there is another PC leader who's been rumoured about for years. Where is Brian Pallister? Is he still in Manitoba? I think I saw him driving down Corydon. Manitobans have been asking.

But I have good news, Honourable Speaker: we found Brian Pallister. It turns out Brian Pallister is on the list of donors to the member for Portage la Prairie's recent election campaign. Brian Pallister donated \$1,000 to him.

We're taking a different approach. We're saving you money and we're fixing health care.

Public Safety Bail Reform

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Manitoba businesses are paying the price for this government's complete disregard for public safety. I was going to grab a coffee this morning on my walk to work, but instead I encountered another business who didn't feel safe keeping their doors open, just across the bridge from this hallowed building.

And guess where that was, Honourable Speaker? In the constituency of Fort Rouge.

When will this Premier (Mr. Kineew) realize his own constituents are paying the price for his neglect?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Public safety was one of the main issues that this side of the House ran our campaign on, because we knew that keeping communities safe is an important way to make them healthy, to make them successful and to build our economy.

Safe communities is an essential building block to building our communities. That's why we heard from so many great partners in community safety at our public safety strategy session that we had this week, where we heard from people, a summit where we could hear all voices, including law enforcement and community activists.

These members opposite should get on board.

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

Mr. Balcaen: When asked for all communication from Manitoba about bail reform, the federal government released a single letter dated December 23, and I table it today.

It's funny how the—in public, this minister and Premier say they can do it alone; they don't need any help from other levels of government. Yet behind closed doors they plead with the feds to implement reforms requested by the National Police Federation.

So I ask the minister: Which is it?

Mr. Wiebe: I'm glad to hear that the member opposite is catching on with our concrete action that we're taking

with regards to bail here in this province. Because it's not enough to just blame other levels of government. It's not enough to just advocate on behalf of the province to the federal government.

It's important we take action here. That's why we partnered with law enforcement here in the province to enhance our bail enforcement, why we have a new team within the Department of Justice that will be working with folks to get them on the right track, to make sure that they don't breach their bail conditions.

And that's why we worked with our Crown prosecutors to ensure that public safety was first, front and centre in terms of their considerations within community. Again, we're taking action in this province; members opposite—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: But if this minister was serious about public safety, I would've gotten a banker's box full of correspondence and needed a dolly to get it down to my office to review it. There would've been an abundance of extremely meaningful dialogue.

Yet, alas, one letter. Manitobans need real reform now, and they need to have this government act.

This minister needs to stop campaigning and start governing. Will he?

* (14:50)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I'm not sure who's writing the member opposite's questions. Well, actually, I do have one idea. It might be the next Leader of the PC Party who decided to write in the Winnipeg Sun just recently, starting to talk about crime and safety that he was responsible for, and now this member defends.

But it's a new day in Manitoba. We have announced 25 new mental health workers in Budget 2024, working alongside law enforcement. We're building a safe consumption site here in this province.

And we heard from hundreds of people at our public safety summit. This government is taking concrete action. We're working with the law enforcement, we're working with community.

The members opposite did absolutely nothing under Heather Stefanson. It's time for them to get on board.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Devonshire Park School Construction Inquiry

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): The Devonshire Park K-to-8 school was projected to have a student capacity of 700 as well as a minimum of 74 child-care spaces located in the River East Transcona School Division. This is one of the nine new schools cut by this government. Now students and teachers will face longer waits for the classroom space that they need.

Why is this minister not building this school?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): You know, Honourable Speaker, it's too bad they didn't run their campaign on that. Can you imagine running a positive campaign where they could have built Manitoba?

Instead, you know what? They couldn't do that because nobody would have believed them. Nobody would have believed them just like nobody believed them about planning to build schools. That's not a plan to do anything.

As a matter of fact, when we say we're going to build schools, we're going to get it done just like in Budget 2024, where we've outlined our capital plan. The difference being, we'll get it done.

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

Mr. Jackson: Well, the difference, Honourable Speaker, is that we committed to building 23 new schools and they committed to building two.

It was recently reported that staff in this same division are being forced to shuffle students out of their own communities and away from classmates they've gone to school with for years. Meanwhile, the land that was already purchased for the Devonshire Park school sits with no action. This is a government that's going backwards on school construction.

What hand did the minister have in these school shuffles, and when will he build this new school for the River East Transcona School Division?

MLA Altomare: Again, Honourable Speaker, I do want to thank the member for that question.

And it's too bad he wasn't paying attention from 2016 to 2023 when that particular side of the House, when they were here on this side, was busy not being able to work with school divisions.

As a matter of fact, we want to continue to work with school divisions. This is what happened before.

They never had the time to even meet with school divisions. So what happens now? Honourable Speaker, we get elected, immediately—immediately—we get invitations. And guess what we do? We meet with school divisions.

We trust school divisions. And we'll work with them to build schools.

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

Mr. Jackson: What he did do immediately was cut nine new schools, including the one in the River East Transcona School Division.

The school board of that division says they are looking at an increase of 1,300 to 1,700 students in the next few years, and yet this minister cut a new school from being built in the division. More students, less space.

How does he expect to find space for that growth by cutting new school construction? Will the minister stand up, admit his mistake and commit today to building that school?

MLA Altomare: I do want to thank that member for their question. He does have an actual interest in public education and in getting things up. I suppose it's too bad the people previous to him never did.

They never got to work with school divisions, never had a real concrete plan and like I said earlier in my first answer, it's too bad they didn't run on that. Instead, what they had run on? They ran on seeking to divide Manitobans.

Can you imagine a campaign that would have been positive for that side? I couldn't. Neither could Manitobans.

RRC Paramedicine Program Graduate Recruitment Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): In letters that I'll table, students in their final term at the Red River College primary care paramedicine program share their frustration with NDP mismanagement.

These students were eager to get to work in our health-care system and excited to fill some of the many vacancies for paramedics right here at home. They were told by Shared Health to get a jump on applying and that they could start working in May, regardless of tight timelines surrounding their certification with the college.

After a complex and expensive application process, at the end of April, these students were told their applications couldn't proceed and they'd now be without a job until the next intake.

What happened to job offers waiting in the hands of every graduate in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): We know that Manitobans are counting on our government to do what the previous PC caucus never did, and that is prioritize health care. That's Manitobans' No. 1 priority.

Which is why our government has made sure that paramedics in rural Manitoba have access to the training that they need and deserve, including advanced care paramedicine, something the previous government didn't value and therefore didn't allow them to access or make jobs available for them in rural Manitoba.

We've been actively working with Shared Health to make sure that those students do have job offers, as of last week.

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

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, more broken promises from this NDP government, who are now leaving these students in career and financial limbo.

The student writes, and I quote: Other provinces are excited and reaching out to us and essentially offering us the moon and stars, what works for us and our families and the greater good of the health-care system. End quote.

These students went out of pocket hundreds of extra dollars to meet the expedited timelines set by the NDP. They went through long and complicated interview and application processes, but were still told that they were out of luck for reasons the government was fully aware of before recruiting them.

Why is this minister willing to lose these new graduates to other provinces?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I remember, and I think many members in this House will recall, when Heather Stefanson and the PC caucus froze the wages of paramedics for over five years in Manitoba.

What are the impacts of that, Honourable Speaker? Well, the impacts of that are that we saw a decline in folks accessing this program.

Our government, from day one, took a different approach. We're investing in paramedicine programs here in Manitoba, across rural Manitoba. We're making sure that these students have opportunities here in their own province, and we're making sure that we get to the table, something the previous government never did.

So we're going to make sure those grads get offers, that they have opportunities for advanced practice in rural Manitoba, something they didn't have for seven and a half years under the PCs.

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

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, it's worth noting that when I spoke to some of these graduates this morning, there was still no offer on the table.

I'll table the recruitment and rejection letters the student received from government officials. This never should have happened. It's happening under the NDP's watch, no matter how much the minister wants to deflect and look backward.

In their letter, one of the students stated they were willing to become bilingual, willing to work outside their community, willing to buy property in Manitoba just to get their foot in the door and work in our health-care system.

But now, thanks to this minister, they, quote, will be doing that in another province, along with many of my fellow classmates. End quote.

Will the minister give these paramedics a job in Manitoba before we lose them to other provinces, yes or no?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, for seven and a half years, the previous PC government, led by Heather Stefanson, cut the resources needed to train and retain paramedics in Manitoba.

Our government, from day one, has charted a different path. We're investing in making sure they have training opportunities. We're investing in making sure that they know that retention is our top priority as a government: \$309 million in our budget alone to retain and train health-care professionals in our province.

As of last week, we had good conversations with their college to make sure that they have job opportunities being offered to them in Manitoba. It's important to acknowledge, Honourable Speaker, that seven and a half years of a previous failed approach is being cleaned up by our government.

We're building relationships with paramedics—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Education Property Tax Property Tax Increase Concerns

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): The apple does not fall far from the tree, and this could not be more true when it comes to this Premier (Mr. Kineew) and his predecessor, Greg Selinger.

In 2011, Selinger promised not to raise the PST, and what did he do? He raised it to 8 per cent, costing Manitobans \$300 million, the largest tax increase in Manitoba history.

* (15:00)

Sadly, history is repeating itself. This Premier just eight months ago said he wouldn't raise taxes. And what do we have; \$148-million education property tax increase, the second largest tax increase in the history of this province.

Why does this Premier think it's okay to mislead Manitobans and impose the second largest tax history increase in this province?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, I'm very proud to rise in this House to say our government is cutting taxes for Manitobans.

We came in, what was one of the first things we did? We cut the fuel tax. We offered Manitobans a fuel tax holiday, something the members opposite didn't do for the seven years—the seven years—they were in government.

What did they do? They applied fuel taxes to Manitobans every single day they were here. What did we do when we got in? One of the first actions we took was to relieve Manitobans of those costs.

Our recent budget offered Manitobans 21 new ways to save, and I can't wait to talk about those in my next response.

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

Mr. Khan: Cutting taxes must mean something completely different in this made-up NDP world, because I'll table page 122 of this minister's own budget, where it clearly says he's increased taxes \$148 million.

Does the minister not know how to do simple math? It's in his own budget. They've clearly increased taxes, they—this is the second largest tax increase in the history of this province. More Manitobans will be paying

money in ridings such as Tuxedo, Roblin, Waverley, Sage Creek, Bridgewater, Charleswood, all of your taxes are going up thanks to this NDP.

The question is simple: Why will this Premier not stand up and apologize to Manitobans for his \$148-million tax increase?

MLA Sala: You know, Honourable Speaker, during our week off, I almost felt a little sad, like I was missing these opportunities to remind the members opposite of all of the great work we're doing to make the province more affordable.

For example, not only did we give Manitobans a fuel tax holiday, we also brought in a \$1,500 home-owner affordability credit. That is putting more pocket-'mon' money in the pockets of Manitobans; 84 per cent of homeowners, to be exact. And that's in addition to a long list of other measures, again, which I'm looking forward to spelling out in my next answer.

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

Mr. Khan: Well, based on that last answer, we know the minister can't spell or do math, but maybe he can read charts. So I'll table a chart that clearly shows a line of gas prices going up in Manitoba by 30 cents since he's taken office. I will table that here for the House today.

This Premier (Mr. Kineew) promised he won't raise taxes, and I'll table another article where he says, the reason I don't like raising tax is because the middle-income people that get hit the most. Well, he just hit them with a sucker punch of \$148 million.

Will this Premier stand up today and apologize for increasing the property taxes by \$148 million, the second largest tax increase in the history of this province?

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

I'd just remind the member for Fort Whyte, it's okay to table documents, but you can't use them as displays.

MLA Sala: It seems that the critic doesn't understand the way that commodity prices work. Our government doesn't set global oil prices. That shouldn't come as news to him.

But the great piece of information I could share is that our team is very proud that, because of our fuel tax holiday, we had the lowest fuel costs in Canada and the lowest inflation for three months in a row.

So in addition to that great work of keeping inflation the lowest inflation in Canada for three months in a row, we've done all types of other important work. For example, not only bringing in that \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit, doubling the fertility treatment tax credit, increasing the—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Children in CFS Care Support for Indigenous Agencies

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I want to thank all of the presenters for coming out and speaking with honesty about their experiences as foster parents at committee on Friday.

We heard from presenters how many systemic issues exist between caregivers, their children and the CFS system. The Province must continue to support Indigenous governing bodies to ensure the best outcomes for children.

Can the minister explain how she is helping Indigenous governing bodies build capacity to assist the ways they can respond to the children's advocate's recommendations?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I want to say miigwech to the member for Tyndall Park for that very important question.

The member and I sat alongside our critic from Midland in hearing hours of presentation from Manitoba citizens that have opened their houses and their hearts and their love to taking care of Manitoba children that—some of which are the most vulnerable among our province.

And I want to say that I heard them, I heard their concerns, I appreciate them so much for the work that they do. That is sacred work that folks in foster take on, on behalf of all Manitobans, on behalf of the province—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

CFS Services for Children Unlicensed Social Workers

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Manitoba is one of the only jurisdictions where unqualified workers can be directly providing CFS services for children. I table this information now.

Licensed social workers have strict accountability standards, and are trained in trauma-informed services.

Can the minister explain why unqualified, unlicensed workers are looking after our province's most vulnerable children, and what is the minister doing to fill this gap?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Miigwech for the question.

I would be very cautious about calling those that are on the front lines of caring for our children unqualified caregivers. I want to ensure that the member understands and appreciates that we have a myriad of different folks that open up their homes to do good work and to help care for our children.

Certainly I, as minister, have ordered a review to ensure that there are standards that are in place that are taking care—in order to take care of our children. And so I want the member to know that our department is looking at that and takes very seriously—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

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

Support for Foster Parents Recreation Fund and Maintenance Rate

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Presenters at committee acknowledged that systemic issues exist, which has taken a toll on caregivers' ability to provide adequate care. The minister did not deny cuts to the special sport and recreation fund, which enabled caregivers to enrol children in extracurriculars.

Honourable Speaker, we heard that folks in the North are literally being enticed with gift cards to become foster parents.

Is there—if there is such a pressing need for caregivers, why do maintenance rates continue to be frozen under this government, and will the minister commit today to reinstating special sports funding?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Miigwech for the question from the member for Tyndall Park.

Again, I want to reiterate my sincere miigwech to each of the presenters that came out to the MACY standing committee.

I also just want to reiterate in this House that our government is prioritizing jurisdiction, and alongside that, we are moving also towards kinship and customary care. We have grandmas and aunties and uncles and sisters and brothers that are currently caring for their relatives with little, if any, supports or financial means.

And so our government is prioritizing, as well, moving towards that customary and kinship model. We know that children do—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

**Red Dress Alert System
Canada-Manitoba Partnership**

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): In the last provincial election, the PC campaign was fuelled by hate and division. The PCs and the members opposite politicized the deaths of four Indigenous women. They forced the victims' families to endure the psychological torture caused by their hateful campaign billboards.

Manitobans rejected that message when they elected our NDP government. We're taking a different approach. We are partnering with the federal government to prevent the deaths of Indigenous women.

Can the Minister of Families please share with the House about the Red Dress Alert, and how this new alert will help save lives?

* (15:10)

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): Miigwech to my colleague across the way for the best question of the day.

I want to just say miigwech to our partners with Canada. We hosted our announcement on Friday alongside MP Leah Gazan, who's been just a stalwart in trying to get the Red Dress Alert established. I'm so proud that here in Manitoba, we've established the Red Dress Alert pilot project, which will pave the way for other jurisdictions across the country.

But it is—it signals to Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited that your lives matter and that, should you go missing or should loved ones go missing, that we on this side of the House take that very, very seriously, and we're offering a tangible, co-ordinated response to ensure that we are bringing—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

**BSC Program
Funding Levels**

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): The Building Sustainable Communities program provided over \$25 million per year during the last two fiscal years and \$83 million over its five years. The From the Ground Up program is only providing 12 and a half million dollars, half of the BSC, to eligible applicants.

Can the minister explain the 50 per cent cut in funding?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I was privileged to be out in the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation to discuss our new innovative program that truly went to the root causes and truly went to vulnerable communities: From the Ground Up; 12 and a half million dollars that will directly support poverty reduction, crime reduction efforts, expand our government's commitment to be tough on crime and tough on the root causes of crime.

There was nothing sustainable—absolutely nothing sustainable—about what that government proposed.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, the Building Sustainable Communities fund was a highly successful program. I'd like to table 21 pages of successful grants from last year alone.

This minister has taken the scissors and cancelled the program that funded over \$25 million of programs throughout Manitoba: pool upgrades in The Pas, rec centre in Arborg, Rainbow Stage here in Winnipeg and many more programs.

Why is this minister cutting a good program?

Mr. Bushie: Again, Honourable Speaker, nothing—absolutely nothing—sustainable about that failed government and their approach to how they governed in Manitoba.

The grants in this program not only support From the Ground Up, not only support initiatives for municipalities, but municipalities across the province can also partner with Northern Affairs community council and non-profit organizations on initiatives that will reduce crime, reduce poverty and revitalize our community.

Unlike them, we have targeted approaches that will get to the root causes of issues that are plaguing Manitobans all across, not ignore them like the previous failed government.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, this minister's solution to—is to provide half as much funding and to limit who can apply because that is the way this government operates. They want to pick winners and losers, and they might want to make it known if—that if they don't pick you for partisan reasons, you'll get nothing. It's disgraceful.

This minister must reinstate the non-partisan BSC funding in its entirety. Will he do it today?

Mr. Bushie: Honourable Speaker, he talks about non-partisan, yet they doubled that budget and 78 per cent went to their constituencies alone.

There was nothing sustainable about what they do. That's shame. It was meant as a COVID pandemic recovery response. And let's know, members opposite absolutely know that there was nothing sustainable about that.

And let's look at the architects of who that was for that budget. Cameron Friesen quit mid-budget because he did not believe it was sustainable. Cliff Cullen retired because he knew he wasn't going to see it through to the end. And Heather Stefanson walked out and abandoned them because she knew it was not sustainable.

Regulated Community Colleges Revenue Sharing Concerns

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Minister and the NDP government have taken revenue directly out of regulated community colleges and given it to public institutions.

Why is this minister choosing to destroy the regulated community colleges we desperately need?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I thank the honourable member for the question.

Once again, I'm uncertain of what the question is, so I'll do my best to put on the record that we fully support well-funded, well-resourced public education systems. We will always invest in our post-secondaries.

And happy to discuss the question at hand, though again I don't quite understand the question.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has come to an end.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: No petitions? All right. Grievances—oh.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, 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 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 zero Celsius 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 heating—of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

* (15:20)

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to not—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 was signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to—

The Speaker: Order please. Order.

I just want to remind all members that we really need to be careful with stuff on our mics, because it does cause problems for Hansard and for interpreters. We're hearing more and more from other jurisdictions that it's causing serious issues, so I'd just really like to ask everyone to be very careful.

Mr. Schuler: I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, a person 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 have deep—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.

(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 is signed by Julie Turenne-Maynard, Hector Demarcko, Bill Wsiaki and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Honourable Speaker, I w-i-s-h, wish, t-o, to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. There are the reasons for—these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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 the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying for 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.

* (15:30)

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

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

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

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:

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

This has been signed by Errol Glenn Dickson, Ed Grenier, Todd Labelle and many, many other Manitobans.

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) 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 18.

(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 under-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.

(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.

This has been signed by Adrian Dueck, Jayden Wiebe, Jairett Dueck, and many, many Manitobans.

The Speaker: No further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider: Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act; Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024; Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images).

I would also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider: Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act; Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act; Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Bill 18, the Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act; Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); and Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2).

The Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Justice will meet on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider: Bill 6, The Manitoba Assistance Amendment Act; Bill 8, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act; Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act; Bill 14, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2024; Bill 15, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act, distribution of fake images—fake intimate images.

Further, it has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider: Bill 5, The Adult Literacy Act; Bill 10, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act; Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Bill 18, the Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act; Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); and Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2).

* * *

MLA Fontaine: Can you please call the continuation of second reading debate of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), followed by second reading of Bill 31, the carbon cap—carbon—the Captured Carbon Storage Act, followed by second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now resume second reading debate on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), followed by second reading of Bill 31, The Captured Carbon Storage Act, followed by Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

* (15:40)

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 30—The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended)

The Speaker: So we will now resume debate on Bill 30, standing in the name of the honourable

member for Interlake-Gimli, who has 26 minutes remaining.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I know, in my brief four minutes, I put a fit in a lot of words on the record.

I just want to talk a little bit—I recognize our police officers that are out there, that protect us each and every day. I met some of the ones in Fisher Branch specifically, when they were successful in securing a little sled for emergency responses. And that includes wheels for the summer and also skis for the winter, Honourable Speaker.

I was just up at Fisher Branch during break week, and I was able to bump into these officers that secured the grant through the property forfeiture grant. And they were excited about this new addition to their fleet. They have had historical successes in applying and getting other monies as well. I'll talk about that in a minute.

But this specific grant was for—I believe it was for a few thousand dollars, I don't remember the exact dollar amount. I should have had that in my notes here, because it was a great day when we announced that for them.

But as I was speaking, I'm sure people in this Chamber realized that not all terrains are navigable by vehicles; an ambulance, for example. And STARS can't land in all the terrain in my constituency of Interlake-Gimli. So it's very important that these forces are able to get equipment such as this little sled that can go behind either a four-wheeler or a snowmobile.

So, I mean, ideal situations, Honourable Speaker, would be if we never, ever had to use this equipment. I mean, that would be a good day that we wouldn't have to rescue somebody from out in the bush or off of Lake Winnipeg or Lake Manitoba for that matter. So that would be ideal, but you have to plan for the worst even though you hope for the best. And this is just one of the tools they will now have in their toolbox if they need to go and rescue somebody or detain somebody as well.

It's not uncommon that people with—that borrow a snow machine without permission; I'll be polite here, Honourable Speaker—and they take that piece of equipment for a joyride, and they're not used to handling it. And what happens is they, you know, they get into twists and turns, and they're not maybe treating it like their own, and they're driving it quite hard, and they end up off of one side of the trail or the other, and they may end up wrapping it around a tree.

And so there's two things that need to happen there. They need to be detained, and they would also potentially need to be rescued if they had any injuries from the accident.

Now, Fisher Branch, as well, in 2021, was successful to the tune of \$20,000. Fisher Branch RCMP held a four-day domestic violence workshop, and that is for at-risk youth. Now, they were ecstatic of how well this went. It's engaging the youth.

I think any time that we can engage youth or anybody of any age with our police forces and get used to realizing that, you know, some kids are taught that police officers are bad, and that's not always the case. They're there to help you in the times that they need. So we need to ensure that kids know that police officers are not bad, and they're there to help in times of domestic violence and educate kids on how to break some of the cycles that continue on in our society. And that's very, very important.

But the points of these two examples that I brought up, Honourable Speaker, are that this already exists. This is a program that was brought in in 2021 under the criminal property—for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit—I'll get it eventually. And they secure money for instances like this and turn it back over for good rather than some of the bad things that are happening here.

So, over the past few years, the PC government has distributed millions of dollars from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to various different initiatives around the province. So this is an existing, very, very successful program. And as a matter of fact, other governments across Canada thought that what the PC government did in 2021 was worthwhile copying.

So, for example, the NDP government in BC brought forward a new law in March of 2023, and their Attorney General was quoted as saying, there is a similar piece of legislation in place in Manitoba. So this legislation that's before us here today is actually already enacted in Manitoba.

So it's a lot more than taking credit for this; it's actually the right thing to do. So, you know, I'm glad that the NDP is bringing through-forward legislation that is the right thing to do, but us as a PC government has already enacted this.

So some of the legislation kind of asks individuals to prove that they are not a criminal. So I'll give you one example under FINTRAC that is out there. FINTRAC is a financial obligation by banks, financial advisors, to track large sums of cash across Canada as

part of our federal legislation. So anybody that goes to deposit more than \$10,000 into—\$10,000 or more, I should say, into a bank account is actually required to show where they got that money from.

And I'll give you a little example. There were some locals who had a wedding social. And they had a very successful social, and at the end of the social they had just over \$10,000. And they opened up their wedding account, and they had to put into their account this \$10,000, just for wedding expenses. And they were keeping it separate from their own personal accounts. They wanted to keep track of that and use that specifically only for the wedding.

Well, when they went to deposit this money—sure, the bank took the money, but they seized it until they could prove where this money came from. So it was a little bit of a hiccup for them. It took them quite a few weeks to get their money released, but we have those checks and balances in place here which is very important to have.

Now if somebody was to walk into a car dealership and buy—put \$100,000 down on a gangster car—or, I forget exactly how the quote went—but a gangster driving a \$100,000 car, Honourable Speaker, then that money would be seized as well.

It's a financial obligation for anybody that's in the business of accepting money. It's their obligation.

* (15:50)

And there's actually education that goes out on FINTRAC every year and you have to have continuing education credits if you want to maintain a licence, like a financial 'advisor', bank tellers. They're all having to continue education on FINTRAC and it's very important that we do that and not let people get away with laundering money or putting it in bank accounts.

Because after it's in a bank account, it's pretty much—you can write a cheque, you can move it around. So it's very important that we stop large amounts of cash from going into a bank account like that.

And these investigations are very important in FINTRAC. And it's very important that financial advisors, bank tellers, don't just take that money and take the word of the person depositing that money. It's important to combat money laundering across Canada and the United States. After it gets in any bank around the world, then it's kind of legitimized and it can be moved a lot easier through bank transfers and whatnot.

But in 2021, we as the PC government realized the importance of this and has already passed legislation that is like this. So, I guess, you know, I'm not saying it's bad legislation; I'm just saying it's redundant. But, you know, emulation is often the best form of flattery, I suppose, in this case, and they want to emulate the PC government in some of their legislation that—some of their good legislation like this.

And this was brought in to tackle organized crime. And it's very important that we do everything we can and pull all the levers that government has and enable our officers to do that as well. I specifically don't believe a \$300 camera on a whole entire farm site would help with our crime rates here in Manitoba.

But when you do catch criminals, it's important that you make them forfeit their money from their crimes. There was historically, and we probably all know these historical issues where people go around, take advantage of predominantly seniors for maybe a home renovation, new shingles or siding.

Back in the day, I recall this one specific event. This is many years ago, where a—well, we'll call him a gangster because that's the word that our Premier (Mr. Kineo) uses. This gangster was going around and selling siding to seniors. And there was a bit of a problem with charging him because he was actually putting a product on, even though it was substandard, installed very, very poorly.

But he was actually supplying a product for the money that he would accept. And he would accept it in forms of cheques and deposit it in his bank account so, you know, there was no issues. He had a cheque.

The only way the police were eventually allowed—able to arrest this individual was on tax evasion. So he—this individual kept taking advantage of seniors, but he didn't actually file income tax. So then that is—enabled them to take his home and a few other things that he had in his possession.

So, this goes back a long, long way of taking money from criminals. And as I mentioned, it's very important to take those steps to combat money laundering. And a lot of the organizations that profit from drugs and whatnot want to clean that money and get it into the—into their bank account somehow so they can spend it as if they had a job. But the legislation that we brought in—and this is, like I say, very similar—it—they have to show that they've earned that money.

So an example of that would be if somebody went and bought a house, and they didn't have an inheritance, they—but they slowly accumulated money in

their account, but they never had a job, and all of a sudden they're buying a million-dollar property, they would have to justify that. And that is something I think that all people in Manitoba would expect to have happen.

So in 2021 we passed this legislation, so if we were able to seize any assets, whether that's vehicles, cash, homes—guns they don't resell and give money back, they're destroyed—but to seize all of that and then sell it, with the exception of the guns, and that revenue would then go back to community organizations, the RCMP and some of those examples that I gave earlier.

We also—the PCs—seeing how successful it was, in 2022 we expanded the staffing capacity within the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to combat money laundering. So it's not just a matter of been—seizing it, but it's also enabling and giving enough staff to help ensure that you can have investigations and have financial analysts to target organized crime. So it's one thing to seize the proceeds of crime, but it's another to prove that the proceeds of crime, so then you can sell them and put them to some of these good examples like I had mentioned here.

So our government has distributed millions of dollars from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to various initiatives and agencies across the province of Manitoba. And I think our colleagues all across here, whether rural or urban, can attest to some of the examples for this.

And this includes the Bear Clan and their law—and other law-enforcement agencies and community safety groups. And I just want to give a thank you to our community safety groups. In rural Manitoba—as with the Bear Clan here in Winnipeg—in rural Manitoba we have COPPs, or Citizens on Patrol; I'm sure we're all familiar with them and the great work that they do.

Just their presence riding around a small town keeps crime down. And they have kind of a group text that they use, or sometimes they use an app like Signal or WhatsApp, that alerts people if there's somebody suspicious in the community, and then all of a sudden there's 40 people that are peeking out their windows to see what this suspicious vehicle is doing.

So I just want to say thank you to those people who dedicate their time and no expectation of getting any monetary dollar back, but it's to make their community safer. So I want to say thank you to all those community safety groups that do that.

Victim services organizations and other services and rural charities are other ones where they have all been helped out in different ways. So BC recognized how good of a job that the PC government was doing here in Manitoba, so they announced their law in March of 2023. And again, I just want to reiterate that they said there is similar—a similar piece of legislation in place in Manitoba.

Sorry, Honourable Speaker, I caught a little bit of a cold over my time here, and—on our constituency break week; I was out and about so much, you end up bumping into people that may have an ailment, and sometimes you catch it.

* (16:00)

And I know earlier you were giving me the stink eye for what you maybe thought was something I was eating in the Chamber, but it was just a 'loshens', I assure you, Honourable Speaker. I wasn't eating anything in it. I would put it under maybe the definition of medication, so I wasn't coughing in the Chamber here, so thank you for your leniency on that.

Now, I just want to maybe wrap up by once again thanking the RCMP 'apross'—across our province. And it's not just the RCMP that keep us safe. We have tribal police, we have Brandon police, we have other smaller towns that have a police force. Winnipeg police, here, of course, is a lot larger than some of the small towns, but, you know, they have maybe more resources than some of the other communities.

But I just want to say thank you to all the people that are out there helping us and putting their life on the line to ensure that not just ourselves in times of need, whether it's been an accident or if it's been a violation of personal property where there's been a theft or an outright dispute where people are involved in.

But I would like to move, seconded by the member for Brandon West,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

the House declines to give second readings—this House declines to give second reading to Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), because this House has not received satisfactory evidence or assurance that this bill is different to the existing legislation that we—that was brought forward and passed in this House in 2021.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

It has been moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), seconded by the honourable member for Brandon West,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

this House declines to give second reading to Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), because this House has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that this bill is different to the existing legislation that was brought forward and passed by this House in 2021.

And I would advise the House that this motion is in order.

The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Again, it gives me great pride to rise in the House and speak again on this bill as it's been presented and now amended by our side of the House.

Of course it's important, Honourable Speaker, to talk about this bill, because it is actually a duplication of process that has already happened within legislation in Manitoba. And I know the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) agrees with me. He was nodding, and it is important that we look at the changes whenever any sort of regulation or bill is brought forward in our province.

We have to make sure that it isn't brought forward just as a quick change or something that gets put on record because a minister or a government wants the opportunity to talk about a bill or to bring it forward again.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And although flattery is excellent, we appreciate it very much, but we look back to 2021 when amendments were made to The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, and unexplained wealth orders were brought in already. And this legislation is eerily similar to what has already been brought forward.

And I know my very dedicated and knowledgeable friend and colleague, the MLA for Steinbach, has worked tirelessly on this file when he was the member and minister responsible for Justice at the time. So I look to his knowledge. I listened to his presentation in the House, and it resonated with me that when we duplicate process, there is no need to look at new evidence—or, sorry—new wording or bills brought forward within the Legislature.

So, again, I get an opportunity to speak in this Chamber and bring the important message forward about the duplication of bills and legislation, and of course, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we, on this side of the House, feel that there is certainly duplication in this bill.

We actually saw it right from the time when the NDP was on the campaign trail, and this is one of their campaign promises, Honourable Deputy Speaker, was to look at a change in The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. And as a previous law enforcement officer, I was looking very forward to this if the NDP was, in fact, elected. I was looking forward to some sort of change that would help the criminal property forfeiture process and really ensure that more teeth were brought forward into the legislation.

But what happened, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is the legislation actually fell flat and there is no real viable change in this legislation. Wealth orders were brought in, as I said earlier, in 2021, and those wealth orders have gone through the courts and they've stood the test of the courts—albeit the civil courts—because these are a civil process. They have been used and have been extremely successful in Manitoba.

And again, we can see the amount of funds and the wealth that the Criminal Property Forfeiture division and unit in Manitoba have been able to seize from the criminal element. And, again, there is nothing better than seeing criminal property forfeiture money, money from ill gains, money that is brought in from criminals, being put back into programs and into equipment and into training for what I will call the good guys, for the law enforcement side, for justice and for other areas within the Manitoba Justice system to make sure that these programs and these helpful areas really get the funding that they deserve on the backs of criminals that have perpetrated terrible acts against our communities and against individuals within Manitoba.

So when we look at the funds that have been brought in from the criminal property forfeiture, I've heard it from many of the people that spoke here over the last several weeks on this bill, and the funds help the communities that each and every one of us have been voted to represent within Manitoba. And those funds will help programs; they will help training; they will help get equipment, and they will better the service that law enforcement, Victim Services and other areas of the criminal justice system can help serve all Manitobans in a very respectful manner and, you know, without coming out of taxpayer dollars.

* (16:10)

And I think that's what's really important, is the millions and millions of dollars that have been put into various networks, whether it be the police service, whether it be entities that help communities such as the Bear Clan, or other service agencies. For example, in Brandon, we had several different outreach communities that received funding. But having those dollars come from criminals and not from hard-working taxpayers is incredibly profound and it really sends a message that crime does not pay in this province.

So the unexplained wealth orders have been used since 2021. They've gone through the court process, they've been proven and they have been extremely successful. Legislation has changed slightly to allow up to \$75,000 of seizure to go through these different funds. And I know that legislation is now talking about moving that up a little bit further to—I believe it's \$125,000, which would be excellent, as well.

But the problem is this legislation is so much identical to what has already been brought forward that it really has no additional meaning or no additional teeth that can be brought forward within Manitoba. And that is something that I have difficulties with as now, a legislator, but previously as an enforcer, is just changing laws for the sake of changing laws when we already have the ability to act within those parameters.

And so, you know, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it's important to make sure that we really look at the need for change and, you know, if there's change that can happen and if the change is viable, it is something that we should look at, rightfully so. It's our job as legislatures in here to look at new legislation and say, yes, this is impactful for the province of Manitoba. This is impactful for my constituents and the area that I represent.

But do we really need to put legislation forward if it is already in place within the province? And, you know, I ask this side of the House—sorry, the other side of the House across the aisle—to look at previous articles, articles that have been printed in the Free Press that spoke about all of these laws that have come into place and how they were really tested.

And Manitoba was at the pinnacle of this, and other areas of jurisdiction have copied us, have emulated what we have done here in Manitoba, much like this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has emulated and looked at exact legislation that is already here. By putting a few new words in, he was believing that this would bring more teeth to the legislation. But those

teeth are already sharpened and they're already engaged within the legislation that is on the books right now and that both sides of this House have voted on. And it's become legislation and enshrined in Manitoba, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

So I think it was quite evident when the Minister of Justice brought this forward—this legislation forward—and we had second reading on it. We had debate. And the questions that came forward to the minister really resolve—revolved around this bill and some of the questions about different committees or different work, if he was familiar with it. And the minister himself couldn't answer those questions that were posed by the MLA for Steinbach. And he asked those questions several times of the minister, reframed them, and I believe, at my count, it was four times that he asked that question, and they couldn't be answered by this minister.

So that leads me to believe that there is a concern. Even he does not know the reasons why he brought this legislation forward and wanted the change.

So, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that is why we have put forth a motion to make sure that we can debate this and look at the fact that there is no real or substantive change in this legislation or the act that was brought forward.

So, again, I would like to talk about these wealth orders and how they go and take money from the bad guys and give it to the good guys. And, again, that is something that we, as legislature—legislators, and all of us within this Chamber, should be extremely proud about.

Again, I got sidetracked when I was talking about this, but think of the millions of dollars, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that we save Manitobans and our ratepayers, because there's only one taxpayer, and that's Manitobans; and we save them multiple millions of dollars every year not having to go into provincial budgets and downstream into municipal budgets that fund policing services.

And you're probably familiar, Mr. Honourable Deputy Speaker, that policing services are funded by municipalities through police boards. And one of the obligations under The Police Services Act and for police boards is to come up with a budget that is supported by municipal councils to support their police services.

And so instead of having to put a million dollars, and the last that I looked when I was the chief in Brandon, there was over a million dollars that this

government had provided to the Brandon Police Service in equipment, and in funding, and in programming so that that money did not have to come out of the ratepayers of, the citizens of Brandon or transfer payments from the Province of Manitoba through to our council, through to the police board that then funds the programming of services provided by a municipal police service.

So it works very similar in all of the other 12 municipal police services within the province, as well as through the Indigenous police services and slightly different through the RCMP because that is federal money.

However, there is a municipal side and municipal contracts that come into place with members from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. And, again, taxpayers are on the hook for those dollars, for policing services, for policing programs and for policing equipment. So why not get criminals to pay for that under this legislation.

And, again, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I must say that this legislation is already in place, and we've seen it acted on year after year after year since 2021. And actually, criminal property forfeiture, I believe, came into existence in this province in 2003 or 2004, somewhere in there. And I'm sure the honourable member from Steinbach would be able to give me the exact time that that happened, because he has been a well-respected member of this legislature for 20-plus years and certainly a mentor to many of us in this Chamber. So, and I thank him for his services and his time and especially his expertise in the area of Justice.

* (16:20)

When I was a police—with the Brandon Police Service as chief, he was one of the ministers for Justice during my time. And we had many, many talks—depth talks—whether it be on the phone or in his office or when he came out to the Brandon Police Service to do these great funding announcements. And we had great discussions about criminal property forfeiture and how we can move forward with this legislation.

And during that time, there were these wealth orders that were brought forward. And although I don't believe it was under then-Justice minister Goertzen that the wealth orders had come forward—the MLA for Steinbach, my apologies for that—I don't believe that at that time those orders were under his time as Justice minister. However, they were brought into place in 2021.

So, you know—and they have gone through the courts many, many times. I have been overseer, as the chief of Brandon Police Service, of many projects that involved targeting criminals within Manitoba that were looking to gain large sums of money and property and assets from criminal. And sometimes it was a solo effort by our police service because it was just people within our jurisdiction. Pardon me. But more times than not, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it was joint forces initiatives that came to the table.

And again, we would get funding through Manitoba Justice to run these programs. And we knew that the legislation that was in place already could be acted on and looked at and relied upon to make sure that the seized funds—whether it be assets, whether it be homes, whether it be vehicles, cash or other properties—were seized legally, were seized in a manner that could go to public forfeiture and eventually to auction, and those funds would end up with Criminal Property Forfeiture Manitoba. And those funds would grow and stay with Manitoba.

And again, at the end of the year, each fiscal year, the director of Criminal Property Forfeiture would be able to look at their bank account and say: We have X amount of dollars. And they would look at the legislation that's already in place—legislation that has been in place since 2021—and they would say: Okay, we have funded X amount for our citizens, but first and foremost, we've taken care of victims of crime. Because they want to make sure that the victims who are impacted by criminality are taken care of first and foremost.

So once that's done, they put out a call to law enforcement agencies to look at programming, to look at funding, to look at equipment and various needs in the community that can serve the community and make it a safer place for all Manitobans, a safer place for each and every one of us to be within our own constituencies or any visitors to our province, or anybody coming from one constituency to another, helping out. We just want to make sure that we have a very safe and protective Manitoba.

And this Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund allows for that on the backs of criminals, people that have, you know, caused much harm in our communities. We're able to get some of those funds back into our community to fund these valuable, valuable programs.

Again, tax free. There's no tax. We don't have to collect tax from any of our constituents, any of—

Manitobans, because this money is seized from criminals that I'm sure didn't pay tax on their illegal gains. So we're benefiting.

But it has to be noted that when there's this criminality and this money is coming into play, this is money that could have been legally gained and taxes paid on to help fund programs. So it's a nice offset when we look at this and the funds that we can get.

So I've read the legislation that this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has put through. I listened to the questions that were posed to him, and I went to the bill briefing on this. And, again, my questions were, how is this substantially different than what is already in place and has been in place since 2021?

And the answer is, it is not, because we've already seen, throughout our history—since 2021—a number of these wealth orders being used to look at the ability to seize funds, to seize assets from the people within the criminal world. And, again, when we put legislation forward, it's important that it's legislation that is not just repetitive.

We went through this recently, Honourable Deputy Speaker, where I got a report from this House that talked about the repeal of acts not in force under part 6.2 of The Statutes and Regulations Act. And we certainly don't want statutes and regulations that aren't in force because they're repetitive or they're duplicating, and that can certainly happen when we look at this sort of legislation that's put forward, really, mimicking the legislation that's already in place.

And so, again, when we talk about the need for change in this legislation, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm not convinced that there is such a need in this House. My colleagues are convinced there's not such a need. And, again, when colleagues on this side of the House that have been previous ministerial portfolios and they've worked intently within the legislation, come and say there is no significant change, I really have to listen to that, and I have to look at, line by line, what this legislation was bringing forward.

And, again, there is a couple of changes that are a little bit different, but the main substance of this bill really mirrors what has already been put in place since 2021.

So it's important also for me, Honourable Deputy Speaker, to give recognition to a few people within the Criminal Property Forfeiture division. And previous director of Criminal Property Forfeiture, Mr. Gord Schumacher, was a former police service member with the Winnipeg Police Service. He's a lawyer as

well, and he became the director of Criminal Property Forfeiture.

And Mr. Schumacher was able to talk at many committees nationally, internationally and globally on the importance of criminal property forfeiture. And, in fact, Manitoba was on a pedestal when they looked at the legislation and what has been brought forward to this legislation.

* (16:30)

So Mr. Schumacher was instrumental in talking to all of the police services across Manitoba, as well, about how this legislation works and how we can partner with the Criminal Property Forfeiture division in Manitoba to make sure that we're working hand in hand or jointly on many of these operations, and that caused a great partnership between law enforcement and the Criminal Property Forfeiture through the Department of Justice.

Unfortunately, Mr. Schumacher retired. He was excellent at his job, but he felt it was time to look at other areas and where he could go and his time could go. So then Melinda Murray now has taken over as the executive director of the Criminal Property Forfeiture.

And she was actually at the bill briefing when I came to this. And I've worked extensively with her as well in my previous role. And it was important to note that we spoke openly about this bill and what it could bring in. And, you know, it's important for me to continue these working relationships with the people that are enforcing these legislations, that are the ones that are actually out there on the front lines.

And so one other shout-out is to the investigator, the one who oversees a lot of the co-ordination is Phil Siatecki and, again, a previous Winnipeg Police Service member—great knowledge in the areas of the criminal property forfeiture. And before that, it was called IPOC, the Integrated Proceeds of Crime unit, that was more of a federally run mandate where items would be seized by law enforcement, but they would go to the federal side, and we would never see the value of those dollars locally or provincially.

And now we look at the Criminal Property Forfeiture bureau or division that we have under Manitoba Justice and under the great leadership that they have and the value of those dollars being brought forward, again, tax free for people within Manitoba—not having to pay extra mill rates, not having to pay extra taxes to support their local law enforcement. Millions of dollars just in Brandon alone that came in. I believe—the

last I checked, there was about \$16 million provincially that came into our province that we did not have to tax individuals within our province.

So—and the benefits, Honourable Deputy Speaker, speak volumes when we look at the engagement that the programs that get funded can have with our citizens, with people that need the services and, quite frankly, the police services' budgets are difficult because they're a costly asset. So being able to get money from the Province through this program is fantastic.

So I thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to speak again today.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Honourable Speaker, I hope you'll allow me just the slightest bit of latitude as I begin this speech to acknowledge my former colleague, Heather Stefanson, who I know officially was—announced her resignation today. I haven't had the opportunity to address that.

Heather and I began in the Legislature more than 20 years ago today and served in opposition and then in government, and now for a short time again back in opposition. And we shared some of the similar portfolios in government and in opposition as well, and I recognize that those are really, really hard positions. There are members opposite now who today hold those positions, and I know that they are difficult positions to hold.

Government, I often describe as being like going on a hike, and every few miles you put a pebble in your bag, and then you go along and you put another pebble in your bag. And the pebbles get heavier and heavier as you accumulate decisions. And I suspect this government still feels that it's pretty light, but for those of us who served in a government, we know that it does get heavier as you went along, and Heather certainly, I think, felt that as well.

So I want to wish her well. She served a very long time in difficult roles, critical roles in our province. Also served well in opposition; served, of course, as the first female premier of our province. I had the opportunity, in my short time, to hand that mantle of the Premier's office over to her. I know it was a great—*[interjection]*

I appreciate the member for Rossmere (MLA Schmidt) might not have the same grace that the former member for Rossmere did, but I do want to again acknowledge the service that Heather had and I wish her well in whatever it is she's going to next.

I know that the member for Rossmere is now paying tribute to Andrew Micklefield. I'll save that tribute for another day, but she's correct; Andrew Micklefield was also a great MLA, one of the best MLAs that Rossmere certainly had in recent times, including in the last seven months.

Now, I want to move on to this particular bill that has now had a reasoned amendment put forward to it. And the history of reasoned amendments in this Legislature is interesting. I think for a long time—I'll be corrected, I'm sure, by the scholarly folks at the clerks' desk if I'm wrong—but I think a reasoned amendment wasn't used for decades, for at least between, sort of, 1950 or '60, maybe, and then it was raised again when we were last in opposition. And I think that the current Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) has—did use reasoned amendments when they were in opposition as well.

So it's sort of kind of been revived a little bit from a long period of disuse. And I think it's good. It's an important ability to be able to provide a reason for why a bill shouldn't proceed. So it's a little bit less technical than some of the other amendments you might bring to a bill, which have very specific changes to a bill. A reasoned amendment simply brings forward a reason why a bill shouldn't proceed.

Now I'm glad that this bill is actually still up for debate; I know when I stood up to speak there were some members who were calling for the question. They want to shut down debate. I'm a little surprised, maybe, they didn't slip it into BITSA like they've done some of the other bills we saw earlier today in, really, an affront to democracy—in, really, an affront to democracy—I would say. I don't know—[*interjection*]

And, of course, the member for Rossmere has only been here for about a cup of coffee, but she wouldn't know that. I don't think a bill in its entirety—a bill in its entirety—has been slipped into BITSA before, and there were two or three bills that were slipped in there.

So I'm glad that this particular bill, which we're debating today, hasn't found its way—[*interjection*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —into BITSA. Because it's an important piece of legislation. It's an important piece of—[*interjection*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: It's nice to be able to speak for two minutes without getting shouted down by the government.

But I'm glad that it is still before the House, and that it didn't get slipped into the BITSA legislation, because one would know that if that bill had—this bill had gone into BITSA, it wouldn't be able to go before committee, as an example. It would take away the democratic voice of people to be able to speak to a particular issue.

A government that has—said that they believe in things like transparency, but then don't want the public to be able to come and speak to bills that have found their way, in a very unusual way, into the budget implementation and tax statute amendment act.

This particular bill, I believe, ultimately will end up before committee, and members will be able to have their own, sort of, debate on how they feel about it—members of the public, not members of this Legislature—who are getting plenty of time to debate this particular bill.

But the reasoned amendment that's been brought forward brings forward the reason why the bill should be withdrawn, not slipped into BITSA, as the government is doing with other pieces of legislation that are contentious before the House, but to be able to have a reason for not proceeding with the bill. In this particular case, that reason is that the bill hasn't been described, hasn't been given any information about how it is different from other legislation that currently exists in the province of Manitoba.

Members opposite will know, because they've listened now to hours of debate, that already in Manitoba, there is an ability to investigate and to seize assets if you believe that an individual has been involved in criminal activity and their wealth that they've accumulated and that they're demonstrating in a variety of ways is unexplained.

* (16:40)

I've never been accused of having unexplained wealth. I don't know how many other members have, maybe have been accused of such a thing, but there are clearly times when an individual is demonstrating a level of wealth alongside activity that might be suspicious where it doesn't make sense with whatever their job or their income might otherwise be.

And that exists in Manitoba already. Already in Manitoba, there can be investigations into that. That was the case when I was the minister of Justice and it was done. In fact, there were articles that were written about that. There were articles that were written about the fact—and there was criticism levelled—that you

could actually seize individuals' property based on unexplained wealth.

There are those on the civil libertarian side—and I think that it's an argument that's worth having—that said that the legislation went too far. And yet, this government brought forward this particular bill, which seems to mirror, essentially, what already exists because they made a commitment in an election campaign, probably not knowing that the legislation already did exist.

And so they brought forward this bill to 'obstensively' say that they fulfilled an election campaign promise even though it already existed in the province of Manitoba.

So one wonders now, as we debate the recent amendment, why the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) can't simply explain the changes or the differences as compared to other pieces of legislation. This could have all been avoided. All of this debate, the days of debate by members on this side, it could have been avoided in that simple little question period that took place—it feels like years ago now, but it was probably only a couple of weeks ago—the question period with the Minister of Justice.

The Minister of Justice, when he was asked, what is the difference between this legislation and the legislation that currently exists, could have simply explained why it was better, why it was enhanced, the provisions. I'm sure he would have been given a briefing from the very capable people in the Department of Justice. And had he simply explained that, then the reason for this reasoned amendment wouldn't have been necessary and we could have been debating, we could have been doing Estimates, all sorts of other things as an alternative.

But the Minister of Justice didn't answer those questions and still hasn't answered those questions, Honourable Speaker. And, you know, I remember a time when we didn't have that question period after bills were introduced. I think it came in in 2016 or around that time. And it was that ability to be able to engage with ministers, to say, you know, here are some questions that we have. Sometimes the answers are provided on the floor. Other times, the ministers—and I certainly did this sometimes as the minister—I would simply say, I don't have that in front of me now, but when we get to committee, I'll provide you the answer.

I took an undertaking. We used to call it taking things as notice. We would sometimes take questions as notice. I remember when ministers would often

take a question as notice in the House if it was too technical or didn't sort of have—if there wasn't a specific answer at the time. A minister could take the question as notice and they would report back to the House in some form or fashion the answer that they—or, question that they had taken as notice before.

That's a reasonable thing to do. So a little bit less formal than that, but the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe), could have simply said during the question period, you know what, I have some ideas about why it's different but I want to give you the detailed answers. I'm going to take that back, and at committee, before the committee begins—or in the opening statements—I will provide you the answers in terms of why there is a difference.

Now, a lot of the new members of the—this House might not know that that's an option and they might want to go back to their Attorney General and say, hey, I heard this from the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and was that a possibility? Could we have avoided all of this by you simply saying, I'm going to take that as notice or under advisement. I'm going to bring that back to committee. When it gets to committee, I'm going to answer your question. And we could have been doing all sorts of other business in the House.

But it is important that we know what the differences are in legislation. Is legislation redundant? Does it add any value? Does it actually make things weaker? Are there unintended consequences? Unintended consequences of legislation are not trivial or unimportant.

I recall as, by way of example, Honourable Speaker, when the fortified buildings and armoured vehicles act was introduced, I think either by Dave Chomiak or by Gord Mackintosh, I believe, back in the early 2000s, that bill was introduced to say that you couldn't fortify a vehicle, you couldn't armour-plate it. Gangs were doing it at the time. And it made sense. I don't know that that was a problem in Manitoba at the time, but they brought in the armoured vehicles act.

But there was an unintended consequence because, unbeknownst to me, there are individuals who own tanks in the province of Manitoba. They sometimes bring those tanks to ceremonial things like Remembrance Day and that sort of thing, and the tanks were captured under the legislation, and it would have made illegal for people to own those ceremonial tanks. They wouldn't have been able to bring them to Remembrance Day ceremonies, and so the bill had to be amended at committee because it was an unintended consequence.

And in the same way with this particular piece of legislation, we can't make a determination whether or not there are unintended consequences to the legislation because the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) won't answer the questions about how it's different from legislation that currently exists in Manitoba already.

And that is important for us to do as legislators. It doesn't mean that the Minister of Justice has ill intentions or that he's trying to somehow do something negative, I suppose. That's not the case at all. I'm guessing that they gave direction to the Department of Justice; they wrote this bill up; they were following the directions of the minister, and it wasn't intended to make things worse.

But we don't know that if we aren't able to examine it or get questions from the Minister of Justice, or at least have an undertaking that he would have tried to find those answers and bring them forward at the committee stage. So that's a real concern.

Now I know that this particular piece of legislation was debated in British Columbia, and my friends across the way spent the weekend with Premier David Eby from British Columbia. I understand he was in Manitoba attending their convention, and he—they may have had an opportunity to have some discussions with him about this, and he might have reminded them, if they were discussing this particular piece of legislation, that the—Premier Eby actually said that they followed Manitoba's lead on the unexplained wealth provisions of the act.

Premier Eby, or his government at least—it may have been his minister of justice—said in the newspaper at that time, we've looked at what Manitoba has done when it comes to money laundering and unexplained wealth, and we're going to follow Manitoba's lead, and then they brought in something similar.

I don't know what other discussions happened with Premier Eby on the weekend. I certainly hope that my friends in the NDP don't plan to follow the lead of Premier Eby by legalizing drugs such as cocaine and methamphetamine. Certainly, I know Premier Em [phonetic] has now quickly put that in reverse and he's trying to get out of those different provisions, trying to get Prime Minister Trudeau to give him a pass on this and to try to make illegal the use of those drugs now in public places. Maybe that discussion happened. Maybe Premier Eby and our Premier (Mr. Kine) in Manitoba were having the discussions

about how can we do the same thing in Manitoba, since they seem to like to copy each other. I hope that that's not the case.

But if that was the case and we find out sometime in the future that the NDP plan to legalize all drugs as they've done in British Columbia, I would hope that the Attorney General or whoever was sponsoring that legislation would be able to answer questions so we wouldn't have to have a reasoned amendment as this one is before us here today.

Because this particular reasoned amendment gets to the heart of what our job is as legislators. Our job is to ask questions. Our job is to seek answers from the minister of the portfolios that those questions are being asked, and to try to find information from them about how things are going to be improved in Manitoba, or if there might be unintended consequences. It's particularly important that we have the ability to do that.

Now, the Minister of Justice, like all the ministers on that side, are relatively new to their portfolio and I suspect, knowing my colleagues, there would have been a level of grace that would have been provided if the Attorney General simply would have said I don't know that answer at the time. But he didn't do that. He engaged in a different way, and I won't get too far into his behaviour during that and subsequent debates. That's already been well decided by the Speaker in terms of that conduct.

But I will say that it is an opportunity for him to perhaps find a way to come back to this Assembly and say, I have the answers that you are seeking. Perhaps I should have brought them earlier. Perhaps I made a mistake by not giving you these weeks ago, but now I have them and now I'm going to provide them to you. I think that my colleagues on this side would welcome that. They would find that to be very, very helpful. But that's not what we're seeing.

And so now we're still stuck debating this particular piece of legislation, which might have good merit to it, which might enhance things even though it already exists in the province of Manitoba. Probably it doesn't make it any worse, but we don't actually know those answers.

* (16:50)

And I would encourage the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), who actually has a role in

this, the Minister of Families, to work with her colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe)—I've fulfilled both roles at one time in my time here in the Legislature—and I do recall times when legislation was, you know, stuck in the Legislature, that it wasn't moving.

And as the House Leader, I would work with my Cabinet colleagues to say: What is it that the opposition is finding particularly egregious about this particular piece of legislation? What is that we can do to satisfy those concerns? How can we move the legislation forward more quickly because there were other things on the legislative agenda, such as Estimates and wanting to debate BITSA, which is trying to move through bills in a particularly undemocratic way.

I mean those are the—they're part of the job description, such as there is a job description, of the House leader. Because the House leader should be working to try to find ways to move the House along, to ensure that the legislative agenda of the government generally, but also to some extent of the opposition, is moving forward.

Now I would say at the same time to the Government House Leader, I'm not trying to tell her how to do her job, but I'm trying to help. It's a little bit like that movie, Jerry Maguire: Help me help you.

I'm trying to help the Government House Leader in this particular situation by simply going to the Minister of Justice and saying: I think that if you were to provide these answers, maybe in an informal way or some other way to the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), the Justice critic for our parties, that might move this along a little bit and then we could get to things like Estimates, which I think that all members are eager to get to.

I would assume that the government, if they truly are proud of their budget, and of course, they're the government so they're going to say that they're proud of the budget, would actually want to discuss it in a detailed way in which Estimates allows you to do, to go line by line.

But instead, because we are unable to get questions on this particular bill answered, we're here debating it for however many days it's been. So I would encourage my friend from—the Government House Leader to go and have that discussion with the Minister of Justice and say, we need to address this issue.

I'm sure that the Department of Justice could provide in written form in some way an explanation of how the bill that is already in existence, the legislation that exists already in Manitoba, is different from this particular legislation, how this might enhance it or come alongside and support it. I'm sure that, you know, in one day the Department of Justice could provide that written response and that might very well satisfy my friend from Brandon West and we could simply move on.

But there seems to be something of a stubbornness—I won't say the word arrogance because that might be going a little bit too far and I don't want to make this personal in any way—but there is certainly stubbornness on the part of the government, a stubbornness that ultimately comes back and will bite this government in the longer term.

But, nonetheless, it is important that this legislation is considered because the programs that have been well-outlined by my friend from Brandon West are critically, critically important programs. I recall many times as the minister of Justice getting phone calls from various communities about things that they would like to try to make their community safer. Often they weren't expensive or elaborate programs and they simply needed access to some funds.

And they were always very, very excited to hear that there might be some access to funds that would include things like the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund because it wasn't taxpayers' money, it wasn't something that, you know, was coming from the Treasury that was raised from tax to Manitoba. They quite liked the fact that these were funds that were seized from criminals. They were seized from those who were preying on innocent victims in Manitoba and sometimes beyond. They liked that, Honourable Speaker.

And this particular program I think has not only grown in terms of its nature and its substance, it's also I think grown in its accessibility for law enforcement around the province. They see in the value of it. They continue to apply for funding through it, and they know that there is a possibility for accessible funds.

And I don't know why it is that this particular government wants to get hung up on this piece of legislation. They haven't done a lot when it comes to justice in the province of Manitoba.

I know that the Attorney General, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), announced that he would be providing some funds so that people could take pictures and have cameras of those who were breaking into their homes and their businesses.

I'm not sure that that's going to provide much of a deterrent for thieves. I don't know that they're always thinking about—because so much of this is done when it comes to drugs or addiction—that they're thinking about cameras that are on businesses or that are on homes. In fact, I suspect that they aren't.

But it's very similar to what the NDP did the last time they were in government under Greg Selinger. Because at that point they brought forward a program that said they were going to subsidize seniors from getting deadlocks on their doors.

So just like the message was to seniors at that time, just lock yourself in your home and, hopefully, morning will come, in the same way what they're saying to businesses now are, well, we're going to give you some funding and you can put up a camera and maybe that'll be an evidentiary sort of thing for those who are breaking into your business and maybe the police can use that at some point down the road.

Now, those are the sorts of things that could have been used under The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. They could have been used for buying cameras. In fact, I recall it was Swan River downtown community safety used The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act for that very reason.

And my guess is if you look at what's happening with businesses now, I mean, we just heard a couple of days ago that a coffee shop just a couple of blocks from here in the Premier's (Mr. Kineew) riding of Fort Rouge has decided to close its doors because of crime, because of significant crime that they've been facing.

Now, I'm relatively familiar with that coffee shop. I had a temporary place not far from there and I would often visit it in the morning, and they did a pretty robust business from what I saw; I didn't look at their financials.

But based on the number of people who were coming through that coffee shop I think that they were doing quite well, and for them to decide to shut their doors, very unusual for that particular franchise, but I think obviously speaks to how significant they were seeing crime.

Now, they believe that cameras is an example, either through The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act or through the new program that this current Minister of Justice has introduced, if they believed that cameras were the solution for those, first of all, I don't think they would've waited for the Minister of Justice; they would've just put up their own cameras; I think they would've had the wherewithal to do that, and they could have tried to deter criminals at that time and kept their doors open. There's clearly something more systemic that is happening.

And the minister and the Premier try to feign concern about this, and I don't want to suggest that they're not concerned about crime, Honourable Speaker; I don't want to say that at all. I believe that they are concerned.

But I don't believe that their words and expressions of concern are being backed up by their actions. And simply raising the concern in a verbal way isn't the same as actually taking action on something. And a little bit of money for a camera, so that police can have evidence after somebody's broken into your home or your business, isn't going to be enough to make a difference in this situation.

So now, with this reasoned amendment that is before the House, we have—the government has to make a decision. They have to make a decision whether or not they do the simple thing, the path of least resistance, and simply answer the questions that have been put forward by myself and others in this House about how this legislation is different than legislation that currently exists, a very, very simple request.

And I'm sure that, you know, when the days are over, these days here in the House, members opposite, ministers and those who aren't in Cabinet on the government side, they probably go home and they go, how can we get past this? How can we get past debating this particular bill day after day, over and over?

And maybe they've even expressed this through the House leader—clearly, I'm not privy to their internal discussions in caucus, nor do I wish to be, so—but maybe they've expressed this through their House leader and said, how is it that we can—*[interjection]*

Well, the Minister of Education's—is reassuring the House I'm not privy to those discussions; I appreciate that.

But he might want to, as the Minister of Education, when he's not busy cutting schools, he may wish to go to the House leader and say, I think we need to do something to move past this particular bill. And one of the things—*[interjection]*

Well, I'm glad he's having meetings with school divisions—but in between those meetings—and you might want to talk about taxation at the same time—but in between those meetings that he's having, if he had time to speak to the

Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), who actually just sits to his left, philosophically and actually physically, just sits to his left—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 6, 2024

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:
<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>