

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

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

Thursday, May 30, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 218—The Celebration of
Philippine Independence Day Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 218, The Celebration of Philippine Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Dela Cruz: Honourable Speaker, I rise today to introduce Bill 218, which will recognize and celebrate June 12 as Philippine Independence Day in Manitoba.

Being my first bill, I am honoured that it is one that acknowledges the Filipino heritage that raised me. This bill brings attention to the colonial history of the Philippines, our people's journey to independence and the intersectional experiences of Filipinos living in Manitoba's diaspora.

Mga kapuwa ko, malaya tayo; my friends, we are free. Mabuhay, mga Pilipino. Maraming salamat po. *[Long live, Filipinos. Thank you very much.]*

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

The motion is hereby adopted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Rules of the House
First Report**

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fifth report to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Rules of the House presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 29, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under consideration

Amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Committee Membership

- Mr. BLASHKO
- Hon. Min. FONTAINE
- Mr. JACKSON
- Mr. JOHNSON
- MLA LAMOUREUX
- Hon. MLA LINDSEY (Chairperson)
- MLA MOROZ

Your Committee elected Mr. BLASHKO as the Vice-Chairperson.

Officials Speaking on Record

- Mr. Rick Yarish, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
- Mr. Tim Abbott, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Amendments to Rules Considered and Reported

At the May 29, 2024 meeting, your Committee agreed to report the following amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

THAT the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be amended as follows:

THAT sub-rule 1(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Procedure generally

I(1) Proceedings in the House and in any Committee are to be conducted in accordance with these Rules and with the sessional and other orders of the Assembly.

THAT sub-rule 1(3) be amended by adding the following definitions in alphabetical order:

"Moderator" means a Legislative Assembly employee who facilitates the virtual participation of Members in the proceedings;

"virtually" means participating in a proceeding of the House or any Committee using an approved videoconferencing platform.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 1(3):

Proceedings of the House or Committees

1(4) A proceeding of the House or any Committee may be conducted with:

- (a) all Members physically present in the Chamber or committee room;
- (b) some Members physically present in the Chamber or committee room and some Members participating virtually; or
- (c) all Members participating virtually.

THAT the following be added after the new sub-rule 1(4):

Requirements for virtual participation

1(5) Members who are participating virtually are considered to be in their seat and must:

- (a) have their audio and video functions enabled with their faces identifiable in order to participate in proceedings, be included as part of the quorum and vote; and
- (b) keep their audio muted until recognized by the Chair, and also turn off their camera when they are away from the screen.

THAT sub-rules 2(1) and (2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Sitting periods

2(1) The House may meet at any time during the following sitting periods, except during the Spring Sittings when the House must begin to meet on the first Wednesday in March:

November Sittings

From the first Tuesday following the Remembrance Day constituency week as described in sub-rule (2)(a) to the first Thursday in December.

Spring Sittings

From the first Wednesday in March to the first sitting day in June.

Fall Sittings

From the sixteenth sitting day before the Thursday of the week prior to the Remembrance Day constituency week, to that Thursday.

If the Thursday of the week prior to Remembrance Day is not a sitting day, the Fall sitting period shall be from the sixteenth sitting day before the Wednesday of the week prior to the Remembrance Day constituency week, to that Wednesday.

Within these periods, the House is to meet on a day fixed by the Speaker at the Government's request and, unless adjourned earlier by order of the House, is to be adjourned by the Speaker, without a motion for adjournment on the applicable day. The House then stands adjourned to the call of the Speaker.

Completion of Specified Bills

The Government may call the House into session for up to four additional sitting days in June after the first sitting day in June in order to complete consideration of Specified Bills. On the last of these four sitting days the remaining stages of Specified Bills not dealt with by the usual hour of adjournment will have all remaining questions put to a vote following the provisions outlined in sub-rule (15). The House will not rise until royal assent has been granted.

Completion of Designated Bills, the Business of Supply and BITSA

On the last Thursday sitting prior to the Remembrance Day Week, the House will not adjourn until the questions have been put and Royal Assent granted for the following items:

- (a) the Designated Bills;
- (b) the Business of Supply set out in sub-rule 77(1) including The Appropriation Act; and
- (c) The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act.

Any remaining steps for these items not dealt with 60 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour will have all remaining questions put to a vote following the provisions outlined in sub-rules (21), (23) and (24).

Constituency Weeks

2(2) The House shall not meet during the following constituency weeks:

- (a) the week in which Remembrance Day falls if it falls on a weekday, or the week following Remembrance Day if it falls on a Saturday or Sunday ("Remembrance Day constituency week");

- (b) *the week designated under The Public Schools Act as a spring break or vacation ("Spring constituency week");*
- (c) *the week in which May 1 falls if it falls on a weekday, or the week following May 1 if it falls on a Saturday or Sunday ("May constituency week");*
- (d) *the week commencing on the third Monday of October ("October constituency week");*

Days of Observance

2(3) *The House shall not meet on:*

- (a) *September 30, the day designated as Orange Shirt Day;*
- (b) *November 8, the day designated as Indigenous Veterans Day.*

THAT sub-rule 2(8) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Specified Government Bills

2(8) *In order for a Government Bill to be identified as specified, the following actions must take place:*

- (a) *First Reading must be moved no later than the twentieth sitting day after presentation of the Throne Speech;*
- (b) *the Bill has not been included on the list of Designated Bills tabled by the Official Opposition in accordance with sub-rule (9);*
- (c) *the Bill has been included on the Specified Bill list tabled by the Government House Leader no later than 60 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour on the fourteenth sitting day after the First Reading Completion Day for Specified Bills;*
- (d) *the Second Reading question must be put no later than the fifteenth sitting day after the First Reading Completion Day for Specified Bills; and*
- (e) *the Bill has been included on the Specified Bill list tabled by the Government House Leader no later than 60 minutes prior to the usual adjournment hour on the Concurrence and Third Reading Completion Day per sub-rule 2(14).*

Private Members' Bills cannot be specified or designated.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 2(7):

Emergency Provisions

2(8.1) *In response to an emergency that could threaten public safety, the Speaker and the Leaders*

of Recognized Parties, or designates, have the authority to vary, pause, or postpone House and Committee proceedings as necessary by sending a letter signed by the Speaker and the Leaders of Recognized Parties, or designates, to all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

THAT sub-rule 5(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Quorum

5(1) *The presence of at least 10 Members in the House, including the Speaker and any Members participating virtually, is necessary to constitute a meeting of the House for the exercise of its powers.*

THAT sub-rule 5(3) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Quorum bell

5(3) *If a quorum count is requested during a proceeding of the House:*

- (a) *the division bells shall ring for one minute during which time the doors shall remain open and Members may enter the Chamber or join the proceeding virtually;*
- (b) *once the division bells stop, no further Members may enter the Chamber or join the proceeding virtually;*
- (c) *the Clerk shall then count all Members present, including the Speaker, Members in their seats in the Chamber and Members who are present virtually, and announce the result to the House.*
- (d) *if a quorum of Members is not present, the Speaker must adjourn the House for the sitting day.*

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 8(1):

Election of Speaker exempt from virtual provisions

8(2) *The election of the Speaker is exempt from the provisions allowing Members to participate in proceedings virtually. In the event of an emergency situation requiring Members to participate virtually in the election of the Speaker, the House Leaders shall authorize the Clerk, in writing, to develop procedures to enable virtual participation during the secret ballot process.*

THAT sub-rule 14(1) is repealed and replaced with the following:

Termination of debate before division

14(1) *After Members have been summoned for a division, no further debate shall be permitted.*

THAT sub-rule 14(2) is repealed and replaced with the following:

Entering and leaving during divisions

14(2) No Member shall enter or leave the Chamber or virtual platform from the stating of the question until the final result of the vote is announced.

THAT sub-rule 14(9)(a) be repealed and replaced with following:

- (a) the Speaker shall provide an opportunity for Members who filed advance notice of pairing to declare which way they would have voted; and

THAT sub-rule 18(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Naming of a Member for an offence in the House

18(1) The Speaker shall be vested with the authority to maintain order:

- (a) by naming individual Members for disregarding the authority of the Chair;
- (b) by ordering the withdrawal of a Member from the Chamber, or termination of a Member's virtual participation, for the remainder of the sitting day, despite Rule 15.

In the event of a Member disregarding an order of the Chair, the Speaker shall order the Sergeant-at-Arms to accompany the Member out of the Chamber, or direct the Member to terminate their virtual participation.

THAT sub-rule 18(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Suspension from service of House for Session

18(4) If a Member refuses to obey the Speaker's order to accompany the Sergeant-at-Arms out of the Chamber or terminate their virtual participation, the Speaker must then advise the House that force is required to implement the order. Any Member removed from proceedings by force is then suspended from all sittings of the House for the remainder of the session.

THAT sub-rule 19(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Decorum on Adjournment

19(1) When the House adjourns, Members present in the Chamber shall stand and remain in their places, while Members participating virtually shall remain in place until the Speaker has left the Chamber.

THAT sub-rule 19(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Use of electronic devices

19(4) Members participating in a House or Committee proceeding may use electronic devices in silent mode. When a Member is speaking in debate, such devices should be kept out of view.

THAT sub-rule 27(4) be added:

Including names in Hansard Transcript

27(4) If a Member indicates that they wish to include in the Hansard transcript the names of individuals referenced in their statement or their response, up to 50 names will be permitted and included in the transcript. Members are responsible for the accuracy of their lists, which must be in a legible form and be provided to Hansard before 5:00 p.m. on the same sitting day the Statement is read in the House.

THAT Rule 40 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Order in addressing the Chair

40 Every Member in the Chamber wishing to speak shall rise in their place and address themselves to the Speaker. Members participating virtually shall signal their intention to speak and should speak from a seated position once recognized.

THAT Rule 44 be deleted.

THAT sub-rule 45(4) be repealed and replaced with the following:

General rule on rotation

45(4) When a Member speaks in a debate, in the absence of a debate rotation, the Speaker must not recognize another Member from the same party to speak until an opportunity to speak has been provided to Member from another party or an Independent Member.

THAT Rule 52 be repealed and replaced with the following:

Closure of debate

52(1) Immediately before the Order of the Day for resuming an adjourned debate is called, or if the House is in Committee of Supply or any other Committee of the Whole House, a Minister of the Crown who has given notice at a previous sitting of their intention to do so, may move that the debate shall not be further adjourned, or that further consideration of any resolutions, clauses, sections, preambles or titles shall be the first business of the Committee and shall not be further postponed. In either case the question shall be decided without debate or adjournment.

Effect of adoption of closure motion

52(2) Where the motion for closure is resolved in the affirmative, no Member shall thereafter speak more than once, or longer than 30 minutes in any such adjourned debate; or, if in Committee, on any such resolution, clause, section, preamble or title; and if the adjourned debate or postponed consideration has not been resumed or concluded before 2:00 a.m., no Member shall speak after that hour, but all such questions as must be decided in order to conclude the adjourned debate or postponed consideration shall be decided forthwith.

THAT sub-rule 53(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Procedure on Point of Order

53(1) A Member addressing the House, if called to order by either the Speaker or on a Point of Order raised by another Member, shall cede the floor while the Point of Order is being stated.

THAT sub-rule 55(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Conduct during the putting of the question

55(1) When putting the question, the Speaker should be heard in silence.

THAT sub-rule 57(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Maintenance of order

57(1) When any matter is being debated, the Member who has been recognized by the Speaker holds the floor until their time has elapsed or the House rises. With the exception of raising a Point of Order or Matter of Privilege, if another Member seeks to interrupt the Member holding the floor the Speaker shall call the second Member to order.

THAT sub-rule 70(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Motions moved and seconded

70(1) Motions shall be moved and seconded before being debated. Members must be at or in their seats to move or second a motion.

THAT sub-rule 76(2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

76(2) The Rules of the House shall be followed in a Committee of the Whole House, as applicable, with the following exceptions:

(a) Members participating in the Chamber are not required to rise in their place to speak;

- (b) a Seconder is not required for moving motions;
- (c) there is no limit on the number of times a Member may speak in a debate;
- (d) with the exception of opening statements in the Committee of Supply (see sub-rule 78(2)), speeches in a Committee of the Whole House shall not exceed five minutes.

THAT sub-rule 78(10) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Recorded Votes in Committee of Supply

78(10) Where, immediately following a voice vote, two Members request a recorded vote, the division bells shall summon the Members of all sections of the Committee of Supply to the Chamber, and a division shall take place.

THAT sub-rule 78(11) be repealed and replaced with the following:

All sections of the Committee of Supply to meet

78(11) For the purposes of conducting a division pursuant to sub-rule (10), all sections of the Committee of Supply must meet together in the Chamber section.

THAT sub-rule 78(12) be deleted.

THAT sub-rule 78(13) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Committee of Supply sitting on Fridays

78(13) When the Committee of Supply sits on a Friday:

- (a) no request for a quorum count is permitted;
- (b) a motion for the Committee to rise may only be decided on a voice vote;
- (c) a request for a division on any question with the exception of a motion for the Committee to rise must:
 - i. be deferred to the next Sitting of the Committee of Supply and be considered then as the first item of business,
 - ii. not be further deferred;
- (d) after a division has been deferred, that section of the Committee must rise.

After the Committee of Supply rises on a Friday, no other business may be called in the House.

THAT sub-rule 85(2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Committee membership lists

85(2) At least one hour prior to the start of each Committee meeting, the Whip or the Whip's designate must provide to the Committee Clerk a signed list of Members from their Caucus to serve on the Committee for that particular meeting. Changes can also be made during the meeting by the Whip or Whip's designate providing written notification to the Chairperson.

THAT sub-rule 89(1) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Presentation of Committee Reports

89(1) A report from a Standing or a Special Committee shall be presented by the Chairperson, and shall be read by the Clerk.

If the Chairperson is unable to present, the Vice-Chairperson may present the report. If neither the Chairperson nor the Vice-Chairperson is able to present, any Member who served on the Committee for the meeting(s) reported may present the report.

THAT sub-rule 92(2) be repealed and replaced with the following:

Presentations to Bills

92(2) After First Reading of a Bill is adopted, members of the public may register to make presentations to a Standing or Special Committee considering a Bill, with the following Rules to apply:

- (a) presentations may be made either in person or virtually;
- (b) presentations are allowed from presenters residing outside of Manitoba, but only the first two out-of-province presenters may present virtually. All other out-of-province presenters must appear in person unless the House Leaders provide written permission prior to the meeting, or the Committee grants leave.

THAT the following be added after sub-rule 92(2):

Hearing presentations on Bills

92(3) The following rules are to apply to each public presentation:

- (a) each presenter may use a maximum of 10 minutes to present to the Committee;
- (b) with the unanimous consent of the Committee, a presenter who has spoken for 10 minutes may be granted additional time to conclude their presentation;

(c) following each presentation a five-minute question and answer period between the presenter and Members may occur. Questions shall not exceed 45 seconds each.

(d) during question and answer periods on presentations to Government Bills, questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation:

- i. the Minister sponsoring the Bill, or another Member of their caucus,
- ii. a Member of the Official Opposition,
- iii. a Member of another Recognized Party (if present),
- iv. an Independent Member.

(e) during question and answer periods on presentations to Private Members' Bills, questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation:

- i. the Member sponsoring the Bill, or another Member of their caucus,
- ii. a Member from each other Recognized Party,
- iii. an Independent Member.

THAT Rules 93 to 95 be deleted.

THAT Appendix D is amended by repealing step No. 8 and replacing it with the following:

8. Speaker reads messages. (all Members in the Chamber stand)

Agreements

Your Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on May 29, 2024:

- THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba come into force at the beginning of the second Session of the 43rd Legislature.
- THAT the Clerk may renumber the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and make other minor corrections that in no way alter the intended meaning of these amendments.
- THAT the Clerk is authorized to make minor corrections to the French version of the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to ensure the equivalence of both versions of the Rules, ensuring that they in no way alter the intended meaning of these Amendments.

- *THAT the Clerk prepare revised rule books incorporating all amendments, additions and deletions.*
- *THAT these amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba are permanent.*
- *THAT the document entitled "Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Rule Change Proposals – May 2024 – Virtual Rules and Other Minor Amendments" be included at the end of the Hansard transcript of this meeting.*

MLA Moroz: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: The motion is accordingly adopted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Is there leave for the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) to do a ministerial statement on Filipino Heritage Month 'despact'—despite the fact the required notice was not provided?

The Speaker: Is there leave for the Minister of Labour and Immigration to do a ministerial statement on Filipinial [*phonetic*] heritage month despite the fact that the required notice was not provided?

Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

Filipino Heritage Month

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Philippine heritage month in Manitoba.

Maligayang pagdiriwang ng buwan ng Pamana ng lahing Pilipino. Sa buong buwan ng Hunyo ipagpasalamat natin ang maraming pagpapala na mula sa kayamanan ng kulturang Pilipino. Ito rin ang panahon upang bigyang pugay ang maraming kontribusyon ng mga Pilipino sa Canada at sa buong mundo.

Translation

Happy Filipino Heritage Month celebration. Throughout the month of June, let us give thanks for the many blessings that come from the wealth of Filipino culture. This is also the time to pay tribute to the many contributions of Filipinos in Canada and around the world.

English

On June 12, the Republic of the Philippines would mark 126 years of independence. This year also marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Canada and the Philippines. The relationship between our two countries is strengthened by deep connections among their citizens.

And I would like to acknowledge members of Filipino community groups who have taken the time to celebrate Filipino Heritage Month with us today here at the Legislature including Knights and Ladies of Rizal, Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba, artists from Ma-buhay!, Meadows West School Filipino bilingual program, Maples Collegiate Asian Heritage Club, Westman Filipino community, Musica Singers, Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers, BIBAK, Philippine Canadian Centre of Manitoba, Kultivation Festival, Mabuhay District, Manitoba Filipino Business Council, Bahaghari Pride Manitoba, Pilipino Express, Filipino Journal, Pinays Manitoba, Brandon Local Immigration Partnership, Philippine Historical Society of Manitoba, Exchange Met School, Unifor, Westman Filipino Community Brandon and Friends of Filipino Immigrants.

On behalf of all of our colleagues, we thank you for the work you do to uplift the communities that you serve in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, while Indigenous peoples of Canada have been taking care of these lands and its people for millennia, the earliest recorded Filipino in Canada was Benson Flores, a fisher in British Columbia in 1861. BC was home to a small Filipino community. This early Filipino community in Canada remained small because of anti-Asian, racist immigration policies that restricted their entry. And it wasn't until the late 1950s, when Canada faced labour shortages, that the country began to seek immigrant workers from previously restricted source countries.

Manitoba's first major wave of Filipino immigrants were medical professionals who came in 1959 to the 1960s to fill shortages in Manitoba hospitals and clinics. And these included four young Filipina nurse co-workers: Fe Vilorina Ryder, Melba Rous, Purification de la Cruz and Cora Liago, who arrived by train in 1959 from St. Mary's hospital in Rochester, Minnesota, to work at the Misericordia hospital. With the rising demand for health-care workers in Canada, many Filipinos applied to Canadian hospitals, where they were offered full-time work and permanent residency.

The next major wave of Filipinos to Manitoba were garment workers who were recruited from the Philippines to fill drastic labour shortages in garment factories across Winnipeg in the 1960s and 1970s. These women frequently sponsored their families, leading to a chain of Filipino immigration that led to an exponential growth of the Winnipeg Filipino community. And many of these garment workers, as well as health-care workers, settled along Winnipeg's Notre Dame Avenue, near many of the garment factories, into an area that came to be called Filipino town.

Today, Filipinos living and working in Manitoba number over 100,000, and we contribute to the life, work and revitalization of communities of faith, to rural and northern communities, the arts and most notably in the manufacturing sector and care sector. In particular, Filipino workers and their families at HyLife in Neepawa have helped to revitalize the town and surrounding region.

Honourable Speaker, our government recognizes the role the Filipino diaspora has in our shared history, the growth and development of our province and our nation. As a Filipina politician, alongside the MLA for Radisson, our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our entire NDP team—it is our honour to work on shared priorities with the Filipino community: creating safe and clean communities, addressing pay gaps for racialized women, providing pathways to work for newcomers in their field of study and work experience, the promotion of the arts and the improvement of working conditions, pay and benefits of folks in the care sector. We are a government committed to these goals, and we will walk alongside the community to achieve these goals together as one Manitoba.

Gabayan nawa tayo ng Panginoon sa ating mga gagawin at sa mga darating pang panahon. Maraming salamat po.

Translation

May the Lord guide us in what we will do and in the days to come. Thank you very much.

English

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (13:40)

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Thank you to members opposite for the gracious 10 minutes' of notice to prepare a statement today.

I'm very pleased to rise and put a few words on the record about Filipino Heritage Month, which was,

of course, established by the former PC MLA for Waverley, Jon Reyes, a proud Filipino and champion in the community.

It's an opportunity for all of us, as Manitobans, to appreciate and recognize the vibrant Filipino heritage and culture in Manitoba and the success and strength of the community.

May is Filipino Heritage Month because June 12 is Philippine Independence Day, and as the minister noted, this year we are marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Canada and the Philippines, and that is certainly something to celebrate.

Filipinos have chosen to call Manitoba home since the 1950s, establishing roots in every corner of the province and have become an integral part of our province's social, economic, political and cultural fabric. They have contributed tremendously to the growth, prosperity and development of Manitoba and will continue to do so for generations to come.

As Health critic, I have been privileged to meet many of the health-care workers who have come to Manitoba from the Philippines. They are such a welcomed and valued part of communities across Manitoba.

I thank them for choosing Manitoba to make their home.

With that, Honourable Speaker, I'd like to extend my thanks to all of the Filipino community groups who joined us in the Legislature today and thank them for the beautiful performances in the Rotunda today. The music was incredible and it was just such a joy to see and to participate in that.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

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

MLA Lamoureux: Salamat po *[Thank you]*, and thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for this minister's statement.

Mabuhay *[Live]* and magandang tanghali po *[good afternoon]*, welcome to everyone, all of our guests and those who were here earlier this afternoon.

Honourable Speaker, there's so much work that has been and continues to be done in recognition of Filipino heritage and culture here in Manitoba over the last couple of years.

Our current Minister of Labour, a couple of years ago, brought forward something on the quincennial celebration of Christianity in the Philippines that was notably and unanimously supported by every single person here in this House, Honourable Speaker.

We can make reference to the former minister of immigration, minister Jon Reyes, as he brought forward legislation recognizing June as Filipino Heritage Month. This was shortly after it was also recognized nationally, Honourable Speaker, and now we can make reference through our newer member from Radisson for bringing forward legislation for Filipino Independence Day. And I'm sure that this is also going to pass unanimously here in the House.

We are incredibly proud of the Filipino community here in Manitoba, as we should be. And over—throughout Canada, Honourable Speaker, it's really kind of neat. We have now surpassed 1 million people of Filipino heritage in our country here in Canada, something we should be extremely proud of, from all sectors and all parts of the Philippines, have spread throughout, far and wide, from coast to coast to coast, within the country of Canada. And we have one of the largest populations here in Manitoba, specifically in the North End of the city, which I have the honour of representing in the constituency of Tyndall Park.

The Filipino community have brought so much culture to our province, Honourable Speaker. They have contributed so much, and my colleagues have made reference to this in every single sector of our economy.

The work ethics are unattainable for many people, and the Filipino community, they crush the work ethic. They crush the hospitality; they are so welcoming to everyone throughout the province. And again, that's why we're so lucky to have such a growing Filipino-heritage community growing here in Manitoba.

So I think it's wonderful to be able to kick off the celebration here at the Legislature. I do have to agree with my colleague, who just spoke before me. It would have been nice to have a little bit more notice. I know we all were very excited for Filipino Heritage Month, and we were not made aware of the event that was going to be happening today or invited to the event. And the ministerial statement, it would have been nice to have had some notice to speak for it, Honourable Speaker.

But, nonetheless, here we are. I know we're very excited to attend the flag-raising ceremony this

Saturday. I trust many of my colleagues will be there, and for the independence ball, as well, coming up.

So thank you to all of our guests who attended the Manitoba Legislature and happy almost Filipino Heritage Month.

Pride Month

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): This Pride month, I stand here with a deep sense of honour and gratitude as the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, and as a proud member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

On behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), our government is proud to declare June as Pride month in Manitoba, this year and every year going forward. And I will table that proclamation for the House. This proclamation affirms what our government already knows: that 2SLGBTQIA+ people deserve to be recognized, protected and celebrated here in Manitoba.

Pride is a protest. Pride is a celebration. And Pride is a daily action that extends beyond June throughout the entire year. And it's an opportunity to recognize and thank those who paved the way and fought tirelessly to establish our fundamental human rights across the nation.

Here in Manitoba, we have a rich history of Indigenous, Black, and people of colour, and allies who have contributed to the social, economic and creative fabric of our province.

To kick off Pride month, we were so proud to have hosted the first ever Pride in the people's building event just yesterday, in this Legislature. Whenever—sorry, this past Tuesday; time is flying—in this Legislature. Whenever you invite drag queens to any space, Honourable Speaker, it's fair to say that it becomes a better place for absolutely everyone. And we were honoured to have a transformative collective in the Bannock Babes here, celebrating Pride with us and community.

It's important to note that after last summer, here in Manitoba, when the 2SLGBTQIA+ community experienced so much harm at the hands of the former PC government, we knew that there was a lot of work that had to be done to rebuild trust in our communities.

Together, we have come so far in just a few months. We have a Premier (Mr. Kinew) that stands on the side of trans kids. We have the first trans MLA and the first non-binary Cabinet minister in Manitoba's history.

Our government is poised to pass two bills: one that will no longer require the publication of someone's original name if they are two-spirited, transgender, non-binary or gender-diverse; and one that will enshrine March 31 as the Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility here in Manitoba.

And, as I already stated, the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) is proclaiming Pride month—June.

So yes, we have come very, very far in a short amount of time since we saw that hate-filled campaign last October. And in spite of members opposite, on the other side of this Chamber, and in spite of everything they have done to advance their own mean-spirited agenda, including doubling down on their divisive and hateful election campaign. And we saw evidence of that just this morning, unfortunately, Honourable Speaker, when the opposition benches—four members voted against recognizing the Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility.

And I want to be clear to all Manitobans, especially to youth, that despite those who might vote against your humanity, you have a government that stands with you. And you deserve to be loved and protected by the people who represent you across this province. And you can count on our government to do just that.

Just this morning we saw this happen and yet we saw, just last fall, that love won when Manitobans made a choice in October and we have been able to make huge strides to build a better Manitoba as a result of that: one Manitoba for everybody.

In December, we committed to a broader coverage of HIV medications in our province, to remove barriers to treatment, care and prevention and we are delivering on that commitment for Manitobans. I'm so pleased to announce that our government is removing the barriers to accessing HIV and AIDS medication by providing PrEP, PEP and ART for free, starting on June 3 this year.

* (13:50)

Honourable Speaker, these medications will be available at no cost to individuals who do not currently have 100 per cent coverage under another federal-provincial plan, including removing the Pharmacare deductible for these medications.

We're also expanding access to HIV medications to Manitobans by removing the requirement for health-care providers to register in order to prescribe PrEP. Now, your primary-care provider can prescribe PrEP as part of routine care, so folks who want to

access PrEP can get it from the care provider they feel most comfortable and safe with exactly when they need it.

Our government is going to continue working with health-care partners across the province to ensure that the health-care system we have in place is inclusive, equitable, culturally safe and responsive to the needs of every Manitoban, including our trans, non-binary and gender-diverse relatives.

Gender-affirming health care is critical and it is, in fact, life-saving. All Manitobans deserve access to safe and dignified health care, and our government is committed to providing that. We're proud to be developing policies that respect and uplift folks accessing gender-affirming care.

Our government's actions show that we can create a health system that does work for everybody as we do the work of making gender-affirming care a standard part of our health-care system. We're working to increase culturally safe and trauma-informed providers—access to these folks—by removing barriers such as cost and unnecessary approvals by supporting youth in their gender-affirming journeys and improving mental health supports for those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Our health-care system must be for everybody. Providing services that are equitable and attuned to the distinct needs of communities that they serve is key.

Lastly, I want to recognize the importance of authentic allies and remind this Chamber of the danger of opportunistic allies. Pride is meant to be a space of safety, celebration, activism and community. It is not a place where politicians with self-serving agendas show up for photo ops and then go out and spew hateful rhetoric that hurts our communities.

Our government's progress and ongoing work honours the spirit of Pride and the values it embodies, the values of dignity, respect and of love.

Today, I invite all Manitobans to celebrate Pride Month and to walk alongside the 2SLGBTQIA+ community each and every day of the year.

Thank you, and happy Pride, Manitoba.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I do have quite the script here but I'm going to deviate just a little because there's always an opportunity to love and care. And I'm noticing, as this is going on, that it's made to be a shame thing when it shouldn't be.

Yes, some people have different views and different values, but that doesn't mean we should be made to feel ashamed. *[interjection]* And I know the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) sure loves to make people feel ashamed when they don't share their values.

But I'm here today to say that I'm happy to rise today and recognize Pride week. As a supportive father to my child who is part of the community, I wanted to take time to thank the awesome 2SLGBTQ+I community organizations in Manitoba that do so much work in our communities.

Like Pride Winnipeg, Rainbow Resource Centre and Clinic Community Health and the many smaller Pride organizations across the province, Pride is about sharing experiences, celebrating diversity, freedom, bringing awareness and highlighting the 2SLGBTQ+I community.

I look forward to the parade this weekend and I hope everyone who comes out has a great time on Sunday. In advance, I want to give a big thank you to the hundreds of volunteers that will make the festival this weekend possible. It is a ton of work.

The 2SLGBTQ+I community in Manitoba and the rest of Canada has come a long way. I'm happy that Pride is going on and happy Pride, Manitobans.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, 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: I'm thrilled to be able to rise this afternoon to speak about Pride.

And in doing so, I want to just first recognize March 31, as we didn't get the opportunity to this year in the House. March 31 marks International Trans Day of Visibility. This is an annual event dedicated to celebrating trans people and raising awareness of discrimination faced by so many.

I also want to take this moment to congratulate my colleague from Kirkfield Park on the passing of his bill this morning, The Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility Act. And I truly am sorry, from the bottom of my heart, that not everyone in these Chambers supported it.

Honourable Speaker, there is so much work needing to be done, and we have a big role here at the provincial level. We can talk and take action about the

psychological effects of bullying and shaming trans and 2SLGBTQ+ kids or forcing schools to out a trans or non-binary person. This has serious ramifications.

We know that trans and other 2SLGBTQ+ youth are well documented as being at far higher risk of suicide than any other demographic. And jurisdictions with laws that limit folks have a pronounced, significant uptake in hate crimes towards members of the community.

Honourable Speaker, these are just a few facts; however, unfortunately, they fuel campaigns with hate and misinformation. And this is why Pride is so important. It helps build awareness and it is a lot of fun.

Take this Sunday. Celebrating Pride, from the march, parade, to the big event at The Forks, it's so much fun. There is music and dancing and kindness and love to be spread all around. Not to mention lots of good food and vendors and, most importantly, everyday Manitobans being encouraged to be exactly who they are.

Honourable Speaker, we need more of this in our society. So for those of you who maybe have yet to attend a Pride event or maybe are considering, please do come on out on Sunday.

In closing, I would like to thank the minister for bringing forward today's statement, and I look forward to seeing many of my colleagues at the upcoming Pride events.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Just before we move on to members' statements, there are some students in the gallery that may have to leave before we're finished.

So we have seated in the public gallery, from Linden Christian School, 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Nick Jansen. The group is located in the constituency for the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

Also, we have seated in the public gallery, from Odanah Colony School, 5 students, and they are guests of the honourable members for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) and Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Acknowledging Filipino Community in Manitoba

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Filipino Manitobans are well represented in our province's labour force. However, we were severely under-represented in decision making for a very long time.

So it is with great pride that I acknowledge our Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), a strong Filipina who works tirelessly to make our workplaces safer and more equitable. Her leadership is a testament to the progress that we as a province are making, and I am honoured to be her colleague and to have bonded over our common experiences.

We both know that Filipino representation in skilled professions is not a mere coincidence but a testament to our collective journey. In the '50s, the first large wave of Pinoys immigrated as health-care professionals ready to help heal our sick. They were followed swiftly by garment workers, home-care workers, teachers and tradespeople.

We began to sponsor our relatives thanks to an NDP Provincial Nominee Program that was started in the '90s, the impact of which cannot be overstated. The work of the NDP is the reason that my family is here today and the reason that I have the privilege of addressing you from this seat.

Skilled labour is the very reason we are brought to Manitoba and the same reason we pride ourselves on staying and calling this province home. It has not only changed our lives but has also enriched our communities.

* (14:00)

We are globally known as resilient people. However, we are not only resilient but relentless. I see this in the teacher who devotes his mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends to his students. I see this in the small-business owner who rolls up her sleeves and buses tables with her staff, and I see this in every kapuwa [*fellow man*] who refuses to accept any less than what they know they're worth.

I want to uplift the commitment and determination of every single one of you in this province as we depend on you for care, for service and for leadership.

I invite all of our colleagues to express once again their heartfelt appreciation for the guests who took their precious time out of their days to join us and to every Filipino Manitoban who makes us proud.

Maraming salamat, Honourable Speaker. At mabuhay, aming kababayan. [*Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. And long live, our compatriots.*]

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Anxiety disorders are among the most common of all mental health concerns, as one in four children and adults will

be affected with anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders can and does take a heavy toll on society, with significant personal, societal costs including time away from work, lost wages, decreased productivity, reduced quality of life and frequent use of our health-care services.

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba, or ADAM's foundation, is built on the peer support model utilizing a clinical approach called cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT. This approach was developed by Dr. John Walker, a Manitoba psychiatrist and founder of anxiety research department at the St. Boniface general hospital. Dr. Walker goes on to say, I am proud that this approach is treated—treating anxiety has become the gold standard as the leading treatment for anxiety disorders across the globe.

I, myself, as a young entrepreneur in my 20s, husband and new dad in the late '80s, reached out to ADAM for support and later was honoured to serve as a peer support facilitator to help other Manitobans experiencing issues with anxiety.

Honourable Speaker, today, across all party lines, to that—pardon me—across all party lines, the team at ADAM, are inviting everyone in this House to join them on June 10 for the blue, orange and red rally—at 4 Fort St. from 4 to 6 p.m.

June 10 is Anxiety Action Day, a day dedicated to create awareness about anxiety, to reduce the stigma and to raise funds for mental health organizations like ADAM.

I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming to the gallery today, executive director Scott McFadyen, along with staff and great volunteer members from the Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba, whose names will be added to Hansard.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Board members: Takeo Ellis, Monica Nercasseau, Sandra Peters, Wesley Takeo-Konrad

Staff: Jessica Burton, Scott McFadyen, Grant Warren

Dr. Nathan Wiseman

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a true legend in the Manitoba medical profession, Dr. Nathan Wiseman, whose unexpected loss on December 13, 2023, leaves the many Manitoba families touched by his work and kindness with a profound sense of loss.

Dr. Wiseman grew up in the North End of Winnipeg, and received his MD from the University of Manitoba, before completing a fellowship in pediatric surgery at the Boston Children's Hospital, an extension of Harvard.

Honourable Speaker, his practice of pediatric surgery at Children's Hospital in Winnipeg lasted nearly a half century. He loved his patients and often recounted in great detail stories of the many children he'd helped. Patients and their families would approach him on the street and say, remember me? And he always did, for it was his patients that brought him great joy.

In truth, he had no intention of ever fully retiring and continued to operate until his very last day. He felt privileged to mentor, support and work with colleagues, nurses and health-care professionals who also enriched his day-to-day life and brought him much happiness.

While recognized with many awards and honours, Honourable Speaker, what mattered most to Dr. Wiseman was the lives of the thousands of Manitoba children he helped to save. His impact on the generations of children he cared for is truly immeasurable, and he is missed by all those who knew him.

It's humbling, Honourable Speaker, to have Eva, Dr. Wiseman's wife of 56 years, and 21 of the people who loved him best, join us in the gallery today. I'd like the members of the House to rise and thank them for sharing Dr. Wiseman with all Manitobans for so long, and I ask that their names be read into Hansard.

Ida Alpern, Zelda Elkin, Phyllis Goldberg, Dr. and Mrs. David Meyrowitz, Jonah Perlmutter, Molly Perlmutter, Hon. Shane Perlmutter, Rona Perlov, Jacob Wiseman Poppy, Dr. and Mrs. Davinder Rehsia, Cecil Rosner, Drs. Jo Swartz and Richard Silverman, Dr. and Mrs. Balbir Singh, Dr. Agi Weismen, Dr. Sam Weisman, Isabel Wiseman, Dr. Marni Wiseman, Nikki Wiseman, Dr. Sam Wiseman, Harriet Zaidman.

Caboto Centre

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Ciao, buongiorno. [*Hello, good day.*] That's all the Italian I know.

It is my great pleasure to rise and recognize Italian Heritage Month in June. This celebration holds special significance for many in Manitoba, but there is no place more symbolic of Italian culture and heritage in

Manitoba than in my riding of Fort Whyte at the Caboto Centre.

The Caboto Centre opened its doors in 1998, and for 26 years it has been a cornerstone of Italian culture in the riding of Fort Whyte. Owned and operated by the Italian Canadian League of Manitoba, which has proudly served our community for 55 years, the centre has grown to become a vibrant hub of cultural, educational and social activities.

Today, the Caboto Centre is much more than a building; it is the heart of Italian heritage in Manitoba. It hosts the amazing Italian Pavilion for Folklorama, offers Italian language classes and supports the amazing Stelle di Calabria dance group. Additionally, it serves as the home for the Sons and Daughters of Italy and houses honorary Italian vice-consulate office for Manitoba, as well as the Canadian-Italian Canadian Foundation of Manitoba.

You can't forget to grab an espresso at Café 13, or get a game of Scopa, Briscola or Tressette—which they still won't teach me how to play—or the amazing catering services of Sorrento's at the Caboto Centre. I want to give a special shout-out to Carly and Gerry up here for making the best extra-cheese-cheese-cheese pizza for my son.

Keeping culture and heritage alive in our communities is of utmost importance. It enhances our social fabric, fostering a sense of belonging and identity. Culture centres like the Caboto Centre play a crucial role in preserving traditions, languages and customs, passing them down to future generations.

The Caboto Centre stands as a testament to the dedication and passion of Italian Canadians, and I'm a-proud to acknowledge their contributions in the riding of Fort Whyte.

With us here today is Remo Aiello, John Allegro, Tony Pesce, Pamela McFarlane, Paolo Deluca, Paulina Cuda, Alex Baksina, Gerry and Carly Lomonaco and Michael Epesko. I want to ask that my colleagues here stand and recognize all of their amazing work for making Manitoba better and sharing their Italian beautiful culture with all of us.

Birchwood Terrace

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, earlier this month, many of my neighbours in Birchwood Terrace had their lives turned upside down; 250 residents were suddenly forced to leave their homes.

Right from the start, I visited with the folks of Birchwood Terrace. I heard their stories and I talked to families about their immediate needs. Many residents told me about the difficult journey they've been on as they had to leave behind their homes and their communities. They told me that May has been filled with uncertainty and apprehension about the future.

Honourable Speaker, I've been advocating for the residents of Birchwood Terrace from day one, ever since we heard of the terrible news. And I am proud to say that our NDP team heard that call loud and clear. I want everyone to know that our government is stepping in to ensure all residents of Birchwood Terrace have their housing and meals paid for. We will support families through this difficult time and help them as they find permanent homes. Let me be clear: no one from Birchwood Terrace will end up on the streets on June 1. Our government will ensure that there is no interruption of services. We will be there to support folks through this weekend and beyond.

If there is one thing that I know, it is that Manitobans take care of each other. I want to thank everyone who has supported the folks at Birchwood Terrace over this difficult time: friends, family, community members and the Canadian Red Cross.

To the residents of Birchwood Terrace, know that we will be there for you every step of the way.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (14:10)

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there's some more guests in the gallery I would like to introduce.

I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Paul Gmiterek and Laaree Wareham, who are guests of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

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

I would also like to draw members' attention to the loge on my left, where we are joined today with—by Eileen Clarke, former member for Agassiz.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Out-of-Province Surgeries Request to Re-establish

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Happy Filipino, happy Pride, happy Italian month coming up. Happy 142nd birthday to the city of Brandon today. And I would like to give a big shout-out to our three pages, Sophie, Debra and Sean for being here as well.

Here we go.

The Premier and the Health Minister have repeatedly said that out-of-province options aren't worth the cost.

I think if you asked any patient that received that care, their families and friends or patients now wishing they could access that care would disagree. All Manitobans know the NDP cutting out-of-province surgeries is leaving patients waiting longer, in pain.

Can the Premier please explain to Manitobans and to all Manitoba patients why he thinks offering them options when wait times here are too long is just too expensive for this government?

The Speaker: [*inaudible*] The honourable First Minister; sorry.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We could pay for three surgeries here in Manitoba for what the PCs were paying American companies to deliver these services. We're investing in health care right here at home.

And I want to say clearly to the members opposite, hate has no place in this Chamber.

Earlier today, we saw a shameful display. There's an opportunity to vote on a bill that would simply say that you recognize the existence of trans and two-spirit Manitobans and that you acknowledge their dignity.

Sadly, the former premier of Manitoba, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), voted against that along with the members for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) and Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler).

But I want to make clear to the people of Manitoba that this is not a failure of those four MLAs; this is a failure of leadership on the part of the member of Lac du Bonnet and for every single member of the PC caucus.

You have a responsibility to children in this province to make sure that hate doesn't make its way to

the floor of the Legislature, and today you failed in that—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, once again, Premier stands today in his place, dodges and deflects from the fact of their failing government.

I'd like to take this opportunity to tell a story about a constituent. Paul needed surgery. With his daughter's wedding on the horizon, he was concerned that not getting surgery would impact his ability to participate in the ceremony. He was in pain and he needed help.

Luckily, Paul's doctor referred him for an out-of-province surgery. He was healthy, willing and thankful to get care faster, paid by Manitoba Health.

Paul was able to dance with his daughter at her wedding, and that was something really, really, really special. If he had not had that option, he's not sure he could have been there for his daughter that night. It's an option that is no longer there for Manitobans like Paul. Paul and Lauree join us in the gallery today.

These are the stories we're learning from Manitobans now that this Premier fired the top doctors in charge of the surgical task force and cut out-of-province options for patients—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Kinew: Glad to hear that Paul is doing well.

With our approach, we'll be able to pay for three times as many surgeries, plus we're still working with Dr. Buchel and Dr. MacDonald. We're fixing health care where they cut it, where they closed emergency rooms.

But earlier today when we saw the members engage in an act of hate here on the floor of the Legislature, I feel compelled to apologize publicly to my colleague from Kirkfield Park. Manitobans saw the hateful rhetoric from the election campaign last year and they responded by electing the first trans person to the Manitoba Legislature. That is a credit to the people of Manitoba.

So do the members opposite who voted against—no one is asking for you to go to Pride. No one is asking for you to be gay. People are just asking you to recognize the existence, the dignity and the human rights of people in this very Chamber. How can the PC caucus (1) allow themselves to be divided—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: It's this Premier that, on the record many, many times in his past, that have said the exact same thing that he is throwing allegations today. The only one talking about hate speech is the Premier of Manitoba.

Wait times for cataracts, cardiac, hip and knee surgeries are up. Wait times to see specialists in Manitoba are not even factored into the equation. Out-of-province options were designed to help people like Paul, who are fit and able to travel. They also help clear further capacity back home in Manitoba.

But due to his own political ideology, the Premier tossed them aside without second thought, without a back-up plan, without any plan to help people get the care they need sooner. What—wait times are up and this Premier made them worse.

Will he recognize his mistake and bring back out-of-province surgical options today?

Mr. Kinew: We're paying for thousands more surgeries than the PCs ever did because we're focused on fixing health care right here in the province of Manitoba.

If the member opposite wants to make this a question of leadership, let's go. Every single member on the government caucus will stand with the LGBTQ community every single day.

We just had an election. The member opposite, for the first time in recent memory, has a split caucus. For the first time, a party leader came in here and he couldn't marshal his MLAs to vote in the same direction. Setting aside the issue of where you stand on trans rights, it's a clear failure of leadership.

We stand united every single day. They can't even look themselves in the mirror, much less look across the caucus table.

We have a responsibility to young people in the LGBTQ community to say that we see you and we respect you. If the members opposite can't bring themselves—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Breast Cancer Screening Request to Lower Age to 40

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): According to Dr. Paula Gordon, a radiologist and breast health expert at UBC, the national task force recommendations released

today on breast cancer screening are based on data that is decades out of date. When I spoke to her this morning, she told me in no uncertain terms that the task force recommendations are all wrong.

Every other province in the country has already acted on this issue by lowering the age for screening or announcing when they will do so. There is no legitimate reason for the NDP not to act.

Is the NDP going to hide behind the task force, or will the Premier join every other province in the country and lower the age for breast cancer screening in Manitoba?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): My esteemed colleague, the Minister of Health is working with the experts and is following the guidelines that they have established. But what's more, we've added capacity here. So many more tests are being conducted than ever took place under the PC government.

But I also want to say that my colleague is a person who identifies as non-binary. How does the member opposite stand by what took place in the House here this morning? This is not abstract. This is not theory. This isn't about gay-straight alliances in schools. This is about human beings who come to work in this very Chamber each and every single day.

* (14:20)

And I know that you want to go to Charleswood or Tuxedo and say, you know what, I was on the right side of the issue. But the fact is, if you stay in a caucus where people take these expressions for hatred as a basic tenet of their political ideology, then you cannot claim to be on the right side of the issue.

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

Mrs. Cook: I know that the Premier can't help but provide hyperpartisan political responses to every question that comes up in this Legislature, but this is not a political issue. This is about what's—doing what's right for women in Manitoba who should not have to fight to get the same level of care that is available in every other province in Canada.

Will the Premier give women the same opportunity as the rest of Canada and start the process of lowering the age to 40 for breast cancer screening in Manitoba today, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: We're improving health care for women. We're improving health care for trans people in

Manitoba. And the members opposite won't have a chance to vote against that.

I want to read a question in response to the vote that came forward this morning from a student from the University of Manitoba who spoke at committee, a trans student. And I quote: I ask you, what about us is so important to you, that you would vote against a bill that merely acknowledges our existence? We are your constituents. We are your friends, family and community members. We are human beings. Please consider the harm you do when you deny the existence of a group of people who are so desperately fighting for their rights to simply live our lives. End quote.

What do you say to that student? What do you say to members of the LGBTQ community? And what do you say to all the decent Manitobans who merely expect public servants to be allies?

The Speaker: Order.

I just remind everyone to direct comments through the Chair and not directly to other members.

Mrs. Cook: I'm going to try one more time to get an answer on behalf of Manitoba women.

The task force guidelines that the Premier and the Health Minister are hiding behind, according to Dr. Paula Gordon, are all wrong. Dense Breasts Canada, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Society of Breast Imaging, the Nurse Practitioner Association of Canada and every other province in Canada agree that the screening age should be lowered.

Yet this Premier seems to think that he knows better than a broad coalition of experts and better than women themselves who are forced to advocate for the same access to care that is available to women all across the country.

Is the Premier really going to stand alone on this in Canada and deny younger women the access to breast cancer screening, or will he do the right thing for Manitoba women today?

Mr. Kinew: We are listening to the experts, and we will continue to do so. As the advice evolves over time, we will cape—keep pace with it. In the interim, we are adding mammogram capacity here in the province of Manitoba.

However, every single time that the PCs engage in hatred, we will call it out. I know what they are thinking. Get through the day, have a split caucus, scurry back to your constituencies and say, well, I

didn't vote against the bill. I was on the wrong side of the—or I was on the right side of the issue. But that is a failure of leadership.

Every single one of you that has a conscious has a responsibility to call out the hatred of your colleagues. They are making a political calculation that they think they will only have to answer to the lonely trans student or the lonely trans child. But I have an answer for you, PC caucus. Every time you engage in it, you will have to answer to the Premier of Manitoba, the Cabinet of the Province and the entire government of Manitoba.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the Premier (Mr. Kinew), if the document he was quoting from in his second answer was a private document, could he please table it.

Thank you.

Out-of-Province Fuel Suppliers Amount Spent on Contracts

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services needs to be accountable, shop smart and get the best deal for Manitobans in procurement.

Can the minister confirm that all best practices are followed in awarding contracts and that she recognizes open and fair tendering—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —is necessary to protect taxpayer dollars?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services): I appreciate that question. You know, it's an opportunity to share the fact that the procurement policy in this province was, I believe, 26 years old, maybe a little bit older, and 348 pages long. So no wonder the folks on the other side of the House, who never did anything to update that, stumbled along so horribly over the last seven and a half years when it came to procurement or getting anything done in this province.

So I am happy to say that that policy is being updated. It's going to be an absolute treat for the public service to use when we bring that forward.

And in the meantime, it is also an opportunity to say to my colleague on the other side of the House that there are a lot of responsibilities to be—through the Chair—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Guenter: I ask, Honourable Speaker, because I am deeply concerned by some of the contracts that I have seen awarded by this minister.

This Premier and his entire team—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would ask the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) to come to order, please.

Mr. Guenter: This Premier and his entire team love to talk about fuel prices, but it sure looks like they have been buying their way out of a problem with taxpayer dollars.

In April, this minister awarded contracts totalling over \$145 million for fuel, and I table these contracts.

Why is this minister cutting cheques to out-of-province billionaires?

MLA Naylor: I'm really happy for the opportunity to answer that question. Well, actually, not to answer that question because what I want to say to the member—for my colleague across the way is that he has a responsibility, as an MLA in this House, to support the dignity and the lives of everybody in this province.

He has a responsibility to the constituents of Borderland to want his constituents to stay alive, to want to support their dignity and humanity, regardless of their gender identity or their sexual orientation—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Guenter: WEX Canada, \$98 million. Suncor, \$45 million; Imperial Oil, \$1 million. 4Refuel Canada, \$800,000; Federated Co-op, \$500,000.

Can the minister explain: Why has she cut a massive cheque to fuel suppliers?

MLA Naylor: This is also an opportunity for me to thank the public servants and EMO, as well as in EDIT and NR and many of our other departments who worked really hard around the clock at the beginning of the issue with our—with the pipeline that was closed down here in Manitoba. So a lot of decisions were made in order to keep gas flowing and oil flowing, airplane fuel flowing, to people in Manitoba over the last few months.

And it's also—I have a few seconds left, so I can just say one more time to the—through the Chair to the member of Borderland, there is no—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Out-of-Province Fuel Suppliers Amount Spent on Contracts

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): This Minister of Finance keeps talking about his fake gas tax holiday, but he has conveniently left out that his fake gas tax savings only lasted three weeks.

* (14:30)

And now, under his NDP, gas prices are 27 cents higher than they were on January 1. And now, over that same time period, this NDP minister has signed \$145 million of contracts with fuel companies. The minister owes Manitobans an explanation.

Can the minister explain why such a massive payment of \$145 million was sent out to fuel companies?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): We are proud to have brought the cheapest fuel prices in the country to Manitoba. That's a fact. The critic can keep spinning yarns as much as he wants, but the facts are the facts.

And fuel prices are an important thing to consider in this House. But another equally important concern, Honourable Speaker, is ensuring that all Manitobans in this province know that they are respected and loved, and that that's shown here in this Chamber.

It's not a secret that the member opposite has aspirations to be the leader of the party opposite, and I want to ask him, today, is—does he stand with his party's hatred that they demonstrated today by voting against recognizing all Manitobans in this province as people, trans and two-spirited people?

Does he stand with all Manitobans, or just some of them?

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, for the record that's 85 non-answers by this minister, and one non-answer by the Minister of Infrastructure.

It is a real shame that the NDP want to attack. They want to attempt to shame. They want to bully. *[interjection]* You can listen to them now, heckling, bullying and intimidating us for simply asking questions, doing our job on this side of the House.

Multi-year contracts are normal. However, the previous contract in 2020 was \$15 million. This new contract is \$145 million, 10 times the amount. Once again I call on this minister to explain himself.

Why was a payment of \$145 million sent out of province to billionaires?

MLA Sala: Again, the member opposite, I think, is struggling. I know it's hard for him to deal with the fact that they charged Manitobans for seven and a half years, every single day, 14 cents a litre. We've taken that off. We're making life more affordable; they aren't.

But again, that's an important concern, Honourable Speaker, but we know that today, we saw an unbelievable expression of hatred in this House today. Every single Manitoban deserves to know that they are loved and respected, and that they have compassion being demonstrated to them by the people who stand up to act as leaders—or apparent leaders—here in this House.

Unfortunately, that's not what we saw today. Ask the member opposite, as somebody who wants to be the leader of that party, does he stand in support of all Manitobans, or just some?

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, if the Minister of Finance wants to talk about leadership qualities, he can look to his own leader, who shames, bullies, attacks, threatens and intimidates members in this House and outside.

Let's—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—just take a look back at his previous record, Honourable Speaker. This minister is not answering any questions. Let's talk about that.

Ten times the contract this NDP government has paid. Ten times the contract, \$145 million—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—Honourable Speaker. Previous government paid \$15 million. I'm having a hard time speaking. I know the Speaker can hear the member opposite yelling—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I know we've had a very emotional day so far, but I would please request members not to be hollering back and forth.

Thank you.

Mr. Khan: You can see members want to attack, they want to threaten, they want to intimidate, they want to bully. They don't want to answer questions.

Why will the minister simply not say why he cut a cheque for \$145 million for out-of-province billionaires?

MLA Sala: Again, the member opposite wants to talk about attacking, bullying. He should ask himself about the campaign he was part of and the members opposite, last election. What did they do? He was a poster boy for their campaign that was focused on outing trans kids and putting them at risk. That is shameful.

On this side of the House, we show love, we show compassion, we show empathy to all Manitobans, especially our trans and two-spirit youth. They deserve it, not just today; they deserve it every single day.

Again, he wants to count the number of questions he thinks I haven't answered. He still hasn't answered: Does he stand for hate or does he stand for compassion and love? Answer the question.

Agricultural Producers Impact of Carbon Tax

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, the fact of the matter is the agriculture producers need this Province's support, and they're not getting it from this minister. A constituent of Lakeside has reached out to me and has documented the impact of the NDP-Liberal carbon tax on their operation: \$72,459 in 12 months. That is just carbon tax.

Can the minister explain why he is refusing to support agricultural producers?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you again for an agriculture question that I anticipated for the last number of weeks, and I want to thank the member opposite for asking an agriculture question.

Obviously there is the challenges the farmers are faced with today, and I bring this up to the importance of being an agriculture producer for 40-some-odd years. And we see the weather challenges that producers are faced with today, and all I can say, in the importance of our discussion today, to answer somewhat of the question, which I will ask in the second time around, third time around, to the importance of our agriculture producers that provide food to our tables and the importance that Mother Nature co-operates.

And hopefully at the end of the season that the farmers and the producers, agriculture, have a profitable year for the betterment for all of us—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Pretty tough to be profitable putting another \$73,000 in the coffers.

Honourable Speaker, do you know what's worse? On April 1, this government was silent as Justin Trudeau cranked that bill up by 23 per cent. Now the constituent of Lakeside will be paying almost \$7,500 a month in carbon tax.

I ask the minister again: Will he stand up to his leaders, both federal and provincial, and stand with Manitoba farmers?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I want to point out a couple of commentaries that somewhat refers to winners and losers, and here's a prime example. The members opposite want to talk about winners and losers, but they made it crystal clear which Manitobans will lose out under the members opposite.

The MLAs for La Vérendrye, Borderland, Springfield-Ritchot and Steinbach all stood up in this Chamber to say that trans kids are not worth our commemoration. And I call on the member opposite: Do you personally believe in that way of supporting your party's lot moving forward, for what we have today in our discussion as a party from this side?

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

MLA Bereza: I think I just heard the member opposite say that farmers are losers. Not on this side. Manitoba farmers feed the world and their efforts feed our economy.

While the member of Dauphin seems to think agriculture consists exclusively of ag Crown lands, we on this side of the House know differently. I encourage him to come and join me as I meet with farmers throughout our province to hear their concerns. Farmers throughout Manitoba are being asked to pay more every day than their fair share on this punitive carbon tax.

I ask the minister to show courage, buck his party philosophy and stand with farmers, not Ottawa. Will he?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Obviously, members opposite had seven years—seven and a half years, to take off the carbon tax, and they chose not to, but in—within government.

But it's quite ironic to—for me to say this about the topic of importance today, is some of our messaging—and this comes from the Dawson [*phonetic*] Trail member—MLA, has quoted as saying this: Some of us messaging are almost hateful in my way. I just felt like I'd seem—I'd have to—gone very far to the right of the stuff that my members are talking about. There are a few things that made me cringe over the past few weeks on the subject.

* (14:40)

And I ask member opposite again: Do you honestly believe in what your party—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Increase in Retail Crime CFIB Recommendations

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): This minister seems to be stuck between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, election laws say that he can't make announcements, and on the other hand, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) is under the firm belief that laws don't apply to him.

When this minister spoke about overtime for police, he acted like it was the silver bullet. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been clear this government needs to do more to work with businesses suffering from retail theft and damages.

Will the minister commit today to adopting CFIB's calls?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, we're standing with law enforcement. We're standing with retailers. We're standing with communities. We're giving additional resources to keep our communities safe.

When the member opposite talks about being between a rock and a hard place, he's describing his own situation. He wants to pretend that he's somebody new in this House. He's different from everybody else. He's different from the party that ran the deplorable campaign in 2023.

And yet he stands with a caucus in this House and votes against trans people. He should be ashamed of himself.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Since the minister seems unaware, I will educate him and the—table some material today.

CFIB are calling for a more than \$300 security camera rebate or a bakery owner needing to catch officers on their way to a lunch break, a break that I note that they skipped to take a report from business owner and staff that were deeply concerned about a robbery in that day. They're calling for coverage for repairs.

Will this minister commit to helping businesses who are victims of retail crime?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, we're working with retailers. We're listening to the community.

That's why we had our public safety summit where we brought people together, because we want to work with all Manitobans. We're ready to move past the division and the divisive campaign that the members opposite ran, but they're still stuck on it.

And where they thought it was a dog whistle during the campaign, their leader doubled down. He said, I have to put an explanation mark—exclamation mark on the whole parental rights involvement. I think that's where we need to go.

Well, the dog whistle has become a bullhorn in this Legislature, and every single member opposite showed their true colours and they voted with a caucus that stands for hate. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, CFIB has once again anticipated the minister's answer, it seems.

Even in NDP BC, a program exists where businesses can receive up to \$2,000 to repair vandalism and \$1,000 for preventive measures. That's not only more than three times what this minister is offering but it's actual prevention, not just a camera to document.

These are real solutions that would tell business owners that they are not standing alone. They're not expected to shoulder the burden of anti-social behaviour from criminals.

Why does this minister draw the line in the sand here, short of offering real help to real Manitobans?

Mr. Wiebe: Quote: we're encouraged by the response of the Province to what we've known—long known to be a serious issue of retail crime and stretched resources at the police services.

That's from John Graham at the Retail Council of Canada. We're going to work with the Retail Council of Canada, with retailers and businesses to keep our community safe.

But we can't forget that some of the most vulnerable people in our province are trans kids and trans folks. And the members opposite clearly don't care about the safety of those folks. They only care about certain people. They want to divide, and they want to talk about hate.

It's unacceptable. Every single member is culpable here in this situation. They should all apologize to every Manitoban and to this House.

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra Request to Address Financial Challenges

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Musicians in the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra are concerned about the financial sustainability of its ensemble. The WSO is facing significant cutbacks to its programming, which include much of its education programming for schools across the province.

I understand that the minister responsible met with the WSO a few months ago and he made many assurances. This previous fiscal year left them with a \$1.3-million deficit and a depleted financial stabilization reserve.

Has the minister taken any action since their meeting on April 11?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Want to thank the member opposite for the question and just maybe update the House on what's been going on.

Want to recognize the arts and culture community here in Manitoba for all the works that they do, especially the WSO. In my time as minister, I've been pleased to meet with them and trying to make our province a better place to be. And that includes standing with every Manitoban, something that that member opposite did earlier this morning.

And I know 'memy'—many members of this House today are meeting with representatives across the arts sector. Today they're here in this very House, sharing all of the things that they are concerned about. We heard those concerns. That's why, in the WSO this year, we've directed \$200,000 of extra money for them to be able to work—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

MLA Lamoureux: The world-renowned Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is such an important fixture here in Manitoba and our arts community. The orchestra

contributes tremendously and does incredible outreach work outside of the concert hall.

For example, the Sistema program helps teach kids from at-risk communities how to play instruments. We know the importance of music, whether it be for mental health to learning to fostering tourism in our province.

Honourable Speaker, can the minister share with us what are some actionable steps the Province can take to help the performing arts sector right now, as they have been struggling since COVID?

Mr. Simard: I just wanted to assure the member opposite that we're in constant contact with these arts communities. We are taking them in. We don't shut the door on people; we open the door.

We've seen a perfect example today of shutting our doors on people. We don't—that we choose to not acknowledge people. In this House, we acknowledge people. We acknowledge what the WSO does. We acknowledge what the MCCC does. We acknowledge what the WSO does, the opera, the MTC, film and music. That's why we've had historic, generational investments in this budget.

But I wanted to talk about it in Estimates, but the other side just delayed. And what did that sound like? I, comma, am, comma—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

MLA Lamoureux: To outline the situation, many of the musicians are currently considering leaving the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.

One of the most significant financial challenges to the WSO is the amount spent on rent. Renting the Centennial Concert Hall costs the symphony upward of \$400,000 annually, and with the increasing financial pressures, this is not sustainable.

What is the government doing to retain our musicians to the extent that they will not have to move elsewhere?

Mr. Simard: Just to reiterate, for the first time in a generation, we are investing in operating funds for arts community.

What stage—steps are we taking? We've already taken the first steps. We know that there's a lot of work to do in this community. We've shared—those organizations that I mentioned before, they're the arts and

culture redwoods; the redwoods that protect the vibrant growth in jazz bands, in music lessons across this province. They provide protection.

My question for the House: Who is going to provide protection for trans kids? Us.

Congenital Syphilis Universal Screening Program

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, congenital CMV is the leading cause of infant disability in Canada.

Rob Tetrault has been at the forefront of national advocacy for CMV screening, including an annual half-marathon event to raise awareness. Rob worked with the NDP caucus on legislation to implement screening, but the failed former PC government repeatedly refused to pass it.

* (14:50)

Can the honourable Minister of Health tell us more about what our government is doing around early screening for congenital CMV?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my friend for the question.

I want to thank Rob and his family for their many years of advocacy and advancing the conversation around CMV, and for his work with our caucus in drafting legislation, despite the unwillingness of the previous government to advance it.

Universal screening for newborns is vital to addressing the impacts of congenital CMV—the impacts on families, on infants—and in preventing long-term impacts.

That's why our government is investing \$2 million in Manitoba to establish a universal screening program for congenital CMV that'll be rolled out this year.

I want to wish everyone who's participating in Rob's run this weekend the best of luck.

We look forward to taking action on CMV screening right here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

\$10-a-Day Child Care Summer Availability Inquiry

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): Despite being asked by the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux), the Minister of Education has repeatedly refused to announce whether or not this NDP

government will be introducing \$10-a-day daycare for the summer months.

He says that he can't announce it because of the blackout rules, and yet the Minister for Justice and the Minister of Municipal Relations have repeatedly made government funding announcements in this Chamber during the blackout period, proving that there are rules for some in that NDP Cabinet, but not for everyone.

So will the Minister of Education get up today and announce \$10-a-day daycare for all Manitoba families this summer?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The reason why we can't roll out \$10-a-day daycare this summer is because they're blocking the budget bill. It would've had to have passed before the House rises in June.

The member opposite failed today, along with every other member of their caucus, to stamp out hate on the PC side of this aisle. And I want to say this is something that I take very seriously on a personal level. Earlier last year, when we were canvassing in southeastern Manitoba, there was a young group of queer kids who'd come knock doors with us.

I asked, like, why do they come with us? And they shared about some of the very difficult experiences that they had gone through. And I resolved in that moment that any time I hear this sort of trans hate, this queer hate, we're going to call it out every single time.

And so I want to say to young people across Manitoba, you have an ally on this side of the House, on these benches. We'll call it out every single time. This is where the people of Manitoba want to go. We are one province. We deserve to live together in peace, harmony and respect.

So to all the good, hard-working Manitobans out there who want a government that stands for all, including the vulnerable kids in every corner of this province, I say, happy Pride.

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Earlier in question period, you asked me to table the documents of the U of M student weighing in on the trans issue.

I table four copies, and invite the members opposite to familiarize themselves with them.

The Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister for that.

* * *

The Speaker: Now it's time to say goodbye to some more of our pages.

Today we have three Legislative pages completing their final shift.

Sophie Jaxa Debicka: As a—this remarkable year comes to an end, I am truly honoured for the journey we've shared. Being selected for the position of page with the Manitoba Legislative Assembly has been nothing short of a dream come true, and I am forever thankful to have been granted this chance.

This year has been an incredible experience, one that has enriched my life in ways I could have never imagined. I've learned so much about the legislative process, witnessing first-hand the intricate workings and making of history within this building. The moments of debate, the lively oral questions and the dedication of everyone here has left an indelible mark on me.

I want to thank each and every one of you, the Speaker, the MLAs, the clerks, the staff and my fellow pages, for their kindness. This time has been especially memorable because of all the incredible conversations and fantastic stories.

Furthermore, it is a true honour to be able to drive past the Legislative Building and say, I worked there.

As I move into my final year at St. John's-Ravenscourt School, I'm eager and look forward to continuing my work as chief editor of the school newspaper, debate perfect, the—to lead the various clubs, volunteer within my community and to work hard and create amazing memories. The skills and insights I've gained here will undoubtedly guide me in these endeavours, and I carry with me the inspiration drawn from all the honourable member—individuals I have met.

Thank you all for your support, your guidance and your kindness. I wish each of you the very best in your future endeavours, and I look forward to the day when our paths may cross again.

Sophie is joined by her mother, Anette Jaxa Debicka.

Congratulations, Sophie, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Next, we have Debra Rotimi.

I will be graduating from the Murdoch Mackay this coming June, moving on to further studies at the University of Manitoba under the Price Faculty of Engineering this coming fall 2024.

I'm honestly just grateful for having this opportunity to be in the presence of great individuals. Though slightly short-lived, I've learned many things I wouldn't have known if it—if I wasn't present in these circumstances.

I'm grateful for my former theatre teacher who recommended me for this, my teachers whose classes I continuously, unfortunately, had to miss, and my parents for having the patience to drive me to my shifts whenever it was too cold, no matter the inconvenience.

Thank you to Cam and Dave for giving me this position and for—so—the new friends I've made along the way, making this experience even more exciting. Though it is sad that it's ending so soon, I'm glad we started together.

Debra is joined by her mother, Blessing, who is in the public gallery.

Congratulations, Debra. We wish you all the best on your future endeavours.

And next, we have Sean Ehmann.

When I received a call in April 2023 telling me I had been selected as a provincial page for the 2023-24 year, I could've never imagined what it would've turned out to be. Coming to the Legislature, sitting in chairs flanking the Speaker, shuffling around documents, adjusting the seating, journeying down to Journals, hustling down to Hansard and keeping members hydrated and well caffeinated—thank you for that, by the way—has been a genuine pleasure.

When someone asks me, where do you work, Sean, I often have found it hard to say the Leg. because it simply doesn't feel like work.

Every shift, I feel like I have seats in—to the hottest game in town. Getting to witness first-hand shots being fired across the Chamber, insightful questions all around, well-calculated lines of analysis and 'anecdotes' from every walk of life in Manitoba has been a privilege.

As for my future plans, I head next year to the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba where I am also set to compete for the Bisons cross-country and track and field teams.

I am certain that as I move on, I will continue to draw on my experiences as a page, to grow as a student, as an athlete, as a son, as a friend, but most importantly, as a citizen.

Ten, 20, even 30 years from now, I'm certain that I will count my time serving as a page as one of the most consequential and formative experiences of my life.

Thank you to each and every person, every MLA, every clerk, every attendant, to the Speaker, to Dave and Cam. Most importantly, thank you to my fellow pages, Abby, Abrar, Ava, Debra, Elena, Iva, Liz, Mai-Anh and Sophie. Thank you for making this experience so amazing. I promise to cherish the memories we have built together as I turn to the next page of my life.

And I should note that Sean's dad, Tom, will be watching this online.

Congratulations, Sean, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

* (15:00)

Petitions?

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: Oh, the honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I just want to take a moment to put on the record our sincere thanks to the pages: to Sean, to Debra and to Sophie. You represent the best of Manitoba, and we hope that you take the good things out of your time here.

And on a personal level, hey, you got the Speaker to say what you wanted him to say on the record here in the Chamber. I can't even do that, so way to go, and have a great summer.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity. And of course we know that this isn't a point of order, but I've had the pleasure of listening to Sophie, Debra and Sean, and—they tell their stories in regards to not only what is happening now, but also into their future.

And we, with the PC caucus, wishes them all the best, and hopefully they really enjoyed their time here at the Manitoba Legislature. There's always positives to take from any experience, so again, to Sophie, Debra and Sean, all the best in your future endeavours, and enjoy your summer.

Thanks, everyone.

The Speaker: I have to point out that there was not a point of order, but we certainly appreciate the kind

words from the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, and we—all of us wish you all the best in your future plans.

* * *

The Speaker: Petitions? Grievances?

Oh—the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

PETITIONS

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventive services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

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

(4) An MRI machine—

The Speaker: Order, please.

If I could get everyone to take their conversations to the loge, or possibly out in the hall, that way we'd be able to hear the member that's speaking.

Thank you.

MLA Bereza: An MRI machine located in Portage la Prairie regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce burden on stretcher services and ambulance services. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plains First Nations. Indigenous people in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their

home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Patricia Guinn, William Minton, Yvonne Enns and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any further petitions?

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(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 of Manitoba—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 petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

* (15:10)

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

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

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

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

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

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

The perimeter has a duty—the Premier, I should say, has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link in northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

This petition is signed by Landon Hudson, Charlene Nikkel, Jean Gagnon and many, many more Manitobans.

Child Welfare System—Call for Inquiry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans; Ken O'Donnell, Sherry Francis, Robert Lowry and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Provincial Trunk Highway 2

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

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

* (15:20)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(8) The communities in the area have been clear that any reconstruction of PTH 2 must include the stretch that runs through the town of Souris; and

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Kim Eissner, Trevor Mealy, Jen Roth and many more fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: No further petitions?

Grievances? No grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to amend the agreement reached by the House on May 21, 2024.

The amendment would allow the House to debate a motion at the beginning of orders of the day today, despite the motion not being on the Order Paper. This will be a motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House with the following limitations on the debate:

(1) Once the motion is moved, five minutes of speaking time will be allocated to members from the government caucus;

(2) Five minutes of speaking time will be allocated to members of the opposition caucus;

(3) Five minutes of speaking time will be allocated to independent members;

(4) Within those speaking time allocations, the parties or independent members will be allocated to—no, sorry; God, where am I?—Within those speaking time allocations, the parties or independent members may assign as many members as they wish to speak; and

(5) At the conclusion of the speeches, the Speaker shall put the question.

The Speaker: Is there leave to amend the agreement reached by the House on May 21, 2024, to allow the House to debate a concurrence motion at the beginning of orders of the day today, despite the motion not being on the Order Paper, with the following limitations on the debate:

(1) Once the motion is moved, five minutes of speaking time will be allocated to the members from the government caucus;

(2) Five minutes of speaking time will be allocated to members from the opposition caucus;

(3) Five minutes of speaking time will be allocated to the independent member;

(4) Within those speaking time allocations, the parties or independent members may assign as many members as they wish to speak; and

(5) At the conclusion of the speeches, the Speaker shall put the question.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

CONCURRENCE MOTION

Standing Committee on Rules of the House First Report

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Labour and Immigration, that the first report of the Standing Committee on the Rules of the House, received on May 30, 2024, be concurred in.

Motion presented.

MLA Fontaine: I won't take too much time, but we did have our standing committee last night on the Rules of the House. And so I just want to take a quick couple of minutes, as I did yesterday in committee, but certainly want to take that opportunity here in the Chamber, just to say miigwech to our clerks, who have led, once again, a very long and arduous, somewhat enjoyable process. I know the clerks enjoy Rules committee.

But I want to just acknowledge the work of our Clerk and our Deputy Clerk, and all of the assistant clerks and certainly all of the staff as well that go into helping bring forward those changes to our rules and procedures.

I was sharing earlier in caucus, just before question period, that, again, I, you know, rules is not necessarily one of my favourite things, as the Clerk knows. I've been on the Rules committee, now, since 2017. It's been long. But we don't always change the rules. It's not like we change the rules, to the rules and procedures, every couple of months or even once a year. It's actually every couple of years.

And so, while it's not a big deal, in some respects it is a big deal for what happens in this Chamber, and going forward, right? The rules that we change today are rules that are going to be here for the next 20, 30,

40, 50 years. And a good example of that—and I really appreciated the Deputy Clerk pointing this out yesterday—in one of the rules that we made changes to, we deleted the rule from 1877, I believe.

And so I think that's a really good example of highlighting that, you know, the rules don't necessarily change all that often, but certainly when they do change, they reflect the current time. And a really good example of that, as well, is in 2019—and the Clerk will remember—that as the Opposition House Leader, with the 2019 election, we elected the first-ever Black, queer, gender-nonconforming person. And the Clerk will remember that I came to your office to talk about language, and to start discussing the language that we use in this Chamber, that up until 2019 we had never contemplated the use of gender-neutral language.

And so, you know, I—when I'm often, you know, asked to go and speak wherever and, you know, inevitably some of that discussion will come up about what happens here, and the importance of being elected or the importance of being representative, I will often talk about the rules changes because of the election of the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara).

And now, from 2019 until, you know, all of the rule changes that we've made, that now the rules and the procedures are gender-neutral language, because of the election of the member for Union Station, now we've got language from here on in that truly is inclusive and representative of all Manitobans. So—*[interjection]* Yes. Excellent. Yes.

* (15:30)

So again, it is not a big deal, but it is actually a big deal in what we do here for the rules and procedures because it really does pave the way for the future generations that come after us.

So with that, I just want to say miigwech, and I appreciate all of the work.

Miigwech.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Honourable Speaker, I'm going to rise today to put a few words on the record about this report back in from the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) and the Rules committee as well.

I'm at a bit of a disadvantage compared to her. I have not been on the Rules committee for seven years. Last night was actually my first meeting, and she answered a number of my questions that a rookie member would have, so I appreciate her for doing that.

And I just want to thank folks for the opportunity to be on the Rules committee. I find—it's no secret—I find the mechanics and the process of how this place works very fascinating, very interesting. It's certainly, as a new member, something that I'm very excited to learn a little bit more about.

And so, I want to take this opportunity, as well, to thank the clerks and their team for the incredible work they did on this comprehensive package. I know we changed quite a—are reporting back a change of quite a lot from last night—some pretty fundamental changes, officially. It's been operating this way temporarily for the last couple of years but some pretty substantial changes to the rules of how this place functions, which is exciting.

As the minister noted, these rules can last for a very long time. And so it is important what we're doing here today because many, many generations of Manitoba members of the Legislative Assembly will follow these rules. It will govern how they function, how they represent their constituents.

And so, thank you to the clerks for their important work on this and making virtual permanent in the rules of this place. I think it's important for younger members, which I'm one of, who hopes to have a family someday. Many in here have a family. I think it's important for those folks.

I think it's important for rural and remote members. If there are transportation challenges, they can still now participate in the positions that they were elected to and represent their constituents. And I think it's important for every member, regardless of where they live because things come up. Life happens. And so, by making these rules permanent that people can continue to do their job, be part of the democratic process as members, I certainly appreciate that. So very excited to see these rules being made permanent.

And, on a last note, I think, you know, folks recognize in here that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is a very wealth of knowledge when it comes to the rules and procedures of this place. He announced last night that it would be his last meeting of the Rules committee. Not that he's going anywhere, but he's just served his time on that committee, and he feels it's time for, I guess, another generation of MLAs to take that over. I wasn't really aware that was coming. So, anyway, surprise. But I'm very excited to learn more about the process.

And I just want to take this moment on behalf of our PC caucus and team and personally to thank the

member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), not just for his years of service representing the PC caucus on the Rules committee, but, indeed, all Manitobans and his passion for this building, for this Chamber and the processes and procedures of how it works and how it is governed.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I will cede the floor and look forward to these rules and procedures passing.

Thank you.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

I would like to also add my thanks to the Clerk and the assistant clerks and everyone that had a part in making those rule changes. I had a part in driving the clerks crazy with my questions. That's my job.

So, as agreed by the House on May 21, 2024, the House will now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Will the Assistant Deputy Speaker please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ROOM 254

HEALTH, SENIORS AND LONG-TERM CARE

* (15:50)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates in the Department of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care. Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I just want to turn our conversation to the topic that I raised in QP for the last couple of days, which is the breast cancer screening age. And, as the minister will be aware, the national task force released its guidelines today and they are recommending upholding the status quo, i.e., not reducing the screening age.

* (16:00)

And I just—in response to that, a number of organizations have publicly stated that they disagree with the findings of the task force and the federal minister, Marc Miller—or Mark Holland, sorry—I'll table this.

The minister has it. But it's—he put out a statement just this afternoon with serious concerns about the task force's findings.

And I'm just wondering what the minister's intentions are now that those recommendations have been released, because I know previously the position had been that the Province was waiting for those recommendations.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that question.

I think it's important for the member to be aware of—and I don't know if the member's had the opportunity to do any reading or research into my comments yesterday on this very issue when she asked the question previously.

Yes, our government is not only—was not only waiting to see the recommendations from the task force. In the meantime, we were also meeting with experts from across the country, experts here in Manitoba and with our partners across the health-care system to take steps to move this aspect of health care in a better direction.

For seven and a half years, Manitobans—women, specifically—had a PC government that cut many aspects of the essential health care they depend on, including the Mature Women's Centre, which was an innovative centre of health excellence for mature women that provided care directly to those in a safe place, in a manner that would support women in being able to have improved health outcomes, to ask questions about their breast health at older ages and stages of life, and perhaps mitigate negative outcomes that could have occurred, because they had the opportunity to meet with experts who understand and are innovating women's health and mature women's health and that of gender-diverse Manitobans.

* (16:10)

That's a good example of an aspect of health care cut by the previous government that actually speaks to the heart of this issue right now: the importance of investing in improving capacity around women's health in this province.

And so, for the past several months, we have been doing the work of righting the wrongs of the previous government who cut women's health care in a myriad of ways, rebuilding relationships with experts and partners across the health-care system to ensure that we are investing in a health-care system in this province that no longer disadvantages women or treats

half the population as though their health care is not as much a priority as others.

And so when we talk about breast health and we talk about breast cancer and we talk about mammography services, it is fundamentally important to talk about the comprehensive picture of what that health care needs to look like.

And so our government has not only been awaiting the task force guidelines of which there are many recommendations there that are important to look at, but we've also been working with our partners in order to invest in improving capacity around technologists in Manitoba. We've been working very closely with the Department of Advanced Education and Training, and minister—the minister responsible so that we can ensure that we are taking steps to train more folks in the area of allied health, specifically the technologists who provide mammography services, and developing ways that these folks can perhaps even get trained more quickly because, like other jurisdictions across the country, Manitoba has capacity challenges in this area of health care, something the previous government didn't bother to acknowledge or do any work whatsoever around to address.

And so what we want to ensure is that we're listening to experts like the folks at Dense Breasts Canada. Our office—my office, rather, has met with these folks. We've met, actually, with Dr. Gordon, who the member mentioned, I believe, in question period, to get her expertise. We've met with many folks across the health-care system who have offered their advice and insights, including survivors of breast cancer.

And so in all of the work and consultation that we've been doing in our investments to improve capacity in regions like the Prairie Mountain Health region, we are taking steps to make sure that women in this province and those who need this care can do so in a manner that is safe, is dignified and comprehensive.

And so I think it's important when the member asks that question, for her to not minimize the realities that there are underserved demographics, there are folks who deserve access to this care, and we have to take a thoughtful approach to enhancing access to these services, to not further disadvantage under-represented groups who currently aren't getting this care and treatment in the ways that they should, due to lack of information, education, awareness or point of contact in order to do so.

It requires a comprehensive approach. That is the approach our government is taking, and we are going to be taking steps to make sure that more women across this province get access to this care.

Mrs. Cook: Page 28 of the supplement references a multi-year phased strategy to enhance the accessibility and diversity of congregate settings with health services in Manitoba.

I'm just wondering what this is a reference to and if the minister can table a copy of this strategy.

MLA Asagwara: I just want to continue putting some more words on the record, more information on the record in regards to my previous response.

You know, it's interesting to me, having worked on the front lines of health care as a nurse for many years, including during the time where we witnessed innovative centres of excellence for women's health be cut, closed, shuttered by the previous PC government, to see members of the PC caucus today not, you know, bring forward any sort of apology or acknowledgement to women across this province who are affected by those cuts and closures, no acknowledgement of what it means for seven and a half years to not invest in women's health care.

Separate issue, you know, I'm talking about women's health, but I think about cuts that were made to lactation services, cuts that were made to, gosh, so many services that women and families depend on. And the place that we're in right now in Manitoba is interesting because what we're seeing in terms of some of the challenges that some folks have in accessing breast-health-related care is that under-represented groups and maybe lower—not maybe—lower-income folks and others have increased challenges accessing this kind of health care.

And for seven and a half years the services that they would have benefited from in order to have the information, education and awareness to access that health care was cut by the previous government.

You know, we, in this province, shamefully, under the previous PC government, had ministers of Health who wouldn't even talk about reproductive health care, who absconded that responsibility to other people in their Cabinet because they didn't want to talk about abortion health care. They didn't want to talk about reproductive health care at all. They couldn't say the words breast health in the Chamber. They couldn't talk about the very fundamental aspects of women's health, gender-diverse health, that would have shown

Manitobans they had a government that understood and valued their health-care concerns.

Now Manitoba is in a place where we have challenges around capacity in order to adequately screen folks. Our government is taking action to address those capacity challenges. Now we are in a place in Manitoba where we're having to clean up the mess of finding innovative and creative ways to work with our partners across the province, work with targeted and marginalized demographics, work with grassroots organizations and service providers to ensure that those folks who have been denied access to essential services by way of a lack of any interest by the previous government to invest, that they have access to the information and services that they depend on.

As our government does the work of expanding capacity and enhances the opportunity for women across this province of varying ages to access screening and treatment, et cetera, we must do, and we are doing the work of investing and improving capacity.

What we can't have happen, what we don't want to see happen is what we've seen in other jurisdictions where capacity and—sorry—rather, demographics are expanded in terms of access to this care and, as a result, symptomatic women, older women, women at higher risk, lower socio-economic demographics, are unable to access this essential health care because there are challenges in being able to provide that care due to capacity not being addressed.

And so I don't believe that the member is suggesting that we put those already in higher risk categories at greater risk, I don't think that's what that member is saying, but certainly I haven't heard that member state yet that she recognizes that the evidence and research that makes that very clear that that is a consequence, unintended, of when things are rushed. It would be great to hear her put those words on the record.

And so what I will say is that we are taking very real steps, and we are going to take very real steps to ensure that more women of varying demographics are able to access this kind of screening and care especially, and this RN recommendations—not just from the task force, but other entities as well—those women and folks who are at higher risk, who are symptomatic, making sure that as we expand access, which our government will be doing, that we're doing so in a way that ensures those who are higher risk, symptomatic, are able to access this care and that those who aren't currently accessing care because the previous government didn't think about those folks, that they

have the information, education and awareness to know where to access these essential services and improve their health outcomes.

Mrs. Cook: This has taken a disappointing turn, and we have been in Estimates for a couple of days now and I felt that we've been fairly productive in here. I've asked questions; we've got answers. But now the minister wants to spend precious time in Estimates making partisan political attacks rather than answering the questions.

That's fine. I will continue to do my job, which is to try and get answers about this government's plans for health care in Manitoba.

On the issue of breast cancer and this notion that expanding access to screening is going to disadvantage already disadvantaged groups, I think the minister knows that Black, Indigenous and other people of colour actually have a higher incidence of breast cancer at younger ages than other groups.

And expanding access to screening for those groups is only going to help them; it's only going to save lives. And nobody has ever suggested that the minister needs to go out tomorrow afternoon and open the floodgates to women under the age of 50; everyone gets a mammogram. Nobody is suggesting that.

* (16:20)

All we have asked for is a plan and a timeline to get Manitoba to a lower screening age, which would only bring us in line with every other province and territory in Canada. That is all I've asked for.

And since the minister entirely ignored my other question, I will restate it. Page 28 of the supplement references a multi-year phased strategy to enhance the accessibility and diversity of congregate settings with health services in Manitoba.

Can the minister tell us what that strategy is referring to, and can they table a copy of it today?

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for those comments. And I appreciate—I think she did, in fact, hear what I was saying. Or maybe she missed it, maybe; I'm not quite sure. But I do appreciate what the member just stated and put on the record in terms of higher risk demographics.

I did state in my previous response that our government will be expanding and enhancing access, and that, in doing so, we need to make sure that those folks who are underrepresented and at higher risk and

higher risk categories are able to access this essential care.

So I do appreciate that she put those specifics on the record. It affirms what I gave as a response in my previous answer. And I'm glad that we are, in fact, aligned, in that our government's approach and the work that we're doing to ensure that those communities do, in fact, have improved access—which is actually aligned with some of the recommendations of the task force.

They do recognize—as do many other advocacy organizations, not only here in Manitoba and across the country, but also in the United States, where there's incredible amount of data on this particular issue—recognize that racialized populations getting screening earlier is to their benefit, and also recognize that racialized and under-represented, targeted, marginalized communities have historically not had the access that they need due to the system not recognizing their unique needs and taking innovative, creative and accommodating approaches to meet those communities where they're at.

Our government does recognize the literature, the research and the evidence on this. We've been actively building relationships with communities that have a hand-to-hand relationship with constituents that would otherwise not have access to care. And it's been wonderful.

And I do want to shout-out the organizations in our province who are doing incredible work. I think of organizations like SERC. I think of organizations that are informal, you know, folks in our communities who are champions for women's health care, and who we are actively engaging with so that when we develop strategies to ensure that racialized and targeted and vulnerable communities have increased access by systemic design and policy under our government, that they actually have the information and the awareness to know where to go and how to access that care.

And so I welcome those previous comments from the member, because it speaks to what is at the heart of what our government is undertaking here. It's to make sure that we don't leave any Manitobans behind.

And I do want to reiterate that those recommendations are reflected by the task force and again, many other folks that we've met with, organizations like 'despradest'—sorry about that—Dense Breasts Canada and other organizations. They've been really clear about the importance of centring equity in this work,

and I want to thank those organizations for having that really important lens on the work that they're doing.

And so, you know, this is an issue, a topic that is close to the heart of many Manitobans. Most of us probably have a loved one or friend or family member who's been affected by breast cancer, maybe who—survivors in our lives. We've lost people to cancer, breast cancer, specifically. I think of people that I know that I've lost.

And so this is an area of health care that, again, touches all of us. We take it very seriously, with the utmost of seriousness. And also recognize that the approach that we take is not just about this particular area and building capacity in our province, it is about a comprehensive approach to women's health care.

And talking about women's health care in a manner that shows Manitobans that, yes, 50 per cent of the population deserves to have a government that wants to champion that care and work with partners across the province in this area of health care.

It is so crucial that government set the tone in terms of whose health care matters. Every single Manitoban in this province matters. The health care of every single Manitoban in this province matters.

And the folks that I've had the pleasure of meeting with, in terms of breast health in this province, all have talked about gender-diverse and trans Manitobans who also need access to this care and how those folks often feel as though they don't have a place that's safe to go, they don't know how to have those conversations with their providers. It's important that those Manitobans know that they have a government that, when we talk about equity, we're also talking about gender-diverse folks in this province.

When I had the pleasure of meeting with many experts recently in terms of mature women's health, it was incredible to see that those folks as well, the people who established the previous centre that was cut by the previous government, also understand that aspect of equity.

And so we'll keep working with partners to make sure that targeted vulnerable demographics have the care that they need, and we will enhance capacity for higher risk communities.

Mrs. Cook: Okay. The minister has twice now refused to answer a question about long-term care and the government's multi-year phased strategy that's referenced in the supplements.

So I'll move on from that and I'll refer to page 29 of the supplement, which references a multi-year home-care revitalization plan. I'm just wondering what this is in reference to and if that document is public or if the minister can provide a copy.

* (16:30)

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for the question. And so—which is a very good question. It's a very good question, an important one, as it pertains to seniors and those in our communities who are reliant on congregate settings.

What we're also—what I've also learned in this role is that some of those demographics were actually younger in age now and have certainly increasingly more complex comorbidity issues, things like that. And so having various settings where folks can live and reside and have the supports that they need is very, very important.

We've known for a long time here in Manitoba, certainly across the country, about the increasingly aging population and what goes along with that. A good example would be Alzheimer's, dementia, you know, that's something that we know is increasing among senior demographics. It's also more prevalent now, it seems, in younger folks as well.

And this is something that requires government to respond and plan, work with partners across the health-care system and experts in developing strategies that are going to meet the needs of very diverse populations.

I'm really happy to be able to say, especially—I'm the MLA for Union Station and Place of Pride is right in my neighbourhood, right in my community, it's just down the street from here. It's pretty cool that Manitoba is a leader in the area of residential senior living for folks in the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I think that's really, really beautiful. It's the first seniors residence that is 2SLGBTQ+-specific in the country, right here in Manitoba, just down the street. Just across the street from the church that I was raised in actually, which I just love. I just love Union Station and all the good things that are happening in it.

But it speaks to the importance of having congregate settings, settings for the diversity of what our province looks like. And you know, just because you age doesn't mean suddenly that aspects of who you are are no longer just as important. It's crucial that we invest in working with partners and supporting folks across the province and having dignified places to live and build community at later stages in life.

And so that's all the more reason why a lack of a provincial framework and strategy for congregate settings was concerning when we formed government, and recognizing that there was no plan under the previous government to invest, or even really assess, this area.

That was concerning, especially given that we've known, like I said previously for quite some time that our population is aging quite quickly. Our population is increasingly diverse, and that requires intention and a diverse approach to how we meet those needs.

And so yes, we are developing a strategy—a phased strategy that will support those folks who can no longer live in their own homes and who need community-care supports. That is an approach that requires a provincial lens. I think that's really important to note. It's an approach that requires us to work with our partners to first get a full appreciation and understanding of what the landscape in Manitoba actually is.

This is work that wasn't done previously, and it's really an essential first step, which is what we're doing right now to understanding the landscape, understanding the needs of communities and assessing what currently exists. Where we need maybe more infrastructure, where we need greater supports, understanding, you know, what home care—as we stabilize home care across the province, as we invest in training more health-care aides, for example, are there areas and ways that we need to do this work that support congregate settings being enhanced and expanded in Manitoba to meet our increasingly diverse community needs.

And so this work is under way. And, again, we're having really important conversations and dialogue with experts in this area, with our partners across the health-care system, with seniors themselves, which is really important, and with folks across the province who maybe aren't seniors but depend on congregate settings and count on congregate settings to meet their needs. This is work that's very important.

It's also very important when you look at reducing pressures on emergency rooms and urgent cares and making sure that people have the supports they need in their own communities.

Mrs. Cook: I just want to clarify, because on page 28 it says a multi-year phased strategy has been formulated—has been formulated. And on page 29, in respect of a home-care revitalization plan, it says it has been developed.

The minister's saying today that they are in development. I'm just wondering, which is it?

* (16:40)

MLA Asagwara: Thank the member for seeking that clarification. I think I'm following what she's seeking clarification on, and I'll just stick to congregate settings. I believe that's the clarity that she's seeking.

And so, just to sort of better articulate what's in the—on page 28 in the supplement there—there is a strategy that's been developed in terms of an approach to making sure that we understand what needs to happen for congregate settings in Manitoba. So acknowledging that this work has not been done previously, that there's a lack of data and information and a full appreciation for the landscape in terms of congregate settings in Manitoba.

We're taking a phased approach, a step-by-step approach, in order to gather all of that information and have a true appreciation of the landscape in the province. That will allow us to, as we do this work, make targeted investments. It'll allow us to be nimble, as well, in terms of responding to the growing needs in this particular area.

And so, the multi-phased—multi-year, rather—phased strategy that's been formulated is an approach to ensure that we can gather all of the necessary information, that we can build the relationships with partners and leaders across the province in this area, that we can listen to and learn from Manitobans who depend on congregate settings and have needs in this area of our health-care system.

It allows for us to do an extensive analysis of the existing state of congregate settings in Manitoba, to look at other jurisdictions and see what we can learn from what their best practices are and what they're doing and how they're meeting their particular demographics' needs.

And following this comprehensive analysis, we'll be able to establish priorities—plans, rather—and execute them, that will support congregate settings in Manitoba.

And so, it's important—we recognize, I recognize it's important for us to be flexible. You know, you may set out—start out with a particular objective in mind or a hope in mind and then realize as you're getting information returned to you by experts and folks who are doing a lot of the heavy lifting here that you've got to be able to pivot or adapt.

And so, as a government, we want to remain nimble in this area and really be able to listen to what communities, what regional health authorities, what congregate settings directors, executive directors, residents

are telling us, so that we make very, very strategic and targeted investments to improve capacity in this particular area. It's something that takes time, something that takes dedicated work and effort, and that work has been ongoing and is happening, quite literally, as we speak.

So, I hope that provides a bit of clarity for the member on her question, and if she has a follow-up, I'd be happy to answer it.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for the answer to that question.

I just want to go back to the topic of breast cancer screening for a moment, because I've been thinking about something the minister said, and it's not sitting right with me. The minister indicated that, based on something I said, that they thought we were aligned. And I don't think we are aligned, because Manitoba is now behind the rest of the country. And the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) answers in question period today indicated that the Province is going to continue to follow the recommendations that were released by the task force this afternoon, recommendations that experts from, now, across Canada are condemning for a variety of reasons.

And I just want to read into the record some comments that were made by Dr. Jean Seely, who I—whose research I cited in the House yesterday during question period. And this is from a CP story, so it's public. Dr. Seely said: Failing to lower the age for routine screens puts racialized women at higher risk. The peak incidence of breast cancer for Black, Asian, Hispanic and Indigenous women are all in their 40s, she said. By saying that they should not start until age 50 puts them all at a big disadvantage and is one of the reasons why we see in Canada that they are more likely to be diagnosed at advanced stages of breast cancer.

The president of the Black Physicians' Association of Ontario also condemned the task force recommendations, agreeing that the onset of breast cancer is earlier for racialized women. Data shows that this group have a decreased mortality than other groups with early screening. This is attributed to the genetic variation that leads to a more aggressive cancer in Black women, despite similar treatment. They have the most to benefit from early screening. End quote.

Knowing all of this, and knowing that advocates are not asking for the minister to solve this problem tomorrow, is the minister prepared to commit today to lower the age of screening in Manitoba to better align with every other province in Canada?

* (16:50)

MLA Asagwara: So the member would likely know that part of the reason why it's imperative that we ensure that, currently, under-represented, under-served, targeted, racialized demographics of women who are not accessing this care are provided the information, awareness, and education and resources, and appropriate services to do so, is because they present later, and are diagnosed at later stages of breast cancer because they haven't been able to access care.

So it's with that in mind, knowing that there are already under-represented targeted group who are currently not accessing care because there are barriers, it's important to take that into consideration when we talk about enhancing access without having adequate capacity.

Not only are those folks part of the demographics who aren't able to access care in a timely manner in cases now, I think the member understands—if she's read the evidence, has seen the impacts, the consequences in other places where there's a lot of evidence that reflects this—that it is those same demographics—yes, at younger ages, and including in the older ages—who will be further disadvantaged and at risk if you don't have the capacity to meet the needs of those enhanced parameters for screening.

And so that's why I keep talking so much about investing in capacity. That's why we're working so closely with Advanced Education and Training. That's why we're meeting with partners across the health-care system and across the province to make sure that we are not only trying our best to better capture the needs of those demographics who are currently in the age range for screening and that care, who are not getting access, but to also ensure that we are doing our due diligence so that when we expand and enhance access for those who are in higher risk categories—yes, Black, Indigenous, racialized women and those who need this care—that we have an approach that allows for them to be able to access that care.

And, you know, the realities of a system that, unfortunately, still navigates very real systemic discrimination, is that we must do our due diligence; we must be thoughtful; we must invest in not just improving capacity, but improving our understanding of how it is we ensure these folks get access to this care and information and education.

And so I said it in my previous response in regards to this question. I was very clear that our government is taking steps, that our government is committed to enhancing access for more demographics and making sure that when we do so, we don't further disadvantage

those who are already disadvantaged in accessing this care. And you know, there are jurisdictions across the country that are facing similar challenges in terms of making sure that we have the adequate staffing resources, technologists being the big example that folks think of, making sure we have enough mammographers to perform this care in Manitoba.

Manitoba, you know, we're going to be taking some unique approaches in terms of—and we are looking at, currently, through our retention and recruitment office and in partnership with Advanced Education and Training, how do we make sure that we are encouraging and motivating folks to pursue a career path that would have them providing mammography care in Manitoba? And how do we do that in a way that ensures it is, again, bringing in those folks who currently do not have access and who are being diagnosed at later stages, as a result, and thereby have worse health-care outcomes?

It is—it's so important that we recognize privilege in this conversation and that we talk about the realities of who has an easier time accessing care and who does not. And what we learned from other jurisdictions, what we've learned from evidence and research has told us that we do have to make sure that those who are in higher risk categories have their needs met.

Our government is committed to doing that work, and we're committed to doing that work in a way that doesn't leave people behind.

It is—talking about systemic discrimination, talking about who has privilege in the system, talking about equity; these are narratives that we didn't hear for seven and a half years, which is part of the reason why the lifting is so heavy right now. But it's heavy lifting that we're committed to doing alongside survivors, experts, organizations, service providers in this province.

And I do look forward to being able to provide more updates in this area, including the update that we provided previously in terms of enhancing access to care in Prairie Mountain Health.

Mrs. Cook: I acknowledge that lowering the screening age for breast cancer is going to require additional resources in the system. But I do not accept that keeping the screening age at 50 is going to benefit anybody.

When—if—it creates an additional step for women who are unable to self-refer for a mammogram. Yes, racialized women, in particular, are dealing with more aggressive breast cancers at younger ages. They are dealing with systemic racism in the health-care system. Forcing them to first find and go to a family doctor to

get a referral for a mammogram, rather than just allowing them to self-refer to BreastCheck for a mammogram, doesn't make any sense to me.

That's why the—you know, the need for additional resources has been addressed by other provinces, who have said, okay, this is a priority for our government. We're going to have this in place by this date. Saskatchewan says, I believe, January 2025. Ontario says fall of 2024. New Brunswick, I think, has said sometime in 2024. It's never immediate. There's an acknowledgement that there is a need to plan and put the resources in place to ensure that it's equitable for everybody.

All we are asking is for the minister to make that plan and pick a date and commit to lowering the screening age for breast cancer in Manitoba, so that Manitoba women have the same opportunity for early detection as every other province in Canada.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that—those comments and questions.

I've been very clear—very clear—that our government is working aggressively. We've done more work in advancing this area of health care and working with partners in the past seven months than were done the previous seven and half years.

And we are going to ensure that more demographics, especially those in higher risk categories—Indigenous, Black and racialized women—are able to access screening and treatment and care, recognizing that they have health outcomes that reflect a change in approach is needed. Our government's doing that work and we're going to be able to share much more news on that in the coming weeks and months.

And I want to reassure Manitobans that our government is listening to not only the experts, but we're listening to women and those who need this care, and experts and partners across the province, and we're going to continue to move this area of health care in Manitoba in a progressive and enhanced direction.

I just want to read into the record something I took under advisement for the member, I believe, last week or earlier this week, the vacancy nursing rates, regional health authorities.

So, Shared Health—16.20 per cent; WRHA—15.6 per cent; Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority—22.5 per cent; northern regional health authority—29.8 per cent; Prairie Mountain Health—28.2 per cent; Southern Health-Santé Sud—28 per cent.

Those are the stats. And the vacancy rates for nursing, combined rate of 20 per cent.

And, again, I want to make very clear for the record that we are listening to Manitobans, we are listening to women. We respect and believe in investing in women's health. That is a necessary approach from government, any responsible government.

And we are going to make sure that breast cancer screening, mammography services, are enhanced in Manitoba and that increased and enhanced demographics have access to this care, especially folks in higher risk categories who require a more flexible approach. We will be ensuring that there is a more flexible, accessible approach that recognizes the diverse and dynamic needs of women and those who need this care across the province.

And I want to reassure folks that, you know, whereas the previous government cut women's health care, closed women's access to health-care services, our government is investing in strengthening it and working with experts and community members and leaders across the province who recognize that half of the population deserves a government that's—

The Chairperson: Order.

Hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

ROOM 255

FAMILIES

* (15:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Mintu Sandhu): Good afternoon, folks. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of Estimates for the Department of Families. Questions for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I'm glad to be back today. I've had some more questions yesterday, and I felt like I just was like, oh, we got to stop? But now we're starting again, so this is great.

So thank you, again, for letting me speak today.

I just wanted to go back a little bit and just talk about where we left off last—the last time we had met. Couple questions to ask about the 24-7 drop-in centres.

One of the questions—and I'm not sure if the minister answered this or not, but one of the questions I didn't think I've found the answer for or had asked

yet was: When will the centres be—when are they—is the minister planning to have those online ready to go, running fully, servicing women that are in need in Manitoba?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Good to see you again. Miigwech for the important question.

We're—don't necessarily have a timeline right now. It's important to understand and appreciate that we're just in the beginning stages of—as I shared last time with you—meeting with all of the community partners and those that are on the front lines and doing tours, as I said. So as I think I had shared last time, I want to get this done right, so we're going to take our time. So I don't necessarily have a timeline to give you right now.

I do, however, just want to say a couple of things. And, you know, I think it's important for Manitobans that are watching this afternoon's Estimates proceedings, which I think Manitobans like. I think this is riveting information. It's really, really riveting stuff.

I want to share with Manitobans about the vote today in the House this morning. I think it's really important for those Manitobans that are watching to know and to appreciate what happened in the House today. And so, as folks may or may not know, this morning we had a recorded vote. And for folks that don't know what a recorded vote is, it is when members—MLAs, ministers, everybody in the House, opposition side, government side, independents—when they get up in the House and they stand up in the House and they record their vote. It is really one of those opportunities where you really physically see where people stand on a particular issue.

And so we had a recorded vote on my—our colleague, the MLA for Kirkfield Park, his bill on trans and two-spirited day of visibility. Important to note that our colleague is the first trans person, first trans man, ever elected in Manitoba's history just in October of 2023. An extraordinary moment for Manitoba, an extraordinary moment for this building, the people's building, the seat of power, this building that enacts laws, policies, that decides budgets for departments—huge departments.

We had the first-ever trans person elected. That's something that we can be so proud of. And our colleague was elected during a campaign that sought to harm in a very real way through the language of using, like, parental rights and a whole host of other things

that happened in the 2023 provincial election campaign that the PCs used in their political campaign. Our colleague was elected in the midst of that hate and that harm. And I think that that's a testament to where Manitobans are and where they want us to be.

And so today's vote, recorded vote to stand up in the House and show your support for trans Manitobans, for two-spirited Manitobans. Again, we're also in the start of Pride month, and it's an opportunity to show Manitobans, all Manitobans, that they're valued, that they're respected, that we've got compassion, that we have love and that we will always stand with trans and two-spirited Manitobans.

And what happened today was that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) and the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) all got up in the House and stood up and voted against Manitobans, voted against trans Manitobans, voted against two-spirited Manitobans.

* (16:00)

I really want to express that I've been elected since April of 2016. I've actually never seen that done in the House since I've been here. We have another colleague, the—another—the Minister for Justice, who's been here longer than myself, I think by maybe four or five years. He's never seen that happen in the House.

We've never seen in the House individuals of an opposing party get up in the House—

The Acting Chairperson (Mintu Sandhu): Order. Order. Sorry, time expired.

Before recognizing the next member, I would like to remind all honourable members that their remarks should be kept relevant to the matter before the committee. For clarification, rule 76(3) states: Speeches in a Committee of the Whole must be strictly relevant to the item or clauses under consideration.

Thank you.

Mrs. Hiebert: I would just like to add to the answer, or just what I received already from the minister, just understanding that it's important to make sure that we—that standards and protocols and all things are in place for the 24—drop-in centres. It's very—and I agree, it's important to get that right because you want to serve the women like they need to be served, and that's important.

Is there an approximate goal as to—by a date that you would love to make sure that they're set up by? Just something to give me the—an idea of what the goal is because I think it's important for us to have a goal.

MLA Fontaine: I think that's a really important question. And it is tied into my previous comments that I was making in respect of the harm and targeting of trans and two-spirited children.

Let me be explicitly clear in my comments so folks don't mistake my comments that they're not relevant to the question that was posed.

First off, let me just answer in respect of the timeline. My hope is, again, to be done in a good way, in a robust way, in a comprehensive way. If I were to express my hopes, I'm hoping by at least next year, if not, at the latter part of this fiscal year. So not a—I mean, not a significant time, in respect of, like, years on years. Certainly, as I shared with you, we're looking at different sites, and maybe some sites might be ready to go earlier than others.

And, you know, the discussion on a 24-7 drop-in centre or a safe space for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited, again, brings me to what happened this morning in the House. I cannot stress how important it is that folks understand the people who are elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly should, and I would submit, must, be concerned with all of their constituents.

And so, as I was saying before that, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) and the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) and the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) have trans and two-spirited constituents. They have trans and two-spirited constituents in their constituencies that they represent, that they're elected, that they're paid good money to represent in this Manitoba Legislative Assembly. They do.

The member for Borderland has trans and two-spirited constituents that the member for Borderland got up in the House today and voted against. The member for Borderland got up in the House and voted against his very own constituents.

If—maybe the public watching this don't necessarily appreciate, we take an oath when we're elected, when we go—before we go into the Chamber, we take an oath that we're going to represent all of our constituents, including trans and two-spirited, including constituents that you may not agree with.

Over the years, in the eight years that I've been elected, there are many constituents that don't agree with me and that maybe necessarily I don't agree with them, but I will tell you this: I would never get up in the Chamber and vote against what's in the best interest of Manitobans. I would never get up in the Chamber and vote against Manitobans' humanities. I would never get up in the Chamber and vote against trans children or children in general.

And that's what happened. That's what happened this morning. Those four men got up in the Chamber and voted against some Manitobans' humanity. They didn't even see them enough or respect them enough or care about them enough or have compassion enough for them or see them enough to vote for their humanity. That's what happened this morning in the Chamber.

And that's a sad day. That's a sad day for Manitoba history here.

And, as I've always said about the PCs, when they show you who they are, believe them. For the last eight years, they have shown us over and over and over and over and over again, including a mere couple of hours ago, who they are.

And so, I take a great exception. I take great exception to what happened this morning as the Minister responsible for Gender Equity, for the minister responsible for our 2SLGBTQ-2-I relatives. I am the minister responsible, and I take great exception to those four men getting up in the Chamber this morning and voting against their humanity.

It is shameful, and I hope that they'll do what's right and apologize.

Mrs. Hiebert: I would like to ask another question about what we're here about in regards to.

Clare's Law is one of the components of intimate partner violence. I just wanted to—actually, just one second here, sorry.

Can the minister share an expected proclamation date for Clare's Law, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act, that received assent in November of 2022?

MLA Fontaine: So I want to—I will answer that question, but I want to go back to the discussion of harm on what happened in that Chamber this afternoon—or, this morning.

One of the things that we're talking about, as the member has so respectfully and honestly asked—and I

appreciate her questions so much—we're—when we're talking about the 24-7 drop-in centre, we're talking about missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

Why this morning was particularly offensive and egregious is because the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) and the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler), while they may not have the capacity to see the connection between what they did this morning and the questions that their colleague is asking—here's the connection.

* (16:10)

We have an ongoing savage genocide against Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited across our territories, from coast to coast to coast. It is an ongoing assault on Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited bodies because for generations, people who sat in these very rooms, in that very Chamber, didn't think much about Indigenous women and girls or two-spirited, didn't give consideration to the protection of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

You know, often I sit in the Chamber and I'll look around that Chamber, and I'll think, wow, in the last 152, 153 years, there were people that sat in that very Chamber, that were sitting in that Chamber making laws and decisions at the exact same time of residential schools, at the exact same time as the '60s scoop, and now at the exact same time as missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

There is a connection between the four members of the PC caucus who got up today to vote against trans and two-spirited peoples—two-spirited Manitobans' humanity and the stuff that has gone on, previous and concurrent; there is a connection between that, when you have people that do not see the humanity and consider some people less than other people.

And I think that—and let me just say this: is that if you're going to run for office and you're going to get elected, you should care about all of your constituents and you should be actively working against harm. You should be actively fighting against harming, putting Manitobans, putting particular Manitobans in harm's way, so that when you come to Estimates and you ask the minister responsible about MMIWG2S and what she's doing on 24-7, make the connection that what happened this morning is connected to that violence.

There is consequence. There is deadly consequence when you have people elected like the member

for Borderland, the member for Steinbach, the member for La Vérendrye and the member for Springfield-Ritchot who cannot even get up and support and vote in favour of a bill that gives humanity to trans and two-spirited Manitobans.

I cannot express to you as an Indigenous woman, as the minister responsible, how offensive and grotesque what we saw this morning is. And I honestly—we know that the minister for—or, the member for Springfield-Ritchot has been there a long, long time. I don't understand how folks can show up for work, show up to represent Manitobans and do what they did this morning, and then to double down on it.

The member for La Vérendrye just doubled down in the hallways. He doubled down on that hate and that discrimination and that real harm.

So to me it's like it's quite insulting that on the one hand, members opposite are asking me about MMIWG and on the other are getting up to support harm.

Mrs. Hiebert: I just want to let the minister know that the harm and protection of my constituents is always No. 1 in me and that is, I believe, part of what I believe in, as well, as a person and as a legislature. So I just need to say that out loud because I am definitely a firm believer in protection and not—nobody should be ever harmed. But just need to put that—make that clear, and I'm sure—yes, anyway.

Another question I have for the minister: Manitoba has a high level of intimate partner violence. Can the minister provide us with the most current statistics specifically for Manitoba?

MLA Fontaine: Yes, I think that's a great question, and while my team is finding that answer for the member, I just want to comment on a couple more things.

I want to give equal attention to everybody, and so I think it's important to point out that the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) sat through the committee—and also, let me just say, I appreciate your opening comments. I appreciate that. However, you all did run in a campaign that targeted trans kids and targeted four murdered, abominably murdered, Indigenous women. You all signed on to that, and you co-signed that.

The member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) sat on the committee for my colleague's bill, and the member said that he was deeply moved—deeply moved by what he heard. And yet, he still let his caucus vote

in a way that showed disrespect and harm and hate and disregard for Manitobans' humanity.

So, again, you can't disconnect oneself from the election that you all participated and co-signed on to and celebrated. Now everybody's trying to backtrack, because now you're being held accountable for an abominably harmful political campaign for the 2023 election.

You can't, on the one hand, say that, you know, try and backtrack—but you signed on to it, you got elected; and then on the other hand, sit in committee and say you're deeply moved by hearing Manitobans who came to present at committee who shared their heart, their spirit, their lives, their experiences, their joys, their pain, their trauma. You can't sit through that and then sit in a caucus with four individuals—that we know about, because, again, there were many individuals, many individual PC members, that were not there during the election—and sit in that caucus and be okay with that.

We know about the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter), we know about the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), we know about the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth), we know about the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler). There were many that weren't there that didn't vote. Was that strategic? Probably. Who knows? But I can tell you this: that if members of my caucus, our team, got up in the Chamber and stood against people's humanity, nobody would stand for that. Nobody would stand for that.

So, again, we're talking about violence, we're talking about violence against women, we're talking about violence against children, we're talking about two-spirited, we're talking about MMIWG2S here this afternoon. You cannot disconnect those questions from what happened in the Chamber this morning. They are intimately connected. They are fundamentally connected.

And it really is quite disconcerting that the member for Portage la Prairie will sit here and say that he's in support and was moved by Manitobans, but at the same time be perfectly okay with his four caucus members—and possibly more—voting against the humanity of Manitobans. It just doesn't jive.

You can't ask me questions as the Minister for Families, as the Minister for Women and Gender Equity, who represents LGBTQ2AI Manitobans, you can't ask me these questions, and yet, mere hours ago, you supported members' rights—like, I think the member for—Lagassé, where's the member for Lagassé from? The

member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) said that this was about shaming.

This isn't about shaming anyone. This is about pointing out what elected members in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly—what they stand for. It's not about shaming. I don't care; if that's what you want to do, be you, do you, whatever. But live with the consequences.

* (16:20)

There are consequences when we participate in harm, and the consequences is that from now until the day I am no longer elected, I will never let every single member of the PC caucus forget what they did during the 2023 provincial election and what they did this morning on May 30, 2024, ever.

Mrs. Hiebert: I'd just like to ask again: Can the minister share an expected proclamation date for the Clare's Law, if she has that information?

MLA Fontaine: Miigwech for that question to my colleague.

The—in respect of Clare's Law, the Departments of Families and Justice are working together and are working with key community stakeholders to build out the regulation and then to build out the program.

It's vital that the work is done in partnership with community and in the same way that we're talking about the 24-7 drop-in centres, we need to do it right and not rush this. We expect the act to be proclaimed early 2025, give or take. And let me just be explicitly clear, that as minister responsible, I will never rush anything. I'm never going to rush anything for the sake of doing it. I want to make sure that we're doing it right.

And then, some of the key partners, community partners that we're working with in respect of this is Ka Ni Kanichihk, the Centre for Child Protection, the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters, the WPS, the RCMP, Brandon police, DOPS, all of those that are on the front lines.

And I have to just share with the member, I think the member will appreciate this, that since becoming a minister, a lot of the work that I do is making sure that I go and visit all of those shelters and those community partners.

And I know the member, a couple of days ago, said that she had an opportunity to go and visit Marymount and found that really a good visit.

And it's important. It's important work and it's certainly important work as the minister to be able to go and visit all of our community partners. And so I spend a lot of time doing that, ensuring that I see first-hand what's going on on the front lines.

So for instance, the Dauphin women's shelter, I've been there twice now. I've been to Dauphin I cannot even tell you how many times I've been to Dauphin to ensure that I'm visiting with our programs and those that are on the front lines.

Ka Ni Kanichihk is doing some really good work at supporting victims of violence. Ka Ni Kanichihk has been doing this work for a long, long time, and they are, in my mind, one of the examples of, you know, an Indigenous organization that is Indigenous-led and doing really transformative work.

And then the other—I don't know when, but maybe, I'm going to say six weeks ago, I'm not sure, but I had a really phenomenal visit with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and got to meet not all of their staff, almost all of their staff on the tour, including the individuals that do the online work, right? Going through online.

And I bring them up because I want to, you know, for the purposes of Hansard and for what is in our historical record, just say how much I appreciate the work that they all do. It is not easy work, and I can imagine that, you know, watching videos and pictures is quite traumatizing. And yet we have Manitobans that do that work to protect our children, right? So I want to give them a shout-out.

And I just want to say that one of the statistics that I found quite shocking—although, knowing that it was high, but not realizing it was that high—was the exponential growth since the advent of COVID on sextortion rates. And so they said that, you know, where their sextortion rates were probably around, you know, the three, four hundred cases, they're now at the thirty-four, thirty-five hundred complaints of sextortion.

And those are our children, right? Those are our children that, you know, as soon as they go online they have these predators and these pedophiles that target them for sextortion.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you for that answer, Minister.

I would like just to clarify, just get a little more information about that. I know that, because Manitoba has one of the highest levels of intimate partner violence, and we are—you're doing the Clare's Law,

which is coming into effect, the 24-7 drop-in shelters, which is also a great program that's going to be coming into effect.

What is it that we've got going right now in our province, immediately right now—because we are in it. We don't have time and, like, there's a lot of women that need help right now. What are the programs that we have right now for the women that need that help right at this moment?

MLA Fontaine: Sorry about that.

So I want to go back to your question on stats. Yes, so the latest stats that we have—which are not necessarily the most up to date—so the latest stats from Stats Canada, which are always a couple of years behind, in 2022, Saskatoon—or, Saskatchewan had 730 victims per 1,000 population. They're No. 1 in the country. And, tragically, Manitoba is second across the country at 585 victims per 1,000 population. *[interjection]* What did I say? One hundred thousand, sorry. One hundred thousand, I apologize for that. Yes, okay, that would've been really, really bad.

I also want to just share a couple of—this is going to be a long answer to your last question, so I may have to do it in two, if the member is okay with that. But I'm going to start with some of our other statistics. So, number of clients—although I loathe that word—the number of Manitobans served by shelters in '22-23, which is the most up-to-date data, right—is 3,124.

* (16:30)

Number of calls received by a shelter, crisis/information line, again for '22-23, most up-to-date, is 18,528. For Winnipeg shelters, that's 10,696, and for rural shelters, that's 7,832. So, again, that's calls received by shelters, crisis or information lines.

Number of Manitobans served by interim housing and second-stage programs for '22-23 is 212.

And then number of residential bed nights—so I'll give you the definition of that: A bed night is a unit of measure used to indicate one night of accommodation provided by an agency to one individual. So, for example, one woman and one child staying for one week's accommodation—miigwech, thank you—equals 14 bed nights, right? And that would be, for '22-23, 28,696. So, again, that's bed nights.

And then from interim housing, if you divide it even more, that's 9,729 bed nights. For long-term second stage, that's 18,967 bed nights.

So I think coupled with this is the number of Manitobans—because your—the last question that you asked—also, this goes to this as well, but I still have more information—but we're talking about what we're doing now, right? So this is some of the infrastructure that we have, and this is some more, but there's also this, as well.

So the number of Manitobans served by women's resource centres, which I'm sure you know do phenomenal work, like, just phenomenal work: 41,802 Manitobans.

And then the number of Manitobans accessing specialized programs in '22-23 is 4,056.

So I think for stats, I think that answers your question and kind of gives you a snapshot—again, '22-23; stats are always, like, you know, two—one or two years behind, but it kind of gives you a snapshot of the numbers that we're using.

Again, and it's, you know, I do have more in respect of what we have now, but I have 19 seconds.

The Acting Chairperson (Mintu Sandhu): Just a friendly reminder, comments can be put through the Chair only, instead of direct comments.

Mrs. Hiebert: If the minister would like to continue speaking about that specifically and about the different programs available right now, that would be great.

Thank you.

MLA Fontaine: And not that I'm trying to push it, because I'm truly not, I actually—even after this question, I have more information that's more, as well. So if you want, I can, but we'll see as we get there.

So I just want to go in respect of some of the infrastructure that we have across the province, and by that, I mean, like, women's resource centres, shelters, all of that, because collectively, that infrastructure goes to support Manitoba women and girls and two-spirited and trans. And, again, it's really important to, you know, acknowledge and appreciate that we're talking about trans and two-spirited and LGBTQ-2-I-S as well in here, right?

So we've got a safe space program at Velma's House at Ka Ni Kanichihk, and Velma's House, as I said—or, did I mention Velma's House? No—before. Okay. So I was mentioning Ka Ni Kanichihk. So Ka Ni Kanichihk, which I already talked about, do phenomenal work, and they've got Velma's House.

Velma—Velma's House was named after an elder in our community. Her name was Velma Orvis. Velma

was actually friends with my kokum, with my grandmother. And she was a phenomenal woman who, for as long as I knew her and for as long as everybody knew her, just worked for the community. She wanted our women to be safe. She wanted our children to be safe. She wanted our trans and two-spirited community be—to be safe. She was honestly one of the kindest and most humble elders, matriarchs, that we had.

And so Ka Ni Kanichihk named this safe space after Velma and so it's called Velma's House. And I was there just, I think at the very beginning of when I was first appointed minister, and got the opportunity to see the work that they're doing there.

And if the—I'm trying to figure out—if the member recalls, in our last conversation, I was talking about our micro-training, our micro-'micocredential' training. And I love that program and, again, it's for—to support folks working in these shelters. We had folks that—I got to meet some of the folks that were working at Velma's House, that took that training, so I thought it was great.

So then we have a shelter program. There we've got Eastman Crisis Centre, Ikwe Widdjiitiwin, Nova House, Parkland Crisis Centre, Prairie Harbour Inc., South Central Committee on Family Violence, The Pas Committee for Women in Crisis, the Thompson Crisis Centre, the YWCA Westman Women's Shelter and Willow Place.

And that—actually, sorry, let me just go—the Velma's House, that total budget for '24-25 is \$1,534,000 and some change. The shelter program, that total budget is \$10,727,000.

Then we have our residential program. So we have—and this is intimate partner abuse recovery programs. So we have the Alpha House project, Bravestone Centre, Chez Rachel, the Samaritan House Ministries. And that—but coupled with that, the subtotal for that is \$1,461,000 and some change.

And then, as part of the residential program—so we have got the intimate partner abuse recovery programs, but then we also have the transitioning housing programs. That's the North End Women's Centre and the West Central Women's Resource Centre, and so those two combined are \$2,072,000 and some change.

Then we get into our women resource centres, which, again, I think you and I are both on the same page do—or, the member and I are on the same page, and do great work. And so we've got the Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre; we have the Interlake Women's Resource Centre; we have the Lakeshore

Family Resource Centre; and well, still going on, the North End Women's Centre—

The Acting Chairperson (Mintu Sandhu): Honourable minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: I'd like to thank the minister for that information. That's great. And amazing programs and, yes, invaluable work that people in our—across our whole province do to help women that need it is—and, you know, yes, it's just a great—such a great—great to hear all these programs and the budget for that.

I do have a question in regards to—you had just—the minister had mentioned the 10-million-plus dollars for the shelter programs.

Is there information about how that's divided up between the different shelters and the different areas of the province?

* (16:40)

MLA Fontaine: So before I answer that, I still had more information. Do you want me to go through that information and then—or, does the member want me to go through that information to continue with that? Okay.

So I ended off on the resource centre for—with the North End Women's Centre. Then, we have the Pluri-Elles Manitoba—again, resource centre. They—in fact, they were just in the Chamber, I believe last week. The member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) had them in for a member's statement. They were just in.

Then we have Swan Valley Crisis Centre; we have West Central Women's Resource Centre; Western Manitoba Women's Regional Resource Centre; Women's Safe Haven Resource Services. So the total budget for the resource centre program, for all of that, is \$4,133,000.

Then we have a specialized program. So, we've got the Brandon couples counselling. We have the counselling centre, and that's specifically for men's counselling, which I am all for. We've got a Couples Counselling Project at the U of M. We've got Ma Mawi, the Spirit of Peace Program. We've got Men Are Part of the Solution, or MAPS. Then we have the NorWest Co-op Community Health. We have the Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre. We have Wahbung Abinoonjiag.

So for all of these that I've read out and shared as our infrastructure for dealing with violence or intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, the total budget is \$20,576,600. So I'll go back to—the member

had asked for the individual amounts. So I'll go back to that.

The Eastman Crisis Centre gets \$791,000 and some change. Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin gets \$1,291,000. Nova House gets \$1,051,800. Parkland Crisis Centre gets \$788,700. Prairie Harbour gets \$752,900. I hope I'm reading this right. Yes. *[interjection]* Oh, perfect. Yes, miigwech.

The—I just—okay, so I just want to also provide for the member, Eastman crisis unit is in Steinbach; Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin is in Winnipeg; Prairie Harbour is in Portage la Prairie—which one—oh, I'm not doing it in order here. Okay. Let me do it this way. Sorry. I'm trying to give you where they are and the amount.

The South Central Committee on Family Violence, which is in Winkler, gets \$772,000. The Thompson Crisis Centre, which is in Thompson, gets \$1,670,000. The YMCA woman—that one's not on here—the Y-M—Westman region, Brandon, \$1,092,000. Willow Place is Winnipeg, \$1,634,000.

So, I just want to give you the other—Nova House is in Selkirk. Parkland is in Dauphin, which is the one that I visited. Prairie Harbour—did I say that—is in Portage. And then I think I've shared all—those are the locations of them.

So that's the individual amounts that all the shelters get. For a total just in that—just the shelters—is \$10,727,000.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you, Minister, for that information. Greatly appreciate it.

I would like to jump over—I have some more questions, but I'm going to jump over to a different topic just because we're—not have much time. I'd like to jump over to EIA, some questions about that. I believe there's a—such a need and such a large demographic of our province that are utilizing that program.

And I just want to ask the minister if she could describe the specific initiatives the department is undertaking to increase the numbers of Manitobans who are receiving EIA to find meaningful employment?

MLA Fontaine: Miigwech for the question.

One of the things, as well, is in my mandate letter from the Premier (Mr. Kinew). The Premier identified that I would work to break down barriers in respect to Manitobans accessing EIA. And so that's something that our department is engaged in as well.

And the member will know that I—well, I guess on Monday—one of those pieces of legislation that will pass and receive royal assent will be one of my bills, which identifies accessing—or, that education is actually a component now and a legitimate component at getting back on to the labour market, which I think is really good.

* (16:50)

And I actually want to also just shout-out my colleague, the minister—or, minister—I can't say names—minister—can't say last names. The—I want to shout out the Minister for Labour and Immigration, because actually it was the Minister for Labour and Immigration, when we were still in opposition, that she brought forward this bill, and so I want to give her a shout-out. And on Monday it will receive royal assent.

So the Department of Families undertakes an analysis of data to determine areas where there are needs for employment supports for EIA recipients who have unique barriers to employment. The department has entered into partnerships with various community organizations that address unique barriers such as single parents, Indigenous individuals, former youth in care, individuals with justice involvement. The department is currently reviewing the outcomes of many of its partnerships to determine the effectiveness of program and services.

The department employs a data-informed approach to collect and analyze data on community organizations' performance and accountability. This approach helps the department determine which programs are most effective in moving EIA recipients to employment and the sustainability of the program models.

I want to just chat about—because this is going to take me two questions as well—I'm going to chat about that we have a \$20-million endowment fund, an EIA endowment fund, and from that endowment fund we were able to support one-time projects that helps folks have that connection to the labour market. So I want to just read out some of them, because I think it's really important.

So the West Central Women's Resource Centre, the project name is supports towards empowerment program, which I love that language, right? For so long I think that, you know, and the language of welfare has been so disparaging, but really, we're trying to not shame Manitobans that need help but really lift up and work with and have compassion with Manitobans, right?

Sara Riel, they've got the employment development program. Abilities Manitoba has the increasing wellness and economic stability program. The Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association has the PREP Employment First Program. Manitoba Possible has the Money Management programming. Youth Employment Services, or YES Manitoba, has the building employability skills for today's—and, in brackets, BEST; so that's the acronym—youth program.

The Canadian Mental Health Association has employment with supports for youth. Taking Charge! has counselling services program. The Link: Youth and Family Supports and the Momentum Centre and United Way Winnipeg has the Still Here, supporting young people to successfully transition into and maintain participation in the labour market. Opportunities for Employment has the demand-led employment program.

Indigenous youth programming, so specific, has Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, they've got the learner readiness program. The Albert [*phonetic*]-Eebert [*phonetic*]-Elbert Chartrand Friendship Centre, they've got the succeed connections path to employment. Manitoba Moon Voices, which works with Indigenous women, has the next step in our journey program. Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre has they take care of each other program. Ready, Set, Go! work-ready program.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you, Minister, for all that information, and it's so important. If you would be willing to table the information so I could ask the next question, I would love that. It'd be great.

I just want to add to the conversation that I appreciate the words that you're sharing about taking away the stigma, taking away the word welfare, because it's not about that; it's about empowering; it's about giving women, single parents, families, that leg up that have found themselves in a hard situation and that need that help. So that's something that's really important to me as well.

I'm—I can honestly sit here and say I'm a product of having been able to use the program—the EIA program. I found myself as a single mom with a baby and a two-year-old, instantly, overnight. And that was what I needed for six months. They picked me up, they took me in and helped me.

So that is something that is just such an invaluable organization and a part of what we can do as a social program for our province, for the women and families

that are in need of that. So I'm a firm believer in whatever we can do to help women and people get on their feet when they're in a hard place.

So my question would be, like what are some of the trends the minister and the department are seeing with the EIA program? Are they seeing trends in more women or more men coming in? Single parents? Are families staying on the program longer than they used to, or is it getting—are we getting them back on their feet faster? What are those trends? And, you know, I'm okay if you want to table some information because I would love to know as much as possible.

But, again, just such a great program, as long, like, and I—you know, used so well by so many people that need it, so thank you.

MLA Fontaine: I'm going to share some caseload trends.

So average monthly caseloads have seen a general increase each year since 2010-2011, except for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, and that was because of CERB, right, so we saw a decrease.

As of December 2023 there were 41,708 income-assistant households. That works out to 31,875 EIA cases and 9,833 MSPD cases.

The significant caseload reduction—yes, that was the CERB, and the Canada Recovery Benefit—receiving those benefits made the majority of EIA households ineligible for provincial income assistance.

All categories saw caseload reductions because of the pandemic. Income assistance caseloads grew from 35,950 in October of 2021 to 41,708 in December 2023, right? So it went down from 35,000 to 41,000. But, again, that was because of COVID and CERB, right? Although the total income assistance caseloads has been increasing since 20—or in '23-24, still caseloads haven't returned to pre-COVID levels. So they're still not at the same levels.

Manitoba's caseload trends are not unusual within the Canadian context. Ontario reported an overall caseload increase between 2017-18 and 2019-20, but then also experienced caseload reductions because of the pandemic and, again, with increases following the termination of the federal benefit.

Partnerships with community agencies to support Manitobans to overcome—

The Acting Chairperson (Mintu Sandhu): The hour being 5:30–5 p.m., committee rise.

CHAMBER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (16:10)

The Deputy Chairperson (Robert Loiselle): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of Executive Council. At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber and we ask the members to please introduce their staff in attendance.

The honourable Premier, to introduce your staff please.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes. I'd like to introduce Mark Rosner, Chief of Staff to the government, and Sarah Thiele, the Clerk of the Executive Council.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Braeden Jones, Chief of Staff.

The Deputy Chairperson: As previously stated, in accordance with subrule 78(16), during consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ewasko: So just want to remind the Premier of a note that I sent him, that—I'm writing in response to your letter to Premier Kinew. This is from one of his staffers: Pipeline's shut down, and I can assure you that the Manitoba government is closely monitoring this situation and is working with Imperial Oil to restore pipeline services quickly and safely. At this time, repairs to the pipeline are well under way and proceeding smoothly. We will continue to work with Imperial Oil and other fuel companies to ensure adequate fuel supply for all Manitobans. That's from his staff.

So I'm asking the Premier, how is he doing that.

Mr. Kinew: We're doing that by convening regular meetings with industry, suppliers, across departments of the government and keeping Manitobans informed. Very grateful to everybody who's been collaborating quite well on this. What could have been a very, very serious threat to the economy has been, instead, a testament to what can happen for the good of Manitobans when we work together.

However, I have to say, I have never seen an opposition try to filibuster and delay Estimates the way the Leader of the Opposition is today. More than an hour late for Estimates, wasting time, filibustering.

What is going on? I have a—you know, a strange, strange, strange impression of what is trying to be accomplished here in Estimates.

The leader himself fails to have discipline in his caucus. He has four of his MLAs break rank, including the former premier of Manitoba, and then he has to hide for more than an hour before he comes to Estimates. Estimates is supposed to be opposition time, and he can't avail himself of the opportunity to bring forward questions to government.

It's a far cry from the strong opposition that we served the people of Manitoba. And, of course, we are an excellent government, far better than the PCs were, particularly towards the end of their days.

But as we sit here, we have to recognize that when we want to talk pipelines, in the current context, there is a pipeline of hatred from the PC caucus room into the opposition benches. And the member opposite had a responsibility. He had a responsibility to the people of Manitoba to ensure that those hateful views that he might hear expressed around the table would not be expressed in this Chamber.

He was unable to do so. I don't know what happens in a room like that, where either there's not voices around the table listening to him or they're just disregarding his counsel, his direction. Perhaps there was no attempt on his part to try to bring these unreasonable voices to reason. Or perhaps he was simply incapable of making the argument. But in that case, where the leader is unable to heal the divisions within a split caucus, then it falls to other members around the table.

It was really something the other day when we saw the caretaker convention being violated and, again, the member opposite had to work himself up to make his way into Estimates time, and he surrounded himself with a circle of courage, and he had all the little MLAs from the caucus sitting around him to try and bolster his confidence. Well, we see now today, the circle of courage is dwindling. There's only a couple people willing to sit with him in the Chamber today.

But to those members, where were their voices? Member from Brandon West knows it would be the decent thing to do to not vote against trans recognition. Presumably, the member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram) knows the same thing. Why were those voices silent or unheard or unarticulated in caucus on the PC side of things?

This is Pride week. We're heading into the Pride parade here in a few days in Winnipeg. The thing that concerns me most about the conduct we witnessed on the other side of the aisle today is that the PCs knew exactly what they were doing. We're a few days before Pride weekend. Four members broke rank to vote against recognizing just something very basic in the form of human rights and dignity for trans people and two-spirit people.

But the fact that the other members come into the Chamber, the fact that they sit in the caucus room with those MLAs, it shows that they want to send a message, and that is very, very unfortunate and very shameful. Convince the unreasonable voices around your table to sit this one out. That's what you should have done. You failed. That reflects very poorly.

I can say for those four members, they are never going to serve in the Executive Council in this province. And the more that this sort of behaviour is tolerated amongst the PC caucus, the lower and lower the probability that any of those MLAs will ever serve in the Provincial Cabinet becomes.

* (16:20)

So again, I look forward to the member opposite, who's decided after more than an hour to come to Committee of Supply today. Let's see, is he going to filibuster all afternoon again? Is he going to take the full five minutes of every question? Or is he going to be in duck-and-cover mode, as he's been hiding all afternoon to date?

Mr. Ewasko: It looks like, honourable Chairperson, much like the honourable Speaker, you're going to have your work cut out for you, because it looks like the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is all in, back to some of his original roots as far as his bullying tactics. He's not going to be able to sit there and bully me.

I sit here today, and people can check the various recordings in Hansard and the livestream. The only one dodging Estimates and deflecting is the Premier himself. I was sitting in here waiting for him.

The lack of any answers to Manitobans speaks loudly from this Premier, and he comes in, starts throwing around innuendos and various different allegations, and he doesn't want to answer any questions. And so, again, how is he actually going to deal with adequate fuel supply?

So what do we look at? We had questions today in question period. No. What does the Premier want to do? He comes in, puffs in his—puffs out his chest

this afternoon, everyone. And, again, to Manitobans and to media, I invite you to come in, sit in the press gallery and watch the show when he is not on camera. He is more showman than statesman.

He continues to do that today. He's trying to come in here and bully not only me but my colleagues.

We gave a free vote on a bill. We value our members' voices, the ability to vote with their conscience and their constituents.

And if the media would have been in the press gallery, he would have seen the bullying nature of the Premier (Mr. Kinew). He's going back to his roots. This is nothing new with you-know-who, the MLA for Fort Rouge.

I've dealt with students in the past that have had behaviour issues, and I've worked with them quite closely. The Premier, when he decided to sign to sign up for this job—you can't help others if you have not helped yourself.

And so we know that the Premier is self-serving, we know that he can't help himself, we know that he's uncomfortable. You know, it's unfortunate that he has to go to some bullying techniques that he tried to do a few minutes ago and talk about various weak—and, you know, he's got to whip people in line, just like he's done his caucus.

Because what did he say at the end of question period today? He said something along the lines—and I'll get it for the next time we're—we have the opportunity for Estimates, but he said that if anybody disagrees with him, they will have to deal with him and there will be consequences.

The people that are surrounding him today—his MLAs—and I'm not begrudging and belittling any of his MLAs, because that's not who I am. But I'm giving a warning to all of you, a bit of a caution, what he did to Greg Selinger, what he's done to other people, he will do to you. Because you've seen the behaviour. You've seen it in your own caucus. You've seen it in your own caucus.

Now, the Premier—just so you can sort of look into your notes that your staff are going to give you—Manitoba has never entered into a contract with WEX, and this Premier decided to go and give \$98 million.

Can you explain that?

Mr. Kinew: A split caucus. What an abject failure of leadership. When's the last time a split caucus happened? Didn't end well for any leader who oversaw that.

The member opposite is the fourth PC leader that I've sat across the aisle from; he won't be the last. But a split caucus? Not a great legacy, I would say. And again, on an issue of human rights.

Member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) comes from a community where issues like this proved very divisive, but as I've said in this Chamber before, I'm very proud of the people of Brandon for coming together and sending a message that they support young people, people of all ages, who are part of the LGBTQ communities.

Member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth), one of the rebel PC caucus members, went out into the scrum and said, and I quote: I'm not against the LGBT community. End quote. It's a bizarre thing to have to assert.

It reminds me a lot of when the member opposite says that he's not intimidated, he's not scared. What are you even talking about? Who's even asking about intimidation or being scared? It's the sort of assertion that comes from somebody who has something either to prove or something to cover up.

And so again, with La Vérendrye's MLA, the person who voted against our colleague, Logan Oxenham's, bill—or rather, sorry, I withdraw that—our MLA for Kirkfield Park's bill earlier today, it really does seem that there is a serious issue here that needs to be addressed on the PC benches. The member opposite has shown himself incapable of addressing those issues.

A split caucus on a question of human rights in the days leading up to Pride. I'm not sure what the member opposite's ambitions were in politics, but this can't have been it. This can't have been it.

What were some of his first comments on the record after becoming Leader of the Opposition? Well, he told *The Globe and Mail* that he wanted to double down on the transphobic, queerphobic rhetoric that the PCs were defeated on in last year's election campaign.

So it seems that his time since being named to the leadership post to his time entering the spring break from sitting here at the Legislature is bookended. Some might say he's being dogged by his inability to show leadership on a question of human rights.

There are young kids in schools across Manitoba for whom safety is an important question. Mental health is an important consideration. The PC Party put their own internal deliberations and their own interests ahead of those children today.

And what was the great consensus, the great solve that they arrived at, at the end of them arguing amongst themselves over their own interests? People from, probably ridings like Roblin and Brandon West, on one hand, saying, we need to be able to show we're allies with the LGBTQ communities; and the people from Springfield-Ritchot, La Vérendrye, Steinbach and Borderland saying, there's no way that we can vote to respect human rights of trans and two-spirit people in the days leading up to Pride.

Those are the moments when leadership is required, when a consensus must be arrived at and built. And that didn't happen.

And so what was the great solve? The great solve was, well, we'll go out there with a split caucus and we'll just survive the day of terrible media on having MLAs break rank. It's not how I would've handled things, but again, the members opposite are seriously lacking in leadership.

There needs to be some reckoning on the PC benches. And Pride week, Pride month that we're heading into, of all times of the year, to say that, you know what, we're turning the page.

* (16:30)

And for all those members who are here today and just, you know, going along with it and hoping to say, when they get back to their constituencies, well, I was on the right side of things. No. These were the measures of your career as MLAs that are being taken. Today, you failed.

The Deputy Chairperson: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Chairperson, once again deflecting, dodging, denying. This is who he is, Manitobans. You're seeing this loud and clear, today, yet again. It's been many weeks of no answers coming from this Premier (Mr. Kinew). Anything that's important to Manitobans, he wants to shy away from.

And he tries to intimidate. He tries to, you know—and I know—oh, the Premier's smiling and laughing and nodding his head to it. And I know—I know, once again, that his favourite sport is wrestling. And he really enjoys that and intimidation.

We are not going to be intimidated by this Premier, and Manitobans should be worried.

And let me put something else on the record in regards to the Premier: the amount of disinformation that he puts on the record on a day-to-day basis in

these Chambers is a ton, to use a quote from the Premier, because sometimes he just doesn't have the right grasp on some vocabulary that he'd like to use.

He's nervous. He gets worried. He knows that his government is failing Manitobans on so many different files. He's going to take whatever he can and try to flip it around so he doesn't have to answer any questions. He can dodge the questions.

We talk about the fact that he cut out-of-province surgeries, leaving patients waiting for longer in pain. We saw evidence of people today who have had successful surgeries. But no; this Premier is stuck in his ideology. He's self-serving, and we've seen that for years, actually.

And then when he talks about leadership, and I ask the NDP caucus, some of the members that are here today: Are you okay mentioning something off-side with your leader? Because he will, as he said today, you disagree with him, he's going to take it into his own hands. You will have to answer to him and there will be consequences. He said that more than once.

And we've seen that in his past, too. People who have disagreed with the Premier, there's been consequences for them; some, unfortunately, to the point where there's been some hospitalization. That's not a good record.

And he continues today to put misinformation about myself and some of my colleagues on the record. That is not becoming of a Premier. Answer some questions, Premier, MLA for Fort Rouge.

Many businesses in your constituency have closed under your watch. We've lost opportunities in—economically here in this province because of you—*[interjection]* No, it's because of you. And so it's unfortunate that this Premier continues.

And so back to the questions about fuel. We tried to ask very serious questions today, and right now, just so people—

The Deputy Chairperson: Order. Order. Order. I'll just remind all members to direct your comments to the Chair.

Thank you. Merci.

Mr. Ewasko: So, going on with questions.

The Deputy Chairperson: Yes.

Mr. Ewasko: My time—

The Deputy Chairperson: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Ewasko: Yes. So thank you.

So, honourable Chairperson, it's unfortunate, and again, if the media were in the media gallery, they would have just witnessed the Premier (Mr. Kinew) bully the Chairperson to go with what he was saying. It's unfortunate, but this is who is leading our province.

And I'm not going to let this continue. Manitobans shouldn't let this continue. Your behaviour as a premier—unbecoming. Honourable Chairperson, the Premier's attitude and behaviour is unbecoming of a premier.

So the question to the Premier—hopefully, he'll answer this one, because this will be his last opportunity to answer a question of mine today—the last fuel contract awarded to Suncor was \$7 million in 2020. Why did Manitoba buy \$45 million worth of fuel in April while a pipeline was shut down?

The Deputy Chairperson: Order.

So, once again, I'd like to remind all members to direct their comments directly to the Chair and—through the Chair and refrain from using terms as you or, you know, you are, and direct your comments through the Chair, please.

Miigwech, merci.

Mr. Kinew: The issue that the PCs are trying to use to distract from their split caucus regarding fuel procurement in the province uses the same vendors as under the former government, though we're estimating a \$13.7-million savings compared to what they paid over a five-year period.

I got to say, Estimates is supposed to be opposition time. The Leader of the Opposition shows up an hour late and he taps out after three questions. What a failure of leadership. Again, he's not in his chair; he can't raise a point of order. Again, quitting after three questions, after being an hour late, on the same day that the Leader of the Opposition—or, sorry, rather, I withdraw the comment about him not being in his chair, but I say a reformulated assertion that yielding time in Estimates after merely three questions, after forcing the committee to wait more than an hour, shows a remarkable lack of leadership.

It's the same kind of lack of leadership that we saw from the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler), who votes against a bill and then can't go face the media. It's the same lack of leadership we saw from the PC caucus.

What is going on in this Estimates committee? Where is the official opposition? The PCs were sent here to do a job. This is PC time here in Estimates.

Again, I'll happily entertain questions from the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux); she brings forward some important constituency priorities. But I think the issues with the issues go much deeper than a split caucus.

Again, the time being yielded in Estimates by the Leader of the Opposition, when is the last time that happened? Certainly never happened while we were in opposition. We're better opposition, better government than the PCs, that much is clear. But even if the PCs aren't going to be on a level with us, should they at least be comparable to what other PC oppositions have been in the past? When is the last time that there was a split caucus amongst Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba? When is the last time a Progressive Conservative opposition was unable to ask questions of an NDP premier?

Again, my friend from Lac du Bonnet talks about misinformation—well, hey, table the article from The Globe and Mail in which he says he wants to put, and, I quote, an exclamation mark, end quote, on the parental rights issue. That's what he articulated earlier this year. I'd say he put quite the exclamation mark on it here today with the help of a former premier and the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth), the member for Springfield-Ritchot and the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter). Hello, I say to each of them. What a remarkable exclamation point.

The rough part for me, though, is that once again, just like in the election last year, the PCs kick up all this dust. They know exactly what they're doing, very, very cynical, and then they're going to walk away. And it's not them that have to contend with it; it's the young person in the community that has to contend with it.

Again, come on over, people of conscience, people who want to be on the side of young people in the province, people who think that being an ally to the LGBTQ community is a good thing, come on over. We also have a functioning caucus, a functioning leadership structure, the ability to articulate views and then form a consensus and go out in public and make the case to Manitobans about why we're taking action.

* (16:40)

PCs might claim to be a functioning political entity, but when you see this disaster of a performance

that we witnessed here today, I don't think any reasonable person can entertain a thought that they are a functioning political process.

So maybe they'll go out and campaign in Tuxedo tonight, or work the phones or whatever, and try to get their minds off of a disastrous performance by their leader and an abject failure of them to function as a caucus. When they look at the four MLAs who broke rank, they got to be wondering how much longer, right? Like, how much longer are they going to have to entertain this sort of nonsense?

And, again, happy to continue engaging in these questions, because there's a fundamental issue of respect for human rights at stake here. And yes, we will call it out every single time.

And yes, it's important that when the PCs think that they can use a wedge issue to target marginalized or vulnerable people in the community, that other folks who 'duv'—do have some purchase and power to speak will speak out, and that's us.

The Deputy Chairperson: Before we continue, and just for clarification, I'd like to remind everybody that we avoid mentioning the absence of any member.

And I'd like to thank the honourable Premier (Mr. Kinew) for retracting some of his earlier comments.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): We're limited on time here, so I just want to dive right into the questions. A few months ago I was able to bring forward a really important piece of legislation, Bill 209, otherwise known as Keira's Law. This legislation passed through second reading unanimously, with support of both the NDP party, the Conservative Party and, of course, myself, bringing it forward.

A tremendous amount of consultation went into this piece of legislation, meeting with groups from resource centres, women's shelters, groups from different constituencies throughout Manitoba who had reached out to me when I first introduced this legislation, as well as survivors of intimate partner violence and friends of family of Keira, where this legislation stems from. It's currently passed second reading, once again, unanimously, and needs to be called to committee.

Will the Premier call the bill to committee?

The Deputy Chairperson: Before we continue, and just for clarification, we're not here to speak specifically about bills. We can refer to bills, but we're not here to speak—[interjection]—the content of bills, but not the specific legislation.

Mr. Kinew: Happy to engage with the topic, and I appreciate the member bringing this forward, because this is something that we're working on.

Okay, so—and I'll try to frame my comments with respect to the direction that we were just given.

So just as background and, I will say, maybe, in lieu of referring to a specific bill, I'll say the member opposite's work on this subject, right? I want to acknowledge the member for doing this important work for years, right? This is a—issue she's brought up in this session, but I know prior to the last election, this is a topic that she's raised going back through the last Legislature and potentially even to the one before that; I can't remember the exact timing.

Folks on our side, similarly, have been working on this. We know our federal counterparts have advanced this project. I can tell the member opposite that we are working on this issue within the Department of Justice, in particular.

So this is a substantive change that is being contemplated, when the member raises this. And, in particular, there is a question that we always bear in mind between the division of the executive and legislative branches of government, and then of course the judicial branch, so the independence of judges, the independence of justices of the peace and so forth. That is a very important precept that we're trying to work around.

So I would first of all indicate that this is an important priority for us. This is something that we are actively working on, under way right now in the Department of Justice.

I think, perhaps, maybe we should invite the member in, and we can provide some updates with some of our officials and our minister, so that we can see if what we're doing internal to government is consistent with what the member's been advocating for. And, of course, she articulates an impressive list of people who have been doing leadership with respect to the policy question, but also in terms of, I guess, the lived experience, I'll say, on the topic itself.

So I guess what I would say for further clarity is that there are a number of paths for us to get to the same goal. Some of those might be through legislation, and some of those might be policy changes internal to government.

And so I would ask for perhaps some patience and the ability to work together on this with the member opposite, in light of the fact that, for us to get this right,

we need to move forward with some policy changes internal to government that have to be designed in such a way that we respect the independence of the judiciary. But absolutely no question, this is something that we want to move forward as a policy priority area.

MLA Lamoureux: I'd like to thank the Premier (Mr. Kinew) for his answer and, at the end of the day, what is important to me is that the substance of this legislation is, in fact, passed here in the province.

The issue at hand, honourable Chairperson, we're now in a position where there are people who want to be able to come and speak to the issue at committee, and I'm hoping this government speaks of being a government of open democracy and healthy democracy.

Will they call the—will they call legislation set before the House who already has—that already has presenters signed up to committee before the House rises for the summer?

Mr. Kinew: So I actually think there's a legitimate public value to having a committee on this because of the list of presenters, basically, that we would hear. And I heard the member opposite talk about folks who've been doing the public policy work, people with lived experience on intimate partner violence and gender-based violence, folks who've been doing advocacy at the federal level, provincial level.

I think it would be a worthwhile exercise for us to go through a public hearing, and that, again, I'm telling the member, is that we are doing work in this space. And so I could see how holding a committee would give us that additional opportunity to have a hearing of the facts, a hearing of the perspectives, to weigh different points as we entertain that work in government.

We're in the second-last day of session, pretty close to the end of the day, so I don't think I can commit, unfortunately, that we would have that committee prior to the House rising for the summer. But I can take this away and talk to the Justice Minister and say let's pull a committee together for the fall. And, in the meantime, let's invite the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) in, and just have a conversation about this important public policy priority area, yes.

MLA Lamoureux: And I truly do want to thank the Premier for saying what he has, and I know a lot of people who have signed up to speak at committee will feel heard just knowing that they're going to have the opportunity to come to the Legislature in the fall to speak to the important issue.

And, as the Premier mentioned, to me it doesn't matter how the legislation passes, but if these people are willing to come and speak now of their experiences of what they have learned, it can only add and contribute to it, whatever future legislation may need to be introduced or implemented.

Mr. Chairperson, I've got quite a few different questions here, just one on child care. I'm really trying to gather a stronger understanding on if the government members are, or are not, or what is the reasoning they cannot speak to the \$10-a-day child care currently?

Mr. Kinew: I thank the member for Tyndall Park for the question.

So actually, we can speak clearly on this issue. So the issue is that the PCs have been blocking the budgetary process, and they did so through the majority of the spring sitting on a bill that, in the end, I think they support, right? It was a bill to give law enforcement more tools to crack down on drug trafficking. Again, I'm not mentioning the specific content. I'm mentioning this legislation in terms of explaining a parliamentary procedure, which is to say that, in order for us to roll out new programs budgetarily, the budget has to pass.

Tax measures are different. Tax measures are assumed, for instance, like, an extension to the gas tax cut, which we put in the budget this year. It's assumed with a majority government that that is going to move ahead. But new budgetary programs require the budget to move through all stages in order for us to be able to roll out that program.

So some of the things that you've seen, for instance, the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) talking about additional funding for Green Teams. That's within an existing program. There's a few additional dollars going there.

* (16:50)

Some of the initiatives that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) may have spoken about. An existing program, there's more resources there.

This is a different policy area. Previously, the last government said that \$10 a day would not happen in the summer. So we have to roll out this new policy under government.

Had the members opposite passed the budget through all stages, we would've been in a position to do so this summer. We would've been able to move ahead with those things. Unfortunately, for multiple, multiple weeks, for reasons that only they can divine,

they decided to delay Bill 30. And then, I think, at the end of the day they supported it.

So what exactly the point was of reading the petitions very slowly was, what the hoists and reasoned amendments and chewing up the clock all afternoon was, I guess they wanted to get negotiating leverage so they could pass a Tyndall recognition bill and a licence plate bill? Okay. Those are their legislative priorities. But it comes at the expense of being able to do \$10-a-day child care this summer.

So, again, I understand maybe there's been some confusion in terms of the rationale of what's going on here, but that is the rationale. In order to roll out new policy spending, the budget has to pass. And so, again, there are other, you know, initiatives that are in this vein, and so you'll see us rolling out some of those things later on this year. So according to the current timeline, it's my hope that the budget passes by—well, it will pass by Remembrance Day. That's the nature of the rules of this place.

And so, I guess from that point on, we'll have that—what I think the member and I are both interested in, which is—I'll call it true \$10-a-day child care year-round. So, meaning the holidays, I guess, would be the next first thing coming up, meaning, like, statutory holidays. And then spring break, going into next spring. And then again next summer. Again, that's at this point what we'll be able to do in terms of a true \$10 a day.

So, again, little bit of a, maybe confusion, mea culpa, on our side, because it's our first time doing a budget. It's our first time going through a blackout period for a by-election, and so we're learning some of these rules. In some cases maybe some folks have been too cautious, and they could've provided this rationale. I'm providing it today in the interests of greater clarity and just, you know, providing an update.

I understand that the member opposite is very engaged with a lot of these—well, I'm sure the child-care centres in her constituency, but also the association, generally. And so I guess let's work together in terms of trying to communicate this. I'm not sure that we can put out the circular until after the by-election period, but hopefully, these public comments do provide some clarity.

If the PCs had passed the budget this spring, by this coming Monday, then we would've been able to do \$10-a-day child care. They chose to delay for

whatever reasons. As a result, new program spending is going to have to wait 'til the fall.

MLA Lamoureux: Just to further clarify that, the inability to discuss details of the \$10-a-day child-care program, it's specifically about the budget—not have been—being able to have been passed up until this point and has nothing to do with the blackout rules. Is that correct?

Mr. Kinew: I'm not sure what back-and-forth has occurred up to now, or comments in the media, but I can provide with clarity today that us not sending, you know, this information is not to do with the blackout. That may have been cited; I'm not sure. But the reason why this thing is not happening is because the budget has not passed.

And so we would have liked to pass a budget. Doesn't always pass, right? You—the member, rather, has been here many years in which an opposition in the past may have delayed the budget into the fall. Again, we were all colleagues at the time; we saw what happened there. But there is a consequence.

So, for instance, I think maybe a notable precedent for this would've been 2019, when the PST was cut in that year's budget. So that year, the PST cut as a tax measure, it was announced by the government; it took effect on July 1. And, in fact, because it was an issue that we were supportive of—we were fine with and supported lowering the provincial sales tax, we decided to pass the budget before the House rose for that summer that year.

As a result, that tax measure, but also the new program spending along with it, came into effect that summer. Other years, though, the member was here, we probably took issue with a lot of budget things, like health-care cuts as one example. And then, so we'd delay it to the fall.

In those years, tax measures would've taken effect on whatever day they were announced, like, say, July 1, as it was with the sales-tax cut.

But then new programming initiatives would've had to wait until Estimates, BITSA and royal assent for those processes.

MLA Lamoureux: I'll jump to one more topic here. It's about Lake St. Martin outlet channels.

The environmental assessment for the proposed Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin channels project was returned recently, which stated that there would be significant environmental impact on surrounding First Nations and communities.

Can the Premier (Mr. Kinew) say whether he still plans on proceeding with this project?

Mr. Kinew: Well, this is a very important question.

There are many folks whose livelihoods and lives are caught up in the balance. You have ranchers around Lake Manitoba. You have First Nations in the Interlake and on the west side of Lake Manitoba, amongst many other communities. You have cottagers and year-round residents in communities like Twin Lakes Beach and others who were impacted by the 2011 flood.

So it's clear that flood mitigation is needed in the Interlake. We do have to find a path forward here to be able to move water through that region.

The flood of 2011 was very devastating. I covered that as a reporter at the time. So, actually, the first place we went was in this region; we were in Dauphin River around March 30 of that year. And then we shot over to the southwestern corner of the province, communities like Melita and Souris. And then, effectively, we followed the water on through Brandon, where we were for a couple of weeks, and then, you know, we're doing reports from there. Eventually, you know, Portage, Delta, and then to the Interlake, Twin Lakes Beach, St. Laurent, Peguis and other communities, in the midst of all those, and, you know, I was there for the evacuation of Lake St. Martin, the community, not the—just the lake itself, to be clear.

So there was a huge human impact. Some folks continue to be impacted by this and continue to be concerned when they have weather patterns on Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba.

What the federal government has articulated is that there are some concerns that are on the environmental side, as well as the required engagement with First Nations and Indigenous communities when it comes to the existing design of the channels project.

This is a testament to the very poor job that the previous administration under the PC Party did. Again, the engagement approach and the consultation with First Nations was inadequate. And I think the federal government, through their approvals process, is now starting to call that out.

There is going to be a bit of a timeline to come with respect to the federal process, and we can, I think, come back with some information about, maybe, some of the next steps that we anticipate with the federal government. I'm sure the member opposite, you know, has her own sources with some of the federal contacts she has.

But, effectively, we anticipate that there's going to be a few more stages of the federal government weighing in. It might potentially go to the federal Cabinet, prior to them making a final decision. In the meantime, information is going back and forth between the provincial government and the federal government where we continue to respond to some of their requests for information that they have.

But what I would flag for the member is in that interim period where we're trying to address the failures around consultation and, you know, engagement with Indigenous communities and some of the environmental concerns that the federal government has flagged, in the interim, we now have many of these First Nations communities who've come forward and said very clearly, we do not consent. That causes a lot of concern, right?

And so we're at a pretty difficult place. We've inherited a challenging situation from the last administration, which is that we all know that we need flood mitigation in this region and probably more than just this immediate question of how do we move water from the Assiniboine through lake-saint-or, Lake Manitoba into Fairford, you know, like, Lake Pineimuta, Lake St. Martin and onto Lake Winnipeg, that whole question.

But also—and I'm sure the member will raise this in the future—the question of flood mitigation in Peguis, right, along the Fisher River.

The Deputy Chairperson: Order.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Acting Speaker (Robert Loiselle): The hour being 5, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 30, 2024

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