

**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*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon, everyone.

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**The Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Oh.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Acting Official Opposition House Leader):** On House business.

#### House Business

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook), on House business.

**Mrs. Cook:** Honourable Speaker, I seek leave to allow the Opposition House Leader to call Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, to a committee of this House before the end of the First Session of the 43rd Legislature.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the Opposition House Leader to call Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, to a committee of this House before the end of the First Session of the 43rd Legislature?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Routine proceedings.

Introduction of bills?

Committee reports?

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**The Speaker:** And I have a report to table in accordance with section 29(3) and 30(6) of The Advocate for Children and Youth Act. I am tabling the annual report and service plan of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, I am tabling this sequence for departmental Estimates for today.

Miigwech.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Recognizing Health-Care Support Workers

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Today, I'm so happy that we're joined by health-care support workers. They're here in the gallery with us.

You do incredible work every single day for patients across Manitoba.

Now, we wanted to recognize health-care support workers' day today in the House because last week, we were not sitting during Health Care Support Workers' Week.

We are so grateful for the commitment of health-care support workers to our province, to our communities and to our loved ones. These folks care for our loved ones when we cannot. They provide daily support, be it emotional or physical support, and increase the quality of life for those who need it.

Each and every day, health-care support workers bring compassion, patience and strength to their work. It's critical that support workers are treated with the respect they deserve in our province. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the challenges and difficulties that health-care support workers have faced over the last seven and a half years.

The damage that was caused by the former government's neglect and disregard for front-line health-care workers, like you folks with us today and those Manitobans on the front lines of our health-care system, has had a lasting impact on our ability to deliver quality health care to Manitobans. They froze your wages for over five years. They denied you the ability to practice to your full scope. They cut your jobs and they ignored your voices. The members opposite and their friends refused to do the bare minimum and even meet you at the negotiating table.

On this side of the House, we're focused on changing the culture in health care and listening to front-line health-care workers. We have been on a listening tour, listening to front-line health-care support workers for the past—over one year, and we have heard directly from you folks and your colleagues across the province what you need to see in health care to make your work-life balance, your workplaces, your lives and the work that you do every single day more fulfilling. And we're

proud to listen to your voices and to do that work alongside these front-line health-care experts.

We are working together to change the culture in health care and that starts by listening, and we're going to continue to do that. I'm so glad that we were able to meet health-care support workers at the negotiating table and come to a fair deal.

I want to take a moment to thank MGEU and to thank CUPE for their partnership. We know how you bring voices of the front lines forward, and the advocacy that you do for your members is commendable. And together, we need to take care of those who care for us and our loved ones.

Support workers will no longer be overlooked. Their contributions to our province will be forever remembered and respected by our government. We're creating a health-care system that works for you and for the people of our great, great province. I'm so proud to be part of a team and government that understands the importance of the relationships we have with front-line health-care workers and prioritize their well-being.

As a registered psychiatric nurse myself, I have seen first-hand the challenges and the complexities of our health-care system. I know the realities faced by front-line health-care workers: the long shifts, the late nights and sometimes the little to no thanks for the work that you all do. I have been so proud as a nurse for many years to work shoulder to shoulder alongside these very support workers, and it's a privilege and an honour to serve in this role and work shoulder to shoulder alongside with all of you to make health care a better place for Manitobans.

We look forward to our continued partnerships and bringing care closer to home for those who need it, and I am dedicated to creating a system that works for all of us and for all of you. And so today, we celebrate you. We recognize the invaluable contributions that each of you make to our health-care system, and we are committed to supporting you in that work. Together, we will continue to build a health-care system that values every single health-care worker and patient and their families in Manitoba.

I want to thank the health-care support workers who have joined us in the gallery today.

Thank you for your hard work, thank you for your dedication, thank you for your commitment to making a difference in the lives of others. Happy Health Care Support Workers' Week. I'd ask you all to stand so we

can all honour you and celebrate you in the Chamber today.

Thank you.

*Jen Bamford, health-care representative; Karen Brown, vice-president, CUPE 204; Claire Campbell, president, CUPE 1475; Gord Delbridge, president, CUPE 500; Dale Edmunds, CUPE representative; Nino Jurial, health-care representative; Alex McClurg, health-care co-ordinator; Matt Mclean, CUPE researcher; Lee McLeod, regional director, CUPE; Limson Mestito, unit president, Riverview Health Centre, CUPE 500; May Quinto, president, CUPE 2180; Trish Sinclair, health-care representative; Jennifer Tucay, president, CUPE 2421*

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I, too, would like to welcome the health-care support workers that have joined us in the gallery today.

Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature.

And I rise to recognize and sincerely thank those dedicated health-care support workers across Manitoba, individuals who are the backbone of our health-care system. Day in and day out, health-care support workers provide critical services in hospitals, clinics and long-term-care facilities. They are the ones ensuring patients receive the best care possible. The facilities are clean, the supplies are stocked, that everyone has a hot meal and that patients have a compassionate presence when they need it most.

And I just want to share an anecdote about a health-care support worker that I know. She works in the kitchen of a rural hospital and there was a longer-term patient in that hospital who was vegan, and anybody who's vegan—I'm not personally—but they will tell you that sometimes the menu options are not great.

But this health-care support worker took it upon herself to take what they had in the kitchen and put together just a really good hot meal for that patient. And that made such a difference in his day. He actually said to her, you saved my life today. And he was so grateful, and that's, you know, she typically doesn't get a lot of glory in her job; there's not a lot of accolades and not a lot of thank-yous, but I know that meant a lot to her. And that speaks to what dedicated health-care support workers do and the difference that they can make in patients' lives.

But, Honourable Speaker, these workers deserve more than just thanks and words. They deserve meaningful action from this government. A recent poll from

Manitoba nursing union members, who are important colleagues of the health-care support workers that join us in the gallery today, revealed that 88 per cent of its members do not believe the NDP government has made any meaningful improvements to the health-care system over the past year. They say nothing has changed. That's nearly nine out of 10 of our front-line health-care workers saying their work is made harder, every day, because of this government's failure to live up to its huge election promises.

Health-care workers, including health-care support workers, have been in our inboxes, on social media and all over the province, saying they do not feel heard by this NDP government. And as we saw this morning during private members' hour, the NDP is far more concerned with patting itself on the back than taking meaningful action for health-care workers and for patients across Manitoba. We owe our health-care support workers more than just gratitude; we owe them action.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Punjabi Community Health Services

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Today I would like to recognize Punjabi Community Health Services Manitoba.

\* (13:40)

PCHS was established in 2022 to address the health and mental wellness needs of Manitoba's growing South Asian population. They got charitable status in August 2024.

PCHS provides grassroots community-based services that support clients and families, accommodating their needs by meeting them in their communities, homes or cultural spaces, ensuring that their clients are connected to the appropriate resources as soon as possible.

PCHS has identified the need for a women's counsellor and emphasized the importance of ongoing system navigation and outreach support from their social worker. PCHS Manitoba has developed partnerships that focus on the well-being of the South Asian population in Manitoba.

Working with the restorative justice committee, the PCHS is ensuring that clients in the legal system receive culturally appropriate mental health counselling and family services. Recently they partnered with the Ontario PCHS branch to launch a South Asian youth peer support group next fall and refine accredited

group therapy programs in a South Asian cultural context.

Through an evidence-based approach, the PCHS aims to build community capacity with a focus on prevention, wellness and cultural competency through collaborations that work towards meeting the needs of Manitoba's growing South Asian population.

Please join me in welcoming PCHS vice chair, Rupinder Brar, secretary on the board and contracted social worker, Roni Dhaliwal, and volunteers to the gallery and in recognizing the incredible work they do in supporting the well-being of Manitobans.

Shukria [*Thank you*], Honourable Speaker.

### Ryan Kristalovich

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Today, I honour Mr. Ryan Kristalovich.

Ryan is a resident of Lorette, Manitoba. He has dedicated his career protecting and promoting public safety. He also volunteers his time within Lorette and the hockey community.

Around Christmastime, after not feeling bright, he went to his doctor and was sent to a surgeon. It was at this time that the surgeon advised him that they had found a cancerous tumour. He then went to surgery to remove the tumour along with many lymph nodes. There was a node with cancer found. Ryan started a three-month chemotherapy cycle and on August 27, 2024, he received his last chemo treatment.

As some of you may know, when you are done your treatment, you ring a bell to signify your end of a—of your treatment and to signify a positive look forward. Unfortunately, at the clinic, there was no bell. His wife posted on a local Facebook page, asking the community members to step outside, honk a horn, bang on a pot or ring a bell. On August 7, unbeknownst to him, horns and honking started.

The Lorette fire department led a parade of over 40 vehicles, all honking and ringing, celebrating the end of Ryan's treatment. Ryan was completely overwhelmed at that moment, having no idea what—that it was going to happen. And he was extremely shocked with the support.

We contacted Ryan to ask for some words of advice for others who might be going through their health battles. His answer was: family and community.

During a cancer diagnosis, there are many uncertainties, so many fears, and the key to his mental support

was family and friends. Ryan says the hockey community in Lorette would check in, make sure him and his family knew they were there for all the support that may have been needed.

He was so incredibly grateful for his employer, for his co-workers and the constant check-ins and well-wishes, his family and friends and his neighbours and even some strangers, to ensure they were all okay.

Ryan, thank you for being open and sharing your story, because there are many individuals who found hope and peace in your journey. Colleagues, please stand and welcome Ryan.

Ryan, we are here with you, standing in your corner.

### **Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry**

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** Today I rise to recognize the extraordinary bravery of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry for their response to the recent wildfires in Jasper. This summer, Jasper faced devastating fires, and when help was needed, the soldiers of 2 PPCLI from Shilo responded swiftly, showing courage and selflessness.

And as a former firefighter, I understand the immense challenges of firefighting: the physical and mental demands, the risks and the need for quick, decisive action. These soldiers faced these challenges with resilience, and their dedication is both commendable and inspiring.

The efforts of 2 PPCLI exemplify the highest standards of service. Working closely with officers, first responders and government officials, they played a vital role in firefighting, evacuation support and protecting the community. Their commitment to service before self stands as a powerful example for us all. And in the face of unprecedented wildfire challenges, 2 PPCLI mobilized with skill and a profound sense of purpose.

Today, we honour the members of 2 PPCLI and all emergency responders for their unwavering courage. They are a source of hope and strength for our communities, and we are deeply grateful for their service.

Manitoba is proud to be home to 2 PPCLI and the Canadian Armed Forces members who embody the best of our province and our country, always ready to answer the call.

I would like to acknowledge the following members of 2 PPCLI who have joined us here in the gallery today: Lieutenant-Colonel Braybrook, Chief Warrant Officer Barter, Warrant Officer Ryan, Private Pilipaites,

Corporal Guiboche, Master Corporal Stevens and Master Corporal Salustro.

Thank you so much.

### **Celebrating 150 Years of Mennonites in Manitoba**

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** This year marks 150 years of Mennonites in Manitoba.

To commemorate this anniversary, I joined many constituents in the village of Neuberghthal several weeks ago for a screening of *Where the Cottonwoods Grow*, a documentary by filmmaker and Halbstadt native Dale Hildebrand.

The film tells the story of the first Mennonite migration from southern Russia to southern Manitoba between 1874 and 1880, with a focus on the difficult circumstances they faced. Both United States and Canada were aggressively competing at that time to attract Mennonites to their open prairies, and 10,000 moved to places like Kansas, while 7,000 moved to southern Manitoba. Some Mennonites stayed in the east reserve, the area in which Steinbach is located, while others moved to the west reserve, in which Altona and Winkler are located.

After disembarking at the confluence of the Red and Rat rivers and spending one month at Fort Dufferin near Emerson, they struck out further west, but not before tragically suffering the loss of over 30 babies and children in one month due to sickness.

It was the Mennonites who first dug wells and found water west of the Red River, and so established communities that today are peaceful and prosperous. Thousands of Mennonites would be prosecuted, heavily fined and even jailed in the 1910s and '20s for exercising their right to raise their children in their own schools as opposed to government-run schools.

Despite their pacifist views, they bought more war bonds in World War I than the average Manitoban, and half of eligible young men volunteered to fight in World War II. Mennonites have always been generous and compassionate, and they established organizations like Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee, the MCC thrift stores that are still popular in our communities today.

Olympian Cindy Klassen, philanthropist and businessman Johnny [*phonetic*] Buhler and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), former premier and now a distinguished member of the opposition backbenches, represents some of the contributions of Mennonites to Manitoba's rich cultural fabric.

Here's to the next 150 years.

### Manitoba Summer Games Volunteers

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Honourable Speaker, today I would like to recognize the volunteers responsible for the success of the 2024 Manitoba summer games in Dauphin.

This past August, games took place in Dauphin, Gilbert Plains golf club, Northgate Trails and Manipogo Provincial Park.

Over 1,500 athletes, 300 coaches and 750 volunteers participated. Carla Wolfenden and Clayton Swanton were the games co-ordinate chairs. Due to pandemic delays for over six years, they dedicated their time to working with Sports Manitoba and 39 subcommittees.

\* (13:50)

During the games, 700 volunteers worked daily shifts from 4:30 a.m. 'til 11 p.m. This represented over 14,000 of hours of volunteering.

My wife Judy and I can attest to the exceptional organization of the games. Co-ordinator Bryan Mento [*phonetic*] was one paid staff for the games who did excellent job.

Over \$2.5 million in capital infrastructure projects were leveraged for the games. Improvements to the Northgate Trail, building a new rubberized track, construction of an outdoor basketball court at the local high school reflects the legacies of the games.

Thank you to all the ones that were involved.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I have several guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce.

First off, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Duane Davison and Scott Phillips, who are the guests of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson).

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

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members at public gallery, where we have with us today Gord Delbridge, Lee McLeod, Karen Brown, Trish Sinclair, Matt McLean, Dale Edmunds, Limson Mestito, Nino Jurial, Alex McClurg, Jen Branford [*phonetic*], Claire Campbell, Jennifer Tucay, May Quinto, who are the guests of the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara).

We welcome all of you here today.

For the—[*interjection*] I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Ryan Kristalovich, who is a guest of the honourable member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé).

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

I would like to also draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Louise Chernetz and George Chernetz, who are the guests of the honourable member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Security Rebate Program Small Business Uptake

**The Speaker:** Oral questions. [*interjection*] The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, the NDP promised \$2.5 million for security rebates, announced only \$500,000, tricked media into covering it more than three times with fake increases. The \$2-million budget still fell short of the original promise.

Now, we're hearing only \$300,000 is out the door after a complete year. And worse, Honourable Speaker, less than 2 per cent went to businesses.

Will the Premier accept personal responsibility for failing to support Manitoba businesses and apologize for the photo op that him and his minister takes on multiple occasions?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** This is a great initiative and I'm very proud of the work that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has done to help Manitobans in their time of need.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate David Eby on his re-election as the Premier of British Columbia. It's great news to see that we'll be able to get to work together to help people right across western Canada. And I want to say that, even though I have taken the opportunity to joke with him a little bit about how long it took to count the votes, I will be working very, very closely with him on our shared interests around health care and affordability.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague, Scott Moe, on his re-election last night.

Now, Scott is the dean of the premiers across Canada and I always look forward to having conversations with him at the Council of the Federation. And now that we have that news, I know that those good chats will continue. And, of course, perhaps our two teams will meet in the CFL's Western Final as well, so stay tuned for that.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Yes, from our PC team as well, we'd like to congratulate Mr. Scott Moe and, of course—and David Eby, and both are extremely great leaders for their provinces.

Unlike the Premier, who dodged again and denied to answer any questions in regards to making sure that our Manitoba businesses are safe right here in Manitoba.

Matter of fact, crime is up 11 per cent year over year, and it's getting worse under this Premier. Victims endured hardships and incurred costs. Premier, on the record, repeatedly claiming security rebate makes small businesses safer. That's just clearly not true, Honourable Speaker. Very few even applied and even less were successful.

Will the Premier commit today to a security program designed specifically to help Manitoba businesses?

**Mr. Kinew:** Businesses across Manitoba have been giving us very good feedback on the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Wiebe) initiative to combat retail theft.

In fact, the only question that we typically get is, when are you going to be able to expand these successful initiatives to more parts of the province, and I can tell you that we are hard at work to ensure that that same data-driven, results-focused approach is going to reach out to more parts of Manitoba.

We can point to increases for law enforcement in this year's budget. We can point to a security rebate program which is getting money into the hands of Manitobans at a time that they need it.

We could also point the finger at an opposition that tries to delay and disparage a bill designed to combat crimes using machetes in the province.

Again, it's unclear where they stand on public safety, but we can say this unequivocally on our side of the House: we stand with you to make Manitoba safer.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** The only finger pointing the Premier should be doing is to his House leader, who has absolutely shown how dysfunctional that team of NDP Cabinet ministers can be, Honourable Speaker.

But this is what the Premier does. He uses political messaging to generate photo ops. Four announcements for a single program, still fell half a million short of its budget, but he quadrupled the original amount. It's all spin, Honourable Speaker, and Manitobans just aren't buying it. He then uses that coverage as a shield if ever criticized.

We asked in this House, what will you do to make businesses safer? He responded, security rebate. We know now that this is not true and that was designed to only trick people, Honourable Speaker.

The Premier has the opportunity to rise in his place today and apologize for misleading all Manitobans.

Will he do this—will he do so today, Honourable Speaker?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, I look at the opposition benches some days and, you know, they're just wondering what is going on with their leader when he starts in question period.

So I'll just, you know, maybe pose some questions for the members opposite. Do you respect law enforcement? Do you want law enforcement to get more funding? Do you want government to be helping Manitobans feel safer?

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

I would just remind the First Minister that comments need to be directed through the Chair, not directly to members.

The honourable leader of the—the honourable First Minister. *[interjection]*

Stop the clock, please.

The honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, no, that wasn't the end of my answer. I sat down because you stood—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable First Minister does have a couple of seconds left.

**Mr. Kinew:** So I ask the members opposite: Do you like law enforcement? Do you want to see them get the proper resources? Do you want a government that takes action to make Manitobans safer?



Well, I say to the PCs: You've got it with the Manitoba NDP.

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

### Public Safety Government Record

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, again, showcasing today the Premier, in all his glory, being part of the Broadway bullies of the NDP side.

\* (14:00)

In the spring, Honourable Speaker, the Premier went to a public safety summit. He told attendees, and I quote, Manitobans are feeling unsafe at home, at work and in our—in their communities.

After more than one year of the NDP being in government, can the Premier please share—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:**—whether Manitobans feel safer at home, at work or in their communities?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** We know that public safety is an important priority for government. And where previous PC governments wanted to go pick fights in Ottawa, we are focused on you, the people right here in Manitoba.

And so what I told attendees at the public safety summit in the spring is that we're going to be tough on crime. We're also going to be tough on the causes of crime.

We have increased funding for police forces right across the province, after years of their funding being frozen under the PCs. But this year, again, over the objections of the Progressive Conservatives under Heather Stefanson, we brought in a universal school meal program. That ensures that every child who shows up at school can learn because they don't have an empty stomach. And when we extrapolate out over the generations-long timeline, we know that that will not only help to make communities safer right across Manitoba, it's going to also lead to better health, educational and economic outcomes as well.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** We know that this Premier prefers fighting with his own—within his own caucus just like his mentor, Greg Selinger, enjoyed doing.

Honourable Speaker, the Justice Minister said the public safety summit was, I quote, part of the NDP government's plan to get tough on crime, end quote. It's confusing, because they talked about having a plan for years when in opposition and, again, just not true, Honourable Speaker.

That was more than six months ago. More than half of Manitobans surveyed say they feel less safe than they did three years ago. Violent crime is on the rise. Random stabbings and violent attacks are more common even in the NDP caucus, and more businesses are victims of crime as well.

What actions has his government taken since the public safety summit, Honourable Speaker?

**Mr. Kinew:** In this year's budget, we increased funding to law enforcement by way of urban policing grants by 28 per cent. It's nearly a 30 per cent increase in our first year in office.

And now we know that the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) or the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) or whoever is kicking the can of PC leadership down that very dusty, boring road is probably, you know, trying to ignore the recollections of their defund-the-police billboards.

One thing we can say for certain: the only people trying to defund the police in Manitoba are the members opposite because last night they voted against our budget's increase to law enforcement in Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary—

Order, please. Order, please.

I'd just ask the government bench, in particular, to calm down a little. We had a good day yesterday. Let's try and keep it going today.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Once again, we see the Premier stand up in this House and put disinformation on the record, as usual. But there's nothing new with you-know-who, the MLA for Fort Rouge.

The stats don't lie, Honourable Speaker. Violent crime is on the rise, up 31 per cent over a five-year average. And, according to a new report, the number of small businesses directly impacted by crime and community safety issues has nearly doubled over one year.

The CFIB says this impact on mental health and well-being is truly frustrating. Some businesses lock their doors while operating for safety. Businesses say they feel frustrated and helpless.

I know that the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) is waiting to get up and say a few words. Maybe they will turn to their Premier and ask for time on the clock, Honourable Speaker.

The NDP's response, according to CBC, is to force the police to work more overtime.

Can the Premier confirm that he has no plan other than forcing burnout on the police, and can he provide—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The member's time has expired.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. Sorry. The honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Kinew:** Sincerely, I want to thank you for interrupting, because now the cringing is over for the members opposite.

We know that the situation for workers on the front lines is a very serious responsibility that all of us in government need to uphold. That's why we have been taking action in initiatives not just like the retail theft, which has gotten very positive reviews from business leaders and from front-line employees, but also through investments like the Downtown Community Safety Partnership, which we are now seeing some very encouraging data from over the additional investment that we were able to provide this summer. Of course it extends to 190 Disraeli, where we are seeing additional investments in a health-based approach to many of the addictions crises that we see.

So what we're bringing forward, Honourable Speaker, is a comprehensive approach, something that lacked for years under the members opposite, who wanted to infantilize Manitobans with catchphrases and slogans. A real public safety approach is here under this government. It's mature—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

#### **Assault on U of M Student Campus Safety Concerns**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** The recent brutal assault on a University of Manitoba student by a high-risk sex offender with an extensive history of violent and sexual crimes is deeply concerning.

This young woman, demonstrating immense strength, was forced to fend for herself against an intruder in her own dorm room, who reportedly attempted to choke and suffocate her. In the wake of this horrific incident, University of Manitoba students are expressing grave concerns about safety on campus, particularly within their dormitory.

With students and staff understandably shaken, what specific actions is the NDP taking to support post-secondary institutions to ensure student safety on campus?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** This is a question that I am sad that I have to stand up on at all. It's a really unfortunate incident, and I just want first and foremost to speak to the survivor and commend you for your bravery and to let you know that our hearts are with you and with the full campus community.

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

#### **High-Risk Sex Offenders Increased Surveillance Request**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** The individual accused of this horrific act is a convicted sex offender, about whom two warnings have been issued since his initial release from prison late last year. He has committed multiple violent sexual assaults and has been deemed a high risk to reoffend. Tragically, that assessment appears to have proven accurate, and now another young woman's life has changed forever.

The onus should not be on women to be strong in the face of violence, no matter how strong they are. The onus is on the government to do everything it can to keep these violent crimes from happening at all.

In the wake of this horrific act, will the Minister of Justice today commit to expanding surveillance for high-risk sex offenders in Manitoba?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I want to join with my colleague to express our deepest sympathies for the victim in this case and to all students who are feeling unsafe right now.

As the member outlined, this is a federal jurisdiction, and we know that premiers from across the country joined together to advocate directly to the Prime Minister recently, to enhance bail and to make our communities safer by making—reviewing and making changes once again at the federal level.

I joined with my counterparts in Yellowknife just recently. The provinces were united in that same call, and we communicated that directly to the federal ministers. We'll continue to bring that message directly to Ottawa.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Well, bail reform is desperately needed, but it wouldn't have helped in this case. According to Statistics Canada, three out of every 10 women over the age of 15 have been sexually assaulted at least once since their 15th birthday.

Since last week, I, and I know others, have received multiple emails and phone calls from constituents who are appalled by this horrific incident. Sexual violence in our community strikes fear into the hearts of all women, vulnerable persons and the people that love them.

The attack at the U of M underscores the urgent need for decisive government action. People in our community do not feel safe right now.

Will the NDP commit today to ensuring that high-risk offenders are better tracked, surveilled and managed, especially around universities and other areas with vulnerable—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, as the member opposite identified, there are steps that we can take within the province of Manitoba with regards to tracking and ensuring safety for all, and especially the vulnerable in our community. We are proud this summer to reinstate the electronic monitoring program, a program that, unfortunately, was cut under Heather Stefanson.

We were able to bring that back, and what we're going to be doing is expanding that program and looking for more opportunities to ensure that there's safety in our communities. We're willing to work with law enforcement, with our courts and judges to make sure we get it right, and there's going to be more news on this front very shortly, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Release of Violent Offenders Public Safety Concerns**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** This Saturday in broad daylight, a woman was a victim of a horrific and violent carjacking just blocks away from this very place. She suffered significant injuries trying to go about her day when the criminals ran her over with her own vehicle. This is just one of a series of violent crimes with shocking headlines in recent days.

Manitobans deserve to feel safe, end of story. Instead, we have a Premier (Mr. Kinew) that tells the media he's shocked to hear about a violent offender accidentally released by his own government.

What is the minister doing to restore the public's faith in public safety?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, Honourable Speaker, it starts with a relationship with community, with law enforcement, with businesses, and with so many in our community who are working towards the same goal. It's about being one Manitoba, looking for solutions together.

And I think the basis for that conversation and for that relationship starts by listening, and it starts by showing in real terms how we're willing to fund our police and make sure that they have the resources that they need. As the Premier mentioned, 28 per cent in this year's budget to ensure that police have the resources that they need. This is just one step that we're taking to show police, municipalities, local leadership and community that we're serious about this and we're getting to work as a government. There's more to come, Honourable Speaker.

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

#### **Request for Bail Reform**

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, Manitobans want to see their government take action. Instead, all we get is regular reminders of the NDP mentality. Members who spoke against calls for bail reform and said it was unneeded now sit in power as average citizens are forced to intervene and stop violent robberies while out for dinner, only to read that as citizens, they held the assailant longer than this Justice Minister's justice system.

How many Manitobans need to suffer life-altering injuries before this minister realizes that we can't go at it alone and we need real, strong bail reform?

**Mr. Wiebe:** And the member opposite knows we took action immediately, a five-point bail plan developed in conjunction with the National Police Federation, who brought real solutions that we could implement here in Manitoba.

But if we want to talk about the mentality, the PC mentality when it came to violent crime in our community, of course, there wasn't an extra cent in a PC budget for law enforcement over seven years, and what did we see? Aggravated assault was the second highest in the country. Sexual assault, the first or second highest rate every single year from '16 to '23; robbery, the highest rate every year from '16 to '23; homicides increased every single year from 2018 and was double the second-place city.

All the while, not one—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** Offenders know that they can be out on the streets again in the blink of an eye under this government's watch. Sometimes after a judge has even specifically labeled them a do not release. When the Premier (Mr. Kinew) with a small army of political staff regularly express that he's finding out information in the media, it shakes Manitobans' faith to know that no one is really at the wheel.

Will the minister tell the public today if the review of the failings will be internally or externally reviewed, and will he commit to releasing the full list of these recommendations to all Manitobans?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, Honourable Speaker, the most important thing when it comes to incidents like this is ensuring that the public has the information as quickly as possible.

I do want to take a moment to just recognize the incredible work of the RCMP to secure the individuals in question to make sure that the community was safe and to get that information, as well, back out to the community. As well, our integrated violent offender apprehension unit, who just recently recognized their 500th arrest, is to be commended here as well. They just brought out a new website for Manitoba's most wanted. We're seeing good results there as well.

You know, this kind of work, Honourable Speaker, is important. It's important to Manitobans. We know that we get this—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

### **Victim Services—Wait Times Constituent Concern**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, in August a teenager was brutally assaulted with a machete and required three surgeons to repair the damage to his hands, nerves and scarring on his face. He qualifies for the Compensation for Victims of Crime program, but his mother waited weeks for a response from the department. This is unacceptable.

Can the minister share what are the average wait times—what the wait—average wait time is? How long do victims have to wait to get a response from Victim Services?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, as I shared last night as we were attempting to move our machete—our bill on restriction of machetes through the Legislature here late into the night last night, we—our heart goes out to all victims. In fact, we had a chance to—I had a chance to put some words on the record directly to that young person who experienced this horrific attack.

It is important to take action on machetes, and, of course, we're working towards that. What I do want to say, though, is when it comes to victims of crime, we've been in touch with that family directly to ensure that the supports are in place, and we're willing to work with any victims to ensure that they have support from our department; it's an important part of what we do.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, it wasn't until the mother went to the media that she got a response. This was after she waited a month. Her son required specialized equipment in order to cover—recover at home that would be incredibly costly. She described the lack of a—of communication from the office as disrespectful.

What steps has this minister taken to ensure this oversight and delay is not repeated for future inquiries into the program?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, these are good questions, and I appreciate the questions and the tone in which they're being asked because I think it's an issue that all sides can come together on.

What we were able to ensure was that we doubled the number of adjudicators with Victim Services to ensure that we have the right resources in place. We identified issues with regards to the forms that victims and their families were having to fill out and to ensure that that information was more clear.

And, of course, there's more to come, Honourable Speaker. We'll be talking more about victims and steps that we can take as a government to ensure that they get the support that they need.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, victims of crime and violent attacks often require complex care, and costs can add up quickly. Many can't afford to cover the costs they need to cover the necessary equipment and care they require to recover at home.

It is unacceptable that it took coverage by the media to get a response from this office.

With increasing attacks and the unfortunate reality that more victims will need to access supports, what is the minister doing to ensure timely communication from his department?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, it's important to note that the case manager was in touch with the family. I know that additional resources and support were provided, and I think that's an important success but obviously more to do.

That's why, as part of our public safety strategy, we're going to be talking more about the rights of victims and the ability of government to ensure that the right resources are in place, and it's an important priority. It's not just about, as we talked about, being tough on crime but the causes of crime and support for victims is an important part of that entire package.

So it's going to be something the minister—the member opposite, I hope, will support going forward. It's work that we're intending to take on very soon.

\* (14:20)

### **Rural Property Crime Request for Plan to Address**

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** Property crime is on the rise, particularly in rural Manitoba, with Manitobans feeling like there are less and less consequences for those that are perpetrating these offences.

The minister has failed to respond to this issue in any real or significant way.

So when is this NDP government going to get serious, introduce real consequences for those criminals and stop the crime?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** You know, I was pleased as part of our public safety summit to not only start in Winnipeg with over 500 attendees coming together—community, law enforcement, municipal leaders—but to actually take that on the road. We went to communities across the province: Brandon, we were in Swan River with the Premier (Mr. Kinew); we were in Swan River meeting with the folks out there. We were in Lac du Bonnet.

We were all over the province, Honourable Speaker, up to Thompson, offering real solutions, but also listening to the people in those communities about how we can help keep those communities safe. It starts, as I said, with funding and making sure that the

funding that the PCs froze for seven years is now been restored, but it's about the next steps, and there's a comprehensive package we'll be excited—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Jackson:** We understand that the minister has heard from the folks from Riverdale and the other municipalities that live in the Blue Hills RCMP district about the fact that his decision to shutter the Rivers Police Service and not add any additional officers to the Blue Hills RCMP district is not 'acceptable.' So instead of doorbell cameras and shutting municipal police forces, this minister should be taking real steps to prevent these crimes from happening in the first place.

Will this minister get serious and take some real action today?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, Honourable Speaker, I mean it couldn't be more clear to anybody that's spent time in rural Manitoba, and I'd encourage the member opposite to spend some time out there because what he'll see is, is that members outside the Perimeter, people outside the Perimeter, have been crying out for support for policing across this province. They had a government in the Heather Stefanson government that, for seven years, cut their funding down to the bone. And what was the result? Well, places like Rivers weren't able to recruit and retain the members that they needed.

That was the mess that we inherited. We stepped in to clean it up. We're working with municipalities. In fact, I think I met with just 20 of his rural constituency municipal leaders just the other day. He wasn't there, but they were there, and we were working together—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Jackson:** The hilarious part of that entire diatribe from the Minister of Justice is he talks about spending time in rural Manitoba, except he met with the municipal leaders from my constituency over Zoom because he couldn't be bothered to get outside the Perimeter Highway himself. He had to Zoom on a constituency week when we're not in session to go have a meeting with them.

So he's absolutely full of baloney. Manitobans know it. Here in Winnipeg, they—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would ask the member for Spruce Woods to withdraw that comment and apologize.

**Mr. Jackson:** Certainly, Honourable Speaker. I apologize for the use of my word—the word, baloney.

**The Speaker:** I would ask the honourable member for Spruce Woods to offer a proper apology and withdraw his comments.

**Mr. Jackson:** I apologize and withdraw the comment.

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** What you see on display today is the reason why Manitobans chose to show the PCs the door in last year's election. There is an obsession with talking points and reciting things that they hear on social media with a complete disregard for the facts.

Our team is very humbled to have been asked by you, the great people of Manitoba, to serve you, and I could not be prouder of the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) that we have. Here is a person who speaks with compassion for the vulnerable, who has a strong hand when it comes to holding people accountable and yet still is also making the investments so that those who choose to take a path on a better life for themselves will be able to do so in this great province.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) embodies the best of us here in Manitoba. He is bringing people together and I want to say to the people across this province: you chose the right team when you elected somebody with this level of character to lead our justice system and public safety initiative.

#### **Private Minor Illness and Injury Clinics Government Support Inquiry**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** According to recent media reports, this government has issued a request to run two privately funded minor injury and illness clinics.

Last month, the privately funded clinic at the Grace Hospital opened, and next month the privately funded Misecordia [*phonetic*] hospital clinic is set to open. This is concerning considering not long ago, when this government was in opposition, they were clearly against privatizing public clinics.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans deserve to know what changed. Why is this government now supporting the privatization of public health clinics?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank the member for that really important question. It gives me the opportunity to talk about how our government is making investments to enhance access to primary care.

Under the previous PC government, Manitobans saw not only health-care workers driven away and out of our province and off the front lines, but they also saw the Heather Stefanson administration cut the very health care that Manitobans need in order to stay healthy in their own communities and to mitigate them having to go to emergency departments to get that care.

So yes, we're making investments to strengthen primary care. I do think the member's mistaken in some of her information. I'd be happy to 'keer thar' up—'keel' that up for her. The extended primary-care clinics are publicly funded and operated. We've got doctors from across the city supporting those sites for Manitobans.

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

#### **Impact on Unionized Nurses**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Just last year on May 23, 2023, our current Health minister said, and I quote: Instead of investing in our public health-care system, the Premier is yet again choosing to send money out of province to private for-profit providers instead.

This is why Manitobans are confused as to what this government is doing with respect to opening privately funded clinics right here in Manitoba. I've received emails from health-care workers who want to know what this will mean to the union workers currently employed at the public walk-in connected to the private-care clinic.

Does this in any way affect them?

**MLA Asagwara:** Again, I really appreciate that question. It allows me to put some correct information on the record.

That member is absolutely correct. I was highly critical of the previous failed PC administration, who spent millions upon millions of dollars, more money out of the country than they ever spent investing in making our health-care system stronger in Manitoba. So I stand by those comments.

We are making investments like 'extendedit'—extended-hours primary-care clinics right in our province, right in our own community so that Manitobans can get more access to primary care. We're hiring hundreds of new front-line health-care workers into the public health-care system. We're partnering with our regional health authorities to deliver public access to primary-care services.

But we also value our private partners who we have strong relationships—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

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

#### Fee for Services

**MLA Lamoureux:** Improvements to primary care is critical in local communities, but there is a big need to ensure the services are still accessible to those who are needing them. For example, we know there were many free services before privatization.

Can the minister share with us today what services are still being offered at these private clinics free of charge, and what services now have out-of-pocket fees for Manitobans?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I am disappointed the member is putting information on the record that is just incorrect.

As a government, we're investing in more access to public health-care services in partnership with frontline family doctors who provide primary care across this great province of ours. We are making sure Manitobans have access to public health care, primary care, from the very doctors and nurse practitioners and front-line health-care workers that they depend on.

\* (14:30)

Net new 873 more health-care workers on the front lines, including 116 doctors, many of which are working in these clinics delivering public primary care for Manitobans.

I'd be happy to clarify this for the member if she didn't understand our press releases, but I encourage her to support the information getting out there—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

#### Primary Care Accessibility Manitoba Results

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Honourable Speaker, after years of cuts by the Stefanson PCs, Manitobans struggle to find a family doctor. Wait times for things like hip and knee surgeries soared, health-care workers were fired and patients suffered.

Under the former PC government, Manitobans felt nothing but pain. But after a year of hard-working NDP government and Health Minister, we are bringing to see improvements—we are beginning to see improvements.

Last week, the Canadian institute of health information released a report on primary care accessibility.

Can the Minister of Health tell us about this report and what it means for Manitoba?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank my friend for that really, really wonderful question. I am pleased to report to the House that after a year of our NDP government, 85 per cent of Manitobans have access to a primary-care provider, the third highest in Canada.

And so far this year, we've hired 873 net new health-care workers or we are well on track to 1,000. We'll continue to invest in public primary care, and I'd like to thank those health-care workers who have joined our front lines of the health-care system—88 per cent of hip fractures are being done within the 48 hours, well above the national average.

And Manitoba's primary-care providers have been wonderful partners in fixing the damage done by the previous government.

More work to do, more good news on the way—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

#### Crime in Rural Communities Request for Police Services

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** We have heard a lot about urban crime in this Chamber, but I need to remind the minister that rural communities are seeing large spikes as well. The difference is that while the minister is quick to provide funding for additional hours of Winnipeg Police Service patrol, many of our rural communities who once knew their local officers are lucky to see a patrol car drive by a couple times a week.

Can the minister explain when rural communities will be getting additional police hours like downtown Winnipeg?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I'd just like to remind the member opposite that she voted against a 28 per cent increase to policing across this province, and I wanted to outline exactly what that impact looks like to communities all across the province.

Lac du Bonnet was a \$33,000 increase. Steinbach: \$800,000; Portage la Prairie: \$500,000; Winkler: \$600,000; Selkirk: \$400,000; Morden: \$500,000; Stonewall: \$190,000; Brandon: \$2 million more for policing in rural Manitoba. I wonder why the member

opposite would vote against such improvement to partnerships with law enforcement.

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

**Ms. Byram:** I've heard from constituents about the significant increase in rural crime. In Winnipeg, you don't know how many minutes away the police may be if you call. In rural communities, you don't know how many hours that help is away.

I've spoken with a single mother who lives in her farmyard with her two teenage daughters. A \$300 security camera gives her no sense of peace knowing that there are criminals cruising rural roads, and if a yard light burns out, she might look like a tempting target.

What does this minister say to my constituents like this mother that feel unsafe?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, Honourable Speaker, the 2021 StatsCan report on impact on rural crime versus urban crime—we know that the highest homicide rate was for rural areas in the country.

The highest physical assault rate for rural areas in the country was under the Stefanson government as well. The second highest rate of impaired driving rate was for rural areas. In the entire country, under this PC government, their record was freezes, was cuts, was no action at all.

We are working with municipalities; we're looking forward to meeting with the AMM. We've been out across the province over the last number of months. We're listening to Manitobans, we're bringing them a solid plan that shows that we're willing to work together and it all starts with—

**The Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

The time for question period has expired.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** And I have some other guests that I would like to draw the honourable—all honourable members' attention to the public gallery, where we have with us today, although I'm not sure they're still there, Rupinder Brar and Roni Dhaliwal, who are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), and on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you to the Chamber.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Petitions?

## GRIEVANCES

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** I've been increasingly alarmed at how the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and others in this Chamber have been politicizing the justice system.

The government of Manitoba administers the justice system. It needs to be seen as neutral and impartial. The Attorney General is a different role than the Minister of Justice. It acts as a referee, ensures that the system is neutral, independent and free from political influence. This is one of the pillars of our democracy and one of the bases of the rule of law.

The justice system only functions if it's seen as legitimate in the eyes of Manitobans. Manitobans will only respect the decisions if they believe that they are impartial and free from outside influences.

At one time, victims had to prosecute their own cases. Only wealthy victims could access the system, and very few victims had their cases prosecuted. By professionalizing the prosecution service, rich and poor alike could have their cases heard.

And public prosecutions would often be detached from situations, removing the emotion, safeguarding the public interest from blood libel and protecting innocent and unlawfully convicted accused, making sure sentences are appropriate to the wrongdoing and not acting out of vengeful or abusive, you know, intent.

Public prosecutions are a safeguard to our system and keep the legitimacy of that system. They are meant to insulate the public from this type of undue pressure.

Now, in a democracy, the Province must establish the rule of law and signal that the justice system is free from interference and it's neutral and fair. The Province employs both prosecutors and defence lawyers. It is a referee of the system and has to remain out of the day-to-day court cases. Manitobans are rightly shocked in often high-profile cases and what follows, but that doesn't resolve the government of its duty to stay impartial and neutral.

One of the issues facing our justice system is that it's not a team sport. The premier doesn't take sides. It's not there for the premier to root for one side or the other to win.

The Premier and others have continued to cross this line. The problem is when the Premier speaks, he's not speaking as an individual, he's speaking on behalf of the entire government of Manitoba. And when he



weighs in on a case, the Province of Manitoba is taking sides.

This attacks the very legitimacy of the justice system. It's no longer neutral and independent. The weight of the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) office is being used to send a signal to who the Premier wants prosecuted and what outcome they're seeking.

If you are a defendant, even an unpopular one, will you get a fair trial in Manitoba because of the Premier's comments? Who is the Premier trying to influence with his comments? It has the potential—the real potential—to derail high-profile cases. It's often seen as an abuse of process and can derail the prosecution. This ultimately places all Manitobans at risk.

I've also had some concerns about the politicization of victims. They have been used as political props. There is certainly nothing wrong with victims meeting with politicians to advocate for changes in policy. But that often is not what occurs.

What often occurs is a meeting with politicians to try to influence the independent prosecution's branch decisions. Victims may be very unhappy about how a prosecution branch has chosen to proceed or not proceed with a certain prosecution, and, ultimately, when politicians meet with these victims and honour these requests, they give them false hope.

They basically turn their trauma, their pain, into some type of political prop. It creates an unfair expectation of the Attorney General's role, and politicians, quite frankly, are exploiting their misery.

And there's also an issue about who gets to meet with politicians. Not all victims are treated equally, and we've seen this very recently in Manitoba. We've seen that the Premier will meet with some victims but not others.

\* (14:40)

I was contacted by an alleged victim of Peter Nygård, and she tells me that she's been trying to speak with the Premier and meet about her case for the past four years. He has refused.

I've met with the family of Jordyn Reimer. They tell me that they've made eight written requests to meet with the Premier, and at each and every one of the times, they were—received a—out-of-office sort of form reply. They didn't even get the courtesy of a response letter.

But, the Premier has met some victims. So it begs the question as to which victims the Premier finds worthy enough for his time and which aren't. And

sadly, I think there's a political calculus to this, which is insulting to all victims' families.

And it's also concerning that the Premier has been commenting on active court cases. The Premier issued a press release and made media comments celebrating the conviction in the Skibicki trial. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** I would ask members who aren't recognized as speaking in the Chamber to please take their conversation somewhere else. Hollering back and forth across the aisle is not solving anybody's problems, it's just making it impossible for the Speaker to hear what's being said.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** So further commenting about what the Premier thinks is an adequate sentence for this offender. Again, this is entirely inappropriate and amounts to political interference. There yet could be appeals in relation to that case, and it sends a signal to everyone in the justice system. It ultimately undermines the legitimacy and neutrality of justice system.

There is a history of wrongful convictions in Manitoba. The 89 recorded wrongful conviction cases in Canada since 1993, 12 Manitobans have been victims. That's 13 per cent of all wrongful convictions for a population of 3 per cent of the country. We are ground zero in Manitoba for wrongful convictions: Brian Anderson, Allan Woodhouse, Frank Ostrowski, James Driskell, David Milgaard, Thomas Sophonow, Kyle Unger, Andrew Rose, Cody Klyne, Richard Catcheway, Wilfred Truscott.

Many of those cases, at their time, were high profile, and it certainly was open to politicians to pander and to give comment about what they thought should happen to those individuals.

We also see that this Premier has denigrated justice participants. We have seen the Premier go after criminal defence lawyers, attack them using ignorant stereotypes. He represented someone as an—making a professional decision, not a moral one, as somehow being problematic because they professionally act for somebody who's alleged to have done a horrible crime.

This discredits all justice officials. It's guilt by association. It's demeaning and inappropriate.

Then, of course, the Premier refused to apologize, which is certainly indicative of his worldview. And not just an attack on justice officials, he attacked the rule of law. When you attack people in the justice system, you're basically going after the legitimacy of that justice system.

This is Donald Trump stuff that we see in the United States. And again, it sends a signal that this Premier (Mr. Kinew) is not a neutral arbiter of the justice system, that he wants to put his finger on the scales and that Manitobans can't get a fair trial.

The other issue, of course, we have is that we have a Prosecution Service here. But it's increasingly becoming the call that there be independent review of cases. Now, they work very hard, they are underfunded, they are understaffed, there's a high burnout rate.

And instead of supporting their work, the Province of Manitoba attacks it and attacks the legitimacy of professional public prosecutions by saying that that we don't trust their professional judgment and we're going to send out of province for another opinion.

Law, at its very basic, is an opinion. Lawyers give you an opinion, and there will always be an opinion for every lawyer out there, maybe more than one. And if you ask enough lawyers, you will eventually get the opinion that you seek. And you have this bizarre scenario where the government of Manitoba is trying to look for opinions elsewhere to justify what essentially is a political decision.

That is completely inappropriate, and it sets a precedent. Now any victim who doesn't like the professional opinion of Manitoba prosecutions will ask for an outside review, and it 'delegitimize' the role of public prosecution, and it makes prosecution's decisions political decisions.

The Attorney General cannot meet with victims for the purposes of lobbying and changing prosecution decisions.

So the criminal justice system is designed to be focused on establishing factual guilt. It is, you know, required to honour the presumption of innocence. Victims play a minor role in that system. Restorative justice, however, puts victims at the centre. They drive the process and they very much have a voice.

If we want to increase victim voices in Manitoba Justice, we have to move to a restorative justice model. And this would avoid many of the problems that we see here today. And quite frankly, the Premier and all those who are, you know, motivated to do this, please stay out of the justice system; let the professionals do their work.

Thank you.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Two things, Honourable Speaker.

Could you please canvass the House for leave to have a list of names included in Hansard after the ministerial statement made by the honourable Minister of Health earlier today.

And then, if you could please resume Committee of Supply.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave for the House to have a list of names included in Hansard after the ministerial statement made by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) earlier today.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

And now we will resolve into Committee of Supply.

The Deputy will take the Chair.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### ROOM 254

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INVESTMENT, TRADE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

\* (14:50)

**The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? *[interjection]*

We will just pause for one moment, please.

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** I can refer to you as Chair? Perfect. Thank you, Chair.

It's my great pleasure to be here on behalf of my department as the Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources. This is, I think, time well spent for our government to have the opportunity to not only review the expenses in the budget put forward in this year's budget, but also to, you know, be very transparent and have an

opportunity to dialogue and have questions come from opposition members, from members of the Legislative Assembly.

And thank the opportunity—I thank the members for being here from all sides and appreciate their time that we're going to spend to go through—over this over the next few hours.

Our government is—has made some strong, sustainable and really great progress on growing our economy over the last year. We're committed to growing our economy as—Manitoba's advantage as a low-carbon leader and with a highly skilled workforce. In our Budget 2024, investment—invests employment and skilled training, which fosters economic development and economic reconciliation, which creates good jobs for Manitobans.

We are launching an ambitious economic development strategy with input from the Premier's Business and Jobs Council that will benefit all Manitobans. Together, we are helping small businesses, medium businesses and large businesses grow, conditioned for new businesses to make their home and revitalize downtown Winnipeg.

To guide this, the formation of our economic strategy, the Premier's Business and Jobs Council, will bring together diverse business leaders from all regions, various sectors of the economy. This council will—is tasked with advising our government on a provincial economic development plan that will grow the economy with good jobs for Manitobans.

And Budget 2024 also promotes economic reconciliation; invests \$4 million in Indigenous economic development fund to support Indigenous business owners, entrepreneurs and organizations, administered through the new Department of Indigenous Economic Development under Minister Bushie.

Additionally, we've had some remarkable accomplishments over the last year. Manitoba is supporting the Portage Place redevelopment into a campus for housing health-care services and other community supports. The redevelopment of Portage Place, in partnership with True North Real Estate Development and Southern Chiefs' Organization, will be among the largest private-sector investments ever undertaken in Winnipeg's downtown and will spur further downtown redevelopment. This initiative complements the SCO's redevelopment of Hudson's—the former Hudson's Bay building and—which is another major initiative which advances reconciliation and downtown revitalization.

Manitoba is also collaborating with the Manitoba Métis Federation and First Nations to develop natural resource management policy that ensures their rights and traditional knowledge are embedded into policy making and progress.

\* (15:00)

To advance these important efforts, Manitoba has completed exploration projects and Crown Indigenous consultations, signed mineral development protocols, particularly with Northlands First Nation, funded and supported 10 First Nations to attend a Canadian central mining exploration conference. Additionally, we've entered into an MOU with three Swan Valley region First Nations governments to extend the Louisiana-Pacific operating licence by five years and keep hundreds of jobs in the region. Under the agreement, the Louisiana-Pacific local First Nations and the Manitoba government will work together to create a 20-year forest management plan that meets the needs of all parties.

We continue to build and invest. A \$30-million investment to repair and upgrade the railroad at the Port of Churchill has been made, solidifying our position as a maritime province. And we're investing in CentrePort Canada to help them develop new business opportunities as we work closely with national and international partners to explore potential international investment and trade opportunities in Manitoba. This summer, we had also the first shipment of zinc concentrate that left Port of Churchill for Europe that showed to the world the port's potential and capabilities.

Budget 2024 also increasing its investment in the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy focused on renewed trade relationships and expanding trade relationships and our export capacity. We—our government will continue and increase trade between Manitoba and the United States to spur economic gains that benefit all Manitobans. We are also very proud of our accomplishments in providing \$500,000 in export support programming for small- and medium-sized Manitoba companies looking to explore, initiate or expand their export activities into new markets.

Funding for MoveMobility: \$1.3 million to support a 60,000-square-foot expansion at CentrePort, creating 55 new skilled jobs and protecting another 55 to remain here in Manitoba. Providing a loan of \$10.75 million to Sapphire Springs towards the \$145-million development of a new arctic char facility in the RM of

Rockwood, which will provide more than 1,000 full-time jobs.

Announcing \$200,000 to support efforts to identify opportunities to grow the clinical trial capacity of Manitoba's life sciences sector and ensure that Manitoba becomes a major international player in the life sciences sector.

We are also partnering with storied companies like New Flyer Industries, the NFI Group. And we are delivering \$10 million of investment supports to create over 400 jobs in the low-carbon sector.

These manufacturing jobs will help support the all-Canadian-build facility and finishing service of zero-emission buses for the Canadian market and establishing a new heavy-equipment vehicle centre of excellence; \$23 million is being made—is also being made in total, which is a \$13 million of interest savings to the NFI Group for the all-Canadian-build facility.

We additionally passed The Captured Carbon Storage Act to enable safe storage of captured carbon in our environment, which helps to grow our economy as well as lower emissions—net emissions from our province.

In terms of resource development and sustainability, we are in progress of working on a real critical mineral strategy to become low-carbon leaders for generations to come, which creates good jobs, ensuring economic prosperity and reconciliation for Manitobans.

Additionally, we—Manitoba has provided \$3.3 million to 15 mineral development projects through the Manitoba Mineral Development Fund, helping drive economic growth, create good jobs and build resilient communities, particularly in northern Manitoba.

Manitoba government is moving forward with silica sand extraction project in Hollow Water First Nation and solar glass manufacturing facility in Selkirk, which will help create good jobs and advance Manitoba as a leader in clean energy.

We've also faced challenges, and when Imperial Oil shut down the pipeline unexpectedly, we worked closely and collaboratively with industry partners to ensure Manitobans had the fuel they needed when the pipeline repair was complete and safe in an environmentally responsible manner.

We also worked in partnership with First Nations and developed a consultation protocol that established mutually agreed-upon processes for Crown Indigenous consultation. Our commitment to collaborate will lead

to more sustainable and mutually beneficial outcomes, improve the effectiveness of our resource management strategies and, ultimately, promote long-term growth and prosperity for all stakeholders.

This year, we also hosted two fish forums for commercial fishers on Lake Winnipeg to hear directly from fishers and find solutions to ensure our fisheries will be—remain healthy for generations to come.

We are advancing survey methods and our collection of reliable survey data to help manage species across population—our province, particularly big game populations. This data is important for informing wild-life conservation and management decisions, including the decisions around conservation areas.

This summer, we also released our first public Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Response Plan and provided an increased \$500,000 for the AIS program.

These are just some of the many initiatives our government has taken on this year to both grow our economy, work collaboratively with communities and ensure that we set Manitoba off in a very positive way well into the future.

Thank you very much.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

A reminder that in Committee of Supply, we do not use last names, and we use constituencies or portfolios.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North):** How would you like to be referred to? Chair?

**The Chairperson:** Yes. Chair.

**Mr. Wharton:** Okay. Thank you, Chair. Appreciate that.

And I thank the minister for his opening comments as well.

Just briefly, for the record, I'll introduce myself. Again, I'm the MLA for Red River North and the former Economic Development minister in the PC government. It was great opportunity and a great privilege to serve Manitobans as Economic Development minister and certainly looking forward to a robust discussion today with the current minister.

Again, I would like to highlight the fact for Manitobans that are listening today and watching us

live that this process has been delayed, and we've only been allotted approximately two hours today to work with the minister and the government to ensure that Manitobans are seeing a positive move forward in economic development on so many levels, which I'm looking forward to getting into in the very limited time that we have today.

However, there's a lot to talk about and a lot of good areas that were started and a lot of areas that I see have been duplicated and moved forward, which we will discuss further in detail as we move forward.

Certainly, I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank the staff from the department, as well, and also thank my staff that are joining us here today.

And with those short comments, I'd certainly like to get into questions.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 10.1(a) contained in resolution 10.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

Please join us.

**Mr. Moses:** I'm pleased to have an amazing team working alongside us here in the department. So I'd like to introduce them.

\* (15:10)

We've got Deputy Minister Dana Rudy; ADM Finance and Administration, Melissa Ballantyne; ADM Workforce Development and Training, Michelle Wallace; ADM Conservation and Wildfire Service, Kristin Hayward; ADM Investment and Trade, Jana Schott; ADM Minerals, Petroleum and Geoscience, Jeff Kraynyk; executive director, strategic 'polishy' and initiatives, Darryl Villeneuve; director, Manitoba Fisheries, Erin Dunbar; and, of course, Chantel—my director of ministerial affairs, Chantel Bacon.

**The Chairperson:** According to our rule 78.16, during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put separately on all resolutions once

the official opposition critic indicates the questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Wharton:** Certainly I would like to take the opportunity to introduce Mat Preprost, as well, who's joining us today as our research and legislative assistant, joining us today here on the opposite side.

Quick—wanted to do a little bit of house cleaning, but I want to be quick because I know we're limited on time, so I just wanted to confirm with the minister that the organizational chart on page 21 is complete and up-to-date.

**Mr. Moses:** Thank you for the opportunity, and I'll get to, you know, talking about the organizational structure chart on page 21.

But I just wanted to say that I'm also very excited to have the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the department. I think it's important work that we have been undertaking and we have been doing. I think that, you know, I'm very proud to be working with a team as robust and as experienced as this, who bring a wealth of knowledge to the table here.

I think I'm eager to, you know, use and chat over the next couple of hours, and quite frankly I think I was eager to have this meeting earlier if we could have gotten to it. I think that there was a bit of delay in the House in the spring with the 'unexplained' wealth act, which I think caused a lot of these Estimates Committee of Supply meetings to be pushed back further, and I think that if we had the opportunity to get—you know, get to these meetings sooner, we could've had a little bit more time to go through the nitty-gritty details, which I'm sure member opposite would have really appreciated.

So looking forward to using the time we have, but, you know, I share the same sentiment, that we could have gotten to this sooner if we didn't have that delay from opposition.

In—to regards to the specific question regarding the organizational structure on page 21, the chart is accurate, and it is up-to-date.

**Mr. Wharton:** Again, I'd like to thank the minister for those comments, and certainly I, too, will echo his comments on some of the best staff in this building are sitting in this room today, and that's not throwing any other staffer under the bus, that's just saying that I know I had the privilege of working with them all as well, and they are super people to have on your team, and you're very fortunate to have them.

And that'll lead into the next question: What political staff within your office do you currently have?

**The Chairperson:** Just while we're waiting for the response, I just want to remind all members during the Committee of Supply that questions need to be put through the Chair, please.

**Mr. Moses:** So I can update the member with respect to his question.

And I think he fully understands, you know, at—being a former minister himself, the importance and the role of—the staff play, political staff, both political and departmental.

And I think he can appreciate the—not only the divide of the role but the specific function that each role plays and how vital it can be to the successful functioning of an office, both in providing the very detailed and very technical work that is, you know, highly regarded in—as the experts and expertise in our province, but also having the right lens with which to view that information.

And also very much being connected to the people of Manitoba, the stakeholders who are feeling the impacts of any decisions, the people who are calling for change or calling for different supports in different regards. And understanding how we, as government, can be responsive to those needs and to those calls.

And so I think it's important role the staff play, both in understanding how we can improve as government and how we can work within government systems in a proper and good way to make sure that we're listening and being responsive to those things.

I think one of the things our government has prided itself on doing is being a listening government. And so in that—to that end of being a listening government, we have certainly taken on the—taken on that responsibility of going out, reaching to communities and hearing from folks and trying to best understand how we can work together, work in partnership, work collaboratively to find a suitable and a very appropriate and a very positive way forward.

So to that end, the political staff that are helping and working with our department, we have, as I mentioned earlier, director of ministerial affairs, Chantel Bacon. We have special assistant to the minister, Carly Savoie. We have executive assistant to the minister, Tino Dogo. And we have issues—assistant issues manager, Nicholas Harder.

**Mr. Wharton:** Can the minister share how many of the four political staff currently under his purview are paid on the executive salary schedule?

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Moses:** I just want to get a brief clarification: So you wanted to just confirm just the number of staff on the executive scale? Executive salary scale—is that the—that was the question, just to clarify?

**Mr. Wharton:** Yes.

**Mr. Moses:** Thank you for that clarification.

So I just want to provide context to that as I get to the member's answer. So there's one person of the staff—of this four staff, political staff who would be on the executive scale. That's the director, as I mentioned.

Now, the director has important function under our team. And the way that we operate with this director is that they act as a liaison between both minister and minister's office and the department. And it's a really important function because in many ways they have to really be enacting a lot of the direction that we want to go in.

Additionally, they act as a liaison between the minister, as well, and central government. And so ensuring that we have a person and people actually able to live out those words where we say, this is an all-government approach or an all-department approach. They do a lot of work cross departmentally, central governmentally, within the department to liaison, to co-ordinate, facilitate, to ensure that, as we move forward in one direction, all parties are moving in the same direction.

You know, if you think about the analogy of, you know, rowing a boat, steering a canoe, you know that you have to have all of the—all of your paddles, all of you—going—rowing in the same direction, rowing at the same time in unison. And so as much as, you know, the minister sets directions, says, you know, we want to head down this path, in many ways it is the director who is the one who's making the calls live in the boat or, say, helping to 'direer' and steer everything into the right direction, right way.

You know, the director also provides very key political advice, and direct and help to lead other political staff as well, so it is a leadership and directoral and executive function that the director plays. Our director also supports the execution and the accomplishments of the minister's mandate. As the member opposite would be well aware that ministers do receive mandate letters from their Premier (Mr. Kinew) to help

steer and direct and focus a minister or department on a particular task. And so it is the role of the director to support the execution and the accomplishment of that mandate.

And so, you know, I think understanding issues day to day goes as part of that issue and making sure that the team is well versed on the different political or departmental issues of the day, and informing and working across the departments to work on and effectively triage and support the solution towards those issues on a daily basis.

And so we're very happy with the director we have in this department as we continue to function very effectively, and I look forward to being able to fulfill even more of our government's priorities and our mandate objectives, with the support of our political, departmental staff and move our province in a really positive way.

**Mr. Wharton:** I thank the minister for that, I guess, understanding of what the director is doing; it sounds a little bit like a special assistant.

But could the minister provide Manitobans today with the salary scale of all four of his political staff?

**Mr. Moses:** So you're asking around the salaries for the political positions. And so I want to first let the new member know that, because as—and as he would be aware that these political staff get appointed by order-in-council, so some of this information is available publicly. So I'll make sure that I give ranges for the individual positions, but knowing that the, you know, that—and I think what would be best, just because it is already available, so the member could find out the specifics for each position.

For the four staff, I'll give a global range, and I know he asked specifically around the director, so I'll give the specific range of salary for that one. The global range for the four political staff range from \$58,839 up to \$156,562. And, specifically, as I know the member was interested, the range salary for the director is between 130—sorry, \$130,198 and \$156,562.

And so, as again, as I mentioned, with that role of the director, that is a role that is very key to the day-to-day functioning of the department, and it is very much one where we've had a success in understanding the intersectionality between government, centrally, departmental work, political considerations, community building and relationship strengthening. These are initiatives that I think are very central to a successful government operation and not just in terms of its day-to-day functioning, but as terms of meeting

its broader understanding of its mandate demands and how we reach them collectively.

You know, I've—my experience in this role has been that many of our objectives, you know, require multiple departments to be working in unison to accomplish those goals. And so I found that it takes someone with a lot of experience and lot of, you know, insight to effectively be able to navigate them. And I'm sure, you know, member opposite and Manitobans can understand the complexity it is with which to work within a government framework.

And so I really have found it being of value to have a person with that sort of drive and intellect, such as the director that work within our government.

\* (15:30)

And beyond that, I think that they're providing a great service to the broader Manitoba as we continue to effectively implement our mandate items and move our province forward, knowing that we have really quality people ensuring our government is a well-functioning organization.

**Mr. Wharton:** I thank the minister for that, again.

And again, just to be clear for the record, certainly I'm not here to question the qualifications of a director or any of the political staff or any other staff in the room, because I know they all have the appropriate job to do. I appreciate the salary range, and I will look up the O/Cs at my next available convenience. We'll have time because we're only here 'til 5 o'clock, so I'll be able to look it up later. But I appreciate the insight and the honesty of where we're at and the transparency that the minister is providing today.

I want to move on, and the minister had mentioned a little bit about the mandate letter. I want to talk a little bit about the minister's mandate letter dated October 19, 2023, and pretty much pore through a couple of the areas that the mandate letter hits on.

But I just wanted to pick up and just put on the record, too, as well, a comment that the minister had made regarding the director—the executive director's responsibility. I guess some of the responsibility, I'm assuming, is to help with the execution of the mandate. That is partially, in my view, what a special assistant would do as a political staffer. I do believe, though, the responsibility to execute on the mandate letter would come from the staff and the team, from the DM's office down.

So that's what we're familiar with, that's what I'm assuming is happening, that the staff are engaged one

hundred per cent, the—other than the political staff. And the bureaucrats are also engaged, because their tenure of being here and their ability to provide information not only to the political staff, but to the minister, is priceless. And I know the minister is probably learning that as a first-time minister as he goes forward. So I just put that on the record for future reference if he's looking for that.

Back to the mandate letter. It says here clearly, the mandate says: grow our economy with good Manitoba jobs for Manitobans. And part of that process here in the mandate letter is: Create Premier's (Mr. Kinew) business council, jobs council to bring together leaders from business, skilled trades, agricultural and Indigenous communities, labour and other sectors.

Can the minister provide Manitobans online today with where and what is happening with the Premier's business council, how many meetings they've had, and I'll add some other questions in at a later date.

**Mr. Moses:** So as you know, we've, you know, taken an initiative of straight—of, you know, standing up Premier's Business and Jobs Council, affectionately known as PB and J.

I think it's done an amazing job of bringing together some of the top business leaders in our province and giving them an opportunity to not only give their sage advice—given all of their business experience and acumen—to government, but also to have those ideas and advice cross-pollinate with other leaders from other sectors and industries. I think that not only gives them an opportunity to better understand the network and the strength of the business community in Manitoba, but also gives us really solid and strong advice to function in.

And so as we—you know, this is our mandate letter; we just got to work on it. We announced the—some of the individuals who are going to be sitting on that Premier's business jobs council, co-chairs Ash Modha, Kevin Rebeck. We know that there are some people with a lot of terrific business experience, folks like Bram Strain, Chad Friesen, Chuck Davidson—people from a variety of sectors. Got Cordella Friesen on there as well, David Chartrand—I've got real heavyweights from across the spectrum—Gerry Price is on there as well. We've got folks like Loren Remillard, Mark Chipman are sitting on the Premier's Business and Jobs Council. This is just a few of the many people who are sitting on there.

I will just give out a few other names for example for the member: folks like Ryan Kuffner, people like

Paul Soubry. We also have folks like Jill Verwey, you know, from Keystone Agricultural Producers, Gustavo Zentner. These are just some people who are bringing in a, you know, a range of expertise in trade and business and investment. And so since the committee kicked off in Council—kicked off in February, they—we have been sub—divided the group into five key areas.

\* (15:40)

And so these subcommittees have been doing the work of building up some really strong policy ideas and suggestions of how we can move our province forward.

So I'll just tell the member the five committees. I'm not going to go into the number of meetings because the subcommittees have been having numerous meetings, working together very—I've been getting the updates and it's been very engaging to see them work in a collaborative fashion, but to give him the highlight around some of the subcommittees that the Premier's Business and Jobs Council have been working on and areas that they've been focusing on.

So the five subcommittees are around technology and AI, artificial intelligence; a clean energy economy; economic reconciliation; trade and trade specifically with the US; as well as one around skill development, workforce development, immigration and skills alignment.

So these are kind of the themes of some of our subcommittee work that the folks on the Premier's Business and Jobs Council have been doing over the course of the past many months. It's been incredible work and they'll continue to do that and continue to provide really solid advice to the Premier, to myself, to our entire team and help inform us about the direction that they see from their experience that we're heading as a province. But also to help ensure that we're—there's a certain level of alignment with what we're both doing in the private sector as well in government.

And so we are very pleased with the progress that the Premier's Business and Jobs Council has made to date and we know that they will continue to be working very hard on behalf of Manitobans to ensure that we have not only a government that works for all of us, but that works for all of us to move in a really good direction into the future.

**Mr. Wharton:** I thank the minister for that.



Does the minister sit on the committee and if so, what role does he play?

**Mr. Moses:** So I thank the member for the question.

So the Premier's Business and Jobs Council is very clearly set up to be comprised of a diverse set of leaders from all regions and sectors of our economy, and having it been tasked with developing economic strategy that strengthens Manitoba's diverse low-carbon economy, that also at the same time creates good jobs for Manitobans.

This is something that's really important to us. And so as we considered how to have an effective Premier's Business and Jobs Council, we want them to provide their open and honest advice. So we take the role of being in that as receiving some of that advice.

The committee is made up of voluntary community leaders, and so we've asked them to go and do their work within their subcommittee, and we often check in by receiving some of that advice and receiving that from those committee members and the subcommittee members as they continue to do their work.

And so that's the role that we play, that I play, as well as having a strong connection with the folks that are working on ideas and advice that line up with priorities around our department and our mandate letter—keep strong connection with those particular works, and, broader, as a government, we stay very well connected and are working to receive regular updates from the work of the Premier's Business and Jobs Council.

But again, this is a committee—council that is made up of voluntary community leaders who work to provide advice to us as ministers, as premier, as government.

And I think you can appreciate that we want to find ways to have better alignment to maximize trade relationships with the United States and position Manitoba as a top investment destination. Like, when we think about how to execute this, many of those ideas don't only live within government. Many of those ideas live in the minds of people from across the province.

So we want to have an ability to tap into some of those great ideas, and we've been fortunate enough to have some of the top leaders in our province come work and offer some great suggestions and great advice to our government, and we're very excited and we thank them for their time.

We know these people—some of the busiest people in our province, running multi-million dollar corporations, organizations—and we thank them, not only for putting their time into work in a positive way for our province, but we are so appreciative of that, that we want to make sure that we're using their time wisely, that they feel like they're putting in a lot of value, and I think that's one of the reasons why they have continued to have regular meetings—ongoing meetings—and continue to work with us. It's because they know that they're providing value to our entire team and our entire province.

And so I'm grateful for the work that they're doing. Any member of the Premier's Business and Jobs Council who is watching or following up on this, I just want to say thank you to the work effort that you've been putting in. I appreciate your work effort, and I look forward to continuing to be able to work collaboratively and productively with you well into the future.

**Mr. Wharton:** I thank the minister for that.

And I, too, are familiar with the appointments—a number of the appointments—and I will echo the comments of the minister that these are wonderful contributors to our economy, to our communities and to this great province of Manitoba. And I, too, would like to ensure that that is on the record.

I'd also like to remind the minister that you are—he is the leader, and the minister takes responsibility and should take responsibility for this. It's in the mandate letter to create business council, jobs council, to bring together leaders in business.

I remind the minister that you are—the minister is the leader, and the minister should be more involved and engaged in the day-to-day. If they're meeting frequently, the minister probably should, on behalf of Manitobans, be there to ensure that the mandate of moving Manitoba forward and growing our economy is met every day.

I'll leave it at that.

The next question I have for the minister is: He talked about US trade with the honourable Gary Doer. It's in the mandate letter. Can he please describe to me what that looks like and how many meetings has he had with the honourable Gary Doer?

**Mr. Moses:** Well, thank you very much for the question, and I like to—it's always interesting to hear how other people, you know, the advice from other people and I appreciate it, so I thank the member opposite.

\* (15:50)

I also want to know, I also want to thank him for pointing out that we've successfully completed something on our mandate list. So that's something that was tasked to us and I can give that a solid checkmark; done. Create Premier's (Mr. Kinew) Business and Jobs Council and bring it together—bring together leaders from businesses, skilled trades, agriculture, Indigenous communities, labour and other sectors. Mandate-letter item tasked to me; mandate-letter item checked; success.

So I'm thank the member opposite for pointing out the successful job we've been doing with completing mandate-letter items. I think that's terrific that even—we're getting praise not only from Manitobans, not only from business community, but from member opposite for congratulating us on a job well done. Forming the Premier's Business and Jobs Council; having business leaders give us sage advice; give us the advice that's going to move our province forward—I think it's actually really rewarding to hear this advice and hear this congratulations from member opposite, particularly because it's something that they never had.

Former minister didn't have this sort of business or jobs council to provide him advice. I'm very fortunate to—and thankful for those members of the Premier's Business and Jobs Council for giving us that quality—the high quality advice that we—that we're lucky enough and fortunate enough to be receiving. So I'm very grateful for that and I also, again, appreciate the member opposite for noting that we've completed a mandate-letter item and congratulating us on that completion. Check; job well done.

Okay, but you know, we're not—job is not all well done yet, because we're continuing to get that advice, continuing to be able to listen to folks. Again, we're a listening government. We're a government that works collaboratively with community, with business partners, with people, and we continue to find ways to move our province forward in a really positive direction. We're going to work collaboratively with this folks into the future, so we thank you for that and we'll work hard to see that we implement some of those great ideas and make our province stronger.

Now, to the specific question the member had when it comes to US trade and working with former premier, honourable Gary Doer, and former ambassador Doer, I think we've—I've had, you know, great conversations with minister Doer, in specifics with US trade. And this is another opportunity for us to—for me to

highlight the great trip we had down to Washington to do this specific work of helping to put Manitoba back on the map when it comes to dealing and building stronger relationships with our largest trading partner, the United States of America.

Now, not sure if the former minister, the member, has had the pleasure of meeting former premier Doer—

**An Honourable Member:** Long before you did.

**Mr. Moses:** Wonderful. I'm glad to hear and understand that he has, and I'm glad to know that he has—had such a positive impact on the member that he is, you know, ensuring that—I also seek the advice of former premier and former ambassador Doer. And I've gotten to know him and understand what he sees as some of the priorities for Manitoba when it comes to building a strong relationship with our largest trader partner.

So, on that trip, we had an—a wonderful opportunity to connect with people in the business community; people in governmental, in labour, involved in trade. And I think that was noted as being a success—widely noted as being a successful trip on behalf of Manitobans. And so, we continue to work with former premier Doer in advancing our understanding and receiving his advice around strengthening relationships and trade with the United States of America.

And I think that's going to be true regardless of any results of the upcoming US election. We are looking for strengthening partners with anyone on both sides of the aisle, because we know that our government is firmly focused on working on the best interests of Manitobans. Regardless of what happens, the US people will decide on how they see their federal government go, and their government will work in—you know, for the next four years, will make that decision coming up next week.

Manitobans, they want a government that's working for them. That's what we're going to be doing. We're going to be building good relationships with United States on both sides of the aisle and making sure we put a good foot forward for Manitoba's trade relationships with United States.

**Mr. Wharton:** Certainly, I must have struck a nerve with the minister because job is not complete when it comes to the Premier's Business and Jobs Council.

He knows that because he's refused to provide Manitobans today with how many meetings they've had, the dates of those meetings and perhaps even the minutes of those minutes on how he's saying that he's

moved Manitoba forward and job done, check the box.

I highly doubt it. And I think Manitobans listening and watching online today agree that job is not done. There's certainly more work to do and, as the official opposition, we will ensure that we hold the minister and the government to account.

I will jump into my next question about—the mandate letter, which is not done, and minister can certainly provide us with how he expects to create 10,000 new skilled trades jobs over the next eight years.

\* (16:00)

**Mr. Moses:** Now I thank the minister—sorry, the member opposite for, you know, for his comments in his last question and I think it's a good opportunity for us to, you know, look at the, you know, the mandate letter. Obviously, he's going down through some of his items and so, you know, yes, we do continue to grow an economy with good jobs, so I think we're continuing to work on that.

Premier's Business and Jobs Council, as we just mentioned, that's something that we have started already. We have brought that together and we are continuing to work on that. So that is well in progress and some really great work is coming out of there.

Obviously, expand our clean energy economy and critical mineral strategy. I know the critical mineral strategy is being worked on right now, diligently and it's a very important priority for us, particularly in northern Manitoba and Indigenous—with Indigenous communities and inclusion as well.

We talked about as the member asked previously around the advisor on US–Canada–US trade and we have been already working with Gary Doer, former premier and former ambassador Doer. And, you know, we've certainly had a chance to have many conversations around important US trading partner relationship and the trip—successful trip to Washington.

So I think, you know, the member opposite's very right to look at our mandate letter and see where we've done. And I think on those fronts you can see that there is already very significant progress and very tangible results that have been already on display.

Now the next item I can see he's obviously talking about: the 10,000 new jobs in the skilled trades over the next eight years that the member is referring to. And so, we continue to work on that priority as well as all of our other priorities.

You know, and we know—understand that that is going to be—that goal is going to happen as a result of strategic investments that is made in economic development projects in the province. It's going to be done in combination with investing in Apprenticeship Manitoba, ensuring that we're very modern on our apprenticeship and meeting the needs of industry, of workers and of Manitobans and that we are making Manitoba an affordable and attractive place to live. And I think those things in combination are going to be part of our approach to ensuring that we deliver on that goal of 10,000 new skilled trades.

And I'll—a few reasons. We know the economic development projects are going to be a key part of the driver. Having an ability for businesses to grow, expand and have their—you know, sink their feet in and their footprints into Manitoba's economy is going to be really impactful for strengthening the economic opportunity.

And so some of the projects that we've already highlighted have created a real number of jobs here in Manitoba. Things like the NFI Group announcement we had last week is going to create over 200, 250 new jobs directly with NFI Group. That means that's more Manitobans hard at work but also means that there's going to be a significant number of spill-off effects—impacts in growing NFI Group suppliers. And that's going to mean a real increase into our economy in Manitoba.

We can also talk about MoveMobility, another company that our province invested in to not only keep them here in Manitoba but for—allow them to expand and grow in our province.

And I can also think about our investment in Sapphire Springs fishery to grow over 100 new jobs in the RM of Rockwood.

And so these are some of our economic developments that are going to help us get to creating those new skilled trade jobs.

In addition, we know that we have to keep our province competitive and affordable. So our things like helping to lower the gas tax and keeping affordability low helps to keep Manitoba more competitive for workers to see Manitoba as their home and not flee to other provinces, as we saw previously under the former government.

And so we're trying to make some of these significant steps to make life more attractive here, to make strong investments, to invest in our apprenticeships and our skilled trades directly.

This past budget—this budget invested an additional \$1.5 million in Apprenticeship Manitoba. These are real dollars that are going to impact the opportunities for apprentices to get into the skilled trades and go through training process.

And so these all combined are going to work together to help us reach that target of increasing the skilled trades in Manitoba.

**Mr. Wharton:** I will just close this part of the Estimates on Economic Development with some comments, and then I'm going to cede the floor to my colleague to ask the minister on—some questions regarding natural resources.

So just on commenting further for the record and for Manitobans on some of the comments the minister had just made on the record, he was talking about how they feel that they're going to create 10,000 jobs. And he cited a number of areas already—a number of businesses already working in Manitoba that were started by the former PC government.

I'll remind the minister that Sapphire Springs was announced in 2022. I'll also remind the minister that True North and the partnership with Southern Chiefs' was announced in 2023, and what a great project that'll be. And I concede to the fact that I'm happy that the current government is moving forward with that very important project for downtown Winnipeg, creating a number of opportunities for all demographics and all concerned in the downtown to ensure that we make downtown Winnipeg safer.

He talked about—the minister also talked about apprenticeship. And, again, I'll close with this because I want to make sure that my colleague has a few minutes with the short time that we've been provided for Estimates here today on a very important file.

When we talk about apprenticeship and the government moving from a two-to-one to a one-to-one ratio, if the minister feels that the one-to-one ratio is going to create 10,000 jobs or a portion of those 10,000 jobs, then he's sadly mistaken. Because certainly moving from two-to-one to one-to-one will not do that. It will not grow the economy, and it'll provide less work and less opportunity for young Manitobans coming out of post-secondary that are looking to grow in—particularly in the private sector, which is the engine of Manitoba.

So with those comments, Chairperson, I will turn the floor over to my colleague, the MLA for Swan River.

Thank you.

\* (16:10)

**The Chairperson:** The Honourable Minister will have a chance to respond before anyone else will be recognized.

Thank you.

**Mr. Moses:** So I think, you know, to the minister's comment earlier in his last question around, you know, the things that they had started or finished or not, I think Manitobans are very squarely focused on getting stuff done. They want a government that's going to work for them. So I'm not going to get into the game of who started what project, who finished. It's not about us taking the credit. It's about us working for Manitobans.

And so I want Manitobans to know you have a government that is now working squarely with you in mind, that is going to be working on behalf of you, and so we're very much excited to be continuing to work on that.

When it comes to the apprenticeship question that the member opposite had around the ratio change, we're very happy to have been working, and now implementing, the one-to-one ratio restoration. I think for us this is a very simple reason: We want to make sure that we have very safe working standards for apprentices, and we want to have very high-quality education with that focused one-on-one approach. Because that's our priority, we're going to work on that.

We also know that in this world where we've been hearing a lot from, you know, federal governments around—you know, federal leaders around the productivity, and there's been questions around productivity. In my mind, like when we think about that and we think of our productivity, it's important for us to think about how do we as a province influence that.

And I think it's important to think about safety as a way, and high-quality training as a way for us to increase productivity. I know that when folks have safe work environments, they're very focused. When they have high-quality training, they're very efficient.

And so, when we look at improving and increasing our productivity as a province, we look at supporting workers to be able to do that, and that's our methodology for getting there. I think it's going to be a very exciting time to see how that progresses, but we're going to do it by supporting workers in our province.

And so that's, you know, our—some of our rationale for going towards that one-to-one ratio, and I think that, you know, with safety and high-quality workers in mind, it'll move our workforce in a very positive direction.

And also just to add on there that I think that also—one of the things I've been hearing from young people is that they want to be able to work in a job where they know they're going to have a good quality of life, a family-supporting job, but also know that they can do it safely and go to work safely, work safely all day and come home at the end of the day safely to their family.

And so I think that the steps we've taken to restore the one-to-one ratio for apprentices is going to help to make sure that workers in our province can have that opportunity.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I just want to introduce myself as Rick Wowchuk. I'm the member from the Swan River constituency. And want to welcome all this great staff from the department here, the political staff and minister, for this opportunity to ask a few questions on this very important 'ponent'.

In my former life, for 25 years, I was an educator in the resource management area, so, wildlife, fisheries, forestry was kind of my passion here. So I'm not going to burn up time. I'm just going to get into a lot of the questions.

But I do want to put on record that I was quite disappointed to see the minister's mandate letter make very little mention of anything to do with natural resources. There was no mention of Conservation Officer Service, no mention of forestry, no mention of wildlife management and a passing mention of minerals strategy. There was a bit on the fishery.

But I'm going to—the rural way of life, I'm going to move right into the Conservation Officer Service, because I find this really important in rural Manitoba.

Can the minister please share with us the current vacancy rate within the Conservation Officer Service?

**Mr. Moses:** I want to—one—I'll answer the member's question directly.

But I just want to first take an opportunity to thank the member, and I know folks on the MLA's have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to natural resources and conservation officers. And I think that's a very useful asset that we have around the Legislature, to have people that are very passionate about that. And so I just want to say appreciation on that as well.

We've had conversations, and I've found them valuable.

I want to say to the conservation officers, and you ask around that specifically—just a message, quick message to conservation officers that we're very thankful for the work that you're doing. We know it's a really tough job. We know it's incredibly challenging to be working in the—all the far corners, regions, northern, rural areas of our province. And it's not easy work. Many times, you're out there individually, and we thank you for that, because the work you do protects people in Manitoba; it helps to protect our wildlife and also helps to protect our natural resources and the environment that we all hold very dear.

So direct message to the conservation officers: thank you for the work that you're doing. We value it. And our government's here to support you.

With respect to the specific job number on vacancies, as of October 2024, vacancy rate was just under 9 per cent. And that is down, because as of October 2023—one year previous—the vacancy rate was just over 13 per cent.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Yes. I thank the minister for that.

Which brings to another question: the importance of our conservation officers and the great work they do.

Significant funding was set aside by the previous government for conservation officer modernization strategy.

\* (16:20)

The 24-7 dispatch has been implemented. New equipment, patrol vehicles been added to the fleet, and work was under way to enhance wages to help recruitment.

Can the minister confirm this money is still in the budget?

**Mr. Moses:** Thank you for the question.

So, you know, we take very seriously conservation officers and the work that they do. I had the pleasure this summer of going out and visiting many of the conservation officers in their allocations around the province. And it's amazing to see first-hand the work that they do each and every day, whether they start off their day in a truck and end it on a boat or they're out in a helicopter, whether they're helping out with our wildfire service team, which I also want to shout-out and say a huge thank-you to our wildfire service team who are protecting communities across

the province, and I know our conservation officer team works closely with them as well.

So we continue to work in support of our conservation officers and understand the needs that they are facing, the challenges that they're facing and find the best ways to meet those needs. So to some of the specifics, we've—have continued to, obviously, support the conservation officer dispatch, which is in Brandon. We have also worked to increase their wages, as well as a northern allowance wages, and to continue support them through enhancements in equipment, in tools and in vehicles.

And I'll just direct the—to the member, on page 55 of the supplement where it talks about the conservation officer service, there that the budget in '24-25 has increased and is up to twenty-five—just over \$25 million. So it is an increase year over year from the 2020-'23-24 budget. So it is—the money that he's referring to is in there and it's actually increased year over year—budget.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Okay, I'd just like to comment, too. The minister mentioned about credit, and I totally agree with him, and he mentioned that we increased equipment, we increased, you know, vehicles, et cetera, and those were all initiatives that were put in place previously, so thank you to you for going down that road and keeping that in and thank you previously for making that available.

Safety is one of the big things in rural Manitoba that I want to talk about, and I know that night lighting is a real hazard up in rural Manitoba and a danger to life. I talked to a logger recently at 5 o'clock in the morning in the Duck Mountains, how a group of people were loading a moose at 5 a.m.

And this brings me to the question. Earlier this year, we learned that the deputy minister issued a directive to officers to not enforce certain natural resource laws for certain groups.

Can the minister explain why his deputy is telling officers to not enforce the law? How does he believe that this has affected morale within the department and enhanced safety within our province?

**Mr. Moses:** I thank the member for the question. It's important to get into those details.

I do think, though, that the way I would talk about this issue is a little bit perhaps differently than the member opposite, and I wouldn't frame it this way at all.

I think, you know, what we are doing as a government is having conversations with a variety of group

who—groups and individuals from all walks of life who—and some of which who have outstanding issues for many years.

And so we are—have been proactively working in a constructive manner to build relationships with people from—who are from Métis First Nation—from Métis—from the MMF and Métis background, from Indigenous First Nations, and understanding their needs and their treaty rights within the framework of natural resources.

And I think it's very important to understand that as a conversation that needs to be had, that our government is responsible for ensuring that we work collaboratively and productively with people right across the province.

And so as we continue to have those conversations, we also are working very proactively with our conservation officers. And so that proactive work means that we've gone out and had those conversations with conservation officers.

And I—between myself and my team, we've been to every conservation officer—office in the province. I was up in Churchill earlier this year and we've been to about every region office. And it's important to have those individual conversations to understand what they're seeing first-hand.

We, as a government, are enforcing the law, to be perfectly clear. We are enforcing the law. And as we continue to work through individual issues, we are continuing to find ways to work collaboratively with communities and understand that we have a responsibility not only to protect Manitobans, but to conserve our wildlife and our natural resources.

And so we'll continue to do that work in a very productive and constructive manner, and I'll, along the way, ensure that all people in our government and in Manitoba have the ability to move forward and move forward in a way that protects and ensures the sustainability of our natural resources for many years to come.

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Wowchuk:** May I take it from that answer that the minister is fully enforcing the law for all individuals, especially when it comes to safety where life can be put at risk, and I appreciate that, if that's what he was meaning by that. Because that is quite important.

We sure don't want to see a fatality happen, you know, in the middle of the night or something where people are trying to make a living for their family and have to go back to their families and then find out that

possibly something was not enforced or somebody had given the idea not to enforce that resulted in this death. Because I'm sure the government would be in great trouble. So I appreciate the minister looking at things that way.

Stakeholders have approached me that this government is not being transparent and sharing details of the recently signed MOU, which government signed with three First Nations in my constituency. This industry and its well-being are the catalyst for economic development in my constituency. And it said that the MOU would be available, but then it wasn't available.

Can the minister table the MOU today and provide it so that I can share with stakeholders concerns, if they have any?

**Mr. Moses:** So I thank the member for highlighting this historic agreement that was signed between three First Nations and the government regarding the forest management—plan for a forest management licence.

It is really, really historic. And I can't under-emphasize that. What we've done over the last eight months is to work through outstanding issues that the First Nations had, not just for years, but for decades.

Now, you have to think about this from their perspective when—that they come to the table with the Manitoba government and have years and years of issues that they felt, in their perspective—and I don't want to, you know, dare speak on their behalf. But what they've told me is that they've felt that they weren't being heard. And they felt that they weren't, you know, being listened to.

And so I—without, you know, making any commentary on any of that, I want to just say that our job, when I came into office, is to do that work of building stronger relationships with those First Nations. And so that's what we've done over many months, is to meet with them, have conversations, not take—use language that would pit anyone against each other or pit any group of people against each other, but truly build an understanding and commonality when it comes to the natural resources on their traditional territory.

But also won a framework that would allow us to have economic success in that region. Because, you know, I know and they know and the community knows that having good, long-term supporting jobs in that region is going to be good for that community. And it's going to be good for First Nations communities as well.

And so that's our goal: How do we keep the person who's working in the Louisiana-Pacific mill working? How do we keep the people who are working in the forest logging? How do we keep those transport trucks—how do we keep that—those people with good family-supporting jobs operating every day?

How do we do that? We do it by building relationship with those First Nations. And so we did that work. Over many months, we negotiated and worked collectively, collaboratively with them and found a common ground where we were able to sign that historic MOU in June that set us—now set us on a path to work on, over the next five years, a forest management plan that'll have long-term and sustainable economic success for the community. I think that's really, really important, and I hope the member opposite agrees that that's really important.

So we did the work to reset the relationship and did the work to have this historic signing, and now we're continuing to embark on the work to get ourselves, over the next five years—again, stability for five years, I think itself, is an accomplishment, because we've been working on a one- to two-year plan for many, many years, which has been unstable for people working in the community, unstable for the First Nations.

And now this five years of stability is going to help us chart the path to 20 more years of a plan. And so as we continue to reset relationships, as we continue to work collaboratively with the First Nations and with industry, we are, you know, very optimistic about where we could be and the new chapter that we could be setting for communities. Specifically ones in that region, the Swan region, but also ones around the province that are looking for how do we ensure that we do resource development projects that are going to be sustainable economically for the long term?

And so we think this is a very historic agreement, and we're very happy that we worked in a collaborative fashion to get it to completed.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** I thank the minister for his response.

So for the hundred-plus people who are watching this live feed today, I can safely say that I want it on record and known the minister is refusing to provide this document that's so important to providing good jobs for families.

And I think I'd be pretty safe in saying that, and unfortunately—hopefully, sometime, it'll be made public so that these people are aware of all that it entails, because it's important for the moose population, it's

important for the economy of the valley and everything else.

Want to go to the population surveys. What are the plans—I'd like to ask the minister, what are the plans this year—you know, we know that moose populations are declining in the Duck and the porcupine mountains despite the fact that it was announced that it was stable. Some thoughts about the modelling that occurred, you know, so there's ways of correcting it.

Is there any plans for population surveys to try to come up with some consensus as to what the actual population is in the Duck Mountains? Ground surveys, the people on the ground, the loggers, the COs, the hunters, they all say that it's declined dramatically in the last three years, and yet, you know, a population approximately 2,400 came up.

So what are the plans to get us on track, to make sure that we got an accurate estimate, that there's no flaws in the infrared survey that was given and all the kinks are worked out of it, et cetera? So what are the plans for this winter, or this fall, late fall after freeze-up?

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Moses:** So thanks for the question, and thank you, Chair.

You know, I think it's very important for us to really understand this issue as a sustainability issue around particularly the moose population but also the—you know, big game, generally. And I think member opposite understands this. It's very important for us to have the population, no matter what, you know, walk of life or reason you might be harvesting big game. You know, it's important for us to know—ensure that we're doing so on this very sustainable manner.

So that's our focus as a government: the sustainability. Part of that sustainability is having a very robust plan to monitor the populations. And so, we are actually looking at—we—and continuing to monitor big game through surveys and doing so on a comprehensive manner.

And, actually, we are hoping to do increased work on that front to ensure that there is continued sustainability around moose and big game throughout the province and, in particular, obviously as the member highlighted, throughout the Duck and porcupine mountains.

We know that that area is, you know, of particular interest and has some particular level of concern. So our wildlife branch uses a science-based decision-making framework for the data population. And so it

is very much looking at that raw data and understanding it.

We consider—the branch considers this information from a variety of sources, which include aerial survey. It includes hunter and harvest surveys, local and Indigenous knowledge, so people who are on the ground. We also include in that data that's collected, like I mentioned, aerial survey, which by the way is—some of the leading technology being used in the country for survey collection is being done right here in Manitoba through our aerial surveys. And so I'm very proud of the team for having this leading technology and being a leader in this front around the country.

And, in addition to that, the evidence-based data, you know, also come from camera traps and also from collaring. And so, some of—these are some of the tools that are used around the province to ensure that we are working toward that sustainability for big game, for moose. And this really helps us make evidence-based decisions when it comes to big game population across the province.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** So I'm gathering that no surveys will be occurring this winter. Appreciate the minister for, you know, sharing with me the importance of surveys and some of the technologies that's available. However, he did not answer the question as to any—whether any surveys are going to occur this year.

I'd like to go back a little bit to the enforcement. And the government reduced regular public communications about the work that our conservation officers do, and this is a big thing.

I see a lot of times when our COs up in the Swan Valley take bears in to the bear rescue centre, they get a lot of positive accolades. Makes him feel really good, makes him feel when they—also that they're doing their job out there in the enforcement.

And the—can the minister explain why these bulletins that were out on a regular basis, you know, praising the work of our COs and how, you know, they're—but they were out there every day and doing their job and getting high-fives from the public—why this is being discontinued or much reduced?

**Mr. Moses:** So just to clarify from the previous answer, I did say—and I'm not sure if the member heard—but I did actually say on the surveys, that we would actually be doing increased surveys this year. So the member might not have caught that when—my response previously, but did clearly say that we're going to be doing increased surveys this year.



In regards to—excuse me. In regards to the conservation officer bulletin, this is something that we're—continue to offer as a government and release them. We have released them throughout this year. We continue to also do the work to not only engage with community members and our Conservation Officer Service through the bulletin without reaching directly out to people.

And that's why we've taken the approach of going out to meet with our Conservation Officer Service directly, face to face. That's why we've gone out and meeting with community to talk about these sort of things. That's why we've gone out and had fish forums in community, to hear first-hand from people how they're relating with government, how they're working with conservation officers.

This is the sort of engagement that we pride ourselves on, being a listening government, to not only engage with folks by putting out conservation officer bulletins, but by having meetings, having conversations, by working hand-in-hand with people to understand that—what they're seeing, and we can get that direct feedback.

This helps us not only inform people about what we're doing as a government but—the good work that conservation officers are doing but also to get that feedback from folks live time, so we can be more receptive and more in tune with what's going on for folks and help us to better respond to what folks are facing on the ground.

So we will continue to put out conservation officer bulletins. I understand one will be out shortly, most likely in November. And so we will continue to put those out to keep people informed and engaged, and we will continue to engage with Manitobans and with our conservation officers in a variety of ways.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Yes. I'll just ask one more question here before I turn it for summing it up here to my colleague, but we haven't had a chance.

I'll make it real easy, fisheries question here. You know, minister set a target of certifying five sustainable fisheries this year.

Where does this target come from, and what fisheries will the minister be certifying this year?

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Moses:** So, yes, so I just wanted to clarify that this certification—so the member referenced five. And so obviously there's certification right now in Waterhen Lake and Cedar Lake, and we continue to work with Lake

Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis, those are the other three to make the five in total.

Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, they're in the precertification assessment process that's been—work's been completed, and so, as you know, the fishers on the lake have to be on board. And so we continue to work with them, those lakes.

And on Lake Winnipegosis, they're precertification. We're hoping that'll go—process will through later this year, in the coming months.

And so those make up the five lakes that are on there. Two are complete, two in the precertification assessment has been completed, and one will be completed I'll—through—in the next coming months, that's our goal.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Yes, I thank the minister.

And just before I turn it over, I thank you for all your answers and your political staff and your great departmental staff who all really care about our resources. And I thank them for their passion and their concern, and just keep working hard.

And I'll just pass it over to my colleague here to sum things up.

**Mr. Wharton:** Clause by clause. Ready for clause by clause.

**The Chairperson:** Seeing no further questions, does—

Resolution 10.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$35,413,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Investment and Trade, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Let's have a little more enthusiasm, folks.

Resolution 10.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$128,186,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Workforce Development and Training, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 10.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,500,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Minerals, Petroleum and Geoscience, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 10.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$34,727,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Natural Resource Stewardship, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 10.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$76,854,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Conservation and wildlife services, for the fiscal year—[interjection] my apologies—Wildfire Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 10.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,010,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 10.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$40,000,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 10.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 10.1.

At this point, we respectfully request the minister's staff quickly leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions—no, there is a question. I apologize, I didn't see your hand. Oh, we don't really have time for that.

**Mr. Wharton:** Certainly, again, thank the staff and thank the minister for today. It's just unfortunate that we didn't have enough time to get through more than about a third of what we had to talk about. But it's difficult for me to give the minister a passing grade today based on what I've heard.

A lot of issues in a lot of areas that started through our government have been continued, which I am pleased with. However there's more to do, and we'll

be keeping the minister to account. I will not be moving the amendment today, though.

**The Chairperson:** Resolution 10.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,110,000 for Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources. The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Estimates of emergency expenditures.

The hour being 4:58, will?

**Some Honourable Members:** Committee rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise.

**ROOM 255**

**LABOUR AND IMMIGRATION**

\* (14:50)

**The Chairperson (Robert Loiseau):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Good afternoon. It is my honour to join you all today to discuss the Department of Labour and Immigration in the Committee of Supply.

With me today are our deputy minister Bernadette Preun; Laura Morrison, assistant deputy minister of Labour; Natalia Hnydyuk, director of Strategic Initiatives in the Immigration division; and Todd Callin, ADM of divisional administration, finance and executive financial officer.

The Department of Labour and Immigration's Labour division's focus reflects our government's goal to ensure that Manitoba workers receive a fair wage and are treated with dignity and respect, so that every single working Manitoban can feel proud of the work they do.

Budget 2024 delivers on the government's commitments and makes record investments. The budget marks a dramatic change in government investments to specifically improve the working lives of Manitobans. We are committed to providing safe and thriving

workplaces and building diverse, vibrant communities that create opportunities for all Manitobans to contribute to growing a strong economy.

Our focus is on ensuring Manitobans have access to good jobs by making it easier for Manitobans to join a union. A good union job is a pathway to the middle class. We are banning replacement workers because no one should take workers' jobs when they are fighting for better pay, more respect and dignity. We have also taken steps to ensure effective essential service agreements are in place prior to collective bargaining negotiations.

\* (15:00)

We are providing additional resources to the Manitoba Labour Board to support this work. To improve workplace safety for all Manitobans, we are increasing enforcement capacity by hiring additional safety and health officers to conduct inspections and investigations, respond to tips and incidents and work refusals and reprisals.

When it comes to safe workplaces and harmonious labour relations, partnerships with critical stakeholders are key. Our government is a listening government. We have developed and solidified relationships across labour and employer groups, as well as with key stakeholders in the technical safety community.

Continuous engagement is critical in ensuring effective legislation and processes for oversight in Manitoba's workplaces. To achieve this, we have already re-established the Minister's Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health. While members opposite viewed workplace health and safety as red tape, our government wants every single Manitoban to go home safe at the end of their shift.

In addition to the advisory council, our government continues to work closely with the Workers Compensation Board, SAFE Work Manitoba and other partners to reduce the number and severity of workplace-related injuries and illnesses in Manitoba.

We are listening to Manitobans and are working towards diverse and vibrant communities, with safe, thriving workplaces—the path to a brighter, more prosperous future for all Manitobans.

The Immigration division contributes to Manitoba's economic growth and strong communities through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, or MPNP, and working with partners to promote the province as a destination of choice for international talent. The division administers the MPNP, an economic immigra-

tion program focused on the skills and talent needs of Manitoba's employers and communities. The division also supports the social and economic integration and career development of newcomers through settlement supports and co-ordinated immigrant labour market services.

In 2023, the MPNP nominated 7,348 candidates, a record number for Manitoba. And while it was a record, it fell short of Manitoba's federal allocation of 9,500, losing out on skilled workers and their families. More than 2,152 skilled workers and their families were lost.

I want to commend Immigration division staff for their record-setting work, despite being significantly under-resourced by the former government.

I want to take a moment to put on the record the legacy of the members opposite in this respect. In 2023, over 16,000 letters of advice to apply were issued. You can find this in our report that was recently received, on page 25. Members here will also note that I just stated that the federal MPNP allocation was 9,500 in 2023.

As an end result of their—of the members opposite's previous government—failed government—lack of re-sourcing, our department was only able to process 7,348 candidates. So that meant 8,652 spots were actually false spots that were pulled.

This meant that the previous government created an inventory more than twice the size of the annual spots that Manitoba had available to fill under MPNP. What this means is that the previous government overcommitted by more than 8,652 spots. This effect of that decision extended processing times; it affected the ability of the government to be nimble and adjust to dynamic labour market needs; and most egregious, it created false expectations of those wishing to make Manitoba their home.

Our government values each and every newcomer that chooses Manitoba to be their home, and that is why we are working to increase the number of immigrants who come to stay in Manitoba. For 2024, Manitoba's federal allocation is 9,500 nominations, and we on track to utilize the entire allocation, which will allow us to welcome more newcomers and their families to the province.

Our government also signed an agreement with the federal government to help transition MPNP-eligible temporary residents to permanent residency and to support local labour-market needs.

This is intended to have a direct and positive impact for up to 6,700 potential provincial nominees. By extending their working status in Manitoba by two years, these prospective provincial nominees will be able to remain eligible to apply to the MPNP and Manitoba will be able to nominate them to apply for Canadian permanent residence.

We are engaged with Manitoba employers and regional communities to promote international recruitment options and address labour market needs. This work seeks to attract and retain skilled workers to address Manitoba's most pressing labour shortages, to grow our economy and revitalize communities.

Through the Fair Registration Practices Office, or FRPO, we are working with Manitoba professions to streamline application processes, offer more flexible registration pathways and remove unnecessary barriers—accreditation barriers through new regulations. We are committed to building on progress, ensuring fair treatment for newcomers and access to skilled professionals for our communities.

Manitoba has been the home of hope as well as a safe and welcoming place for people coming to Canada. Manitobans have a well-deserved reputation within Canada for compassion and willingness to help those in need. In collaboration with the federal government, we will continue to welcome those affected by war and conflict and seeking refuge in Manitoba.

Thank you, and I look forward to a productive discussion regarding the department's budget.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I will keep my opening remarks brief; this is my first Estimates process and I'm looking forward to asking some questions, getting some answers and going through this. And so I'm willing to just start with some questions here.

**The Chairperson:** Alright, we thank the member.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 11.1(a) contained in resolution 11.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

**MLA Marcelino:** With me today are deputy minister Bernadette Preun, Laura Morrison, assistant deputy minister of Labour; Natalia Hnydyuk, director of Strategic Initiatives in the Immigration division; and Todd Callin, ADM of divisional administration, finance and executive financial officer; Justine Brisebois, director of legislative and policy branch of the Labour division; Allen Mankewich, special assistant; and Carolina Stecher, director of ministerial affairs.

\* (15:10)

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

According to our rule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the minister share how many total staff, both technical appointments and civil servant, that are in your office?

**MLA Marcelino:** I thank the member opposite for the question.

And we have six political and civil servant staff in total in the minister's office.

**Ms. Byram:** Okay. And civil servant?

**MLA Marcelino:** So we have six in total for the minister's office, and that's three civil service staff and three political staff. So six in total.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the minister tell me the titles and the wages for those appointments?

\* (15:20)

**MLA Marcelino:** The annual salary total of the six staff in the minister's office is \$386,461. *[interjection]*

Oh, and the titles. Thank you.

\* (15:30)

The six titles of the minister's staff include director of ministerial affairs, special assistant to the minister, executive assistant to the minister, administrative assistant to the minister, administrative correspondence secretary and a second administrative correspondence secretary.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the minister provide the total number of staff in the Department of Labour and Immigration?

**MLA Marcelino:** Total number of staff in Labour and Immigration is 286.7. That's 12 FTEs in administration, 205.7 FTEs in Labour and 69 FTEs in Immigration.

**Ms. Byram:** How many vacancies does the MPNP office currently have?

**MLA Marcelino:** There are currently six vacancies in the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program department.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the minister tell us the total number of EOI spaces that were allocated from the federal government for the calendar year 2024?

**MLA Marcelino:** The EOI—that stands for expression of interest—there are no allocations for that by the federal government. It's an open portal and folks can apply to put in their expression of interest applications; that is not what the federal government allocates.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the minister tell us how many EOI letters in total have been issued?

**MLA Marcelino:** I'd like to ask the member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram) for clarification.

We do not send out EOI letters to applicants. We do send out letters of advice to apply to applicants, and I'm just guessing that maybe that is what the member for Agassiz is referring to in her question. But I would like to get clarification.

**Ms. Byram:** How many letters have been issued?

**MLA Marcelino:** As of today, since January 1, 2024, we have issued 6,934 letters of advice to apply; that's LAAs.

\* (15:40)

**Ms. Byram:** Does the minister believe the backlog of MPNP applicants will be cleared by January 1, 2025?

**MLA Marcelino:** I'm going to have to get a little bit more clarification from the member opposite. Like, when you—when they say clear the backlog—do you mean all the folks that have applied using their expression of interests?

**Ms. Byram:** Those that have an MPNP application in the queue.

**MLA Marcelino:** So currently we have 25,528 EOI profiles in our system. And we currently have 4,343 MPNP applications that are pending. So the short answer is no, to the question about January 1, 2025.

And I would like to remind the member, on page 25 of the report that we issued, you know, a few

weeks ago, it states there very clearly that the members opposite, when they were in government, were extremely irresponsible in giving out all the letters of advice to apply that they could in their dying days before they left government. There were thousands of applications, even though there weren't any spots for these folks.

In fact, it was something like over 8,652 more spots that did not exist. Just giving out letters of advice to apply in their dying days—in their dying days, in the last few months. It was so extremely irresponsible. It put our MPNP system—it destabilized it; it put in so much in inventory and it's going to take us a long time to recover.

We are doing that good work right now by hiring folks to help with the processing and also by having a clear vision of what it is that we need to do. I'm very thankful for this government and for the support of the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Finance Minister and the Treasury Board in giving our department the resources that we need to work on this backlog that was irresponsibly solely created by members opposite in their dying days. Over 8,652 spots that didn't even exist.

But, yes, we are working on the backlog. We are, you know, trying to welcome as many Manitobans—many newcomers to Manitoba as possible and making sure that folks have a pathway to citizenship if they're working here in Manitoba. We know we certainly need their labour.

But you want to talk about backlog, you have to look in the mirror and realize what it was that members opposite did to solely contribute to that backlog.

**Ms. Byram:** What specific industry sectors and occupations will be given priority in future draws?

**MLA Marcelino:** Thank you for that question.

You know, part of reducing the backlog means having consistent but smaller draws, unlike members opposite when they're in government, when they were having thousands of people in draws. So part of that means that we need to be very judicious in how we're doing this while we're tackling this inherited backlog by members opposite.

So we have to prioritize folks that have the best possible chances of staying in Manitoba and contributing to Manitoba that have ties to Manitoba especially as it relates to our needs and communities and in labour sector needs.

So, first and foremost, we typically draw from what we call the international education stream. These are applicants who have studied in Manitoba and then—or, post-secondary studies in Manitoba, and then they have found employment in the fields of their study. So we have excellent retention rates from folks like this and we know that they're already contributing to Manitoba labour force needs already.

The next group that we typically draw from Manitoba's needs relate to the strategic initiatives that we have as a department. We strategic—we enter into strategic initiative agreements with communities, usually municipalities, for example the Parkland, Morden, Winkler and we are in the middle of negotiating more strategic initiatives across our province. We are in talks with The Pas, with Thompson, and on Friday of our break week—or, constituency week in November, I'm happy to announce that I'll be opening another strategic initiative in the Assiniboine Valley area.

So we are continuing to do the work by getting into agreements with municipalities and helping them to ensure that they have their labour needs. This is very, very important work, and this is another group that we will prioritize when we are drawing folks.

Another group that we prioritize is folks that have entered into strategic initiatives, specifically as businesses. So the member opposite will know HyLife quite well, being from their constituency. So an example of a strategic initiative that we have with a business is with a company like HyLife, an excellent company that has an excellent track record here in Manitoba for treating their employees very well and lots—a host of other stuff that they do extremely well. And they enter into an agreement with us, with our department, and we help them supply their labour needs.

So those are always at the top of our priorities in terms of making sure that we have enough nominations and that we prioritize those nominations for strategic initiatives and for international educated—international education stream.

**Ms. Byram:** How are draw dates determined and is there any consistency to those dates or draws?

\*(15:50)

**MLA Marcelino:** The department engages in biweekly draws every month, as a practice.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** We've talked a little about the skilled trades. The demographics of the skilled trades in the 2021 workforce of Canada document shows that 22.3 per cent of our workforce in

skilled trades is over 55 years old. It further states that 19.9 per cent of the workers are nearing retirement age.

What is this government doing to fulfill those positions that are desperately becoming vacant?

**MLA Marcelino:** Thank you for that question.

Specific draws for skilled workers happened in May of 2024, but they are included—skilled workers are included in every draw through the strategic initiatives and Skilled Workers Overseas.

In terms of your question regarding workforce development, that's best suited for the economic development, industry and trade department.

**Mr. Perchotte:** I think we need to look more than just passing this over to economic trade and development.

We have a steady pattern from 2016 of people at or near retirement age of 14.5 per cent, now nearly 20 and 21. I would make the argument that we're probably close to 23 or 24 per cent of our skilled workforce or journeypeople are going to be at or nearing retirement age. We're going to have a tremendous void in our tradespeople. We're going to have a tremendous void in our economy. We're going to have a tremendous void in getting projects done on a timely basis.

The NDP government has now announced dropping the ratio, instead of two-to-one, which was producing more skilled tradespersons down to one-to-one. So then we need to have a secondary mechanism to get people into our trades. If it's not through labour immigration—I don't think we have a printer yet that can start producing people, so I'd like to have some substantial answers as to what this department is doing to address a tremendous labour need that is coming directly at us in the next five to 10 years.

**MLA Marcelino:** I would like to repeat to the member opposite that specific draws for skilled workers were made in May of this past year—of this year, rather—but that they are included in every single draw through our strategic initiatives draw. These people are chosen by their communities.

A strategic initiative is made in context with a business or with a community. The community would then go out and find out from all the different parts of their area: What are their needs? And then they will say, well, we're going to need this kind of mechanic. We're going to need this type of teacher. We're going to need this kind of line cook. And then the community will choose, then, the applicant. That is what a strategic initiative with a community is.

So those are the types of immigration priorities that we have. The community identifies the folks that they need, and then we go out and help facilitate those applications, those ones that were chosen by the communities themselves.

Another way to do this is through a business. When a business says and enters into an agreement with us through a strategic initiative, they're saying how many folks that they're going to need in that way and then our department will help to facilitate those types of folks that they have identified. And that's what our department does.

In general, we know that there are going to be very serious labour shortages, especially—they're here already, but impending and then in the future—especially as it relates to the construction sector. So many different types of jobs there, as well as the health sector, so many different types of jobs there. And we will regularly pull from those streams when we have those types of applicants in our pool.

\* (16:00)

But in terms of economic—or, sorry, workforce development, that is not the role of my—of our department. That is in another department's responsibility.

**Mr. Perchotte:** And taking a look at the percentages retiring: 42.6 per cent of client services repairs are retiring; 41.6 per cent of tool and die makers are at or near retirement age; 34.1 per cent of the mechanics are at retirement age; 34.1 per cent of cabinet makers are also at retirement age; 31.8 per cent of autobody collision and refinishing technicians are at retirement age.

I think the department has to have a little bit more responsibility and making sure that the industry is kept whole. We know that there's manufacturers who are desperate for workers. They need to have a clear path to get these people here, and it's not working.

We have the number of tradespeople in our province dropping off. A drop from—a change from two-to-one apprenticeship down to one-to-one is going to take 50 per cent of the trades—people entering the trades away, and then you have another up to 41 per cent or 42 per cent retiring. We are decimating our trades.

What can this department do to fix that?

**MLA Marcelino:** I would like to remind the member that back in May of this past year, our department entered into a very good policy, a special measure policy with the federal government, that the federal

government had put this announcement that we were going to be losing folks who are already here and that they would have to leave if their work permits were expiring.

That was up to 6,700 people that were going to be leaving Manitoba. Those were workers that the federal government were saying, well, your time's up, time to go.

And in response to the needs of communities, in response to the needs of businesses, in response to the needs of these hopeful applicants, we entered into a discussion from February 15 until we heard back on May 10 that we were able to have a special measure to retain over 6,700 workers here in Manitoba who otherwise would've had to leave before the end of 2024.

And then when further discussions that we were able to engage in over the rest of the summer, we were even able to extend that, not just for folks with postgraduate work permits that were expiring, but for many folks that were already here.

So those people were retained in Manitoba through a very special policy measure that we were the only province to be able to negotiate to date with the government. And like I said, maybe with the help of our economic development, industry and trade minister, those 6,700 workers or more could be put on a path to all the different types of labour shortages that we're experiencing here in Manitoba.

So I certainly believe that our Immigration department is pulling its share in trying to make sure that we have people here, that we are keeping and trying to retain the folks that we are choosing to be here, unlike members opposite, who, under their watch, 'shlaw' the highest out-migration rates our province has ever seen.

Thank you.

**Mr. Perchotte:** In your opening remarks, you had mentioned how the PCs had disregarded the safety of employees. I hope the member's aware that the safety of all employees in our province is legislated by government. Every organization is required to have a work-safe policy.

There are several organizations out there: the Construction Safety Association of Manitoba, SAFE Work Manitoba, Sales and Service Safety Association, Manitoba heavy construction, RPM trucking industry and the list goes on and on and on.

Are—were you saying in your beginning statement that companies are not required to follow a safety protocol, or are you aware that it is legislated by this government that there has to be a safety program in place?

**MLA Marcelino:** Thank you for your question, or statement.

Yes, I am aware of industry-based safety associations and the good work that they do. When I was speaking about the PC record on safety, I was referring to the abolishment of the workplace safety and health advisory council.

This was a—this is a non-partisan group made up of workers, employers and technical staff—or, technical safety experts that review legislation, that are abreast of, you know, current workplace safety and health policies that are happening in other jurisdictions, that are on the ground seeing different types of safety and health concerns that are happening.

Things are not static in the workplace safety and health world. There are emerging issues, and the past previous PC government removed this advisory council and they just called it red tape. This was panned by employers, by workers and by technical experts all around. This is not something that you do when you care about the workplace safety and health.

And that was the first thing that I did when I became minister, was put that in order to try to get that back for our province, and I'm happy to say that that legislation passed this past spring, and we have been working on trying to populate that committee once again and they are going to be doing the important work of trying to further workplace safety and health across our province.

This is a very important thing for many Manitobans. Some of the topics that they're going to be covering is stuff about asbestos, about silica, about mental health, psychological health. Did you know that there's so much safety and health issues now in corrections, in our health sector. What are some things that we can do to try to make those experiences better for our workers across the province in—that are suffering through those types of sectors.

We are seeing crime and violence in our retail sector. What kinds of things can we do as a province to help protect workers in that sector? These are the types of questions and issues and policies that a committee like this—made up of employers, technical experts and workers—can do when we are working together and providing advice to government for how

to make further regulations or legislation, or just other types of areas of focus.

This is very important work. Another thing that we're doing as a government that I am extremely proud of is making sure that folks—make it easier for them to join a union. Why that's important; because one of the things that a union can do is help ensure that its members are healthy and safe in their workspaces. This is, like, job No.1 that unions do.

And if folks in a workspace aren't unionized and they're seeing that safety and health concerns are a problem, then it will be up to them to be able to organize themselves and form a union if they can, if the conditions warrant it. And then they can, as workers, take that self-empowerment and be able to make their workplace safer and healthier for themselves.

\* (16:10)

So those are some of the things that we can do and that I'm proud to be doing as minister for this department.

**Ms. Byram:** I do just want to put in on the record that I've met with lots of businesses and—small and large, that don't belong to a union but, yet, still provide a very, very safe workplace for their employers. And Manitoba has legislation out there to provide that for employers. COR Program is another example that, you know, there's legislation there for these businesses already.

And like I said, many businesses, large and small, provide a safe working environment for their employees and offer programs and fair wages and great wages in a lot of cases.

I just want to go back to ask exactly how many are on the advisory council and how often do they meet?

**MLA Marcelino:** The Workplace Safety and Health advisory council has one chair, four worker representatives, four business representatives and four technical representatives. In the past, they have met on a quarterly basis.

As for the member's previous comment, I would agree wholeheartedly that there are many workspaces in Manitoba that provide excellent working conditions for their employees and really do a good job of taking care of the safety and health of their employees.

And then I would suggest that in those spaces, folks wouldn't necessarily feel the need to unionize in



order to improve those spaces. And I have spoken to union organizers themselves who would say, we don't go into those types of spaces to organize because everything's good in those workspaces and they don't need us.

So it's not just that, you know, the government is here to try to make every single space be unionized; it's to empower workers themselves to be able to do that in—when they need to, where they need to. Government can't be everywhere all the time, and it's up to workers that see that need to organize and to unionize that will do so.

**Ms. Byram:** Can you share a little bit more about what does the advisory council report on, who do they report to and has this always been standard practice?

**MLA Marcelino:** So some of the emerging workplace safety and health issues that come up that are relevant, particularly today, are things about PPE, personal protective equipment, especially as it relates to women and also folks that wear head coverings; for example, men who wear turbans. There's an issue with how ill-fitting PPE can really endanger a person while they're at work.

I remember meeting women electricians who worked for BC Hydro, how they recounted climbing up those hydro poles and they had these gloves that didn't fit them properly because they're not made for a women's physio—I don't know what the word is—physio—well, 'physiogyomy' or something like that.

So, for example, the pinky of this glove was—just was so much bigger than the actual pinky of the woman, like the little finger of a woman's hand, and here was this woman electrician, you know, metres and metres and metres up in the air at very high distance, trying to do her job.

So, women's PPE, the effect on—and ill-fitting PPE and the effect on a woman's safety at work. Then it went as well to the coveralls that they would wear, or even protective coverings for their face. There was a lot of issues especially for PPE. So this is an emerging issue that we could get some advice on.

\* (16:20)

And other related types of matters could then be referred to the council to get some further recommendations for future steps for—to improve our safety and health for our workers here in Manitoba. Other current items that we know are important, that Manitoba is now behind on because of the lack of an advisory council and, like, a mechanism to communicate to

government and do this type of research and build consensus in industries with workers and with technical experts because of the Tory idea of this being red tape, is things to do with asbestos.

We know that asbestos is the No. 1 cause of death in workplace safety and health, and there are many measures that people can take for training and other types of PPE to improve these outcomes here in—across Canada and in Manitoba, and we're just behind the ball on that because of, you know, previous Tory ideas that this is red tape.

It's not red tape. It's about making sure that workers across our province can be as safe and healthy as possible when they're at work. And so these are some of the issues and advice and recommendations, areas of consensus that would be built in a—in the work of a Workplace Safety and Health advisory council.

Again, the consensus between employers, industry, technical experts and workers themselves, this is very important work that is being—that is going to be resumed now and we're looking forward to seeing Manitoba take the lead in making gains in workplace safety and health issues.

**Ms. Byram:** So creating a 'safier'—safer, healthier community under your mandate or legislation, can you tell me how the department is going to promote operational efficiencies and enhance the productivity while streamlining regulatory and administrative processes?

**MLA Marcelino:** I find this question particularly galling given the fact that there wasn't even a stand-alone Labour and Immigration department for almost seven years of the previous government's existence.

When I first came to the department to visit them on my—I think it was probably in October or November, there were hardly any lights on, there were empty stalls, you could see the response time to complaints for employment standards violations or workplace safety and health were months and months long. So that's if somebody had already complained, not even a proactive investigation that would be happening.

So before you can, you know, decide to cut or whatever, you have to do an evaluation of what is here, who is here and really, talk to folks about their experiences. I was up north in Thompson over, like, I can't remember which month that this was, but just recently in the last three months at least. And there's only one Workplace Safety and Health officer there,

and he covers such a huge geographic region. These people do a lot of good work.

And, anyway, so I'm not sure what the member is trying to say; that I need to, you know, the first step is to really appreciate the workers for what they're doing here for our department on behalf of their efforts to really improve workplace safety and health and making sure that workers have the protections and rights that they deserve.

And I believe that our staff and our department have gone above and beyond, given, you know, the cuts to their departments over the years with this previous Tory government. It really was nothing to—it was actually not very good, what was happening under the previous government, and we are slowly starting to make some gains in terms of the hiring and making sure that we can address the needs of workers across Manitoba.

**Ms. Byram:** That was set out in your—as a key initiative in your supplement, so that's—I just wanted some clarification on how that was going to work for you.

I just want to touch a little bit about the labour legislation that was passed in the BITSA bill, that was jammed in and rushed through and was tacked on the end of this. It should've been a stand-alone bill and gone to committee. Can the minister share who was initially—

**The Chairperson:** Order.

Just want to remind all members that we can't currently talk about legislation that is under review at this point.

**Ms. Byram:** Okay. Moving along, the federal immigration minister confirmed that federal officials met with their provincial counterparts about provinces taking in more asylum seekers to ease pressures in Ontario and Quebec. Under a proportional system, Manitoba would receive eight—yes, 8,490 asylum claims.

Can the minister confirm if Manitoba will be receiving any additional asylum claims?

**MLA Marcelino:** The member opposite is wrong and is putting false information on the record. Over the past summer months, there was a working group that was developed among the provinces with the deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers of immigration that would meet with their federal counterpart, and those talks broke down.

Those talks between the provinces and the federal government broke down at that level of that working

group, and the—one of the—the initial formula that that initial working group put forward for Manitoba was nowhere near this 8,000 number that members opposite have been bringing up multiple times and was repeated erroneously in newspapers.

That number was actually something like 470; that was Manitoba's formula calculation for our population. So I have no idea where members opposite are coming up with a number closer to 9,000.

But, like I said, that working group dissolved and is no longer functioning. And that was a working group that involved deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers across the provinces with their federal counterpart.

**The Chairperson:** I just want to remember all members, including the minister, that we have to be careful with wording around misinformation or anything that's related to anything that's like lying or of that nature. Thank you.

**Ms. Byram:** There was a Immigration Advisory Council, and I'm just wondering, can the minister provide an update on how many of the recommendations from the Immigration Advisory Council report have been implemented?

\* (16:30)

**MLA Marcelino:** The initial Immigration Advisory Council did have some recommendations. A lot of them were value statements like we should have, you know, Manitoba should encourage more rural immigration, Manitoba should focus on our Business Investor Stream.

So a lot of those types of, you know, recommendations were more like priorities that Manitoba should have. There were some—which we are in agreement with. There were some specific recommendations especially, as I recall, for the Business Investor Stream that we were wholeheartedly in support of.

A lot of those recommendations would put us in line with the other provinces, especially as related to the Business Investor Stream's qualifications for language levels, let's say, or—that was something that I remember. But it wasn't anything that would make us, like, a leader again as Manitobans for our—for MPNP.

But those specific recommendations about the Business Investor Stream—we did put them through and are waiting for federal approval. I'd like to remind the member that immigration is largely federal jurisdiction, and for many of these changes we would have

to seek federal approval for them, which we did back in the late fall or early winter, especially as related to the Business Investor Stream recommendations of the Immigration Advisory Council.

Now, we believed that the council's recommendations didn't go far enough because they mostly put us in line with other jurisdictions. And like I said, Manitoba has been and can be again and will under this NDP government again be a leader in Canada as it relates to our priorities for immigration in—regional immigration here in Manitoba.

And to that end, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has put together a business and jobs council with an immigration committee made up of some of the very same folks of that Immigration Advisory Council from the previous government—lots of great folks on this current Premier's committee and also in the past advisory councils.

So more work is being done on how to improve our Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program and other types of ways to improve retention and more recommendations for our Business Investor Stream and for employers.

So more recommendations to come from this committee that we're looking forward to hearing about and we'll be able to share more in the House once we've got some traction on those activities.

But yes, very supportive of moving these priorities forward.

**Ms. Byram:** So according to the FAQ on the Immigrate Manitoba website, individuals whose work permits expire in 2025 are not eligible to apply for a support letter from Manitoba. Can the minister explain why this is the case if an individual's work permit expires on December 31 of 2024, they're eligible, but not in January of 2025?

**MLA Marcelino:** Again, I'd like to remind the member that most of, if not all, of the jurisdiction of immigration is a federal jurisdiction. We can only carve out, you know, certain rights and responsibilities for the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program as an economic immigration measure specifically for our province. But jurisdiction for immigration lies with the federal government.

We brought forward, because of our concerns about folks having to leave in—at the end of 2024, when they had very, very little notice. The first communications for these folks was at the end of December 2023 and then again in the beginning of

January 2024, that if their work permits were going to be expiring in 2024—and some of them as early as March—they would have to leave. And we felt that—you know, after talking to these applicants, after speaking to the—speaking to employers, after speaking to many communities—very concerned about this very, very abrupt news.

The rules changed abruptly. The federal government changed these rules very abruptly for this cohort, and we felt that it was important to give these people time to be able to adjust. Now, folks whose work permits are expiring in 2025, back in 2023 of December they knew that their work permits were expiring in 2025; they can still make certain types of moves in order to try to organize their lives and to try to make the certain types of applications, whereas this cohort, you know, they had no idea that this was coming.

So we can't do everything for everybody—again, this is a federal government jurisdiction—but we pride ourselves in doing our best to be a listening government, and we will continue to do that for applicants, for—especially for municipal leaders, especially for our business leaders to hear about what their concerns are.

And if, you know, this proves to be an issue, then we would be open to that conversation about where this would lead. But again, immigration is a federal jurisdiction and it is highly unlikely, I would say—but not impossible—but unlikely that the federal government at this point would acquiesce to certain types of concerns like this because of their determination to reduce the number of temporary residents across Canada.

Like I said, we're always willing to listen and to advocate for Manitobans; that's my job, that's our job as government is to represent the good people of Manitoba right here in this Legislature day in and day out, 365 days a year. So if and when we would need to do so, then we would try to advocate for these folks; but at this time, I haven't actually been approached by municipal leaders or by community members or by employers to extend work permits for 2025 expiries.

**Ms. Byram:** Did you—was priority given to MPNP applicants who had work permits close to expiry?

**MLA Marcelino:** Yes. If people had their work permits expiring in 2024 and they had—either their work permits had already expired or were expiring within something like 15 days or—I can't remember—45 days, then we instructed them to prioritize some

process so that they could be able to stay in Manitoba and continue working.

**Ms. Byram:** And what was the processing time on those applications?

\* (16:40)

**MLA Marcelino:** The department advises me that processing times ran from two weeks to two months, depending on the complexity of the application.

**Ms. Byram:** Are there any applications in the queue yet?

**MLA Marcelino:** The department advises that there are 361 applications left.

**Ms. Byram:** Can you repeat that? I'm sorry.

**MLA Marcelino:** The department advises that there are 361 applications left.

**Ms. Byram:** What do you—what does the timeline look like to get those applications reviewed and completed and processed?

**MLA Marcelino:** Department anticipates that these applications will be finalized in the next 60 days.

**Ms. Byram:** Will there be another, I guess, extension through that work permit, where you've allowed for MPNP applicants whose work permits are expiring? Are you going to revisit that again?

**MLA Marcelino:** We are not planning to do so at this time.

**The Chairperson:** Hearing no further questions, we will now proceed to considerations of the resolutions relevant to this department. I will now call—

We'll just take a moment here.

Resolution 11.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,164,000 for Labour and Immigration, Labour, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 11.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,464,000 for Labour and Immigration, Immigration, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 11.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 11.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions. Seeing no questions,

RESOLVED that resolution eleven point run—11.1—sorry: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,323,000 for Labour and Immigration, Administration, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

\* (16:50)

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

The next step of Estimates to be considered by this section for the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Finance.

The hour being 4:50, what is the will of the committee?

**Some Honourable Members:** Rise.

**The Chairperson:** The committee is adjourned.

**CHAMBER**

**JUSTICE**

\* (14:50)

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Justice, which last met on May 29, 2024, in another section of the Committee of Supply.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

Could the critic please introduce the staff in attendance?

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Certainly. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Our staff researcher and member of our staff Umar Awan.

**The Chairperson:** As previously agreed, questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I appreciate the opportunity to resume debate on Estimates, and I'm hoping that it goes a little smoother than when we left off last time, where it was

just no questions really answered and a lot of political rhetoric.

So I'm just going to get into my first question and—for the minister, through the Chair, is: How many total applications has the government received for the security camera rebate program since it was initiated?

\* (15:00)

**The Chairperson:** Maybe before the minister answers the question, we could introduce—lovely.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I do appreciate the opportunity to be back in the Committee of Supply to answer questions. And hopefully we can get all the information that the member opposite is requesting of us.

As I know we've already started this section of the Committee of Supply, we don't necessarily need to do opening statements, but of course I do want to introduce my fantastic staff who are here joining me in the Chamber.

On my right, your left—the opposition critic's left—is deputy minister Jeremy Akerstream, who I think the critic has met and knows quite well. And also another face that he might know at the table here is our assistant deputy minister of Public Safety Division, Owen Fergusson. And I know that they are going to make sure that we have all the information that we need.

And I don't want to take too much time to—you know, from the debate here today, but just to say that I'm glad that the member opposite has seen some of the benefits of this program. And so, you know, I'm glad his constituents are asking him questions, he's asking me questions, and we'll be able to get him some of the data that he's looking for.

**The Chairperson:** The honourable Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, again, I just want to begin by thanking the member opposite for asking about this important program.

You know, this was one—I knocked on a lot of doors in the last election. That's pretty much how I spent all my time. And it really gave me a great opportunity to get out and talk to folks. And of course we heard, right at the doorstep, folks who are concerned about their security and safety of their own homes, of their own property. People who were concerned about their larger community and just, you know, the impacts to the neighbourhood. How it feels, right?

So a lot of—when we talk about public safety, a lot of it has to do with how it feels and the impact that that has. And that has an impact on, again, the individuals; also on businesses and community organizations. And so this was something that we heard loud and clear going around knocking on doors.

And what we were able to talk about is a real concrete measure and a concrete program that—you know, I'll—full disclosure, we didn't invent it here in Manitoba. It was something that we saw was successful in other jurisdictions, and we saw that there was a real opportunity to build on what they had done and to replicate a lot of the work that they had done.

So we undertook some study beforehand. And you know, I think the member opposite knows that the member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway) was a big proponent of this type of program. We were happy to adopt it as one of our—as part of our campaign and one of the concrete solutions we could offer to folks, not just on the public safety side, I would mention, but also on the affordability piece, which is, you know, again, something we heard very clearly from Manitobans, that, you know, when times are tough—and they want to protect themselves, they want to be part of the solution. What action could they take to be part of the solution, and how could we help them to do that?

So the security rebate program was a huge success. And in fact, I'll just—you know, I'll say it clearly, that it was an overwhelming success. And I say that intentionally, because when we initially started, we said \$500,000 in the first year, and we'd look to build it out over subsequent years. And we were almost immediately overrun with a great response and a great uptake from individuals wanting to be a part of the solution.

So what we saw is we saw that immediate rush. We moved almost immediately, very quickly, I think within the same month maybe even, to increase the funding to that program after we had started to roll it out. And we increased it from \$500,000 to—all the way to \$2 million; \$2 million into pockets of Manitobans. This is a huge step and, again, just showed our action-oriented posture when it comes to taking action on public safety.

What we saw is that even that additional money was quickly capitalized on, and we had lots of great feedback from folks. We got, I think, a total of 8,800 applicants was around the final number before there was—the money was allocated. And what that meant is that we had to really get to work. And we were, you know, committed to getting the right

resources. We started with just a few people doing this work, and we quickly realized because of the success that we had to increase it.

I'll inform the House or the committee today that previously we had said—I think we were up to 22 staff, and we're currently up at 29 staff that are working on this, which is great. Four hundred—over \$400,000—\$438,000 to be exact, has been paid out to Manitobans, and we've increased the number of applications and really just picked up steam now in getting the money out the door.

And, you know, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) just the other day indicated to folks that we recognize holiday season's coming up. We want to make sure we get this money into people's pockets. We're committed to doing that. The staff has been doing a great job. They're working around the clock.

They're also giving, and I'll just maybe just quickly mention, a real personalized kind of assistance to folks who maybe have filled out the forms wrong or maybe just didn't quite submit the information correctly.

So there's still work to do, still opportunities to build on what we've done. And of course, stay tuned on the program going forward.

But I will say that this has been a huge success, and we are excited that we—you know, we've seen Manitobans want to work with us. They understand public safety is a real concern and that idea that you're not just protecting yourself, you're protecting everybody in your community: the businesses, the places of worship, absolutely everybody; that's a huge part of this. And I just—I couldn't be prouder of Manitobans' willingness to work with us on this endeavour.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I didn't have a chance on the record as staff wasn't in here, but I certainly welcome the expertise that has walked into the room with both the deputy minister and the associate—or, assistant deputy minister. Having worked with them both in a previous life, I know the value that they bring to their positions, and I appreciate that they're going to be here to put true facts on the record. Something that, you know, I look for is these true facts. So, I don't often hear them and really looking forward to this.

So the minister made mention that during his campaign he knocked on a lot of doors and I'm sure made a lot of promises, and some of these promises would've been about a camera rebate program. And, you know, I'm concerned because he said that, and I

quote, he's putting the money back into the pockets of Manitobans.

But I have been hearing extensively from not only my constituents but constituents across Manitoba about money being absent from their pockets. They've not been receiving their rebates. They've had to phone me several times, and I know the minister's aware through his office the number of letters and emails that I've forwarded on to his office to ensure that these rebates are coming to them.

I also want to reiterate that the minister, and rightfully, said, you know, they didn't invent this. They didn't reinvent the wheel. It's from another jurisdiction. They took it from them. And I've seen this pattern, as well, of adopting many themes from outside areas, including adopting many of the Progressive Conservative initiatives on justice and on crime and safety.

So I thank the minister for recognizing good programs that the PC Party have put forward and announcing them and attending to those ribbon-cutting areas.

\* (15:10)

So with that, 8,800 applicants at \$300 per rebate; just quick math, is about \$2.6 million of the \$2.5 million—oh, sorry, of the \$2 million that was said that was going to happen here. I'm shy about \$640,000 in the math, and I'm just wondering if the minister can let Manitobans know: (a) is the program extended to \$2.65 million rather than the \$2 million; and when will they be getting their money?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, again, I appreciate the line of questioning here from the member opposite because I think it is—it's a great program. It is one that has been widely supported.

And—you know, and I appreciate that he mentions, you know, working across the aisle, and, again, folks that know me in this place know that that's really where I want to start any conversation, any debate, is ways that we can work together, find commonality.

Around public safety, I think there's a lot that we can work together on. You know, we've tried to always present or project a vision that is inclusive and does work with members opposite. I hope that I will get the same consideration from him when it comes to good programs that we're doing.

And, you know, again, we thought we had a slam dunk with The Unexplained Wealth Act. It was something that law enforcement, of course, had been asking

for. Folks in community were saying this could make a real difference. He would've heard this, obviously, in his previous life, and probably as critic probably heard a lot of folks talking about The Unexplained Wealth Act, how it could really make a difference to keep our communities safe, go after those who are bringing that toxic drug supply into our communities and really just make a difference. When it comes to organized crime, we really see that there's some potential for that.

You know, we—again, we thought we had a slam dunk, and we brought it into the Legislature and then whoops, here it is, it's being used by—you know, and I'll give the member opposite credit. Maybe it was his House leader who convinced him this was a good strategy to delay and to, you know, force the Legislature to take months and months to just pass this one bill.

In the meantime, of course, folks out on the—in community were—we weren't able to use this. We've got some great people who do our civil forfeiture who work really, really hard. They're innovators. They look at ways that we can, you know, really make an impact on organized crime. And so we've got a lot of respect for those folks, and we wanted to give them another tool, a tool that brought us back into a leadership role across Canada. And, again, you know, political football.

So, I guess, you know, maybe I'll just say, to close off that thought, that I really—and I guess I shouldn't be giving advice to other members; member opposite can certainly take his own path—but I know how this place works and sometimes the House leader can, you know, present something as this is the—you know, the only way we can do this in terms of strategy, and I think it's incumbent on him to push back.

And I hope that, again, the machete bill that we brought forward yesterday, you know, into the middle of the night just to get a vote on it, and going out and criticizing it in the hallway, I think was the wrong move. Again, I think those talking points were put in his hands, and they were probably something that his House leader said we're going to jam the government on this. And, you know, I think there's some things that transcend politics.

And the other thing I'll just—you know, I'll just say that, you know, he mentions how this was one of our campaign promises. We made a lot of promises, he says. Well, yes, this was one of our main campaign promises. It was one of those concrete examples of ways that a government can make a difference in com-

munity, and so this is how we—you know, we could present this to people. It's not just—you know, just not some sort of policy change, but an actual dollars-into-your-pocket kind of way of supporting you, you know, making life more affordable and also allowing you to be part of the solution in your community.

And so, you know, we made the 'promits,' we kept the promise. We not only brought out the program immediately and got things under way, but then when we saw the overwhelming response, we upped the funding for the program, and then we upped the resources to get that money out the door.

So there is still work to do. Our folks are doing great work to do that.

He asked specifically about the amount of money that was allocated for this program. It was \$2 million. What we've seen is, of course, there is a percentage of applications that just don't qualify; folks didn't understand the, you know, exactly what was needed or what would qualify for a rebate or didn't. And so certainly there's a percentage out of that number that just don't qualify and don't go past the process in terms of the vetting through the applications.

The other thing I'll mention is that the average payout on these is \$229 at this point, and that number flux—is in flux as more get paid out. So, you know, this is a bit of work behind the scenes to make sure we're getting that exact amount right.

We've been very clear that we want to get this money out the door, and so wherever the program ends, we're going to ensure that people—anyone that's applied and qualifies will get their money. And certainly if there's any money left over—which I don't anticipate but if there was to be, as I said, stay tuned, because we've seen some real success with this program.

We're looking forward to the future.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Appreciate the opportunity to continue to ask questions on—during our Estimates here.

Mentioned The Unexplained Wealth Act and there was a lot of innuendo about delay tactics and everything else. Same as the long-bladed control act that recently was brought forward into the Legislature. And I think the minister mentioned that these were going to be slam dunks. And, you know, he said anybody that knows him well knows that he likes to work across the aisle and work with people continuously.

But, you know, I came into the Legislature. I was put into the role of Justice critic because I haven't been

a full-time politician and I actually bring some institutional knowledge to the table and real-world experience and lived experience. And I've offered many times to help out the temporary Justice Minister and work through some of these issues here with him.

And I don't think there's ever such a thing as slam-dunk legislation, simply because there's always room for improvement, just like in work. And I'm sure the minister, in his work life, has had performance appraisals so consider each one of these like a performance appraisal of the bill that you put forward, and there's always room for improvements. You know, the score might only be one out of five on these bills, but we want to bring it to a five out of five to meet, you know, PC standards and standards that the public expect on justice.

So I'm very willing to work across the aisle and make sure that these continue to have great legislation brought forward to Manitobans.

I'm wondering: Estimates that I've done, just based on what I've heard, is approximately 15 per cent of the dollars that were promised have flown—sorry, have flowed to participants in the program. And that's why I'm thinking about 85 per cent, somewhere in there, are reaching into their pocket and finding it empty.

So, can you correct those stats, because I know you have very capable staff as I said here. Of—how many or what percentage of the dollars have been distributed?

And you also mentioned that, I think, there was 29 staff working on this. Could we be—provide the list of which departments they came from and which programs are now suffering because of this area?

**The Chairperson:** Before I acknowledge the minister, I would just remind all members that comments should be directed through the Chair.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Of course, and thank you for the reminder, honourable Chair. And you're doing a heck of a good job and I know we had you here until almost midnight last night and I lost count of the number of votes that you administered in the Chamber, and it was an incredibly stressful time. Hopefully, we'll give you a little bit of an easier ride here today—this afternoon. Yes, fingers crossed, exactly, but I see applause from the other side of the aisle, as well, because you did a great job and we really appreciate that.

So through you, Chair, I think, you know, it's important to acknowledge just a couple of things there

that, you know, I think, you know, are important to put on the record in just general terms.

\* (15:20)

So the first thing is to say, I appreciate that the member called me the temporary Justice Minister, and my—I see that he's apologizing, but I'm being serious about this. My officials here, I know they're not allowed to interject in this way, but I think they would agree with me that I've said that right from the start.

And everybody that comes into the office, I show them the pictures going back to 18—uh-oh, now I'm getting myself in trouble. More than 100 years in this province. My math is not great—Justice ministers, attorneys general, that go back many, many years, and I see a lot of those faces that I've had the chance to work with and learn from and have a lot of respect for. And again, a lot that go well beyond—before my time.

But I do see this as a temporary job, and I hope that, while I'm in this role, I can do the best that I can. And what he'll probably find too—and I'm not sure how many years he'll be in this place, but it's something that every member comes to realize at a certain point—that you're—everyone's just temporary here. It's just a very short time that you're here, and one day you'll just be a photo on a wall somewhere, and all you can hope is that you made a difference while you were here.

And that's really, honourable Chair, what we're really trying to do here. This program, I think, has really struck a nerve with a need in Manitoba for enabling communities to have a role. And, again, individuals. We talk a lot about, in recent days, about how, you know, community can get engaged, how they can be part of the solution.

And so this came really from the grassroots up. You know, he mentioned it was other jurisdictions that have done this. I think, and correct me if I'm wrong—he can correct me or others can correct me—that I believe this was a program that we initially learned of coming out of Minnesota.

And, of course, Minnesota, being a great trading partner, a great cultural partner, a great vacation spot for a lot of Manitobans, we know a lot about that state. But what maybe folks didn't realize—I certainly didn't realize as fully until our—the current presidential candidate, Kamala Harris, chose Tim Walz, governor of Minnesota, as her running mate, just how thoughtful and compassionate that government had been in, you know, taking a very serious look at things like public safety, but in a very progressive and inclusive way.



And so, yes, this is one of the opportunities for us to build off of that. But when brought it back to Manitoba, you know, we weren't—I'll be—I'll just be frank, Honourable Speaker, we weren't looking for PC standards or PC approval. What we were looking for is true law enforcement, true community members, true people who are trying to make a difference.

And we didn't just, you know, again, bring this to Manitoba and say, job done. We went out and we worked with law enforcement, we made sure that they understood the impact that this could have. We worked with community to get feedback. And then at the end of the day, we made sure retailers were also on board, which is, again, a big part of the work that we've been doing.

There's been lots of work behind the scenes to make sure that everybody's concerns and views and suggestions were captured. But you know, when it comes to things like The Unexplained Wealth Act, when it comes to the machete bill, when it comes to the security rebate, we're not going to sit back and wait for PC approval when quite frankly they've, honourable Chair, they've been unserious about this issue. They haven't really—they want to play political games or score political points.

That's not really what we're trying to accomplish here. We want to react to what's the needs are in the community and work with law enforcement partners to pull it off.

My understanding is—and I just want to—a quick caveat: these numbers are sometimes slightly out of date only because we are—this is a—this is happening in real time, but 2,079 applications have been paid out. That represents 22 per cent. Is that correct? *[interjection]* 22.9 per cent? *[interjection]* 21.9.

Now, I just also want to make a mention, I know the member opposite mentioned his calculator, and he's working out the numbers. I'm going to trust the officials at the table's calculator, and I hope that he would do the same, because they're coming at this in an honest way.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Appreciate that. And thanks for that information by the math wizards that we have across the way as well. Not only are they Justice wizards, they are math wizards as well.

I'm just wondering, Honourable Speaker, if the minister could answer this or if there was ever consideration to making the security rebate a refundable tax credit just to simplify the administration. And this would certainly lower the cost of administration, the

number of staff that could do it, and people could just do this on their own and not have to bog down the justice system.

And, of course, the minister could focus on the serious crimes within the province and the daily notations that we're seeing; whether it's in print media, social media or film media and, you know—if that was considered or if that is something that this government could look at moving forward.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Chairperson:** Before I acknowledge the minister, I will just direct all honourable members' attention to the public gallery. We have seated in the gallery staff from Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, under the direction of Scott Edwards.

So welcome to Committee of Supply.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Wiebe:** Yes. I think—honourable Chair, I think this—it's an important point to suss out and just spend a little bit of time looking at because, again, what we heard on the doorsteps very clearly was people were looking for that sort of direct connection to action. Maybe I can just characterize it that way.

You know, we've heard some troubling stories over the last, you know, months since I've assumed the role where community members and, you know—for no fault of their own or no criticism of this feeling—but they certainly felt frustrated; they felt, you know, helpless when it came to the issue of public safety.

And, you know, this is a very serious element to consider because what we don't want, and we don't want ever, is for individuals to feel like they need to take things into their own hands or take action outside of the guidance of law enforcement and other experts in the field.

And so, you know, I know why they felt frustrated. I know that, you know, when a government—as we had in the Heather Stefanson government—says, well, you know, we're going to clean up the streets, or I think the member for—the member during question period—I'm sorry—I'm forgetting, Honourable Speaker, his constituency name, and I don't want to get that wrong and get called out of order here—anyway—brought up in today in question period a kind of a slogan that I've heard.

In fact, there was a byelection in my neighbourhood just recently, and so we saw, you know, lots of Pierre Poilievre literature coming in my mailbox, and

I picked one up one day and it said, stop the crime. Like, didn't say, you know, that's the heading, and then here's our five-point plan. It wasn't—it didn't give any further details. It didn't even, like, give any kind of nuance about what kind of crime or, you know, what does stopping it mean. Like, you're saying that you're going to stop the crime one hundred per cent.

As the Premier (Mr. Kinew) said in question period today, that's kind of a—it's kind of a talking-down to Manitobans. It's insulting their intelligence. Manitobans understand these are complex issues. It's why when we talk about getting tough on crime, we also talk about getting tough on the root causes of crime.

And the member opposite will know if he's knocked on any doors recently, like in Tuxedo, for instance; we spent a bunch of time out there. The great people of Tuxedo, I think, have a good MLA who's doing a great job raising their issues now in the Legislature.

But what we heard directly from them was—they say, you know, my garage got broken into, and they took my chainsaw and I'm upset. And you go, yes, I'm upset when I'm a victim of crime as well. And then you go, but you know, this is—there's larger issues. The cuts that we saw in education have an impact on public safety. The cuts that we saw during the Heather Stefanson years to health care even have an impact. Certainly, the cuts in the Department of Families or, you know, the new Department of Health—of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness certainly have had an impact.

So we heard very directly from those folks. What they told us is they said, we want to be part of the solution. We don't—we want to work with you to solve the issue of public safety and make our communities safer. And so the security rebate program was a concrete way that we could do this.

\* (15:30)

And what they said was, they wanted to see this money flow directly to them as a separate rebate.

I appreciate what the member's saying. I know he starts off by saying delays; he's worried about delays to get the money out. If we did this as a tax credit, of course, everybody'd be waiting until, I guess, what, next April, if they file their taxes on time. We thought this was an easier way or a faster way—certainly a faster way but maybe even an easier way or a simpler way to get the money out the door.

What we didn't maybe anticipate is the resources that were required to fully appreciate the demand, the

pent up demand, for this kind of program. And so that's where the increases to staff time and a streamlining of the process, some further direction on ways that we can work with folks.

Again, we want to give them that support. It's not just fill out the form or, you know, get it right or get it wrong, and if you get it wrong, you're—you know, you're on your own. We wanted to give them support. And so I know staff has been reaching out and working through some technical issues and other problems with applications.

Bottom line is we saw this as the quickest and fastest, most direct way, certainly, to get the money out into peoples' pockets. And, you know, more work to do, but we see it's getting out now.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I appreciate, again, the answers that I'm getting from the minister's staff and through the minister. It's excellent to hear these.

I also—I forgot to acknowledge on the last question, so I'd like to thank him when he said that I will one day find myself being a picture on a wall in the minister's office. So I know he's looking into the future three years and—when government will change and we'll have this. So I appreciate it and the vote of confidence, and I'm sure if he was in my riding, he would vote for me as well. With those sorts of statements, I appreciate that very much, Mr. Chairperson.

When we look at the camera program, the number of people that applied for it, 8,800 applicants. I'm wondering if that can be broke down just a little bit further for how many were residential and how many were businesses applications. I don't know if that's possible if they put it under their name or if they just put it under business. And the reason I ask this, honourable Chairperson, is, according to the CFIB, only 2 per cent of their members applied and received the security rebate. Of course, individuals from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business are very important to the economy of Manitoba. They're very important to ensuring that small businesses thrive. And small businesses are often the target of crime, and they don't have the same resources as the large retail consumers have that can put extreme dollars into public safety.

So I'd like to ask—sorry, when previously asked what specifically this government was doing to help out small business with the significant increases of vandalism, theft and criminal activity they were experiencing, members from the NDP pointed to the \$300 security rebate system. And we know that a

standard rebate for a security system for a business can be in the area of \$5,000, \$10,000 or even more. When I had quotes for my constituency office, some of them came quite high.

So given the recent data from the CFIB, we know that this program has not been utilized by small business the way that I would have hoped to see. And some of it—of what I'm hearing is the fact that it was very difficult to fill out the application, that people didn't want to see their time being more valuable than the time it's taken, the frustration to fill out these forms.

So can the minister share what specifically the department is doing to help support small businesses through these challenging times? And with that, the question that was first asked is the comparison between private residential camera systems and camera systems for businesses.

**Mr. Wiebe:** So first before we get to the answer here, honourable Chair, I just wanted to clarify for the member about the picture on the wall. Because, you know, I don't know why he's selling himself so short because, you know, there's a whole wall of portraits of esteemed Speakers of this Chamber, as well as premiers. And so I'm not sure why he's selling himself so short on just a picture in a ministerial office; he can get a whole portrait painted of him and that can be in his future.

I also want to mention that he may have seen that, I think, they've probably hung up the latest legislative class picture up in the hallway there, so he's already on the wall. So, you know, I always said as soon as I entered this Chamber, I appreciate the opportunity to serve and I look forward to new opportunities and new ways of—ways to serve. But, you know, you get that picture up on the wall anywhere in this place and I think that's something to be proud of and something to hold in high regard.

With regards to his specific question on businesses and, you know, I would maybe just—I think he did the same and forgive me, Chair, if I get this a little bit wrong in terms of how he characterized it, but the way that I would maybe characterize it—and, again, I think along with him—is that the biggest impact this can have is on small businesses.

As we know, and we've had several meetings with the Retail Council of Canada and with others who, you know, represent all sizes of businesses. And certainly there are a lot of challenges and we're working with them on addressing a lot of concerns. He was at

the retail summit. I know the member opposite was at the retail summit and there were over 400 retailers there of all different sizes and all different compositions who are very interested in the steps that we're taking; again, around security and safety but even around enhanced security training and opportunities that we're looking forward to in the future.

So certainly a lot of bigger businesses maybe wouldn't apply to this specific program. But what we're seeing is, is first of all, that small businesses are engaging. The number's very—you know, fairly small in terms of who has identified or has a business address, but of course the member opposite would know that if you're just a sole proprietorship or just a small company, you may just use your home address for the purposes of the rebate; really doesn't really differentiate between, you know, what that information is. We'll send you the rebate. It is \$300—up to \$300 dollars for individuals and for businesses.

The other thing though that I'll say, and I think this is really where the member opposite continues to miss the bigger picture, because we know that businesses have already been doing this in terms of security cameras, security systems, security barriers. For many years, this has been a part of the investment that they make. And, of course, we work very closely with businesses like, you know, Canadian Footwear. Brian Scharfstein has been a great friend and somebody who's given us great advice on ways we can enhance the retail crime initiative. We can work on public safety more generally.

But we know business owners like Ravi Ramberran who, if the member hasn't been, Four Crowns restaurant over in—on McPhillips is a great, great location. Ravi's doing amazing things throughout the city. He says, quote: You wouldn't believe how many people get caught on camera and then a month later the police find them; it's awesome, and the police do a great job of actually finding these people, he says. And that's what we've heard from law enforcement as well.

\* (15:40)

But what the member opposite just continues to not get is, is that it's not about necessarily the one camera that, or one system that the business can buy, but it's about the house down the back lane who invests in their own security system to watch their own property that then the police canvass and they go over and they say, you know, do you have the footage, can we get that, and can that be part of the larger investigation.

Like, again, for the member opposite to be so out of touch with the—how law enforcement is using these tools and that fact that this actually works not just—it's not just about one individual protecting themselves, it's about this idea that all of us coming together can make a difference on public safety. That's how it works.

And so, I'm—I just—I wish the member opposite, this is maybe just where his PC frame, you know, so narrowly individualistic, can't understand how when you work together as a community, can have a bigger impact.

Businesses are happy that all of their community is safer, and it makes everything safer and, again, then more prosperous and more profitable.

So that's what we're really working towards. This program has been a good step in the right direction, and I'd love to say more about the CFIB, because they've shared some really interesting stuff with me just recently.

**Mr. Balcaen:** You know, I take it with a grain of salt when the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) talks to—about myself being out of touch with law enforcement and with justice initiatives. You know, I worked in that field specifically for 33 years. I keep well engaged with a number of the people within the community. And, you know, attend all of their events regularly and keep that conversation going.

And you know what, especially when we're talking about security cameras and, you know, my limited focus, I believe, is what the minister said. Maybe he should get out and about and visit some of the local police services and some of the local initiatives that are flourishing.

And because I'm from the city and I know the program specifically, the SNAP program that was undertaken by the Brandon Police Service and the City of Brandon. And that is called—the SNAP is an acronym for the Safer Neighbourhoods and Policing Initiative.

And what this does, honourable Chair, is it gets people who have camera systems, whether it be retail, whether it be provincial, whether it be through the school divisions, whether it's residential, they can register online with the Brandon Police Service and have their cameras registered. And that SNAP program allows the police service to quickly go into the database and see where the cameras are that could've captured some crime.

Now, of course, I want to dispel the rumours or any beliefs that the police can actually go inside of their security cameras. That is not something that happens. They give written permission for police to use the video that they voluntarily turn over to the police. So, of course, I don't want people thinking that this is some sort of Orwellian theory where, you know, Big Brother is watching you. It's the case where the neighbourhood is watching you and individuals are watching you, and they want to partner with the police.

And these are programs that came in under the PC time in office. And again, I would offer the minister to get outside of the Perimeter; you know, actually jump in a car and drive, not go on Zoom, and talk to law enforcement. I would set up—I would personally set up a meeting for the minister, Mr. Speaker, with the police service on these initiatives so that he can bring it forward.

And I know the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) would also love to tout the great things that City of Brandon and the Brandon Police Service have been doing for our collective community.

So with this said, is there any incentive to move forward with businesses and making a specific program for small businesses, and one that's not complicated to get onto the database and have lots of forms.

And I'm just wondering if this is something that this government would consider, honourable Chairperson.

**Mr. Wiebe:** So just to give the member opposite just the specific numbers: at this point what we understand in terms of those who have, again, self-identified—I don't know if that's the correct terminology—but as part of the application process, businesses that have applied for this program, it's 320 businesses that applied to this point. And of course, there's—you know, there is more work to do.

And, again, this is why when we're talking about the success of the retail crime summit, it's really something to appreciate. You know, we heard this time and time again when we were setting up first our initial public safety summit.

But then, when we travelled the province—and I'm looking over here at our intrepid assistant deputy minister; I know he won't want me to point him out in this way, but holy smokes did he put some miles on over the summer—spring, I should say, and into the summer—reaching out to communities and hearing directly from them. And reaching out—AMM was a great partner to help us facilitate a lot of those conver-

sations. There were also individual meetings and one-off conversations that we had in communities across the province.

But what we found is as we're working through this, in every community that we were in and every situation, you know, there were business owners who were saying, we also want to be part of the solution, and not just part of the solution in some sort of, like, esoteric way, but like an actual, you know, dollars-and-cents commitment to making a difference.

And, I mean, this is just how business owners think, is they think in dollars and cents and they see the impact on their businesses; they see the disruption to their business and the impact that that has, and then they see their—you know, their—the goods that they're losing or that theft is impacting them.

The other thing I'll just say, honourable Chair, is that time and time again we heard from folks, business owners, saying, you know, we care about our employees; what are we doing to keep our employees safe when it comes to public safety?

And so we also convened a public safety summit meeting with labour, and brought together folks from many different industries and many different perspectives to say what—you know, what is the impact for you—for the employees, for your workers, who are out just trying to earn a paycheck and worrying about whether they're going to come home at the end of their shift?

We often think about those—that language in terms of, like, an industrial workplace, a construction workplace, somewhere where you work around dangerous equipment or in dangerous circumstances. But in this case, it's people who are just going to work the cash register, maybe, at their local grocery store, and then they have to worry about staying safe.

So we engaged those folks as part of the public safety summit tour that we did, and, again, we heard very clearly that there is real opportunity for businesses to be more engaged. That's why we convened the retail summit, and the Retail Council was a fantastic partner, in that they ensured that we heard from folks across industry and across businesses, and they came up with some really solid, strong ideas and they're really eager to work with us in this regard.

And so, certainly there are opportunities for us to build on that success. I think that's one of the areas we're going to see some real opportunity and—to build. And I'm just getting corrected here, I think I said 320 businesses—332. So the member opposite can

write that down and plug that into the old calculator there, the adding machine, and make sure that he figures out what percentage that is.

But, again, what we're hearing is, is they're looking for all—any and all support and opportunity, and that's really what we're—the way that we're approaching this. We're not going to focus in on one element or another.

And, again, when we're talking about not only a direct response in the moment but how do we make communities safer? By investing upstream. How do we stop some of this violence from perpetrating in our communities? Upstream. And that is really all about a larger government response.

And so every day I'm thankful that I've got my team on the government side of the benches here, the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), Minister of Education, the Minister of Housing, Addictions, Homelessness, the Minister of Health. You know, every element where you see these cuts having a real impact is, at the end of the day, if they're involved in the justice system, there's been a failure somewhere upstream, and that's really the work that we're trying to do while at the same time give people the confidence, work with business owners and give them opportunities.

So lots more to come and lots more to say on that in that regard.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Balcaen:** Again, appreciate the staff providing these answers.

So, and it does make a difference knowing the actual numbers, so when you move up from 332 to 340—or, sorry, 330 to 342, it actually makes a difference of 3.64 per cent to 3.77 per cent. And that's the number that applied. So I don't think the CFIB is far off when they said that they only had 2 per cent of the people that applied and were successful.

Based on what the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) himself said is that, you know, there is some issue. Some people have difficulties filling out the applications. Some people have, you know, they didn't provide the proper information.

So, again, in businesses where money equals dollars and their livelihood and keeping the businesses open, it's important to have a system that's maybe dedicated to business rather than mixing in with business and residential as well.

He also talked a little bit about the rural crime initiatives that have happened here, and I'm wondering since the spring—or, sorry, the retail crime initiatives, I should say. I believe I said rural crime, Mr. Chair, and I meant retail crime.

So since the spring, we've heard the announcement of the retail crime initiative, and we've seen multiple announcements of extensions, and, you know, whether those extensions were in place or whether this is, you know, for—capitalize on media; that's not for me to ponder here, although, it makes me wonder whether it is to get some media play for the minister and his government. Because, you know, that's important to this Premier (Mr. Kinew), to make sure that he's seen positively in the media. He doesn't like these distractions that happen on a regular basis when his ministers are called to question or there's mistakes made.

So looking at the retail crime, I'm just wondering—I've heard from businesses in my own community and businesses around Manitoba that are struggling to keep their doors open. I'm just wondering if there's going to be an extension of the retail crime initiative brought outside of the Perimeter, the highway that runs around Winnipeg.

We've heard these extensions. We've heard the three different areas. We've heard that it's chasing crime out of those areas to new hotspots. But I'm wondering if this program that is being touted as successful, why it hasn't been expanded to areas like the city of Brandon, Thompson, The Pas, Swan River, you know, somewhere—some down in the southern area of the province with Altona, Morden and Winkler.

And again, I know the MLA from Brandon East—the minister of sports, culture, heritage and arts is nodding his head because he'd like to see this in Brandon as well. So, you know, I'm sure he talks about this at his caucus table as well.

So I appreciate the support across the aisle.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, again, I'm—I appreciate that the member opposite is taking the time to talk about some of our successes and some of our real, you know, hands-on initiatives that we've undertaken and seen some real success with.

You know, I do take issue—and I'm not sure why, again, maybe he's being passed notes by his political staff telling him he—you know, he's got to sort of ramp things up and take shots at the Premier and say, oh, the Premier's just in it for the photo op. And, you know, this

is unfortunate because he should know better. He should understand the real impact that this has made.

If he spent any time talking to the Winnipeg Police Service, understanding the difference that it's made into how they police communities and how they're able to respond to communities. We're talking about some real positive opportunity and an initiative that they've been willing to work with us to undertake.

And really, I think, for me, the biggest impact—or, one of the ways that is—it's having the biggest impact in community is that they're able to do a kind of community policing that they hadn't been able to do because of the lack of resources under the PC government.

I mean, it's been seven years without any increases in funding from the provincial government, and so, you know, I can understand that the resources were stretched pretty thin.

What that—impact that has on members is that they're not able to respond in that kind of community way that we expect of our law enforcement. We kind of think about how we understand policing to operate, that they would come and they would, you know, be preventative in some cases, they'd have a presence in others and that when something does happen, they'd be able to investigate it or be able to address it in a way that's actually thorough and responsive to the needs of, in this case, businesses, but for anybody in the community. So it was very much appreciated that this initiative was started.

And so he wants to talk about photo ops, I don't care too much about photo ops. What I care about is the flood of calls that we got in our office talking about the real impact this has had, the difference that it's made for businesses, from regular community folks who walked into a store in Osborne and said oh, you know, whole bunch of cops in here, something must have happened. And they, you know, struck up the conversation and realized no, they're just in checking in, making sure that everything's going well.

So there's been that sort of anecdotal response and success. But that's not really what drove—or, wasn't fully what drove our commitment to expanding and extending the program. What we saw that there were 769 arrests; there were over—almost 9,000 engagements with businesses and community members; there were 224 provincial offence notices issued; and there were over \$60,000 in products that were recovered. And this is—makes a big impact for retailers.

So they understood that we—you know, this initiative is not just—shouldn't just be a short-term solution

but that we need to make it—we need to understand how we can replicate and build off of the successes.

What that meant was in the short-term—or, in the immediate term I guess I should characterize it as—came out and we said we were going to extend this project through to the end of the year. We're all getting ready for Christmas. My son, you know the beauty of technology, he's sharing his Christmas list for Santa all—with me on my phone. I can—it gets updated every day, honourable Chair. So you know, I know I'm going to be out in the shopping mall pretty soon. And of course, we've seen some of the biggest concerns around public safety in that setting. So we wanted to extend it through to the end of the year.

What I will say, though, is that, as I said, we've been doing a ton of work out in community. We were in Brandon offering money for a downtown community safety initiative. We were up in Thompson doing the same. We were in other communities looking at their unique needs and what their suggestions were about how we could fund initiatives that had the greatest impact in their communities.

So there's—you know, there's lots of opportunities on the table. But in terms of this kind of communities policing initiative or the way that we could build off of additional resources for law enforcement and how they can do their job differently and have a bigger impact in community. Yes, the message has been heard that rural Manitoba—again, you heard in Premier (Mr. Kinew) in question period say that very unequivocally. There's opportunities there. I think there's an opportunity for us to build off of the success in Winnipeg and see how it could be translated or built in other places.

That being said, you know, this is all an ongoing conversation, because the other thing I've learned, and the member opposite should know well is, is that in every community, you hear a different set of realities and a different set of opportunities.

And so we're willing to listen to each community individually.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Yes, the—in—I will absolutely agree with that. In every community, there's a different set of circumstances, there's a different set of initiatives. But there's also a whole lot of similarities.

\* (16:00)

And I think what other rural policing areas, from what I'm hearing, are feeling disenfranchised by this NDP government and this minister who can find over

a million and a half dollars in a budget that is supposed to be relatively tight; \$9 million removed from it in this last budget. And, you know all of a sudden some of these areas we can find a million and a half to support the Winnipeg Police Service. And I don't begrudge that at all, because I know that they do incredibly hard work.

The minister mentioned about the incredible hard work that's being done in Osborne Village right now, in the Osborne area, and that's one of the areas that is funded and has police resources put to it. And it doesn't escape me that that's the same constituency that the Premier himself is from.

And so, you know, we're funding the Premier's own constituency with these safety initiatives and leaving the rest of the province out of it. And we've seen this, honourable Chair, with a number of programs, and, you know, specifically the only daycare that's been announced by the NDP, or the only opening, has been, again, in the Premier's own constituency, Fort Rouge. And, you know, it's concerning because Manitobans are saying how come some people get privilege and others don't?

So I'm wondering, the rebate program: How many cameras and how many applications were put in in the Fort Rouge area, or even if we can narrow it down to the Osborne Village area, and, you know, is it making an impact? Have we got any statistics on that?

And, secondly, if this program is very successful, and I've heard the minister tout it, talk about the benefits, the fact that it's had real impacts; can this be rolled out to other jurisdictions, and why hasn't it? Why are other jurisdictions having to play the poor second cousin?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I would caution the member opposite in using those kind of words in the House. And, I mean certainly, the actual support and funding that's been increased to rural Manitoba in terms of policing is significant. I've read some of these numbers out in question period; for his benefit I'll read them again.

Lac du Bonnet, 3,000—sorry, \$33,000 increase; Steinbach, an \$800,000 increase; Portage la Prairie, a \$500,000 increase; Winkler, \$600,000; Selkirk, \$400,000; Morden, \$500,000; Stonewall, \$190,000; Niverville, \$300,000 increase; Swan River, \$130,000; Virden, \$100,000; Beausejour, \$100,000; and his hometown, \$2 million.

You know, it's the reason why, you know, again, the member wants to put those kind of words on the

record about, you know, some kind of perceived insult to rural Manitoba. Those are words; we're taking action. This is a real, in dollars and cents, commitment to show where the focus that we've put on rural Manitoba.

I'll also point out, because the member opposite hasn't yet, that Indigenous communities and increases to partnerships in Indigenous communities have been important, an incredibly important part of how we're addressing crime throughout the province. And they, along with municipalities, Indigenous communities have been nothing but willing partners to work with us on enhancing public safety and looking at ways of finding partnerships and supporting law enforcement.

So just the premise of the question is off, and it's frustrating because, you know, he talks about funding reduced overall; just in the public safety division, a 12.6 per cent increase in money that's supporting work that's being done across our province.

I'll also take issue with the idea that somehow this government is only focusing on one neighbourhood because a certain member represents that neighbourhood. I would suggest that if we took a poll of all members on the opposite benches there, probably more of his caucus lives in the Osborne area, Osborne Village area, than any other party in this Legislature. In fact, the member opposite himself might live now in the great community of Osborne Village.

And so he should realize that it's about keeping everyone safe and it's about keeping all Manitobans safe. It has nothing to do with what areas or, you know, what places certain members live in. In fact, we—you know, we worked with law enforcement.

Again, the member opposite knows this: we don't direct police resources, we don't tell them go to one community, go to one business, go do one thing or the other. What we say is, where—what are your needs? Where can you have the biggest impact? And then we fund—and then in this case, as a Province, we funded specific resources to address those problems.

And so he knows. In fact, I would—willing to bet—I don't have the Hansard in front of me, but I'm willing to bet he spent most of his spring standing up and yelling and screaming in the Legislature about the impact that we're seeing in places like Osborne Village, in the West End and in the Exchange.

But what we also didn't do is we said to the—law enforcement, this needs to be a broader response, and this needs to be in all communities that are seeing

upticks in violence and in retail—excuse me—retail theft.

So that's what we tasked the Winnipeg police with, and they've been great partners. They have absolutely used those resources in a positive way. And when we said we're also bringing on additional resources and 12 new officers this fall, they were looking to us to see how we can, again, build off the success that we've had and that we can find real opportunities to make communities safer; not just one community or the other, but really every community that needs additional support.

Again, back to the original question that the member asked and I answered last, but I'll say it again: we are working with rural Manitoba. We're not doing it in a cookie-cutter fashion; we're working with individual communities to find individual solutions, and they have been great partners for us so far. We're looking at more opportunities going forward, he should stay tuned.

But we have been out in Brandon, he knows that. In fact, I think he was upset we didn't invite him to our public forum, but he's invited to the next one, I'll put that on the record. And we're always happy to work with everybody to make all communities safer.

**Mr. Balcaen:** At this time, I'd like to turn the floor over to the member for Fort Garry until 4:45 p.m.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** The Attorney General of Manitoba (Mr. Wiebe) is the chief law enforcement officer of the Crown. He represents the Crown not as any sort of individual department or agency and not the Premier (Mr. Kinew), but the whole of government. And the role is to protect and uphold the rule of law and respect for the independence of the court. That's very different than being a Minister of Justice.

You know, roughly about a month ago, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) basically made demeaning and inappropriate comments about the president of the Law Society of Manitoba, and he was condemned from coast to coast to coast. He became a national embarrassment for his ignorance.

And the legal community reached out, was wondering where was the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe)? Why wasn't the Attorney General making a statement in relation to the rule of law in Manitoba, including how we talk about and delegitimize actors in the justice system?



So my question for the Attorney General was why he made no public statement, why he denied every media request to comment that was given to him and why he since hasn't made any public statement condemning the ignorant comments of the Premier?

\* (16:10)

**Mr. Wiebe:** I appreciate the question, and we're just having some conversation here, and I look forward to answering the member more thoroughly in just a moment.

Maybe if I could ask him a question: Is it his intention to ask questions with regards to the role of the Attorney General? And the reason I ask that, of course, we have Owen Fergusson, who's a fantastic member of the team and somebody who understands public safety incredibly thoroughly.

However, we do have the assistant deputy Attorney General, if I've got all those words in the right order, who might also have some—just some perspective that might be helpful if that's the line of questioning that the member expects to undertake for the remainder of the time.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** The Attorney General knows full well what I'm asking. And it comes down to a choice that he made in his role. That he took an oath, a solemn duty to the Province of Manitoba to uphold the rule of law. That's his job.

He failed in that job. He abdicated his responsibility, and that job requires that, at times, when a premier or somebody steps over the line and starts attacking the foundations and the 'legitimacy' of the judicial system that, as uncomfortable as it may be, they have to stand and show leadership to the community and call out that behaviour and support the justice system and the rule of law.

Now, he's a smart man, he knows this, he's just buying for time. And I think Manitobans haven't heard from him. He's never apologized. The legal community called out for weeks for some type of signs of life from this Attorney General, some display of leadership, where he actually would put the interests of the province before his own personal partisan interests. That never happened.

So I'll ask the question again, and we'll see if he has the character and the wherewithal to answer it: Why did he not make a public statement? Why has he not made a public statement since? And is there any plan on making any sort of public statement in relation to this incident to clear the air and to repair the broken

trust between this Attorney General and the legal community in Manitoba?

And finally, why has he dodged the media and refused to do media interviews in relation to his responsibility in this role? Does he not take it seriously?

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question and, of course, the member opposite asked a very important question about the very specific role of the Attorney General.

And it is something, you know, I talked a little bit earlier about the, you know, awesome responsibility that all of us have when you enter this building, whether as an MLA or as a minister. There's a certain amount of importance that is conveyed upon in terms of your—the seriousness with which you take your role. And I think everybody who is in this Chamber takes those roles very seriously.

That being said, the Attorney General role is an even—apart from those other roles—a specific set of expectations and requirements, and it's certainly one that I take very, very seriously.

\* (16:30)

Again, the member opposite seemed to start his question by describing the role of the Attorney General and seemed to understand the role that the Attorney General plays in terms of my responsibilities to Cabinet and to others but then seems to conflate the role that I have as both—well, I guess all three: I'm MLA for Concordia, a member of the caucus, the NDP caucus, Minister of Justice but then also, on top of that, Attorney General—he seems to sort of keep or bring those three separate roles together in how he perceives the advice that—or, lack of advice that was given by the Attorney General would be communicated to him or to others in the public.

As he knows, the independence in the role and the non-partisan impartial role that the Attorney General plays is so very important to government, and the role or the advice that's given in Cabinet, or lack of advice that's given at the Cabinet level, is something that would not be necessarily shared publicly, and it would be confidential advice. It would be advice that, again, would be taken very seriously by government but not necessarily something that would be put on display.

And in fact, I would suggest that by overstepping those bounds and making those kinds of comments public, that would do as much damage in terms of the

independence of that role as, you know, as anything, as is making a public statement that simply, you know, could be construed in a number of different ways.

The member is—so I'll also say that the member is just wrong about the clear statement—or, the clear media statement that we made with regards to the importance that I place on the role of the—as Attorney General—as my role in—as Attorney General but also just the importance of the law profession and defence lawyers as part of that legal system.

And I did make that comment directly to the media. And, you know, he doesn't have the resources, I guess, to do all the research now that he may have had at his disposal before. I certainly can appreciate that it can be difficult to keep up with all the ins and outs.

But I'll also say that there—you know, subsequent to that, in terms of just media accessibility, I wouldn't suggest that I'm the most accessible minister, but I would say dozens of media interviews and responses on other subjects and other issues. And so I'm very accessible and very happy to, you know, communicate in terms of my role as the Minister of Justice.

I'm also happy and willing to communicate as—in my role as Attorney General. However, making a comment about something that, at the end of the day, was a caucus decision. It was a decision that political MLAs made and statements that they have made. If I was to make public comments about those, it certainly wouldn't be something that the member opposite would necessarily be privy to.

But we certainly want to make sure that everyone understands the importance that we know that we place upon the legal profession and the actors within it, including, specifically, those members of the Law Society who do incredible work, who put so much extra time and effort into the work to ensure that there's robust support for the legal profession.

So, specifically, the Law Society, but all defence lawyers and, of course, everyone in the legal profession; we have nothing but respect for the work that they do.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Should note for the record that it took the minister 10 minutes to come up with that non-answer and the previous time took five minutes to come up with that non-answer. He took 15 minutes not to answer that question.

Now, it's not disrespectful to me. It's not an insult to me. It's an insult to Manitobans, and it's an insult to

the legal community for whom I'm their conduit to be asking this question.

So again, the Attorney General is not a partisan position. It's supposed to be above partisanship. Apparently, this Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) doesn't believe that. Apparently, this Attorney General wants to politicize the position, and he has broken the trust between this government and the legal community. They simply do not trust this government. They do not trust this Attorney General.

And we see why today. It's on display that he would rather play procedural games and try to burn out the clock than to give an honest accounting of his failure as an Attorney General.

So the question that was asked to him that he's not answered twice now was why he never condemned the ignorant statements of the Premier (Mr. Kinew), why he never apologized to the legal community and why he didn't do anything to sort of resolve the situation.

It took several weeks before the Premier got shamed into apologizing himself, and at one point said he wasn't going to provide an apology to the Law Society president for demeaning and disrespectful comments that he made in relation to her. And the legal community looked for leadership and didn't find any from this Attorney General.

So how does he go forward from here? What's his plan to re-establish trust with the legal community? How are they supposed to take him seriously after watching this grotesque display this afternoon?

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Wiebe:** Well, again, I appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit more about the—you know, again, the role of the Attorney General in the province, but more broadly, the role that I, you know, take very seriously in collaborating and getting feedback from members of the legal community, from a variety of different perspectives.

And what I will say is that I've very much appreciated the good advice that I've gotten, that I've been able to collaborate with folks on. And of course, there's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes to ensure that we're listening and we're not just talking about respect. Because I think we talked about that earlier in a different context where, you know, words are one thing, but the actions are really what we're talking about here.

And so the opportunity that I've undertaken is to reach out to—you know, I mean, I mentioned the Law

Society earlier, but, you know, I can mention the Bar Association, I can mention the faculty of law and even students in—that are in Robson Hall and in the program at the University of Manitoba. We listen to folks, we listen to their perspective—defence lawyers, certainly—we've talked to many and look forward to further meetings.

So there's lots of opportunities, and I'm going to take every one that I can, not just to listen, but also act and show, in real terms, how we can show that respect.

Again, something that we've certainly taken very seriously was to right some of the wrongs that were done under the Stefanson government.

You know, again, one of the things that I was very proud of was to work with our Crown attorneys to ensure that we came up with a contract and settled some outstanding issues with them. Increasing the pay, getting them back into alignment with other jurisdictions. And certainly there's more work to do there but we're eager to get to work on that.

To reduce vacancies, I mean, you know, one of the sort of eye-opening pieces, we talked a little bit about it in opposition, but we've done, I think, a little bit more—we were able to get a little bit more information about just how bad some of the vacancy rates, specifically in court clerks, were under the previous government. And that's a—I mean, I don't need to tell the member opposite how vital court clerks are to the operation of the courts.

And it was something that the members opposite in the Stefanson government seemed to have no interest in addressing. And we've made serious strides in bringing those vacancy numbers down and really just showing clerks how much we respect them. I had a chance to go over and meet some of the clerks here in Winnipeg as well as Brandon and just kind of show that level of respect, which was a real positive step that we were able to take.

We're hiring more crowns, you know, more Crown attorneys in our province. It's something that, again, shows that level of respect, because not only is it important for us to take the steps internally, but the—build on the partnerships that we've seen.

We know access to justice remains a serious issue outside of the Perimeter and, most specifically, in northern Manitoba, remote communities. And so I've also undertaken the opportunity to work with, certainly, municipalities throughout the province, but also work with Indigenous communities and Indigenous organizations. The MKO is a great partner who is really on

the leading edge of some access to justice initiatives that we're now supporting, and we want to look to see for further partnerships.

So again, this is not just about the words that are spoken—although again, I've been very clear in the words that I've spoken, that, you know, my respect for the role of defence lawyers and all in the justice system. And you know, I'm certainly willing to do that any day of the week to make sure that those words are spoken.

But it's not just about words, it's about action and it's about, you know, in this case, putting dollars and resources towards addressing some of the issues that were allowed to fester.

Which, you know, I'll just put on the record that, you know, the member opposite, you know, he, was first to stand up in this House and talk about some of the deficiencies and the—under the Stefanson government. And I hope that he would undertake to, you know, focus up on issues that relate to access to justice and make sure that he's representing his constituents in that way as well.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Based on the, I guess, awkwardly long time to answer these questions as well as the fact the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) didn't leave a lot of time for Estimates, I will have no further questions at this time.

**The Chairperson:** Hearing no further questions, I'll now put the question on the resolutions.

Resolution 4.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding sixty-one million, two-hundred thirty—I will restart that: \$61,203,000 for Justice, Crown Law, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,823,000 for Justice, Legislative Counsel, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

Resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$240,659,000 for Justice, Correctional Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

**Resolution agreed to.**

\* (16:50)

Resolution 4.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$86,523,000 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 4.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$332,829,000 for Justice, Public Safety, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 4.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,660,000 for Justice, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

***Resolution agreed to.***

For the information of the committee, there are no monies allocated for resolution 4.8 this year, so there does not need to be a vote on this resolution. The information was included in the books to reflect change from last year.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 4.1(a) the minister's salary, contained in resolution 4.1.

At this point, we request that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this last item.

Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$66,375,000—*[interjection]* Apologies.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this.

You know, I look at the work that's being done in Justice and what has been done in past years, and the significant work that was done particularly in the past seven and a half years in Justice on this, and I know that there's significantly more work that can be undertaken at this time.

So I move that line item 4.1.1(a) be amended so the Minister of Justice's salary be reduced to \$300, the same as the camera rebate.

**The Chairperson:** The honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), to restate your motion.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Right. My apologies. I didn't realize this had to be in writing and, therefore, I move that line item 04.1.1(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$300.

**The Chairperson:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West that line item 04.11(a) be amended so that the minister's salary be reduced to \$300.

The motion is in order.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

**Mr. Wiebe:** I appreciate the questions—the conversations that we had here this afternoon. I think there was some worthwhile discussion and, certainly, you know, I think maybe we've helped the member opposite understand a little bit better about how Manitobans are really intent on working together, not dividing one another, not being—not using divisive language or rhetoric and really coming together in ways that we can find commonality.

And I think—I feel like maybe we've made some progress. And maybe tomorrow in question period, the member opposite will, you know, just maybe say he supports a lot of the initiatives we've talked about today, and more specifically, I guess, I can put on the record the machete restriction—the long-bladed weapon bill that we've brought forward.

But I just wanted to briefly put on the record and, you know, the member opposite mentions the \$300. You know, I'm not too concerned about my salary. I don't think anyone that gets into this line of work does it for the money. It really is about service to other Manitobans, and that's how I take my role. So he can do what he wants with my salary.

But I think it just really shows—it demonstrates how out of touch the member opposite is when he starts his debate by defending the government of Heather Stefanson. And we often say, well, every member opposite ran under Heather Stefanson's banner, and so there's some level of endorsement for, you know, the approach that she took. But really, the member opposite seems to take it to a whole 'nother' level. He really does seem to be a true believer in the government that Heather Stefanson had in this province.

And he knows very well—he knows full well the divisive nature of that government, the impact that it's had, the long-lasting impact that it's had on the province. Certainly, we've got a lot of work in health care—the Department of Families, I know, is digging out from a lot of the mess that was created, the cuts that were created and the impact that those have on real people.

And that work is being done in our department as well. And what we inherited was a department that saw nothing but cuts and nothing but less money for, you know, not just within the department but even public safety throughout the province.

And so, you know, we've taken steps. The \$300 rebate is a real step and it's going to make communities safer. I hope the member opposite really takes this seriously that, you know, he can do—he can go a lot farther if he adopts our mantra of one Manitoba with one future and that we all work together to make our communities safer.

That's what we're going to continue to do, and the member opposite would be well-served to undertake that himself.

**The Chairperson:** Are there any further questions?

Seeing none, is the committee ready for the question?

Shall the motion pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

### Voice Vote

**The Chairperson:** All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**The Chairperson:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Chairperson:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** Are there any other questions on the resolution?

Seeing none, I'll put the question to the resolution.

Resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$66,375,000 for Justice, Corporate and Strategic Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

### *Resolution agreed to.*

And just to confirm, the motion was defeated.

This concludes the section for the Department of Justice.

\* (17:00)

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

### IN SESSION

**The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko):** The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, October 29, 2024**

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