



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

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
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
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	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, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	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, Hon.	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
<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 14, 2025

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 300—The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by MLA Corbett, that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Just a reminder that you cannot use a MLA's name. You have to use their constituency or ministerial title.

MLA Loiselle: I move, seconded by the MLA for Transcona, that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation », be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Loiselle: Honourable Speaker, I am proud to introduce Bill 300, the Winnipeg 'foundayshmen' amendment act.

This bill contains amendments to this act that will both support the foundation in its efforts to modernize the foundation and make it more accessible to the people of Winnipeg and Manitoba.

It's a privilege to sponsor this amendment in support of The Winnipeg Foundation's mission to enhance community well-being by fostering philanthropy, building partnerships and supporting a variety of charitable organizations. I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table for Manitoba Justice, the '22-23 Annual Report of The Provincial Court of Manitoba.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Turban Day and Vaisakhi

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Today I rise in the House to recognize and celebrate the third annual Turban Day, a vibrant and meaningful event that brings us together to raise awareness and deepen our understanding of the Sikh community and the enduring significance of the turban.

Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This event provides an incredible opportunity for people from all walks of life to learn, ask questions and engage in conversations that foster cultural awareness, unity and respect.

The turban is not just a piece of clothing. It is a symbol of faith, identity, equality and resilience. For many Sikhs, it's worn with great pride and represents a deep spiritual commitment and unwavering values.

Today we invite everyone to participate by trying on a turban and engaging in open, respectful dialogue with members of the Sikh community. These moments of connection go a long way in building bridges and strengthening the multicultural fabric of our province.

Turban Day is not just about understanding the significance of the turban. It is also a celebration of the enduring contributions and strength of the Sikh community here in Manitoba and across Canada. From business and agriculture to arts and health care and public service, Sikh Manitobans have helped shape the province we proudly call home.

As we mark this celebration during Sikh Heritage Month, we also acknowledge the rich history of the Sikh community and honour their ongoing impact on our society. It is a time to celebrate their culture, their achievements and their unwavering spirit.

Honourable Speaker, today we also recognize Vaisakhi, also known as Khalsa Sajna Diwas, which commemorates the creation of the Khalsa Panth in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It is a foundational moment in Sikh history and a time of deep spiritual reflection and celebration. For many, Vaisakhi is also a time of renewal, generosity and joy; a time to gather in community and reaffirm values of equality, courage and compassion.

On behalf of the government of Manitoba, I want to extend warm wishes to everyone celebrating Turban Day and Vaisakhi. We are proud to celebrate along the Sikh community and honour the diversity that makes our province so strong.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): In continuing to celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, it is my honour to recognize the third annual Turban Day in Manitoba. It was on this day during Vaisakhi in 1699 that the practice of wearing a turban was formalized as a pillar of Sikh faith. Centuries onward, the turban is a source of pride for thousands of Manitobans across our great province.

It should also inspire pride in all of us as Canadians to see how far we've come as a society, not only for the turban to become accepted but now actively celebrated and recognized for its significance. It was, unfortunately, not always the case, as we know that discrimination still exists.

* (13:40)

Honourable Speaker, I have had the pleasure of twice having a turban placed on my head and learned the importance of the turban to the Sikh people during the multicultural celebrations in Brandon.

The turban is a visible identity that has often been the target of anti-Sikh violence and persecution. That's where we must come in as community leaders to help

increase awareness, dispel myths and stomp out hate against turban-wearing individuals and Sikh Manitobans.

We must foster an environment where children feel proud to wear their turban to school without fear of being bullied. Let us all work together to accomplish just that.

I wish all Sikh Manitobans a happy Turban Day and happy Vaisakhi.

Thank you.

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

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: Sat Sri Akal. *[Truth is God.]*

April is a very exciting month as we celebrate Sikh heritage all around the world.

Honourable deputy Speaker, the Sikh community here in Manitoba has contributed greatly to our province and our country. And this is why, whether it be through dates, events or legislation, it is wonderful to celebrate occasions such as turban-tying day here at the Legislature.

It's important to speak about the symbolism and significance of the turban. Through both experience and friends like the member from Burrows, I have learned that the turban deserves immense respect as it means humility and kindness. The turban is integral to a religious identity and it's a symbol of sovereignty, courage, equality and self-respect.

Now, today is a very important day as we celebrate Vaisakhi. And honourable Speaker, it was just a couple of years ago I visited Anandpur Sahib. And this is where the 10th guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa in front of thousands of people in 1699, which is when Sikhism as a faith was born.

So today we celebrate Sikh Heritage Month, we celebrate Turban Day and we celebrate Vaisakhi.

I want to thank you, honourable deputy Speaker, as well as the minister for bringing forward today's statement, and for those who have joined us today in the gallery. Thank you, and Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh *[The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory belongs to God]*.

Thank you.

Point of Order

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, just on a point of order, I want to say a happy Vaisakhi and ask everyone in the House to show you some appreciation, because you are the member who passed the bill acknowledging Turban Day in the House. You are the first person to wear a turban sitting in the Speaker's Chair, and you've convened a lovely event for us all to celebrate the occasion.

So, congratulations.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on the same point of order.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): On the same point of order, your honourable deputy House—or deputy Speaker. Congratulations again on being the first Sikh to be sitting in the Speaker's Chair, even though it is, at times, temporary. Happy Vaisakhi. And, of course, to the Premier, as he knows, this isn't—not necessarily a point of order.

But that being said, it does give us an opportunity on all sides of the House to come together and wish everyone a happy Turban Day. And we do look forward to the celebration and some of the festivities that you've helped organize later on today.

So again, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): This is, of course, not a point of order, but I appreciate the appreciation.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): So before we move to members' statements, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Varinder Singh, Sindy Brar, Amritpal Singh Dhillon, Jay Sodhi, Dalbir Singh Bala, Gurjant Singh Dhillon, Dr. Kiranpal Sroay, Gurmukh Singh Saroay, Manjit Kaur Thind, Tavleen Kaur, Puran Singh Sandhu, Gurdial Singh Chahal, Baldev Kainth, Sunil Sharma, Dr. Singara Singh, Baljit Natt, Parmjit Thethi, Jasdev Ahuja and Prabhnoor Singh, who are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Vaisakhi

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today in celebration of Vaisakhi.

Ever since the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh, established the Khalsa in 1699, this day has held tremendous importance for Sikhs. Through the harshest of times, including persecution, war and unrest, to times of peace and prosperity, Sikhs have marked this day with reverence in every corner of the world, including the hundreds of thousands of Sikhs living in Canada today.

The Speaker in the Chair

Honourable Speaker, Sikhs have established roots in Canada going back over 100 years, and Sikhs have been calling Manitoba home since at least the 1960s. For those who immigrated to this province, the world was a different place decades ago. Oftentimes, men would not be hired if they wore turbans and had to choose between their identity or putting food on the table. For that generation, building a life in this province was a path of struggle, sacrifice and perseverance. The hope was, one day, their children, the next generation, would not face their hurdle.

Today, Sikhs are represented across almost every sector of society from business, government, education, health care, law enforcement and so on. The community went from gathering in small converted spaces to worship to building new spaces and then running out of room there. It's a community that holds more fundraisers and donation drives than I can keep count.

In many ways, those dreams of creating deep roots have manifested, and here we are celebrating Vaisakhi in this hallowed Chamber. But the story of Sikhs in Manitoba continues, as a younger generation now look to be a part of the process in ways their parents weren't able to be and while still upholding the values that were displayed on that day in 1699: faith, courage, equality and compassion.

Vaisakh bhala sakha vaes karae. [*Vaisakhi is so pleasant; the branches blossom with new leaves.*]

Dhhan Dhaekhai har dhuar. Avahu Dhaeia karae. [*The soul yearns to see the Lord at its door. Come, O Lord, and take pity on me.*]

Honourable Speaker, happy Vaisakhi.

Reverend Father Chad McCharles

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Today, I rise to acknowledge bishop-elect of Saskatoon, the Reverend Father Chad McCharles. His dedication to faith and community service has been extraordinary, extending far beyond the borders of Agassiz constituency.

I would like to welcome the Reverend Father Chad and his family, who are joining us here in the gallery today.

Raised on a cattle and grain farm in Shoal Lake, Reverend McCharles has deep rural roots. His first vocation was that of a baker and bakery owner, where his work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit were evident. His deep grassroots, strong values and determination are a direct result of these formative experiences, which continue to inspire his leadership today.

Ordained a transitional deacon in 2008, Reverend McCharles served five years as rector of the five-point Prairie Mountain Parish and moved on to serve other parishes in the diocese of Brandon, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. He returned back to Neepawa in 2020 to launch the Neepawa United-Anglican Shared Ministry, where he currently serves.

Reverend McCharles was recently elected as the bishop of diocese of Saskatoon on March 8. He will be transitioning to a higher calling where he will continue his ministry, fostering and strengthening relationships among diverse groups. His approachable demeanour and rural life experience allow him to inspire others, connecting effortlessly with individuals from all backgrounds—academics, farmers and everyone in-between—demonstrating his genuine care and understanding.

* (13:50)

He has guided his parish with wisdom and has enriched lives of countless individuals through his commitment to outreach, spiritual formation and community-building initiatives. His journey is a testament to resilience and the transformative power of faith.

Mr. Speaker, Reverend McCharles is a shining example of what it means to lead with humility, grace and purpose.

I invite all members of this Assembly to join me in celebrating his contributions and wishing him continued success in his new role in Saskatoon.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Order, please.

Prior to moving on with more members' statements, there's some guests in the gallery that are leaving right away, so I want to take the opportunity to say we have seated in the public gallery, from Sir John's-Ravenscourt [*phonetic*], 50 grade nine students under the direction of Heather Ragot. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), and we welcome you here today.

Vaisakhi

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Today, on April 14, families and communities across the world are celebrating Vaisakhi. It's a time to gather with loved ones, celebrate the harvest and honour the values that bring people closer: community, compassion and faith.

But Vaisakhi is more than just a spring celebration. On this day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh Ji established the Khalsa, a pivotal moment in history that marked the formal birth of Sikhism as a collective faith. It is rooted in the courage, equality and service to others. For Sikhs everywhere, Vaisakhi is a deeply spiritual and historic day.

It's also a time of remembrance. On this day in 1999, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place in the state of Punjab, India. It's a painful moment when innocent people celebrating this festival were met with violence. It reminds us why it's so important to protect the right to practise faith freely, and why we must always stand up against haters, injustice and the silence of the community voices.

At its heart, Vaisakhi reminds us of the core teachings of Sikhism: equality, unity, selfless service. We see these values in every day acts of seva, such as community kitchens that provide meals to thousands.

Today, I want to recognize and celebrate the many contributions of the Sikh Canadians to our country's culture, society and economy. Thank you for your work in enriching our society in many ways.

Vaisakhi diyan vadhaian. [*Happy Vaisakhi.*]

Happy Vaisakhi.

Ralph Nespor and Rob LaCombe

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize an incredible achievement by two outstanding athletes from Stonewall, Manitoba. Ralph Nespor and Rob LaCombe recently captured

the national title at the 2025 Canadian two-person open stick curling championship, held in Grande Prairie, Alberta.

With this victory, they have brought home Manitoba's third national open championship in just four years—a remarkable accomplishment that speaks to the depth of curling talent in our province.

While Ralph and Rob have curled recreationally in the past, it's only been recently that their competitive fire has been lit by stick curling. Having only curled as a team for two years, they clearly have what it takes to compete at a higher—a very high level.

Nespor and LaCombe were nothing short of dominant throughout the competition. They went undefeated in a five-game round robin, carried that momentum into Sunday's playoffs, where they noticed—where they notched wins in the opening round, quarter-final, and semi-final, each time against strong Alberta opposition.

The championship final, they faced off against the 2023 champions Paul Landry and Keith Bennett. An early three-ender set the tone; the Manitobans held their ground, leading 4-2 at the halfway mark. With precision and poise, they blanked the fourth end, added a single in the fifth, and smartly ran their opponents out of stones in the sixth to seal a well-earned victory.

This is not the first time that the stick curling national championship has come to Lakeside. Jim Rouse and Ross MacMillan of Warren captured the national title in 2015.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba continues to be a powerhouse in the world of stick curling, and I am incredibly proud of these champions. Please join me in congratulating Ralph Nespor and Rob LaCombe on their national stick curling championship.

Thank you.

Turban Pride

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): In Sikhism, a turban symbolizes courage, equality and respect. It represents a commitment to stand up for the rights and freedom for all.

The turban is an important cultural article, as well. When two individuals exchange turbans, they pledge to be like siblings for life.

I salute turbaned Canadians for their unwavering commitment to their identity in spite of facing barriers, hate and racism. Doctor Kiranpal Kaur serves

as a proud turban-wearing dentist in Winnipeg. Turbaned educators like Darshdeep Kambo and Mr. Kewal Singh inspire their students. Turbaned students like Shubh Jaura, Armaan Dhanoa, Simar Ubhi and Baljot Rai earned significant scholarships in Manitoba.

Four out of the 10 wheat breeders in western Canada hail from Punjab Agricultural University; three are turbaned. Dr. Harpinder Randhawa, known as wheatsingh on X, Dr. Gurcharn Brar, Dr. Harwinder Sidhu and Santosh Kumar, thank you so much.

I salute turbaned Manitobans serving in the Manitoba Justice system. Gursham Wander and Dr. Baljeet Singh enrich institutions like MITT and ACC Brandon. UMSU elected its first turbaned president, Prabhnoor Singh, this year.

To the next generation of Punjabi Canadians, I would say, wear your turbans with pride. And to my colleagues, please join me welcome two big-hearted Punjabi Manitobans sitting in the gallery: Mr. Sunil Sharma from Dawat Restaurant and Uncle Puran Singh J *[phonetic]* from 4Tracks, who are donating \$10,000 to University of Manitoba for Baba Nanak Scholarship for Human Rights Education.

Happy Vaisakhi. Happy Turban Day. Let's celebrate in Rotunda at 5 p.m. tonight.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there are some more guests in the gallery. I'd like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Bishop-elect of Saskatoon, the Reverend Father Chad McCharles and his family members, Della Gilchrist, Dawn McCharles, Jacob McCharles, Tye Bickerton, Anna Hofer, who are the guests of the honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

And we welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

West End Winnipeg Neighbourhood Violent Crime and Vandalism

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Happy Vaisakhay *[phonetic]*—Vaisakhi, and in addition to that, Honourable Speaker, this weekend, congratulations to the Winnipeg Jets on their division title, first for a long, long, long time, ever, and of course, the Presidents' Trophy. Bring it home to Winnipeg.

So congratulations.

It was an awesome weekend, Honourable Speaker, but unfortunately, with this, many western area residents of Winnipeg in the constituency of Wolseley are waking up to, once again, more crime in their neighbourhoods.

But, unfortunately, Honourable Speaker, in addition to that, the West End is starting to look more like a war zone.

So I ask the Premier or his minister, will they explain why the children of the neighbourhood are having to deal with gunshots, explosions, fires and constant police patrols, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I'll take this opportunity to say happy Vaisakhi to everybody. And I also want to acknowledge you in helping to ensure that the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) could take the chair and acknowledge the esteemed occasion.

* (14:00)

Boy, was that an historic moment at Canada Life Centre last night when they announced that the Winnipeg Jets won the Presidents' Trophy. I was happy to be there, giving a standing ovation along with 15,000 other great Manitobans for the best team in hockey.

Now I know that, day after day, the PCs get their QP material from Winnipeg Wildin, but on this side of the House, we're working hard to ensure that you are safe in your own community.

Again, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has been working hard with law enforcement at the local level, while the MLAs have been there listening to the desire for not only short-term responses but long-term solutions. We're bringing forward both. We're tough on crime. We're tough on the causes of crime.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, it's important to recall that the Premier had, at one time, all of the solutions. And I quote, he was going to end violent crime. End quote.

Gunshots, stolen cars, homes on fire, explosions. I'm not sure how many of this weekend's West End events qualifies as ending violent crime, Honourable Speaker.

Manitobans want action, not just announcements. The shootings, according to a former West Vancouver

police chief and BC solicitor general, noted that the events posed a significant threat to community members.

Can the Premier advise if either of the two individuals charged by police were on bail at the time of the incident?

Mr. Kinew: We're working hard to make Manitoba safe. We're ensuring that law enforcement have the resources that they need. We're also ensuring that children have the resources that they need so that they can go to school and be successful.

At a certain point, when you're talking about the issue of public safety, you're talking about we, as a society, are willing to tolerate. The mistake that the PCs made during their two terms in office is that they were willing to tolerate far too much. They tolerated needles in the streets. They tolerated homeless people in bus shelters. They tolerated ever-increasing rates of violent crime.

Our team is different. We're like you. We want to see these things end, and we're committed to working together to bring about that better outcome.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, I table the story so that the Premier can maybe take a bit of a read on what is actually happening in reality. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: The NDP told Manitobans that they would make our communities safer. The NDP told Manitobans that they would end violent crime. The NDP told Manitobans that they would fix bail, and they've done none of these, Honourable Speaker. Friday night's violence proves this.

How many shots need to be fired? How many homes need to be burned? How many vehicles need to be stolen? How many times do we have to watch and listen to explosions before this Premier sees the reality around him—a reality, Honourable Speaker, that this Premier doesn't seem to have to live in.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I used to live in the West End, okay. So the members opposite live in Fort Rouge and in Union Station and claim to be from rural Manitoba. Meanwhile, we spend more time out of the Perimeter than they do; at the same time that we're moving the needle inside the Perimeter.

How are we doing so? We're investing in law enforcement. While they saw 55 Winnipeg Police Service

cuts during their time in office, we're adding police officers: 12 last year, 12 more this year.

At the same time, we're investing in rural law enforcement as well because we know that this is one Manitoba, one province. They were willing to tolerate rising crime because they want to turn it into a campaign issue.

We want to work with you to force solutions into every part of the community. We're showing early signs of success when it comes to taking action on bail with the Crown attorneys. We're also hiring up law enforcement across the province.

A lot done, a lot to do. But if you go back to the PCs, there'll be a lot to lose.

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

Education Property Taxes Cost-of-Living Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, this Premier stood in his place during the election. And many months after the fact, it is said that he had all the solutions to end violent crime, and we're seeing evidence that he doesn't even have a clue on reality.

The Finance Minister himself cut the education property tax rebate and refuses to fund education adequately from the Province's tax revenues. Instead, he chooses to make school divisions do his bidding to raise local school taxes on Manitoba families.

When will the minister stop trying to hide his tax increases, stop blaming school divisions, stop blaming municipalities for his failed policies and campaign promises, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I'm going to give a shout-out to our Finance Minister, the best one in the country, who's given you a \$1,500 tax credit. The only Finance minister in Canada who's given more than a \$1,500 tax credit than Manitoba's Finance Minister did last year? It's Manitoba's Finance Minister this year: he's giving you a \$1,600 tax credit.

Now, when are the members opposite going to stop blaming themselves? Of course, they say it wasn't us who won the election to fix your health care and to make life more affordable. No; it was all them and the mistakes that they made in their terrible time in office.

Well, there's a leadership campaign going on right now on their side. Is anyone going to show up for that?

Like, literally, is anyone going to show up for the PC side? I see no signs of it each and every day.

Quit being so hard on yourself. We would welcome a much stronger opposition than what we see here on the day to day.

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

Mr. Ewasko: On a day-to-day basis we, on this side of the House, are asking questions, on behalf of concerned Manitobans, for many topics all across this great province of ours. And it's unfortunate that this Premier continues along the lines of this frat person mentality, Honourable Speaker, and refuses and dodges any type of questions coming from our side, or any answers.

It's clear that the Finance Minister is trying to make school divisions the scapegoats for his failed cuts to education policies. He abandoned phasing out the school taxes on homeowners. He's replaced the record of success in lowering taxes that the PCs were doing by cutting education funding, increasing school taxes, property tax increases, new hydro rate increases, higher income taxes.

When is the minister going to admit his mistakes, stand up and apologize to Manitobans for making it even less affordable to live here in Manitoba, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: Okay, okay, okay, I see what's going on here. Why is he asking questions about schools to the Finance Minister? Well, because he's afraid of our Education Minister—

The Speaker: Order.

Just a quick caution to make sure the member's always directing his response through the Chair. I may be mistaken; you may have been, but I just want to caution.

Mr. Kinew: If you'll indulge me again: why is the member opposite, Honourable Speaker, asking questions of our Finance Minister? Because he's clearly afraid to go toe-to-toe with our amazing Education Minister on questions of school funding.

And no wonder he doesn't want to talk about the amazing job she's doing. In her short time in office, already 600 more educators in the classroom working with your kids. More one-on-one time for math and for reading and for learning how to collaborate with other young minds at the same time.

What's that? Is that the sound of children who used to be hungry under the PC's time in office, now reaching their full potential because of the universal school food program? Yes, it is, but you almost can't hear it because of the outpouring of support of Manitobans who are saying thank you for the \$1,500 tax credit. We can't wait to save \$1,600 next year.

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

Mr. Ewasko: The Premier knows himself that, even if I did ask the questions directly to the Education Minister, he's got too big of an ego and too self-serving to allow her to get up and answer them, Honourable Speaker. Because I might get an answer from the Education Minister.

The minister needs to stop raising taxes—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —on Manitobans, Honourable Speaker. He's making life even more unaffordable, with higher grocery prices, higher hydro rates, higher income taxes, property taxes and, of course, higher school taxes. And where does the list end? The Premier spends and Manitobans pay more each and every day.

What more will Manitobans have to pay with this NDP Premier and his failed Finance Minister, Honourable Speaker?

* (14:10)

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, I am but a humble servant, and when I have the amazing honour to work with such esteemed colleagues—it's not just the ministers of Education and Finance, but, really, every single member of our team—it inspires me with this response day after day when I hear these terrible, terrible questions, to say, you know what? Your time is far more valuable. Let me handle the answers to these misguided questions that are being written by the babysitters' club—the babysitters' club; babysitting the PC caucus office until Wallay [phonetic] comes in and clears out the cobwebs and the detritus still here from the Heather Stefanson era.

But they don't need to worry. We're already doing that work for them.

Remember when the members opposite had to call the police because somebody asked them to move their desk away from the window? Not exactly working for the people of Manitoba, are they?

Education Property Tax—Increase Concerns Impact on Winnipeg Homeowners

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, in correspondence sent to me by the City of Winnipeg, 25 per cent of single-dwelling properties in Winnipeg would have been worse off under the NDP's affordability tax credit last year than they would otherwise be under the former PC's rebate. That's over 50,000 homeowners that would have paid more to the NDP and education property taxes last year. I table that correspondence for the minister.

With the NDP's double-digit tax increases to education taxes, this number will significantly grow this year. Clearly, this minister did not think through their tax changes when abandoning the PC's 50 per cent rebate and credit.

Will this minister recognize that his tax plan has failed and immediately reverse his decisions to tax homeowners and the City of Winnipeg?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans know they can count on this team to make their life more affordable. We started last year, of course, with 21 ways to save, including a \$1,500 Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit, and this year, as the Premier pointed out, we were very proud to raise that up to \$1,600, which means every Manitoban's going to see a \$1,600 reduction in their school tax costs.

You know, not only are we reducing, of course, costs of school taxes, but we bring in—brought in other important measures, like a permanent reduction to your fuel taxes. We brought in a hydro rate freeze. Those are the important measures that a government takes when it cares about your day-to-day costs.

For seven and a half years Manitobans had a government that worked to raise their costs in every new and creative manner when it came to hydro rates, raise taxes on renters. We're going to keep rates—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: One in four homeowners in Winnipeg would have paid more last year under the NDP system. Does that sound more affordable, Honourable Speaker? No.

With double-digit education tax increases and property values going up, in 2025 more Winnipeggers will be worse off with this NDP government.

In another City of Winnipeg analysis a house in the Winnipeg School Division valued at \$349,000 will pay more in education taxes under this NDP. I table this table for the minister.

Will this minister admit these families are worse off under his government, yes or no?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we're going to keep doing the work of making life more affordable every single day. In our recent budget, Budget 2025, brought in 25 new ways to save for Manitobans, including a hydro rate freeze, free park passes for a year, that permanent 10 per cent gas tax. We're bringing in that universal school nutrition program, making it easier to afford your home with that \$1,600 tax credit, free birth control, including Plan B, because this team actually cares about the health of women.

We're going to keep doing that important work of making life more affordable. Regardless of what the members opposite like to say, they made life more expensive. Manitobans know they can't count on them and they can trust us to get the job done.

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

Mrs. Stone: The numbers don't lie, Honourable Speaker, and the reality is, is under this NDP's tax changes, more Winnipeg families will be paying higher education taxes under this NDP.

In the same chart tabled from the City of Winnipeg, a house in Seven Oaks School Division valued at \$323,000 will be paying more under this NDP. A home in Louis Riel valued at \$383,000 will be paying more under this NDP. There is nothing affordable about this minister's taxes on families. He clearly didn't think through these tax changes when he implemented them and this is not sustainable in the long term.

Will this minister commit to returning to the PC's 50 per cent education tax rebate and eliminating education taxes on properties altogether?

MLA Sala: Only thing we're going to commit to, Honourable Speaker, is continuing to make life more affordable in Manitoba, right?

Let's talk about the work. When it came to energy, every single day, for seven and a half years, they charged a fuel tax on Manitobans. What did we do when we came in? We removed that for an entire year, and now we've brought in a permanent 10 per cent cut.

When it comes to the carbon tax, the only party in this House that voted for and charged the carbon tax on Manitobans, is the members opposite. When it came to hydro, what did they do? Every single day, they seemed to come in here with new and novel ways to jack up hydro rates on Manitobans.

Their record when it comes to making life more expensive on energy is a bad one, Honourable Speaker. On this side of the House, we're making life more affordable. When it comes to energy, child care, taking care of your home, you can count on us—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Discarded Needles in Swan Valley Region Request for Disposal and Clean-up Plan

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Since becoming minister, the MLA for Point Douglas has personally distributed almost 1 million needles in the Swan Valley region, a community of 4,000 people. Community leaders and members have repeatedly warned this minister about the safety of residents, especially the young children, as used needles are strewn across local parks—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —sidewalks and ball diamonds. Even the surge in the number of HIV cases hasn't been enough for this minister to wake up to the dangers of her drop-it-and-forget-it used dirty needle policy; and I table the photos.

Once again, I'm asking: What is this minister's plan to safely collect and dispose of the nearly 1 million dirty needles she has distributed within the Swan Valley region?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I want to thank the municipality of Swan River for working so collaboratively with Prairie Mountain Health. Prairie Mountain Health has been out every day, twice a day. They've been to schools, playgrounds; they've been cleaning up every day.

Last week they picked up a total of 17 needles. People have been, you know, pretty responsive in terms of calling the hotline that's been set up. So I'd encourage that member to create awareness around that hotline, encourage people to call it and do their part, in terms of helping to create awareness and help clean that community up. Under their government they had no disposal plan; we have a disposal plan.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, the used dirty needle situation in the Swan Valley has become so bad that this minister has now initiated, I quote, community spring clean-up event for Thursday, April 24. Participants who join the minister's crack commando committee—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —for the day and pick up the most dirty needles can win a prize, then get tested for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections and, of course, have snacks followed by fun. So I table this invite.

As but a humbled servant to the people, I ask: Can the minister advise what prizes she is offering the children and residents who are putting their health at risk to pick up these used needles?

Ms. Smith: Again, in 2021, under their government they distributed over 200,000 needles without a disposal plan. In 2022, 300,000 needles were distributed with zero disposal plan. In 2023, 500,000 needles were distributed with no disposal plan.

We will take no lessons from members opposite. We have a disposal plan. We are working with communities. Unlike members opposite—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —who like to fight and create division, we'll not take any lessons from them. We'll continue to work on collaborative approaches and work on solutions with communities.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, we've risen on numerous occasions asking if the minister would be providing puncture-resistant gloves and steel-toed boots for children and residents picking up her used dirty needles in the Swan Valley.

And now the minister's own needle clean-up invitation shows participants—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —wearing bright yellow rubber dish gloves. Rubber dish gloves, Honourable Speaker, offer zero protection against used, HIV-laden needles. No wonder she's also providing free STBBI testing to all participants.

Will the minister be joining local residents for their community spring clean-up event with snacks and fun, or does she feel her role ends with distributing the needles and not consequences that follow?

* (14:20)

Ms. Smith: It's very troubling that that member would get up in this House and encourage children to go out and be picking up needles. What I would say to that member is he should be encouraging members to call that hotline to get those folks that are trained to go out and do the needle disposal and work with the municipality. That's what they're there for.

That member can continue to use divisive rhetoric. We will continue to work with the municipality. Under that government, they had no plan. They continued to distribute. We have a plan. We'll continue working with communities on a cleanup plan.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Stop the clock for a moment, please.

Some more guests in the gallery I'd like to acknowledge. We have seated in the public gallery the mayor of the City of Selkirk, Larry Johansson, and he is the guest of the government. We welcome you here today.

Rural Crime in Manitoba Status of Security Rebate Program

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Last week the minister stood in this House and said his solution to rural crime was the Security Rebate Program, a program that if you tried to access today is completely closed. I'll table a screenshot of the government's website that shows this.

In fact, I've heard from dozens and dozens of Agassiz constituents for the past week straight, people who were led to believe they could access this program by this minister, only to be left high and dry by the NDP government when they needed help the most.

How can the minister stand here and claim that this program is helping fight crime when Manitobans can't even access it?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you to the member opposite for the question. It is important, and that's why last week we were proud to announce over \$5 million of additional funding that'll go directly to RCMP to support law enforcement across the province.

We know that under the PCs, year over year over year, crime increased outside of the Perimeter, and of course, they did nothing. What did they do? They sat on their hands and they stood idly by.

We're not going to take that approach, Honourable Speaker. We're going to increase funding. We're going to work with community and, ultimately, we're going to work with law enforcement to ensure that the supports are there to support communities and make our province safer.

Ms. Byram: Crime is increasing under this NDP government, Honourable Speaker, and I will table for the Minister of Justice just a handful of the dozens and dozens of comments made on social media in response to the violent attacks that occurred in MacGregor last weekend. People in rural Manitoba are scared. They are rightfully concerned about their safety, their families and their property, and right now they do not believe that this NDP government is taking their safety seriously.

If the minister truly believes that surveillance footage is key to improving public safety and helping law enforcement do their jobs, then why did this government launch a program, then ran out of money almost immediately, leaving hundreds—if not thousands—of rural Manitobans behind?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Honourable Speaker, over \$5 million directly for additional resources and supports for RCMP specifically to address rural crime and to ensure that the response is timely and that it is adequate for the situation that's happening.

This is welcomed, of course, in rural Manitoba by community leaders. Don't have to take our word for it. President of AMM Kathy Valentino said, we welcome the province's timely investment to expand the RCMP emergency response team for rural and northern Manitoba. This support is a critical step towards safer communities in ensuring all Manitobans feel secure, no matter where they live.

That's what Kathy Valentino said. What did the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) say? Manitobans didn't need another funding announcement today. I disagree, Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Ms. Byram: Manitobans are doing their part. They're stepping up trying to protect their homes, their farms, their small businesses, their families and trying to support law enforcement in the process.

But instead of backing them with real, reliable help, the NDP rolled out a limited first come, first served rebate that's almost maxed out. Actually, it's

already maxed out. And it's a program that is inherently limited. It's inaccessible to the vast majority of Manitobans. That won't do much to actually prevent the crime.

How does this minister expect to build a safer community when the very tools he says are essential to crime prevention are only available to the lucky few, and what is he doing for the thousands of Manitobans who were told: Sorry, please try again?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Honourable Speaker, our government is working with law enforcement; it's working with individuals, empowering them and giving them the tools that they need. We gave out additional supports directly to people in Manitoba.

Under the members opposite, not one dollar was given out to support safety and security in their communities.

But again, the member for Brandon West says Manitobans didn't need another funding announcement today, which I think betrays what their actual plan for crime and rural safety is, and that is to do nothing. To sit on their hands, to freeze funding over seven and a half years under the Stefanson government, to do nothing to support individuals and communities.

Our government is different. We're providing the kinds of supports that Manitobans are asking for, and we're making our province safer while doing it.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

WRHA Centralization of Home-Care Scheduling Impact of Consolidation on Patients and Staff

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Last week, the Minister of Health accused front-line home-care staff of being, quote, wrong and fear mongering about the realities they are facing under the NDP's cost-cutting centralization of home-care scheduling.

Over the weekend, I received dozens of comments and emails from impacted workers shocked to hear how this minister responded to their concerns. I'll table some of those today, including one from Reddit, where a scheduler described staff in emotional breakdowns, patients missing their medications and 300 cancelled visits per area in just one week. They are pleading with the minister to drop the pride and the attempted media spin and actually listen to these health-care workers in crisis.

Does the minister still believe these front-line home-care workers are lying?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, over the weekend, I had the pleasure of hearing from, talking to, meeting with a number of health-care workers, home-care workers here in Winnipeg. And I want to say thank you to all of those folks who have reached out and have had conversations with myself, our office and the WRHA.

I want to reassure these health-care workers that we are listening. We've been working with the WRHA to make sure they take the necessary steps to address the challenges as this new scheduling system rolls out.

I do want to remind the member that the scheduling system is a direct result of a review that was commissioned under the failed PC administration that didn't provide home care to those who needed it, and as a result, a Manitoban passed away.

We don't want to see that happen, which is why our government is taking real action.

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

Mrs. Cook: As of this morning, the WRHA is advertising 20 open positions for scheduling clerks. Yet, last week, the minister stood in this House and claimed there were absolutely no staffing issues in home-care scheduling. I'll table the job postings for the minister's reference.

Meanwhile, the Manitoba Nurses Union is sounding the alarm, saying clients are stuck in hospital beds because home-care services cannot be established. Patients are stranded in hospital beds they don't need to occupy, all because of the disorganization caused by this NDP government.

Will the minister admit they've caused a crisis in home care and will they take action today to fix their mess?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, let's be clear: the previous PC administration, Heather Stefanson, that member opposite caused a crisis across our health-care system. They cut health care to the point where we couldn't respond. They fired hundreds of health-care workers.

And as a result a review was completed, which made the decision to create a new scheduling system.

Our government is doing the work of listening to health-care workers, including the nurses and health-care aides I had the chance to talk to this weekend, including a nurse just this morning. And we are

listening to those folks and working with the WRHA to make sure those concerns are addressed.

And, yes, we're going to continue to hire as many people as possible to the front lines, because for seven and a half years the PCs fired and cut them.

Mrs. Cook: I'll table another letter from the very same nurse this minister dismissed last week, who wrote in response to the minister's comments, quote: Before the election, nurses stood with your government, hopeful that real improvements were coming. But we are not just disappointed; we are broken. This government is failing us, and in doing so, putting patients at risk.

What's happening—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —in home care as a result of this minister's rushed, cost-cutting decisions is not a hiccup. It is—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —active harm.

* (14:30)

Staff are burning out and leaving; patients are going without care, missing medications and stuck in hospital beds.

Will this minister stop dismissing front-line workers, and will they apologize to them for their callous, offensive comments last week?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and the honourable member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) will please come to order.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we are going to continue to listen to health-care workers.

I want to say it again: I want to thank those nurses, health-care aides, home-care workers, who I've been in conversation with since last week. These are the same health-care workers who could never get a meeting or a visit from any member on that side of the House for seven and a half years.

Our government takes those concerns seriously, which is why we're not only training hundreds of additional health-care aides, but we're doing the additional work of making sure there are jobs for them across the system, including in home care.

We're going to keep doing that work to repair the damage done by the previous government. And as the system unfolds, we'll make sure that the needs of patients are put first, that we're addressing the needs in communities and making sure that staff have the resources they need.

I'll continue to work with these health-care workers—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

New School for Tyndall Park Cancellation Inquiry

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Families in Tyndall Park were hopeful when plans were announced for a new school in the community, something that had been long overdue because of the increasing enrolment year after year.

But in October of 2024, the provincial government abruptly halted these plans along with eight others across the province, despite the clear and growing need. Classrooms are overflowing. Students are being taught in gymnasiums, portables, libraries and even in hallways.

Will the minister explain why the government decided to no longer build much-needed school in Tyndall Park that people have been expecting for years?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning—oh, sorry.

Hon. Mike Moyes (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you to the member for this important question. And I am so proud to be a part of a government that is building one Manitoba.

The fact of the matter is, we're building 11 new schools across our great province, and unlike members opposite, we're not doing it on the back of a napkin; we're actually budgeting for it and making those plans. We will build, build, build.

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

School Upgrades and Repairs Request for Funding Increase

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Students and educators across Manitoba are being asked to make do in schools with leaking roofs, broken boilers, outdated facilities and not enough space to meet the demand. This is a result of long-term underinvestment

and a lack of vision when it comes to school infrastructure.

If this government is serious about supporting education, it needs to address not only new construction, but also maintenance and repair of existing schools.

Will this government commit to increasing infrastructure funding to upgrade, maintain and modernize schools in all communities?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Like I said, we are building one Manitoba. We are going to continue to build one Manitoba.

This includes a record number in capital. We are going to continue because we care about kids. We are going to continue to increase our budgets on capital. We are going to continue to make investments, including a \$67-million investment in operating, in addition to the \$30 million to ensure that our kids are fed.

We're going to continue to do that good work because we care about kids.

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

New School for Tyndall Park Cancellation Inquiry

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, families in Tyndall Park are growing to be more and more frustrated under this government.

Our community continues to experience rapid population growth, and schools continue to struggle with overcrowding and hallway education. The new school that was promised has been cut by this NDP government. There has to be some fairness in the decisions as to where to build new schools in Manitoba. Tyndall Park deserves the school that it was promised.

Will this government bring it back?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): We recognize that after two terms in government, there's room to grow, because they didn't make the investments. They were instead writing their plan on back of a napkin.

The new schools that we're building: Devonshire Park, in River East Transcona; Prairie Pointe School, in Pembina Trails School Division; Meadowlands School, in Seven Oaks School Division; Brandon Southwest School, also in Brandon School Division;

a new French school in the DSFM; Ste. Anne Regional High School. The list goes on and on and on. We're going to continue to build because we care about kids.

Lemay Forest Park Announcement

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): As an MLA, I've been listening to my constituents and working hard to save an important piece of land in the community of St. Norbert. And earlier today, our Premier announced welcome news for residents of south Winnipeg.

Manitobans have been clear: they want us to protect Manitoba's land and water while we continue to build one Manitoba in a responsible way. That's what our government will always do.

Can the Premier please tell the House more about this great news?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Your provincial government is taking action to protect Lemay Forest.

I want to take this opportunity to single out the amazing work of the member for Seine River, who has been a tireless advocate, bringing forward the public interest in this instance: the public interest, of course, in having public spaces; the public interest, of course, in the historic cemetery in the area; the public interest in the endangered species and, of course, the public interest in the forest on-site.

Because of these public interests that need to be defended, and after having exhausted so many other reasonable courses of action, today we announced that we are expropriating Lemay Forest for the—get this, Honourable Speaker; I'm sure you'll love this—to make a beautiful new provincial park.

So not only will historic and contemporary public interests be served, everyone in Manitoba will get a beautiful new park to enjoy together, thanks to the member for Seine River.

Pembina Trails School Division Cyberattack Minister's Knowledge of Security Breach

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Photos of valid passports, staff payroll information and credit card statements were all among the data stolen from the Pembina Trails School Division during a December cyberattack.

When was the minister first made aware of the December breach affecting thousands of staff and students?

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): I want to thank the member opposite for the important question.

Our government certainly recognizes the growing concerns around cybersecurity and the potential damage it can do to Manitobans when systems are hacked.

With respect to the specific question at hand, I want to assure Manitobans that we're working with our partners across the province to strengthen cybersecurity. To that end, the departmental budget has been increased over the past year, and it reflects our deep commitment to providing the resources necessary to protect Manitobans' data.

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

Cyberattacks on Provincial Institutions Provincial Policy on Monitoring Services

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It's been almost six months since the cyberattack. The minister has yet to issue a single policy under his portfolio. Victims are scared and frustrated at this breach of data.

How many publicly funded institutions have been subject to a cyberattack since this minister took over, and will the minister table the provincial policy on the provision of monitoring services to protect exposed Manitobans?

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): Honourable Speaker, again, I want to thank the member opposite for the important question.

I think it's important to recognize the difference between the work that's being done on this side of the House and what was done previously. Of course, school divisions are arms-length bodies. They are independent, and we respect that. Previously, of course, the government prior had no respect for those school divisions and the important work that they did. In fact, bill 64 was brought in specifically to eliminate them.

We're going to continue to work with our partners in education across the system to make sure that they have the resources they need to protect Manitobans' data.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

House Business

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

* (14:40)

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Johnson: Honourable Speaker, I would like to table a list of five bills designated by the Official Opposition for the First Session of the 43rd Legislature.

Our designated bills for this session are: Bill 8, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act; Bill 12, The Housing and Renewal Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 23, The Public Interest Expression Defence Act; Bill 30, the election financing amendment act and elections amendment act; and Bill 40, An Act respecting "O Canada" and Other Observances and Land and Treaty Acknowledgements in Schools (Education Administration Act and Public Schools Act Amended).

The Speaker: One moment, please. All right, moving on to petitions.

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

And the background to this petition is as follows—*[interjection]*—it is a good one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Robert Grant, Debasish Mukherjee, Tanusree Mukherjee, and many more fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No further petitions?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Sorry. On a point of order, Honourable Speaker.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: On a point of order, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: I just wanted to take a quick moment because, as we heard today, we had many guests in the Chamber. There were members here for the Vaisakhi celebrations and, of course, are staying here, I believe, for Turban Day, for the celebrations at 4 p.m. and—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

Points of order are serious business and I would ask members to remain silent while the member's speaking because I do need to be able to hear what he's saying.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much for your guidance, Honourable Speaker, and that actually leads very well into the point that I was—and the point of order that I was bringing to the House's attention.

So as I said earlier, there were a number of guests here in the gallery. And not only did we have the—of course a ministerial statement by the minister for sport, culture and heritage, we also had three separate members' statements which pertained either directly to the history of Vaisakhi, the specifics around Turban Day, and also with regards to the history of the Canadian experience with regards to Vaisakhi.

In all cases, those were very, very important statements, and in fact, that was recognized by you, Honourable Speaker, by allowing for the member for The Maples (MLA Sandhu) to take the Chair, and we appreciate that. I think that speaks to the—all members in the House wanting to come together and to ensure that we respect that situation.

That being said, Honourable Speaker, the point that I want to make—

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), if you've got a point of order, I wish you'd get to it.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I appreciate it. Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I think the Clerk is just making sure that we're on point here, as you are as well.

The point that I think all members in this House and in this Chamber are very, very keen to understand and appreciate is how those guests, while they were in the Chamber, how they were being treated and how the relationship between what we do on the floor of the Legislature is reflected to those members in the gallery.

And what I wanted to say is, is that, while many, many times in this Chamber, there are a lot of situations where members, you know—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member's risen on a point of order. So far, he hasn't gotten anywhere close to talking about a point of order. If the member needs a short recess to do something, I would suggest that he ask for leave to do that, perhaps.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate that offer, Honourable Speaker. I will make the point that—as I said, I'm trying to make without hopefully any further interruption so that I can make that point—is that there is, as I said—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Just to remind the minister that when the Speaker interjects into something, it shouldn't be viewed as an interruption. So the member will very quickly conclude his point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, Honourable Speaker, very, very good guidance and I appreciate that.

The point that I'm making is, when we do have guests in the gallery, that oftentimes there are situations where that—there is a—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, okay. I'm going to—you know, I'm very surprised, actually, because the point that I was going to make was with regards to the respect that was shown for the members—or for the visitors in the gallery.

But I think I may actually be called here by the members opposite to maybe retract what that point was. Because what we're seeing here is a disrespect for those guests who have come in the gallery. And I believe that, Honourable Speaker, we all have a duty here in this place to ensure that every member that comes to this place—every single member of the public—is shown respect, is given the kind of respect that they deserve in the people's building.

Now, we all have an obligation as members—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I've been pretty lenient with the minister. I don't believe he actually has a point of order. So if you have something specific that's a point of order, get to it. It's not time for making speeches.

Mr. Wiebe: Appreciate the guidance once again.

I also appreciate if there can be some decorum in the House so that we can ensure that folks, members here, as well as people in the gallery are able to hear the point that we're trying to make. And that is simply, Honourable Speaker, that when we're talking about important issues, moments and days and recognition in Manitoba, that we give people the respect that they deserve.

* (14:50)

The folks that have come in the gallery expect us to all present in a certain way, to show that kind of decorum that the Speaker constantly reminds us of and that we should ensure that we are giving that respect. We all have an opportunity later, at Vaisakhi, but I hope that the Honourable Speaker will—

The Speaker: The—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) does not have a point of order, but I do look forward to him following his own advice in the future about decorum.

House Business

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on House business, please.

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I just want to clarify: when I tabled those list of bills, it had the right text on the ones that I tabled, but I would like to table a list of the five bills designated by the official opposition for this Second Session of the 43rd Legislature, not the First Session.

Thank you for that time to clarify.

The Speaker: I thank the Opposition House Leader for that clarification; it has been duly noted.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Would you call for second reading debate: Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act; Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities); Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2); and Bill 35, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

The Speaker: So it has been announced by the Government House Leader that we will now proceed to second reading of Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act; followed by second reading debate on Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; followed by debate on second reading of Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful

Activities); followed by Bill 23, The Public Interest Expression Defence Act; followed by bill—

An Honourable Member: Sorry. No, 23 is one of their—no.

The Speaker: —followed by Bill 9—please. Bill 23 is not the correct bill; I apologize for that. Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2); followed by Bill 35—*[interjection]*—thank you—followed by Bill 35, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 25—The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act

The Speaker: The honourable—so now we will move to consideration of second reading of Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), that Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Sandhu: It is my great pleasure to rise today to give second reading to The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act. The purpose of this bill is to enhance the transparency and public accountability when a public sector entity uses a public-private partnership procurement model for a major capital project.

Manitobans accept that major capital projects will be delivered on time and on budget. By introducing this bill, my department is committed to meet this mandate. This bill introduces a progressive approach to transparency and accountability for oversight of P3 agreements, and business government bodies will be exempt from this legislation, recognizing and supporting Indigenous self-governments.

This bill ensures that no private sector entity may acquire or hold, directly or indirectly, an ownership interest in the public work. This bill establishes best practice for the procurement of major capital projects. For example, this bill requires that a 'preliminary' analysis will be conducted before starting the procurement process for a major capital project. The preliminary analysis must include a public sector competitor to

establish the total costs of the—for the life of the project before a decision is made to enter a P3 contract.

This bill requires that a fairness monitor be hired to make sure that P3 capital projects are done in a fair and 'transfit'—transparent manner. The duties of the fairness monitor will include: advising the government on the procurement process; reviewing all tendered documents; ensure that a procurement process and a selection of the private proponent follow the intended process as well as applicable laws, agreement policies and procedures; make recommendations to the government regarding it is public reported—reports about the project; prepare a final report to the public and prepare the term of the contract awarded by the government to the successful 'promonent' or bidder in the procurement process.

The Auditor General will conduct a report of these projects and make them public to ensure accountability. The bill will also provide a opportunity for the public to review information about the project and comment on it. I'm proud that this will improve transparency in government procurement and look forward to it receiving the unanimous support of this Assembly.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions may be asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It's a pleasure to rise today in debate on Bill 25. Just to kick off question-and-answer period, just would like to know from the minister who he consulted with in drafting this bill.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I also want to thank the member for that question.

Honourable Speaker, we consulted 221,695 people. Those are the people who voted for NDP in the 2023 elections. That was our election commitment, and we are delivering on that one.

And, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Certainly request a list of that 221,000 people; would be great.

Under the agreement, typically private sector guides and manages the project under their expertise. Building in any particular project, the public sector owns the asset being built but may not operate it. Is the minister aware of that process currently in place?

* (15:00)

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question.

I want to make sure that he understands the purpose of this bill is the transparency and public accountability, and I think the Conservatives really don't want to have a transparency and public accountability.

We are bringing this bill forward as this was our election commitment.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: I appreciate that the minister opposite has a sense of humour, but I would like to know if—and I—perhaps we can take from his answer that there were no consultations, and I find that concerning because I think there was an opportunity for the minister and his department to consult with the construction industry, the property management industry, perhaps Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Why did the minister think it wasn't important to consult with these organizations?

MLA Sandhu: As I said earlier, this was our election commitment and we want to deliver on our election—that promise that we made during the election, so promise—we had promise kept and promise delivered. And same thing with the election during the gas tax cut, and that was our election commitment. And, again, we delivered on that one, and also we made it 10 per cent permanent gas tax.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: We know that even under the former NDP government back in the 2000s, there were a number of P3 projects that were approved, and I just wanted to know if the minister could name one current project that was completed on time and under budget here in the city of Winnipeg.

MLA Sandhu: The purpose of this bill is delivering the project on time, on budget, and this bill will do that, Honourable Speaker. I'm sure the opposition members don't believe in transparency and public

accountability. And this will also—you know, we could have delivered—like, there's 11 schools that we are delivering this year, and if we have to do a P3, then we have to follow this process, and processes where Manitobans will know exactly what is in there. Is it for the best interests of the public or not?

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: So, Honourable Speaker, and let it be clear for the record that the minister did not answer my question. I asked the minister if he could name a—I'm sure I'll get a text shortly—a project in the city of Winnipeg that was completed on time and under budget. I'll give him one more opportunity to see if he comes up with that.

Thank you.

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, I have no idea why a member opposite want to spend more than what is required and why they don't want to have a transparency and accountability.

Honourable Speaker, again this is the bill that will protect the public purse and also make sure when we are delivering, if we were to do a P3, there are the project itself, will stay with the province as well.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: And, again, no answer there, but I'll give the minister another opportunity.

I see in the bill they want to engage an independent fairness monitor who will oversee the procurement process and prepare a final report on contract and summary.

Where does the minister feel that that's going to create more transparency, let alone more red tape and bureaucracy?

MLA Sandhu: Again, as I said, this will create—when we have a fairness monitor, he will have—the public will have the input in there and people can give their views. Is it in the public interest or not?

And it's also—we'll see a, you know, if we were to build a traditional way, how much it's going to cost and building with a P3, how much it's going to cost, and at the final stage of the project will always—will stay with the province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: How long will the analysis report take for each P3 project, and won't this step delay moving ahead with infrastructure projects?

MLA Sandhu: What—I want to thank the member for that question.

What I'm seeing from that member is, he don't want to have any transparency and accountability. He wants to spend the money on the project and he really don't want the public to know exactly, are we getting the value—our money's worth or not.

So again, I will—we will definitely follow these accountability and transparency, unlike the members opposite.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: I hope that the minister can be transparent with me in confirming that they—the NDP here in Manitoba are simply following the NDP in British Columbia by setting up a new bureaucracy and oversight major infrastructure projects where the professionals, like contractors here, not only in Manitoba but across this great country, have the ability and the skills to move forward.

Can the minister tell me today, how big is the department going to be and how much is it going to cost Manitobans?

MLA Sandhu: I even want to take a look back for the member that side to Brian Pallister. Even though P3s schools were a bad idea, he backed off from his plan to use the P3 model and admitted it would more expensive.

We also have a failure of P3 schools in Alberta, and who could forget the P3 schools in Regina where teachers were not allowed to even open the windows?

Honourable Speaker, again, this is a transparency and we will follow the transparency, and hopefully the member opposite also supports our bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: I think it's important for the minister to clarify the impact of this bill on building infrastructure projects across this province, across Manitoba, schools, hospitals, roads and that sort of thing, when we have new bureaucracy, new red tape, new legislation like this brought forward.

What will the delays be? How much longer will it take? For instance, the analysis report, that requirement in this legislation, fulfilling that; what's that going to do to the timelines on these infrastructure projects that the government wants to build? I think it's important that the minister has an idea and can provide some clarity on that.

MLA Sandhu: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Bill 25 ensures there's accountability and transparency if the government chooses to use a P3. We're not saying we will not going to choose a P3, but there's a process that we have to follow when we do a P3.

With this law, Manitoba will know how the cost of a P3 compares to traditional delivery models. This will ensure government delivers projects in a way that has the most benefit for Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: Again, I want to ask the minister about this fairness monitoring, independent fairness—Crown corporation, we'll call it, I'm sure—because who will be engaged in this role, and I'm sure the minister's given it some thought.

And who will be representing—who will be represented in this role? Will it be industry? Will it be folks that are actually on the front lines? Or will it be just simply a one-way type of—well, you guys are going to build it this way because we feel it's the best way for Manitobans? Yes or no?

MLA Sandhu: Again, the fairness monitor will advise the government on the procurement process, review all tendered documents, ensure that the procurement process and the selection of prided—private prominent follow the intended process and will, as applicable laws, agreements, policies and procedures, make recommendations to the government regarding the public report—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

Mr. Guenter: The bill says that during the term of the public-private partnership, a private sector entity must not acquire or hold directly or indirectly an ownership interest in the procured public work or improvements.

Why is this necessary and is it always the case that the public needs to own the asset forever? Is it not possible for some assets to devolve away from government? Would that not potentially reduce future government liabilities?

MLA Sandhu: Again, as I said, this is about Manitobans spend the money, they should own the project. They should own the assets as well.

* (15:10)

So again, this is bringing transparency and accountability into this, Honourable Speaker. This is an election

commitment that we had made during the 2023 election and we are delivering on that.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: It also says here that the report will also go to the Auditor General and to the public at various stages of the project.

Can the minister maybe enlighten Manitobans and this House today on what exactly that'll look like and how long it'll take? Of course, it sounds like it will take some time, engaging the Auditor General throughout the various stages of a project.

MLA Sandhu: As I stated earlier, the fairness monitor will generate the report and it will go to the Auditor General and the report will be made public to make sure Manitobans have oversight on exactly—if we are doing a P3 project, how much we are spending money and, if it is a traditional model, how much we are spending money with that. Is there savings, is there more cost? So that's the main purpose of this.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: Related to my previous question to the minister, sometimes government has building assets that are no longer in use and become a liability for government and the taxpayer, and government cannot afford to rehabilitate the building and the cost of remediation is greater than the actual property value.

So why would the minister want to hold on to ownership of these assets if they are more of a liability?

MLA Sandhu: We cannot go back to—the answer I'd given earlier, Mr.—sorry, Honourable Speaker. What the member wants to see is—even Brian Pallister said P3 schools were a bad idea. So again, if we were to build P3 the way the member thinks is a good idea, those people may say, hey, you know what, you can't really open the window for the school. And the project, they can say certain things you cannot do.

And with this model, the government will always own the asset. They will have the—you know, whatever they want to do as—in the future—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Guenter: Yes, wouldn't it be better if, once an asset reaches end of life, some other party has to deal with the spent asset? You know, for example, some old schools or buildings around the province—I can think of Manitoba Housing units in my constituency; 90 per cent of them are considered—if not more—surplus and derelict and never going to be repaired by the gov-

ernment, and they're eyesores in the community, and the community would love to buy them—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —and turn them into something profitable. That's been done before.

But I'm just wondering, couldn't this problem be solved by the Province not owning the asset?

MLA Sandhu: Again, the purpose of this bill is transparency and public accountability.

Member opposite wants to be a 51st state of the States, and his attentions are there.

But when Manitobans pay for the project, they deserve to have transparency and accountability. The Stefanson PCs gave Manitobans false hope and hope with their imaginary P3 schools.

We are building 11 schools, and we are doing it the right way with accountability for Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The time for question period is expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I just want to be really clear off the top. I thank the minister across the way for the bill briefing and, you know, appreciate his work. And also want to thank his departmental staff and all those in the department, you know, for their work on legislation.

However, I do have concerns with the prospect of this legislation creating more bureaucracy and adding to the overall regulatory burden on the—on Manitobans and on the construction industry, in particular, at a time when we're facing a \$9-billion infrastructure deficit and we need to have schools and hospitals built in this province, among other things.

You know, I understand that it's important that government cross all its t's and dot its i's, but I think it's important to remember as well or to consider that government cannot—the taxpayer cannot carry the bag on everything, and there's a huge opportunity to invite the private sector into helping to build Manitoba.

The—it's the mantra of the government across the way. I think it's a bit misplaced; it's a misnomer, because the very first thing they did when they got elected was to cancel six personal-care homes, the construction of six personal-care homes, and to cancel the construction of nine additional schools across the

province and among many other things that they did. And so this added extra cost and extra—unnecessary delays to these very important projects that Manitoba seniors, Manitoba students and many others depended on. And so that's a direct consequence of this government actually cutting projects and cancelling projects or pausing them and then restarting them, only to incur far higher costs.

So that's the record of this government, and I just want to throw that in there. But if we set all that aside, which is pretty hard to do because that is the—that is their record, but let's just say we set that aside and take what they say at face value, they like to build things, well—or, that's their mantra. Well, I don't see how this legislation is going to help them do that, and it certainly will not help them do that any more quickly.

And so, as I said, some very pressing challenges across Canada, across this province, across Manitoba, and I am concerned that the red tape will make public projects slower—the construction of public projects slower and more costly.

We know that the NDP are opposed to most public-private partnerships, to the detriment of the public and taxpayers. So there is, with everything this government does, a bit of an ideological spin on it, and that's unfortunate. And it's important to note, as well, that this bill is restrictive—is too restrictive and will essentially kill any future public-private partnerships. It will make public-private partnerships almost impossible to implement.

And we know, again, that this bill is, I think, in the final analysis, unnecessary and will certainly slow down projects. But it will—it will—if their intent is to build a bureaucracy, they definitely will be able to do that.

So I know there are other members that would like to speak to this legislation, and I yield my time.

Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to place a few words in the Assembly today on this legislation, which is clearly designed for one reason. I listened to the minister intently, and he spoke of transparency, which none of us would be opposed to, but clearly this bill isn't about transparency.

Part of the clear understanding of that would be when the questions were asked by my colleagues, very good questions, about who was the minister—who did the minister consult with on this bill, he could name

nobody. And the minister, who I consider to be an honourable person who I enjoy personal conversations with, I'm sure, in his moments of pure clarity, if he was asked about the consultation on the bill, he would acknowledge that he got a phone call from somebody in room 204 in this building, a office that faces Broadway, and they either called him down to the office or just summarized the nature of the call quickly to say, you need to bring forward this bill because we don't support P3—[interjection]

Wow, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe)—you know, one would think that he has his hands full battling the skyrocketing crime in the province of Manitoba that's happened under his watch, but apparently he's got enough time to worry about P3s when there are shootouts on the streets of Winnipeg—unfortunately every weekend, it seems.

But back to the matter at hand. The minister responsible for this particular bill would've gotten the call from room 204 and said, you need to bring this in because we don't support public-private partnerships. That was made clear when the NDP were in opposition when it came to a number of new schools that were subsequently cancelled or delayed by the NDP government, some of which were going to be built with a P3 model. And they said in opposition, we don't support public-private partnerships. And there wasn't a lot of discussion about accountability at the time. They just said, we don't support them.

* (15:20)

And so the minister assumes his new role, he's happy to be in Cabinet, he thinks this is going to be nothing but accolades and fun. And then he gets the call and is told: Bring in this legislation and kill the P3 models.

And because he's an honourable person who I have respect for, I'm sure he said: Why would we do that? Because there probably are some examples he probably cited—although he didn't cite it in the House today, but I'm sure that was a memory lapse at the moment. He probably said on that phone call that he was getting from room 204, you know, there are things like the Chief Peguis Trail in Winnipeg that was built with a P3.

In fact, that particular project, I think, from commissioning of to actual opening of the project, it was a year ahead of time. They actually completed that project one year ahead of time. And under the P3 model, if I remember correctly, the maintenance of that particular project is going to be done by the

private corporation. So he would know examples that are not that far away.

We could go much further back in time. I think the Confederation Bridge, actually, in the Maritimes, was built under a P3 model, probably one of the first in Canada built under the P3 model. Since then, there have been hospitals built under the P3 model, some of the infrastructure for the Olympics that were held in Vancouver were built under a P3 model. There are tons and tons of examples that involve many different modems either of transportation—I named Chief Peguis here in Manitoba or, in Vancouver, the infrastructure for the Olympic Games—but there are many, many examples in many sectors where the P3 model actually works.

But instead of taking a practical approach to this, the NDP have taken an ideological approach. This is purely about the fact that they don't want private investments in any sort of public model. That's all that this has to do with.

And so maybe the phone call that my friend, the minister, got from room 204, when he was still celebrating getting into Cabinet, maybe it was a little bit more nuanced. Maybe it wasn't quite as clear as we need to just kill the P3 models. Maybe the crafty folks in room—who now inhabit room 204 have said, why don't we just bring in a bill that'll make it so cumbersome and put in so many layers and so much bureaucracy that no private investor would actually touch this with a 10-foot pole, and then we don't actually have to go forward to the public and say, well, we just killed it outright the way we cancelled those schools.

And, of course, we've heard questions even today from our—the independent member who raised questions about cancelled schools. Maybe the crafty folks in room 204 said, we don't actually have to go as far as to publicly say we want to kill all P3 models. Let's just bring forward legislation that's going to make it so difficult and so cumbersome that no private entity would actually want to be engaged in the P3 models.

So instead of actually building, building, building, it's just bureaucracy, bureaucracy, bureaucracy and, how are we going to slow this down at a time when—and nobody has a crystal ball and it's difficult to predict the economic future of a lot of things; it's difficult to predict tariffs and the stock market from moment to moment in this particular environment, but I do think that there is some general consensus in the world that we may be heading to a slower economic time, whether that's in Canada or the United States or

wherever, and that that is going to cause some degree of challenge.

We see the pressure on the job market in Manitoba and in Canada, and Manitoba is certainly not immune to that and it hasn't been a leader in that under this NDP government. So we see the pressure that exists when it comes to the job market, when it comes to the economy, and one would hope that the NDP and the minister would be looking for ways to expand the ability to have more dollars invested into construction and by extension, then having more jobs through construction and, hopefully, also better results.

But that isn't what this bill is about. The public should not be fooled that this is not—that this is about transparency, as it is not about transparency. It is about shutting down something and a method of building things in Winnipeg and Manitoba that have proven to be successful. Anybody who drives down the Chief Peguis Trail, I think would say that it's a valuable addition to the infrastructure in Winnipeg. It's about shutting down something without having to say that you're shutting it down.

So I know there may be others who want to speak and I know there are other bills this afternoon that others want to debate, but I would say to my friend, the new minister, on this particular file, I know he probably feels the pressure. He was excited about—*[interjection]*

Well, and again, I appreciate the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) who apparently has solved crime in the last 10 minutes, because when I was looking at the news feed 10 minutes ago, there was more arrests being done. He's managed to solve it even though it's gotten significantly worse under his failed time as minister.

Now, back on topic, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the minister when it comes to P3 partnerships—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would just remind the minister—I know he's a long-term member, but there are some certain subtleties that take place in this place that the honourable member from Steinbach will know quite well, and that is that the proper address for the Speaker is Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you Mr.—Honourable Speaker. I was so convinced that I was off relevance that I slipped on the proper title. And I'll do my best both to stay relevant and to use the proper Honourable Speaker reference.

But I was off topic but certainly on point when I was talking about the failed Minister of Justice, and then I pivoted back to the minister responsible for this particular bill, which is designed to kill P3 partnerships in the province of Manitoba.

And I would say to the minister—Honourable Speaker, I would say to the minister—the relatively new minister—next time he gets one of those phone calls from room 204 in this building, next time he gets one of those calls that say, we need you to do this, and it might not be for the benefit of Manitobans, and it might not be for the benefit of infrastructure in the province of Manitoba, and it might not be to the benefit of the young people who are going to live and grow up in the province of Manitoba, that he take that phone call and do something that's not easy to do—that's hard to do as a minister—but to say, I think that that is the wrong decision, and we need to have a further discussion about it—a respectful discussion around the Cabinet table between the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) to say, this isn't good for the province as a whole.

And we need to set ideology aside, particularly in this time of great division that we see, not just in Canada but around the world, but in a time when we need to see the economy grow, when we need to seize on every opportunity, to let no opportunity wheel by because we have an ideological blindness or difference to some particular issue, Honourable Speaker.

To let no opportunity of individuals in business or in the public sector who have good ideas or capital to invest, to better the province, to employ our people in this province to get them to work to ensure that they have a sustainable future, regardless of what's happening south of the border, to let none of those opportunities go by.

With this bill, the minister—not by his own volition but because of the Premier and those in room 204—are putting our province further behind as opposed to advancing it.

So that is my suggestion to my friend who occupies that ministry at this time. I hope that—and of course, he still has time. He knows the legislative process, as this bill proceeds to committee and ultimately to third reading. He has time to either make changes within the bill or to entirely say: We're going to move away from this bill and really fulfill the promise of Manitoba and the great ability that it has under a number of different models when it comes to infrastructure.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Speaker: There are no more members wishing to debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 10—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2)

The Speaker: Now, as previously announced, we will move on to discuss second reading of Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2).

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), that Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of this—of the bill, and I table the message.

* (15:30)

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Public Service Delivery, seconded by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, has been advised of the bill and I table the message—the message has been tabled.

MLA Sandhu: Recent events in Winnipeg have seen tenants immediately displaced from their rental building due to reasons beyond their control and through no fault of their own. Tenants were forced to evacuate their rental buildings following the issuance of a provincial and/or municipal order.

Currently, under The Residential Tenancies Act, landlords have very few obligations to assist tenants who have been displaced from their rental building

when a tenant is forced to evacuate due to a provincial or a municipal order, or the tenancy's otherwise frustrated. The Residential Tenancies Act does not require landlords to help tenants in situations where tenancies are frustrated, other than refunding pro-rated rent already paid and returning the security deposit.

In the recent Speech from the Throne, the Manitoba government committed to making life more affordable for the renters by strengthening protections with a few laws—new laws. As per my mandate, the department is reviewing The Residential Tenancies Act to strengthen renters' rights and protect affordable housing through several possible legislative regulatory and policy changes.

This will amend The Residential Tenancies Act to make it mandatory for the landlord to pay compensation to tenants, the form of displacement costs and monthly rent up to an amount prescribed in the regulations. The obligation to pay compensation rises where there is a provincial or municipal order, notice or directive to vacate the residential rental building because the building does not comply with the health, building or maintenance and occupancy standards.

The proposed bill allows the branch director to advance funds to tenants from the security deposit compensation fund if the payment of this amount is urgently required. The bill also provides authority for the Residential Tenancies Branch to recover the front—funds from the tenants' landlords.

These amendments will give the Residential Tenancies Branch the legislative authority to order that a landlord assists tenants in covering the costs of basic expenses incurred due to a provincial or municipal order to vacate, without the tenants first having to file a claim and prove it at a hearing that the landlord caused the tenancy to be frustrated.

The amendment sets the onus to the landlord to prove to the Residential Tenancies Branch that the landlord took all reasonable steps to prevent the accordance of conditions that resulted in the order to vacate or it has—beyond the landlord's control.

The amendment to The Residential Tenancies Act also restricts above-guideline rent increases for landlords while the order to vacate is in effect for a period of two years after the expiry date of the closure orders.

The amendment also includes the ability for the Residential Tenancies Branch to issue a demonstrable penalty if the landlord has breached their obligation to provide and maintain residential rental buildings, along with the services and facilities promised to

tenants, in a good state of repair, fit for habitation and in a state that complies with the health, building maintenance, occupancy standards required by law.

This proposed bill is the first phase of the multi-phase approach to modernize and strengthen The Residential Tenancies Act to better meet the needs of Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions may be asked by each independent member; remaining questions to be asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I appreciate the opportunity to again rise in debate this afternoon on Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, and I thank the minister across the way for the bill briefing on this legislation several weeks ago, and also thank his staff and all those working within the Public Service Delivery department for their work on this legislation.

Again, just to begin question and answer on this legislation, I wonder if the minister can talk perhaps a little bit about who he and his department consulted with in drafting this legislation.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): We all saw what happened at Birchwood Terrace. This was a direct reference to that part what happened. So we want to protect the renters from this happening again, and then being put into a situation where they have no place to live; and also where no compensation is paid at current—act won't allow any compensation.

So this is the result of that terrace—Birchwood Terrace building that unfortunately was evacuated due to a *[inaudible]* to the order from the City of Winnipeg.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Can the minister advise the House who would be doing the inspections, or are they all individuals who are housed within the

minister's department? Would there be some from the Department of Health, health inspectors? What cadre of inspectors would be pulled upon to do those inspections?

MLA Sandhu: As it stated earlier in my response, and it is related to Birchwood Terrace, and the inspectors the member is talking about, if—this is related to—if there's any order from the provincial government or any orders from the City of Winnipeg, order that the building need to vacated due to a reason that are under the control of the landlord that they have not taken care of their buildings.

So this is reference to that, Honourable Speaker, and again, in case we—they—the building needs to be vacated and the landlords are responsible—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Guenter: Again, just related to my previous question, I'm wondering if the minister across the way, if the minister consulted with the insurance industry in drafting this legislation.

MLA Sandhu: As I stated, this is a reference to Birchwood Terrace. There are a landlord and tenants' committee that we have at our branch and we have consulted with them. We have brought forward this issue to them and they are aware of it, and then they are support of this bill as well.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: For the minister, when individuals are removed from a rental unit because it's been deemed that it's not safe for them to reside there, are there—is there assistance or resources to help those individuals find another place? We know that the rental tenants—or the rental market can be tight, and particularly for affordable places for people to live.

What assistance is provided by the minister's department?

* (15:40)

MLA Sandhu: Again, this bill is reference to Birchwood Terrace, and this is also, we're—there's—under current legislation, there's no compensation paid to the tenants other than returning their security deposit and their rent. And with this, the landlord will be responsible for paying the tenants—the accommodations. That will be prescribed in the regulations, for how long.

So, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: And I appreciate the member's response on the issue of compensation, which, you know, brings up another sort of set of questions and the challenges, I suppose, that folks face.

But my question, in particular, was about just assistance in finding another place. And I wasn't necessarily referring to financial assistance, so I'm happy for the minister to have referenced that. But specifically, when an individual is removed from a place, they just might not know where to go.

And is there any assistance in finding an appropriate place, quite apart from financial assistance, for individuals who are displaced because of the situations that are referenced in this proposed act?

MLA Sandhu: I can maybe let the member know when the Birchwood Terrace situation happened, there was a department from the City of Winnipeg, as well as from the Minister of Families' (MLA Fontaine) department was also there to help those residents.

And we will continue to help the tenants and we will continue to strengthen The Residential Tenancies Act, where the tenants are protected.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: How many more—or, how often will building owners in compliance be required to reinspect their buildings?

MLA Sandhu: This is the responsibility of the landlord to keep their buildings in—the way, like, safe for everyone to live in those buildings.

I really didn't quite get the question from the member. I'll probably try to answer in the next one if he can repeat the last question.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I wonder if the member can educate me a little bit on the process by which a building or a rental unit would be caught under the circumstances of this act.

Would it be because an inspection has happened? Is it because of a complaint by somebody who's living in the building? Is it a situation where there's a list of regular inspections?

Can the minister tell me, how is this triggered? Or maybe it's all three.

MLA Sandhu: So, Honourable Speaker, you probably—the member probably has seen the news—in the news, about the Birchwood Terrace, where it was in certain hours' notice the building needed to be vacated.

So again, this is where this kind of situation happens again, the landlord will be responsible for paying the compensation. And the—also, the member is talking about how the building—like if they're inspecting the buildings or not.

Well, again, this is up to—when this is going to Residential Tenancies Branch, the landlords have to prove that they have kept the building up to date. They had—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Goertzen: And I appreciate the member keeps referring back to, you know, a very notable and well-publicized example. But there are others, I believe, in Manitoba that have happened.

Could he give us maybe a bit of a history lesson other than the one he continues to cite? How many other times has there been a notice that tenants had to vacate a building on short notice and then had to find alternative accommodation?

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question.

There was only one building that has happened; that was at Birchwood Terrace. Other than that, according to my department, have not seen this magnitude where the whole building needed to be vacated. So it was only the Birchwood Terrace that happened.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: In just going off that last question and answer—question posed by my colleague, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), how many times have we seen an incident like Birchwood Terrace, and the minister has just replied that there's only been one instance.

I wonder if it's wise for this—for a government, for this House, to pass legislation when only one—there's only one instance that this happened, you know. Can the government not be flexible and treat that as a, you know, on a case-by-case basis? Because, clearly, this legislation will have an impact on the rental market.

I wonder if the minister doesn't think that the government couldn't handle these cases on a case-by-case basis, rather than passing, you know, additional regulations and more bureaucracy.

MLA Sandhu: I'm really surprised the member opposite doesn't want to protect the renters, doesn't want to see what happened out there. He wants to say, you

know what? If that were to happen again, it's okay for—with him.

So, again, we don't want to see another incident like this happen again and we—our—in my mandate letters said protect the renters, protect affordable housing. I will continue to do that.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: Well, this sounds like, once again, after the horse has been stolen, the government comes along and locks the barn doors, closes the barn doors. That's really what it sounds like, because the minister has just said now in question and answer period that there's one incident. He's—his department—and that's not a mistake—his department has advised him that only one instance has brought forward—has resulted in the government proposing this legislation.

So I do think it's a concern when the government says, you know, this has only happened one time and, by the way, now we're going to implement this legislation.

Of course we support high standards. Of course we support strong building codes and protections for renters, but clearly this legislation will have an impact on the availability of—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sandhu: I'm really surprised again. Like, I don't know why the member from Borderland doesn't want to protect the renters. You know, this was a horrible incident that happened on Birchwood Terrace, and we don't want to see that happening again. And as soon as we have seen this, that there's no regulation that is protecting the renters, and we took action right away and we brought this bill forward so we can help the renters.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I think that the question that the member for Borderland was clearly asking that the member is not answering, is whether or not there exists a current means or other means by which the objective that is sought in this bill could already be achieved.

So, for example, does the residential tenancy board not have the power and the authority to order damage deposits and other things to be returned currently? Is the minister just bringing in legislation that duplicates powers that already exist?

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, again, surprised, coming from that member. I know the member's an

honourable member, and have been here for a long, long time. Again, want to protect the renters. And whenever this kind of incident happens, there is no act that is protecting the renters.

We want to make sure we are protecting the renters if this situation happens. Again, the landlord may be responsible—because we have to prescribe in the regulation—he may be responsible more than just returning the rent, which has already happened, or returning the security deposit, which already happened. That person might be responsible for a certain period of time.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I think we're getting to some clarity here. I don't think that people are objecting to the outcome by which the minister is trying to achieve in legislation. The question is whether or not it's already achievable with legislation that exists. And I think he's essentially said that it's already achievable through the rental tenancy act, and the rental tenancy board can ascribe that and can give the order, and perhaps even faster than the legislation that he's proposing might.

So can he just bring clarity? Are the things he's trying to achieve in the act already achievable under current Manitoba legislation?

* (15:50)

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, I think the member hasn't really read the bill, exactly what the bill said.

And it is very clear that in case of this kind of situation happening again, the rent—the landlord will be responsible for a certain period of time for that person to be moved to a different location. So again, this is helping the renters where the certain situations that person may not find the accommodation right away, that might—person might have to move into hotels or something. The landlord will be responsible for that—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for questions has also expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

If there are no members—the honourable member for Borderland.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): My pleasure to rise and just put a few brief comments on the record with

regard to Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And, just to say, I think it was somewhat of an interesting question and answer period. You know, we've learned that this legislation comes about as the result of one instance, the Birchwood Terrace situation, which was dealt with and, of course, is a concern.

And I think we all support, as I said in my question—one of my questions to the minister—that we all support a, you know, strong standards—high standards and strong building codes and protections for renters, absolutely. There's no disagreement there.

However, you know, a bill like this that will add additional, you know, oversight and regulations and perhaps send a chill through the rental investment sector, I think, is a concern, especially these days that when—and I just happened to take a look at the Canada mortgage housing corporation's fall 2024 rental market report, and they shared that the vacancy rate in Manitoba is 1.2 per cent for condos. And so that's not a very high number.

And so we want to encourage the rental industry to continue to build and to increase supply, because we know that that's an issue in this province. And, you know, I know when we were in government, the previous PC government had—the vacancy rate was around 4 per cent. And so, this number of 1.2 per cent—the condominium of—vacancy rate for condos in Manitoba is quite a bit lower than that 4 per cent, and that's a concern.

So—and I think just for those who are listening, and perhaps I'm taking it for granted that folks understand, but a low vacancy rate means that there's not a lot of choice. It's, you know, renters are essentially forced to stay in sometimes less than ideal situations. But if there's a higher vacancy rate, then it's easier for renters to get up and move and find another place to live and that sort of thing.

So a higher vacancy rate favours renters; a lower vacancy rate favours landlords. And so under our previous PC government, the vacancy rate was a healthier 4 per cent, which favoured renters. And under the NDP today, according to the Canada mortgage housing corporation fall 2024 rental market report, the vacancy rate is around 1 per cent—a little above 1 per cent. So that's the situation, as I say, that favours landlords.

And so I think it's a concern when we bring forward legislation like this that sends a chill across the rental investment sector, because that's one area where we definitely need to increase supply.

There are many young families, seniors, many Manitoba renters of all backgrounds who are seeking to live in a place where they can raise their families, where they can carry on their lives. And so we want to make sure that they have the ability to do that and have some choice, not just be forced to settle for the first thing that comes available on the market.

So I, as I said, just have a few remarks. I know other members may want to speak, but as, you know, the question-and-answer period did bring out that this legislation has been introduced in response to just one instance in Manitoba, and that comes, as the minister said, on the advice of his department officials who advised, again, that there was just one instance, the Birchwood Terrace instance, in which tenants were forced to vacate.

And so I think there are—I think, perhaps, it might be somewhat—I think the situation here, again, is you have a government that is very keen on appearing to address issues without actually addressing the issues, and I think Manitobans are slowly learning—discovering that.

So that's a concern. But, clearly, there are other measures; there's other ways to deal with these matters on a case-by-case basis. I think, you know, there are perhaps other insurance-based systems that the government could have looked at that could be implemented to ensure that both tenants and landlords are both protected in situations where it is determined a building is unsafe for occupancy.

But here we are. And as I said, this bill will send a chill through the rental investment sector because of the additional financial burden placed on building owners. And when those building owners—when those landlords decide that it is no longer feasible, that it's—there's too many hoops to jump through and that there's too much risk, and they exit the market, well, then we have a very, very serious concern because many renters will find themselves not able to get a home. So it will be that much more difficult to find a place to live.

So I think it's very important that before the government introduces legislation like this, that it carefully considers the impact of the legislation, and it carefully considers their decisions rather than immediately jumping the gun and trying to look like they're

addressing an issue without actually addressing it, but having the impact of discouraging and sending a signal to landlords that the services they provide are not appreciated. And that's a concern, because there is a balance. There's a balance between renters and landlords, and it's important that we strike—that government does everything it can to strike a right balance so that the interests of both renters and landlords are protected.

So with those remarks, honourable Speaker, I yield my time.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2).

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

I declare the motion carried.

* * *

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to—oh—
[interjection]

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, upon completion of the bills that I called earlier today, would you call for second reading debate, Bill 13, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025; followed by Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act.

The Deputy Speaker: It's been announced that following the second reading of bills 32 and 23, we will follow—[interjection]

Following the completion of the bills already announced, we will commence second reading of Bill 13, the minor amendments and corrections act; followed by Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act.

* (16:00)

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 32—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming second reading debate on Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Justice, who has unlimited time remaining.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'll pick it up right where I left off: our government is getting tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

This bill, honourable Speaker, recognizes that drug trafficking is a major problem in Manitoba, allowing organized crime to spread toxic drugs that harm our families and communities. In our safer neighbourhoods, safer downtowns public safety strategy, our government promised to make it easier to evict drug dealers by strengthening The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and the Residential Tenancies Act.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 32 fulfills this promise to Manitobans. I'm proud to rise in the House today to speak about this important legislation. Since our government came to power, we have heard from many Manitobans who are struggling with the consequences of drug trafficking, of human trafficking and of other serious offences in their rental complexes. These Manitobans often bring their concerns forward to their landlord or to Manitoba's Public Safety Investigations unit. However, too often, investigations do not result in quick resolution due to misinterpretations of the law.

The proposed amendments aim to bolster public safety in our communities, making residential complexes safer for Manitobans by removing ambiguities in the law surrounding five-day eviction notices for unlawful activity, including drug and human trafficking.

Currently, the director designated under The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act can apply to the Court of King's Bench for a community safety order in cases where resident—a resident files a complaint with the Public Safety Investigations unit when they fear for their safety or their security. However, the Public Safety Investigations unit rarely uses these orders because they require a lengthy court process. Instead, investigators provide their investigative files to landlords to support a five-day 'invasion'

notice for unlawful activity under section 74.1 of The Residential Tenancies Act.

Honourable Speaker, the Public Safety Investigations unit is 'conspired' of—mainly of former police officers with significant experience conducting and participating in drug-related investigations. While tenants who have been served with a five-day notice to vacate do not leave a property, the landlord must apply to Residential Tenancies Branch for an order possession under The Residential Tenancies Act.

Currently, under the Residential Tenancies Act, the unlawful activity in question must pose a, quote, immediate risk to public—sorry, immediate risk to health or safety, end quote, of the landlord or of the tenants. However, in many cases, Residential Tenancies Branch hearing officers have decided that they believe drug trafficking is already occurring, but that does not pose an immediate risk to health or safety under the former legislation. As a result, the Residential Tenancies Branch is often denying orders of possession.

For example, in a decision from August '24, the Residential Tenancies Branch denied an order of possession to a Winnipeg landlord, despite video surveillance provided by our PSIU which revealed that over a four-day period, 78 persons entered a tenant's suite; 82 persons exited the suite; and 13 persons attended, knocked but did not enter.

The trained drug investigators with our PSIU stated that this level of activity is strongly suggestive of drug trafficking. However, the Residential Tenancies Branch hearing officer found that such activity does not necessarily constitute an immediate—a, quote, immediate—risk to health or safety. The Residential Tenancies Branch has shared many similar decisions with Manitoba Justice.

Honourable Speaker, our government believes that trafficking in drugs and human beings is always a risk to public safety, which is why we are changing this law with Bill 32. In addition to this challenge, since its inception in the—Public Safety Investigations unit has been submitting written reports rather than participating in person at Residential Tenancies Branch hearings.

Under Bill 32, proposed amendments to The Residential Tenancies Act will streamline the process for five-day eviction proceedings by requiring contraventions to the act to pose a significant, rather than immediate, risk to health or safety. Proposed amendments will also clarify that if the landlord proves, on

balance of probabilities, that the tenant is engaging in drug or human trafficking, such activity will be deemed a significant risk to safety.

Under this bill, an order of possession must be granted in cases where the landlord, at times with the support of Public Safety Investigations unit, has demonstrated that drug or human trafficking is occurring in a residential complex.

The proposed amendments will also outline the types of information that the Residential Tenancies Branch will consider when determining a grant of an order of possession due to unlawful activity, including evidence of—or information from an investigator from the Public Safety Investigations unit.

Bill 32's amendments also make clear that Public Safety Investigations unit investigators can provide evidence at the residential branch hearings while still protecting the confidentiality of investigative techniques, as well as the identity of informants and complainants.

Honourable Speaker, what this all adds up to is these amendments align with our commitment to get tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. By making it easier to evict drug and human traffickers, we're ensuring that the safety of people who live in rental properties in neighbourhoods throughout Manitoba is paramount. We are supporting tenants, we're supporting their families. They should never have to live in fear of drug trafficking and other dangerous criminal activity taking place in their buildings. And we're hoping to disrupt those criminal networks which have terrorized and preyed upon communities for far too long.

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 32 to make our province a safer place for all Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): You know, errors can occur. We know that errors can occur. We see it quite often by this Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), by the Minister of Justice, and so we know that errors are common, especially on that side of the pen.

So I'm wondering—we have seen this in our courts as well. What remedies exist as evicted individuals who have erroneously been evicted?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, as I said, honourable Speaker, we have full confidence in our public investigators, the PSIU. These are trained individuals who have a proven record of bringing evidence in a thorough manner when dealing with situations.

We've got full confidence in them, and we are at every step of the way standing with community to ensure that we shut down the drug dealers that are harming our neighbourhoods.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): One of the questions I have is just, in receiving correspondence from tenants who are living in apartments that are in—like, they're in danger and they're not safe spaces, and there's security guards working in those places, and the security guards are told—are telling the clients or the tenants that they can't do anything.

So my question would be, what would that—how would that change with this legislation? Will they actually be able to protect those living in those in those homes?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate the question coming from the member opposite. I know that she, along with many members, share these concerns.

What I will say is, is that this is specifically about the powers that are granted to the PSIU. That being said, I would love to connect with her or connect her community with the resources of the PSIU.

And to answer her question more specifically, the role that security can provide in this case would be to feed this information in—that's also baked into this bill, that they would be able to make representation to the PSIU, and that would also be able to be used at the Residential Tenancies Branch hearings.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): With this legislation, there would become new responsibilities for the director of Residential Tenancies, and I'm just wondering if the minister can share with us what additional resources are being provided to assist with these investigations.

* (16:10)

Mr. Wiebe: So, again, this is specifically about the hearings that would be undertaken by the Residential Tenancies.

That being said, we want to ensure that the information that is being shared with them is thorough and is complete. And this—by giving our PSIU additional authority and additional standing at those hearings, they'll be able to share the information more thoroughly, and that will assist the work of the Residential Tenancies Branch.

Mr. Balcaen: I know that one of the platforms of the failed NDP bail platform was intelligence sharing. And so, in law enforcement, there's a saying that intelligence is worthless unless it's shared.

So I'm wondering, if an individual gets evicted, is that information going to be available for future landlords? Are we going to share that intelligence so that future landlords don't have to have the same issues that ones that are already reporting this and going through the rigorous process already have to go through?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I think you call that a backhanded compliment there, honourable Speaker, because the member from Brandon West, and out of one side of his mouth says, you know, you pledged to do more information sharing. You're devoting all this extra funding, specifically around bail and the data sharing that is to occur there. And then on the other side, says, oh, well, are you going to do it in this case as well?

Absolutely, honourable Speaker. This is what we're talking about here, is giving additional tools to the PSIU, ensuring that the information is being made available and that Residential Tenancies is supporting that work of keeping our communities safe.

Mrs. Hiebert: Another situation I have a question about.

There's a tenant who lives in a building, a Manitoba Housing unit specifically, in Portage la Prairie, who—there's a lot of illegal activity happening directly next to her apartment—in the apartment next to her.

How will this actually, boots-on-the-ground, change the situation for her so she doesn't feel barred in and that she can't leave her apartment because she doesn't feel safe?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, I appreciate the question. And I think this is maybe a piece of case-work that we can take off the floor of the Legislature.

I'd be more than happy to help her constituent with that.

But specifically, when it comes to this bill, the idea is, is that our PSIU can be engaged in this situation. They would do the investigation, and we can just help to ensure that she understands the role, then—they would play if that person was being moved out of that unit because of the investigation that was done by our PSIU.

Mr. Balcaen: The minister had put some words on the record but certainly didn't answer my question.

So, when it comes to intelligence, will the name of people that have been evicted from an apartment under this act become available to future landlords, or anywhere else this individual may live or move to, so that they don't face the same consequences?

Mr. Wiebe: I think the member opposite is playing fast and loose with the term intelligence there. I won't comment any further on that.

What I will say, though, honourable Speaker, is what we are ensuring with this bill is, is that the information that's gathered through the investigations that's done in the Department of Justice with our PSIU unit, that that information is—be shared with Residential Tenancies. Ultimately, it's up to Residential Tenancies about the rules and procedures that they have with regard to, you know, applications for new rentals, et cetera. What we want to do is ensure that there are—if there are drug dealers, human traffickers in our communities, that we're rooting them out.

Mrs. Hiebert: One more question. You had, you know—had mentioned the investigative unit. How will you be equipping them specifically? Because we know that there's a lot of situations across the province, Winnipeg included, and many rural areas that are quite a ways away.

How will you enable this unit to get to all the different places that are happening? Will you be growing and adding investigative people to this unit? Can you give us a little bit more information about that, please?

The Deputy Speaker: I'll just remind all members that comments should be directed through the Chair.

Mr. Wiebe: Again, probably too much information here to go through in a 45-second answer.

What I will say is, is that the SCAN, the safer communities and neighbours act, brought in by an NDP government previously, established the PSIU,

and this unit—we have added extra resources. They do operate throughout the province. And I'd be maybe a little bit cautious about sharing some of their techniques that they use because, you know, these are used in a law enforcement capacity. But what I would suggest is, again, I'm happy to have this further conversation offline with the member or with her constituents at any time.

Ms. Byram: I'm wondering if the minister can share with us in the House here, is there other legislation across other provinces similar to this, and if so, you can share with us what that looks like and what provinces?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's a great question. And SCAN is one of these policy initiatives, as I said, brought in by the NDP government back in, you know, the early 2000s or mid-2000s, that really has found a bipartisan or a non-partisan support. And so other provinces, from Alberta to BC to, you know, I don't have the whole list in front of me, but Ontario—they have all followed our lead.

Now, what we're doing is we're giving these—this next level of information sharing between the PSIU and the Residential Tenancies, which has been a bit of a friction identified by community. We're giving them those additional powers. So we believe this brings us back into the forefront of developing this legislation.

Mr. Balcaen: I appreciate—I'll just kind of wrap this up so that we can get on to some debate.

But some of the answers that I'm hearing from this Minister of Justice on this legislation ring hollow. And, you know, if we're talking about safety, we're talking about safety for everybody, and that includes landlords that are going to go forward with having these tenants in there.

I'm wondering, if somebody gets evicted from a Manitoba Housing unit, will that be shared within Manitoba Housing so they don't end up back in another Manitoba Housing unit?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, honourable Speaker, that's exactly what this is about—is protecting landlords.

In most cases, I would suggest that landlords want to be part of the solution, but they don't feel that they have the tools necessary to be able to instigate or help these investigations and then use Residential Tenancies to really highlight the significant danger that these

kinds of activities have on other tenants and on themselves.

So we're giving them additional tools. This will be just an enhancement of the work that's already being done, and we want to continue to build on keeping our communities safe by engaging landlords, engaging community and engaging individuals who want to be a part of the solution.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions?

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing none, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Happy to put a few words on the record about this bill and the work of the failed Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) from the NDP side.

I actually didn't know if I'd be able to have a chance to get up and talk to this bill today because, you know, the minister had to stand up and put a vexatious claim forward prior to the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) being able to get in here and announce what bills were going to be debated today. So it shows the absolute disorganization that is happening on that side of the House, honourable Deputy Speaker, and really would like to be able to move government business forward at a much quicker pace. But I guess that is up to the Premier (Mr. Kinew) to decide on that.

So talking about this, I've heard the Minister of Justice a few times talk about this being public safety, but many times, particularly from the member from Morden-Winkler, when she was asking questions about this, the minister said there's just too much information to answer: I can't answer that in this 45 seconds; I can't answer that.

* (16:20)

And I think that's because he doesn't have the answers to any of these questions. This is, once again—once again—another bill that has been rushed through without proper consultation, without proper education and without really listening to the people that this bill is going to impact.

It was asked no less than three times whether landlords are going to be protected with this, and, you know what? I'll absolutely put it on the record that I have many friends and people that I respect very much in the Public Safety Investigations unit, in safer communities. They do fantastic work. They're well-trained

individuals. They are very intelligent and very responsive to the work that they do, so I would like to say thank you to each of them for providing safety to Manitobans and making sure that Manitobans are kept safe through their investigations.

And it's hard work. They must be diligent; they must, you know, really make sure that they protect surveillance techniques and prevent any of these techniques from being found out. Some of them are very surreptitious and they have to make sure that the public also respects what they're doing.

But not answering questions shows a profound misunderstanding of what's happening within the landlord-tenancy issues. A simple question: Will this be shared amongst Manitoba Housing? Manitoba Housing, we're seeing lots of issues since the new Minister of Housing has taken over. There has been—crime is running rampant in a lot of these areas and people are scared. They're concerned.

The member from Portage la Prairie has brought this forward numerous times about Oak Tree Towers and how those residents are screaming at the top of their lungs for help, and none has come. None has come, so I'm hoping that this legislation actually does bring some of that relief to people from Oak Tree Towers.

But, let's take an example, honourable Deputy Speaker: what if we had somebody evicted because of drug use, because of gang affiliation, because of weapons or a plethora of areas that cover the 'gambint' in public safety? They get evicted and then what happens? Can they make an application again, and will Manitoba Housing in Brandon, will Manitoba Housing in Winnipeg, or any of the other places across our great province, then have to deal with this, and will this cycle continue?

So I guess my question is, is this really putting false hope up to our public investigation unit that they're going to have to redo this again and again and again? And these criminals, these people that are breaking the law, are going to learn these techniques because of this situation that the Minister of Justice is putting them into?

Instead of saying, you know what, Manitoba Housing? Person A has been evicted for unlawful behaviour. Person A can no longer be a tenant in Manitoba Housing, period. Let's put that into place. Let's make sure that other people are protected and other landlords are protected. Basically, this minister

is casting out problems onto other landlords that he knows is happening.

So, you know, we, on this side of the House, have a place and accommodations for people that break the law, and it's called jail. But this Minister of Justice fails to place them there. He's not taking bail seriously, and, really, this probably would not even be a necessary piece of legislation, honourable Deputy Speaker, if this Minister of Justice could actually get his bail process in order.

You know, he raves about ankle monitors. Let's put the ankle monitors on these people and keep them in their place so they're not bringing in criminals, so they're not wandering about on the streets. Let's make sure that people that are out on bail and have strict conditions enforced by the law are monitored. This minister, he talks a big game, but he doesn't do anything to protect those people.

If they were actually protected, and inside of their residence being monitored and being out on bail only once, we wouldn't have to do this. If it happened more than once, these people would be gone and would be in that residency that we suggest, which is jail, holding them there to protect citizens within our province.

And you know what? That's what government is charged to do. But, more so, that's what the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is charged to do, is protect people within our society. And when he can't do that, other people apparently need to step up and do that for him.

So, once again, I would really like to thank those members that are in the public safety unit that go out of their way, that have the skill sets to do this and make sure that everyone is protected.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, one more story that I think would be important to share and is really germane to this topic is the fact that—*[interjection]* I'm sorry, the Minister of Justice is acknowledging the time, so I guess he wants to get up and speak again before this, but he's had his chance to put some words on the record and they failed and rung hollow with Manitobans, so I have no problem stepping in for him and helping the safety of Manitobans.

So a member—or a citizen who was in Oak Tree Towers was actually sentenced to jail, and this information was just provided to me a short time ago. Sentenced to jail.

And what happened under this Minister of Housing's watch and this Minister of Justice's watch is, they—and I know it's going to be hard for anybody

to believe this, and this is not a fake story, honourable Deputy Speaker; this is the truth—they held the apartment for that person who was sentenced to jail. They held it for him for six months so that he could come out of jail and come back into Oak Street Towers and continue to terrorize the residents there.

So how is this bill going to help those residents, honourable Deputy Speaker? I'm suggesting once again, rushed through, pushed on, trying to make a hunt for headlines, and this is where we end up in this failed Justice Minister's bills that are put forward.

So with those few words, honourable Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities).

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

I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READINGS *(Continued)*

Bill 9—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2)

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 9.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, that Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce second reading of Bill 9, the liquor, gaming and cannabis control act (2).

This bill supports our government's commitment to public safety by putting a stop to controlled-access cannabis stores in Winnipeg and other urban areas. By confining the sale of cannabis to age-restricted stores, we can ensure that cannabis products are kept behind

closed doors and out of establishments that young persons under the age of 19 enter.

Currently, the legislation allows for two types of cannabis stores to operate in Manitoba: age-restricted stores that prohibit people under 19 from entering, and controlled-access stores that sell cannabis within a larger retail store that offers non-cannabis products.

Although cannabis products may—must not be visible in the controlled-access stores, young people may still be present while cannabis sales are taking place.

In recent years, Winnipeg has experienced significant growth in the number of licensed cannabis retailers. Winnipeg and other urban areas are now well-served by existing cannabis retail stores. Introducing more locations that are not age-restricted invites greater access for young people under the age of 19.

* (16:30)

This amendment is being brought forward to enhance safety for these young people by limiting the sale of cannabis to age-restricted stores. With the proposed legislative amendment, our government is continuing to ensure sufficient available—sufficient availability of legal cannabis to further our goal of 'reducing' the illicit market.

At the same time, we're responding to industry concerns about the prevalence of cannabis retailers in the city as well as public concerns about underage cannabis access for communities.

Controlled access stores will continue to be permitted in rural and northern areas, ensuring that Manitobans throughout the province have sufficient access to legal cannabis products. This amendment supports our government's commitment to safety, ensuring that adequate safeguards are in place to protect young people by reducing their access to cannabis.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by the critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining ques-

tions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

And a reminder to all members that implying that someone is talking out of both sides of their mouth implies lying, which is unparliamentary.

Are there any questions?

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): My first question to the minister would be, why not just allow municipalities to decide where, when and how cannabis can be sold in their communities through zoning bylaws and that kind of thing?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm sorry, the audio was a little bit quiet on this side. I'd ask the member opposite to repeat the question. It is an important area. I know he's got specific concerns around it. If he could just repeat the question.

Mr. King: So my question to the minister was—and I could probably ask two of them here now, together—is why not just allow municipalities to decide where, when and how cannabis will be sold in their communities through zoning bylaws and that type of thing, and why does the province need to restrict or stop licences for something that is now legal and provides small businesses and retailers economic opportunities?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, look, honourable Speaker, I got young kids, and they go down to our local convenience store to get their candy and their Slurpees, and I don't think that they should be witnessing the sale of cannabis.

There's also, in my neighbourhood, probably four cannabis stores within walking distance. We want to ensure that there's access to the market, but we do believe that, as the legislating body, the L-C-LGCA, that we want to ensure that there's safety and access, and that's what this bill does.

Mr. King: Next question for the minister is how is this going to affect the business of so many new Canadians that are running local retail outlets and shops in the province and urban Manitoba now?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's important to note that this legislation will be on any licences going forward, so any businesses that have made any kind of investment in their business will be protected and grandfathered in under the current regime.

What I will say is, is that we are supporting local business, small business in this province. We've of course reduced the health and education levy, the

payroll tax. We've decreased that; we've increased the threshold for those businesses who qualify for no business tax at all; and we're going to continue to support small business. That is what our government is all about.

Mr. King: The minister mentioned earlier about access to kids and visual to kids, but I guess my next question would be, if you're banning these types of stores getting licences, why are we now exposing the public to government-sponsored lethal drug injection sites?

Mr. Wiebe: The member opposite seems a little confused. Cannabis is legalized in Canada, and in Manitoba it was, of course, Brian Pallister who brought in the legislation that governs how it's distributed and sold in our province.

With regard to harm reduction and ensuring that all Manitobans are given the opportunity to choose a better path and find treatment and get better, the work of the Minister of Health—sorry, the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) is paramount in this. As a caucus, as a government, we are supporting her work each and every day.

Mr. King: I'm just wondering, are you never going to issue any more licences for these kind of establishments? If the minister could elaborate on that.

Mr. Wiebe: That's correct.

Mr. King: Next question for the minister, how are we differentiating between these businesses from other kinds of Canada—cannabis retail outlets?

Mr. Wiebe: So the member opposite may be aware that there are controlled access cannabis retail locations throughout Manitoba. Specifically we're talking about urban settings, so in the city of Winnipeg, there are—the market is quite saturated, I would suggest at this point, with access to cannabis. Those are restricted to those of the—under—of the age of 19 and older.

What we're talking about in this bill is restricting the sale in other kinds of retail locations—gas stations, convenience stores. That's where families and communities tend to do their shopping. We want to keep cannabis out of those locations.

The Deputy Speaker: Before the member from Lakeside asks his next question, I'll just remind folks that the comments should be directed through the Chair.

Mr. King: Thank you, honourable Speaker, and thank you for that reminder.

And just for some clarification on the minister's last answer, so does this bill apply in rural areas? And can a small town retail store that has a grocery store, a liquor mart and a gas station also have a cannabis retail operation at the same location?

Mr. Wiebe: I think we covered this in the bill briefing, but just to give the—put it on the public record, no, this applies within the city of Winnipeg and other urban centres. The idea being that, of course, when it comes to alcohol sales in the rest of the province, there we often work with, you know, the retailer who's available in the region to provide that product. And likewise, we would be able to offer cannabis as one of those products in a controlled setting as well.

Mr. King: If the minister could tell me if this is going to make it more difficult for parents that are purchasing medical cannabis to get their prescription while watching over their kids that they probably are going to have with them. So is this making life that much more difficult for parents?

Mr. Wiebe: As I said, the market is quite saturated right now with retail cannabis options, and we want to ensure that the market is healthy and strong and that we essentially eliminate the illegal market by offering a product and in a way that's accessible to folks in community.

What we want to eliminate is this additional layer of distribution that, quite frankly, you know, throughout community, folks have been telling us that they don't see the benefit of allowing children to be present while we're selling cannabis.

Mr. King: My last question here—or questions. How many convenience stores are in the province that will be affected by this legislation, and how many of these controlled access stores will be left in the province and in the city?

Mr. Wiebe: So I don't have the total number of convenience stores in the city of Winnipeg or in the province, of course, in front of me.

What I can say is that we are grandfathering in any retail locations that have adhered to the regulations and the stipulations of this act previous, and they will continue to be able to sell cannabis.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

* (16:40)

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record here in regards to Bill 9, and it gives me a chance also to recognize small businesses here in Manitoba because, of course, many of the establishments and outlets that sell cannabis here are small businesses, and it's an opportunity and an alternative for them and their stores in retail to have another option of increasing their margins or selling another product. So, of course, again, my many thanks to all the small businesses that we have in Manitoba.

I'm a little concerned that this bill might result in a little less consumer choice and less competition in the marketplace, reduces some business opportunities for small businesses in Manitoba in a legal, regulated market. It's coming at a critical time too, when businesses are being impacted. They're impacted by US tariffs, impacted by inflation, foodflation and, of course, most of all, an epidemic of retail crime. And, of course, another thing coming out of the pandemic, these small businesses are still trying to recover from that, too, so I see it as a bit of a concern for businesses that need these options to stay afloat in our province and in our major urban centres.

So going back to my questions earlier, the NDP claim they're doing this to keep businesses that are close to schools, like 7-Elevens and convenience stores, from exposing minors to cannabis, but again, it comes at the same time that they're planning lethal drug injection sites in our neighbourhoods. Just a little confused on that even though—so the argument from the minister and my question was that it's—cannabis is legalized. Well, I think these lethal drug injection sites are considered legalized as well. So I'm just a little confused there as to why we're conflicting with the two.

Now, where businesses locate and what businesses are operating and selling cannabis, should maybe they be decided by the municipalities through their zoning and urban planning bylaws? I guess because the MLVB can do this and that's why they have the control. So it just seems to me that this legislation is going to allow the minister and the liquor gaming control to discriminate against some business owners. They can pick the winners and losers based on their own basis and I think that's already in the legislation. They picked the winners of the rural Manitoba to be able to have the licences and the losers are the small businesses in the city of Winnipeg that will not get the licence, so I'm certainly hoping that Manitobans get a chance to consult at committee and

express these same views that they've expressed to me and express them to government.

And, again, many convenience stores are owned by new Canadians that have come to Manitoba to invest in our province, and the NDP are telling them that they will discriminate against their own convenience store and restaurant operations, prohibiting them from competing in the cannabis retail business with other business owners and licensees.

So the concern is, I mean, we see a number of cannabis stores just about every other block on some streets. Having said that, we're finding that some are struggling to keep going so they may be closing their doors. So the concern is when the ones that aren't able to make a go of it selling this product that, you know, when it comes time that there's not many options to purchase it, are we not going to be able to license any other facilities and establishments? So it just seems to be inflexible that it shuts down any future licences and doesn't contemplate for the future closing of some of the existing licensing businesses.

It'll reduce the number of legal licences issued for controlled access stores, result in more people going to the unregulated and unsafe black market supply for cannabis once these establishments are few and far between.

So, honourable Speaker, those are just some of the concerns I have about this legislation and I certainly encourage any members of the community to come and leave their comments and consult with the government on this legislation.

So thank you for that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak in debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 35—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 35.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation (Mr. Moses), that Bill 35, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Currently, MPI's fleet insurance model can only offer surcharges and rebates at the year end for its fleet customers.

This bill will give MPI the legal authority to offer discounts instead of rebates in the fleet insurance model. This will also apply to blanket policies once those become available in the future.

I look forward to this consideration of passing in the House this afternoon.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how many customers will be impacted by this change of legislation throughout Manitoba.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I can definitely get that information to the member. Insurance for fleet customers are with those who have 10 or more registered or insured vehicles under basic Autopac, and we can get the number for the member.

Mr. Balcaen: So with this new legislation that is being proposed by the Minister of Justice, how did these proposed changes compare to how this is addressed in other jurisdictions?

Mr. Wiebe: Of course, there is some variation across the country with regard to those public insurance models versus private insurance models.

What I will say is this is in line with the other public insurers within Canada. So we're looking specifically at ICBC and SGI.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm just wondering if the minister can advise whom he consulted with on the development of this legislation as we move forward. It's going to impact a great number of Manitobans so we want to make sure that proper consultation has taken place.

Mr. Wiebe: I can assure the member that we've been working very closely with industry to ensure that this—they understand the dynamics and that they are supportive of this.

What I will say is that they are—they've been calling for this change for quite some time. This will be beneficial because, of course, it means cash on hand rather than waiting until the end of the year to get a rebate.

Mr. Balcaen: So we've seen a flip-flop with this NDP government many times throughout their short tenure here and the short tenure that will happen before PCs are back in government.

* (16:50)

And one of the areas is the cost; that we were told that there would be rebates and then there was actually a 5.3 per cent increase. So I'm wondering, will there be a cost to MPI to make these changes, and will it be passed on to our clients?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, of course, the biggest cost ever to MPI was having the PCs in government. Not only did they—was there a revolving door of CEOs, of boards that were hired and fired and board chairs that were dismissed. And now, of course—and then there was a strike that was perpetrated by the PCs, and now, of course, we're still unravelling the Project Nova mess that was left to us. What a boondoggle, honourable Speaker.

We're saving Manitobans money with this bill.

Mr. Balcaen: Just a follow-up question, honourable Deputy Speaker. Will there be a cost to this and will it be borne by Manitobans?

Mr. Wiebe: No, there's savings for our customers at MPI through their fleet vehicles with this bill.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Again, gives me an opportunity to put some words on the record regarding what's happening with this failed NDP government and their legislation that is brought forward.

Probably once again a testament to rushed legislation and poor consultation, there is going to be lots of questions left, and obviously we saw today questions that the minister himself couldn't answer because he doesn't have the data or it isn't provided.

That's a common theme with this NDP government, honourable Deputy Speaker, is that we're seeing constantly questions that can't be answered, legislation that is thrown together that is going to impact Manitobans, and, you know, it's quick to say, you know what, we're going to save Manitobans, but I'd like to see some of this proof come to the top and come to fruition regarding what's happening to our system here.

This is certainly a need in our province, but it's important to make sure that it is done properly. We've seen a historic increase in rates that are being charged this year to Manitoba Public Insurance customers. That, after being told that it would be another year of rebates. So I don't know how we went from rebates to 5.3 per cent increases across the board to the customers of Manitoba.

MPI was offered rebates year after year after year under this Progressive Conservative government. Cheques were mailed out to Manitobans, and they were so very thankful to have that extra money in their pockets. And now it seems to be the tax-and-spend process even leaking over into the government agencies that are run by this NDP government.

So concerns are grave, honourable Deputy Speaker. Affordability crisis right now, and the more unaffordable it becomes, the more taxes, the more costs, the more issues this government—this NDP government is putting onto Manitoba citizens and the ratepayers. It's sometimes a hidden tax, sometimes up front. Again, sometimes we're told one thing and we learn another, as in the case of the rates that have gone up.

So Manitobans are concerned, and rightfully so, and I just wanted to make sure that we were able to put a few words on the record for this bill.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 35, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporations Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 13—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 13.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 13, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I am pleased to rise today to introduce—or to speak at second reading of Bill 13, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025, more fondly known as MACA.

As the members in this Chamber are likely aware, MACA is a routine annual omnibus bill that's used for correcting typographical, numbering, minor drafting and translation errors, making other amendments to statutes. As is always the case, the amendments proposed in MACA will provide additional clarity and consistency across Manitoba's statutes book.

There is also a number of changes that are made with regard to minor amendments to acts that go beyond typographical or grammatical areas. This year, MACA 2025 brings forward a number of these changes and I'd like to share just a couple of examples.

Firstly, amendments to being proposed to The Adults Living with an Intellectual Disability Act as it related to the hearing panel roster. Currently, a member is appointed for a term that is fixed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council and may be reappointed. The proposed amendments have provision to clarify for—that a member for the roster will remain on the roster until they are reappointed.

The public—Police Services Act: amendments are made that will allow First Nations police service to operate in our First Nation Safety Officer Program. Currently, only a First Nation or an entity representing a group of First Nations can operate this program. The change will help to ensure that there are consistent responses across public safety.

There are numerous other examples, but I hear the Opposition House Leader calling for the question, so I will sit down and we'll move forward on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to ask questions?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak in debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 13, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 7—The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 7.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 7, The Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les dons de tissus humains, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: I'm thrilled to be able to bring this legislation forward. This approved—this legislation, rather, will ensure that the expanded definition of human tissue gets agency, will better reflect current donation and tissue gift services and support future changes to our health-care system.

Further, the current definition of human tissue agency is inconsistent. This will bring this up to date.

Thank you.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: Question—are there any members wishing to ask questions?

The honourable—a question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Just a quick question about how—how far in advance must individuals register to donate their birth tissues?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I encourage Manitobans to register right now. You can go online, update your information, put your name down on the registry with all your current information and what you'd like to donate. It's very easy. I did the same thing myself last year.

Mrs. Hiebert: Just a quick question about—who did the minister consult with in the development of this specific bill?

MLA Asagwara: Tissue bank—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, there will be 14 minutes remaining in the question period.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 14, 2025

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>