



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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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

Wednesday, April 16, 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 and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 228—The Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act (Farmer's Identification Number)

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that Bill 228, The Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act, the farmer identification number, be read now as the first time.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Morden-Winkler, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, that Bill 228, The Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act (Farmer's Identification Number), be now read a first time.

Mrs. Hiebert: It's an honour for me to rise to present my first bill. Bill 228, the retail sales amendment—tax amendment act, will reduce the red tape and the paperwork burdened—burden for agriculture retailers and farmers when claiming retail sales tax exemption

for farm business inputs, products and supplies used in the farming operation.

The Retail Sales Tax Act is amended to enable a person engaging in farming to obtain a farmer's identification number that will—that can be used in place of a wet or a digital signature by retailers when recording farm purchases.

A person who provides their farmer identification number is not required to pay taxes on products and services that are exempt when used in farming. The bill reduces requirement for a signed declaration to once within every two-year period, respecting the farmer's use of product suppliers and services.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Education Week

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Today, I rise to recognize this week, April 14 to 18, as education week in the great province of Manitoba.

Education week is an opportunity for all Manitobans to reflect on the importance that education plays in all of our lives, and the critical role that educators play in ensuring all children and youth in communities have a sense of belonging and can succeed in reaching their highest potential.

I would like to acknowledge education professionals and school staff, as well as business and apprenticeship partners, who work within and across our provincial education system to prepare young people for careers and many other aspects of their future.

Every day across Manitoba, teachers, EAs, clinicians, principals and school staff are inspiring students through rich learning experiences and opportunities to develop the tools they need to become active citizens and leaders in our communities.

A strong and equitable education system prepares all children and youth to be successful and live The Good Life, Mino-Pimatisiwin, and pursue a well-balanced life full of hope, belonging, meaning and purpose.

Our government is committed to ensuring that all students, from all backgrounds and from every corner of our province, have the chance to learn and flourish in school. That begins by making sure they have the food they need to focus on learning.

This year, for the first time ever, Manitoba students are benefiting from a universal school nutrition program and access to healthy food in schools. The historic universal nutrition program is leading the way in Canada, and our government is proud to ensure that through Nello's Law, this investment in our children and youth will continue for years to come.

Manitoba students also need a well-funded education system and quality learning environments in which to thrive. This is why our government has increased education investments this year by \$67 million, ensuring that Manitoba schools and school divisions have robust and healthy support to hire more teachers, more supports, and ensure smaller class sizes for our kids.

Our government is so proud to announce as part of Budget 2025 that we are going to build 11 new schools across our province. These new schools will provide our teachers and students with the space they need to teach, learn, grow—and grow as a community.

Our government believes that all students have the right to learn to read. Reading and writing is the foundation of a student's lifelong learning journey.

Last week, our government announced that every Manitoba student from kindergarten to grade 4 will be screened for early reading skills to ensure that students who may be experiencing challenges with literacy can receive the support they need to thrive in the classroom and beyond.

But education week is not just about what is taught in the classroom; it's also about everything and everyone that contributes to the success of our education system. So today, on School Bus Driver Day in Manitoba, I want to recognize the importance of our school bus drivers. Bus drivers have the important responsibility to safely transport our students to and from school, to events and to field trips. Our government appreciates the work that you do in keeping our students safe and getting them to where they need to be.

I would also like to take—I would also like to take a moment to celebrate and thank the great folks that work in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning for their passion and their dedication to supporting the education sector here in our province. We have a fantastic and talented and big-hearted team

and I'm so proud to work with each and every one of you.

So during this education week, I encourage all members in this House and all Manitobans to join me in reflecting on the historic role and enduring influence of education in our province, including the sins of the residential school system, all of the incredible progress that we've made as a province since then, and the work that we have yet to do to, guided always by the principle and the truth that Every Child Matters.

I honour and celebrate the hard work and dedication of our students, educators, school staff and school bus drivers across all Manitoba, this week and always.

I'd also like to say a special thank you and a happy education week to all of the many educators that we have elected into this beautiful House.

Thank you very much. Merci. Miigwech.

* (13:40)

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am pleased to rise today to celebrate education week in Manitoba, occurring from April 14th to the 18th, 2025.

Education week is an annual celebration that focuses attention on all those who are connected with the education system in helping to shape and nurture the lives of children and youths.

They include the many teachers, counsellors, bus drivers, support staff, custodians, senior admins, school boards, principals, Department of Education, Department of Education staff, as well as those in industry, business, child care and apprenticeship that continues so much to the education—contributes so much to the education of students, their families and our communities.

All of us have been impacted by the K-to-12 education system and the important role that educators play in the lives of not only ourselves but of the young children going through the education system to reach their maximum learning and full potential at each grade level and stage of their development.

We know that education matters and profoundly impacts individuals, families and communities. At a personal level, a good education encourages one to think critically, develop problem-solving skills and lifelong learning habits needed in today's increasingly complex digital and technological world.

On a societal level, a good education promotes economic stability and greater equality. The transformative power of education leads to a more healthier, informed and cohesive communities.

We are fortunate in Manitoba to have a public education system that remains intact, but Manitobans are witnessing the current NDP government not placing education as a top five priority. They are cutting funding to schools, stealing legislative ideas in education from our former PC government, and including Liberal members, on—and in addition to stalling in construction of much-needed new schools through the province.

It was our former PC government that worked with educators, parents and the community in the announcement for the construction of nine new schools. But the NDP put ideology over policy and, as a result, we are now seeing delays with new school construction, including classrooms and daycare spaces. School divisions are voicing increasing concerns of hallway education and overcrowded classrooms throughout many parts of the province, all due to the cuts and flip-flops made by the current NDP government. As well as the large education funding cuts, which is forcing double-digit tax increases on Manitobans.

Nevertheless, I am so proud that in this Chamber, on all sides of the House, we have many former teachers who have made invaluable contributions in and out of the classroom for the many students they have taught and mentored. The impact that educators have placed on students is so positive and fulfilling and will remain for generations to come, Honourable Speaker.

Our PC team, as part of education week in Manitoba, will always appreciate and recognizing the amazing work that education professionals play in the lives of students now and into the future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

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

MLA Lamoureux: Education week is a valuable opportunity to recognize the incredible work being done in classrooms across Manitoba.

From passionate educators to dedicated support staff and, of course, our resilient and curious students:

thank you for everything you do to make learning meaningful and inclusive.

This week is also a reminder of the importance of continuing to improve our education system.

I was so proud and excited to have Bill 225, which focuses on universal early screening for learning disabilities, pass through second reading here in the House yesterday, and I am so grateful for the encouraging support that it has received from my colleagues across all party lines. It truly demonstrates how, when it comes to supporting students, we can all work together.

Honourable Speaker, as we look to the future, we must continue listening. We must listen to those on the front lines, who understand first-hand what is working and where we can do better to prevent children from falling through the cracks

Whether it be ensuring early interventions, supporting mental health or investing in classroom resources, our shared goal is ensuring students are safe and set up to best succeed.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: This would be good time to introduce some guests we have in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery, from St. John's-Ravenscourt, 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Heather Ragot. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv).

We welcome you here today.

Further, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Daniel McIntyre Collegiate all-girls class: Harmony Catcheway, Melodee Catcheway, Alex Day, Jordana Eastman, Nevaeha Hood-Asham, Kaleigh Meekis, Shaydi Roulette, Tamaya Tait, Jade Taylor, Tanis Taylor and Tia Taylor.

Their teachers are here with us as well, and they are Britney Leost and Danis Machado. And they are guests of the honourable Minister of Families, the honourable member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine).

And we welcome you all here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**Tammy Mitchell**

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): Honourable Speaker, I am so proud to rise today to recognize the incredible career of my former colleague, mentor and friend, Tammy Mitchell.

For 35 of her 37 years working in education, Tammy has devoted herself to the River East Transcona School Division, supporting students with additional needs. When we think about the definition of a champion, a warrior, a fighter—one that does battle for another's rights or honour—we think of Tammy. She is a fearless leader who advocates for the rights and dignities of others.

Tammy started out as a classroom teacher and later moved on to running a specialized program for students with additional needs. From there she became a divisional consultant, the manager of student services and finally has served as the assistant superintendent for student services for the past eight years.

Beyond her work in our division, Tammy has served on provincial and international boards and committees. She has presented at international conferences, sharing her knowledge and helping others to support students. She has been an innovator since day one. Her creative vision has helped schools and educators stretch their thinking in how they can support all students in their building.

One of her most impactful contributions has been the development and implementation of a framework for service delivery. Through this initiative, Tammy has pushed us all to rethink how we support schools and to think about new and creative ways of supporting students instead of following the status quo.

Tammy is the ultimate servant leader. She empowers others to be their best selves and leads with unwavering integrity and authenticity. She is patient and takes the time to listen to what others are saying and—so that everyone feels heard and valued.

Even in the toughest conversations, Tammy remains composed and focused, never forgetting the importance of advocacy. She uses her strong facilitation skills to find meaningful resolution, never forgetting what matters most: putting the needs of children first. At her very core, this is who Tammy is. She cares about the needs of others. She cares about making schools a place where everyone can learn and achieve their best life, and she cares about making this world a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

I ask my colleagues to please rise in celebrating Tammy and her incredible contributions to our province.

School Bus Driver Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am pleased to rise today to recognize the third Wednesday of April each year as the School Bus Driver Day.

Many members will know that it was about 10 years ago that I fought—brought forward this bill to appreciate and recognize the important work that school bus drivers play in the educational lives of students throughout our great province.

Today and every day of the school year, bus—school bus drivers are the unsung heroes often overlooked in education. Similar to other professions, bus drivers serve the front lines of our education system.

School bus drivers are dedicated in their work and passion—and are passionate about driving, so much so that students and their families become part of their overall livelihoods and routines. School bus drivers play an integral part in families' weekday routines by saving them time and expense by picking up their child to school at the start of the day and dropping them off at school at the end of the day.

* (13:50)

In fact, school bus drivers not only provide an incredible service for our students and communities, they take on the huge responsibility of promoting a culture of safety and security for students and their families while supporting their educational successes along the way.

One of my constituents is a school bus driver in Beausejour named Jodi Ruta, or Jodi the Bus Driver to the school kids. She is a vocal advocate for seat belt safety and making sure that school buses are even more safe on our many streets, roads and highways.

And a big shout-out to Gail and Tim, who drove my boys back and forth to school each and every day, as well as Allan, Lorne and Ron, who are retired bus drivers but remain close friends and are all watching from home.

And, of course, to the Luczek family whose late father Art drove me to school for 13 years. Art was the main reason for me recognizing School Bus Driver Day every April.

To all the school bus drivers in Manitoba, we appreciate you and we lift you up. We recognize your

invaluable contributions to the public education and student safety day in and day out.

Today, we recognize these worthy professionals on School Bus Driver Day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Lemay Forest

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I rise today to recognize a momentous outcome; one that is the result of tireless community-driven advocacy, research and collaboration. The Lemay Forest, located within my constituency of Seine River, will soon be preserved into a provincial park for Manitobans everywhere to enjoy.

The Lemay Forest is not simply a parcel of land. It is a living place that is rich in cultural, spiritual and ecological meaning for the residents of St. Norbert. For generations, the Lemay Forest has been a place of ceremony, healing and connection. It's where community members gather for sweat lodge ceremonies. It's where families walk to catch glimpses of the protected pileated woodpecker, and it is where the history of our province lives on.

The Lemay forest is just steps away from where Manitoba's honorary first premier, Louis Riel, founded his provisional government. It is deeply entwined with the Red River Métis heritage of St. Norbert.

It is also the final resting place for potentially thousands of children, children who lived and died in the nearby Asile Ritchot orphanage and who were buried in graves on the land.

That land will now be protected and preserved. This outcome was not inevitable. It was the result of five years of advocacy by community members. I want to express my deepest thanks and admiration for their efforts. Their leadership reminds us of what democracy looks like in action: engaged citizens shaping the decisions that affect their communities.

I would like to specifically name some of the incredible advocates, archaeologists, historians, researchers and firekeepers who worked alongside the Coalition to Save Lemay, and allowed this victory to happen: Cat Gauthier, Louise May, Gerald Tole, Tracey Turner, Shelley Sweeney, Diane Bousquet, Eric Reder, Jaxon Kowaluk and so many more.

I thank you.

This is a victory for all Manitobans, and for everyone who believes that sacred spaces deserve protection. It sets an example and sends a message about the prior-

ities of our government; the importance of environment, of heritage, of reconciliation and of listening to all Manitobans.

Thank you.

Sara and Kate Manness

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I am pleased to stand in the House and recognize Sara and Kate Manness who have made Canadian History as they, along with their teammates, won gold at the women's world's under-18 hockey championships earlier this year.

Canada went undefeated in Finland in six games, and won after a 3-0 shutout against the United States.

Sara and Kate are twin sisters from my community of La Salle, who played for Balmoral Hall Blazers and the Manitoba Women's Junior Hockey League prior to joining team Canada.

To continue on their professional hockey journey, they moved to Ontario in 2023 to play in the U22 Ontario Women's Hockey Association, where their team won the provincial title. Sara, one of the youngest members on the team, was the leading scorer and MVP in 2023. She finished third in the Ontario Women's Hockey League with 43 goals and 100 points, while Kate finished with six goals and 36 points.

As they enter university this coming fall, they will play for Clarkson University in New York. The Manness family have all watched in pride as the girls have competed on a local, national, and now global stage.

As they are still in Ontario competing in the OWHL, they were unable to attend today. However, I want to congratulate them on their recent gold medal and wish them all their success in the future.

Latinas Manitoba Inc.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise today to honour Latinas Manitoba Inc., a grassroots women-led organization founded by Maria Fernanda Vallejo, a community leader, interpreter and advocate whose journey, work and impact has made a difference for immigrant and refugee women here in Manitoba.

What started as a Facebook group in 2020 has turned into a non-profit organization that supports Winnipeg's Latin-American community through supporting, uplifting and protecting Latin-American women navigating life here in Manitoba.

Maria hosts the Community Hour and Latinas Manitoba TV, which airs monthly, covering community stories, local resources and educational

topics. They have recently expanded into community radio as well.

Honourable Speaker, Latinas Manitoba offers free and low-cost programs that assist newcomers with a special focus on empowering women. This has grown into a community-powered movement led by volunteers representing a network of over 2,000 members and almost 7,000 Spanish-speaking immigrants across Manitoba.

Some of these services include helping people with resumes and interview skills, navigating the medical, legal and financial systems, hosting health and wellness workshops and helping to raise awareness about intimate partner violence, and providing interpretation for all of these resources.

Further, they donate food hampers to families facing food insecurity and their Latinas Closet project has donated hundreds of clothing and personal care items to families in need.

Honourable Speaker, if you can't tell, they do a little bit of everything.

In closing, Latinas Manitoba incorporation is building a future of empowerment. They are creating a community with access to knowledge and amplifying the voices of Latin-American women right here in Manitoba. I ask my colleagues to join me here today in recognizing the members who have joined us here today in the gallery.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, the—another guest in the gallery. I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Leslie Munoz from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, visiting from Guelph, Ontario, who is the guest of the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, the honourable member for Point Douglas (Ms. Smith).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Lemay Forest Expropriation Notification of Property Owner

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Expropriation is an extraordinary power that should be used sparingly. Negotiation and conversation should always be the first option.

Media has reported that this government didn't even communicate with the landowner prior to the Premier's

announcement that he intended to eventually file the paperwork to expropriate Lemay Forest. They also reported that the minister personally called the protestors camped out around the land to give them a heads-up.

Why is this NDP government being so disproportionate with their communication strategy? Why would you announce to the media before even telling the property owner?

The Speaker: Just a quick reminder that questions should always be directed through the Chair and not directly at a member opposite.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to thank our member for Seine River (MLA Cross) for her tireless advocacy to protect Lemay Forest.

Your provincial government is taking action to preserve the historic interest and the public interest in the Lemay Forest. And guess what? That means everyone across the province is going to get a brand new, beautiful provincial park for us to enjoy together.

* (14:00)

Again, protecting our history, protecting wildlife, creating a provincial park for everyone to enjoy. Sounds good to me. Who in their right mind would possibly oppose that? *[interjection]* Oh, yes, there we go. That's them right there, the rudderless PC opposition who, just this week, also opposed Bill 23, better known as anti-SLAPP legislation.

Anti-SLAPP legislation is to make sure that people who prey on others in our societies can't use frivolous lawsuits—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Each and every day, Honourable Speaker, our Premier stands up and once again puts misinformation on the record, tries to distract from the fact that he is failing as a premier.

The NDP tendency to resort to expropriation instead of proper negotiation is a long-standing tactic. Farmers and landowners throughout Manitoba remember how the NDP negotiated for land for their multibillion-dollar Bipole III.

The MLA for Fort Rouge, this Premier, his mentor, Greg Selinger, drew an arbitrary line on a map and gave landowners two choices: sign a deal now, or have your land taken away.

The minister confirmed that he had called the protestors; can the Premier tell us when he called the property owner?

Mr. Kinew: We're standing up for our collective interests as Manitobans, and a shared history and a beautiful future with a wonderful new provincial park at Lemay Forest.

The members opposite, though, who are they standing with? They delayed Bill 23. That's anti-SLAPP legislation. That is the protections so—that somebody like April Telek, who sued Peter Nygård over the alleged sexual assault, doesn't have a counter-suit launched against her to try and silence her voice. Who would you want to stand with on that side of the equation?

Seems like most Manitobans think that Peter Nygård is a pretty bad dude, and we should take steps in this Legislature to protect people from his actions.

Why did the PCs then block Bill 23 that was going to bring in that protection? Please, educate us. Help us understand. Why did you block Bill 23, through you, the Chair?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Just saying through you, the Chair, is not the same as going through the Chair, so just to caution the honourable First Minister.

Mr. Ewasko: And this Premier can all educate us because we know that he's got a history and a profound knowledge of the word slapping, Honourable Speaker.

What's most concerning, Honourable Speaker, on this topic, is the order-in-council, and the Premier recently posted, which I table—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: We know he, like Donald Trump, loves to be the 'auterian' showman. The Premier even—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —demanded the media applaud him earlier this week.

The order-in-council tells the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Moyes) basically to ignore the process. We already know the Premier blindsided the developer by refusing to communicate or negotiate.

Why would the Premier sign an order-in-council to further deny the opportunity of all interested parties to be heard?

Mr. Kinew: We're creating a beautiful new provincial park. End of story.

But it's only the beginning of the story to try and understand the bizarre decision-making on that side of the House.

They're blocking Bill 23. That is to bring protection for people who want to speak out and seek accountability from people who'd done them wrong in the judicial system, and they blocked it. Everyone on that side of the House needs to think very, very carefully when they find themselves on the side of Peter Nygård. And when you think about Bill 30, that is about the landfill ads that each and every one of them stood behind. They tried to stand firm against the landfill search.

We stood with you, the people of Manitoba. We searched the landfill, and we're bringing two Manitoba women home to their families.

Why did they block that bill? What are they doing here each and every day? If you don't have a substantive reason to oppose legislation, let it pass.

And if you can't defend—if they can't defend their actions on Bill 23 and Bill 30, perhaps they should revoke the blockage of those bills so we can get on with serving you, the people of Manitoba.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Safe Consumption Site Location Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'll remind the Premier that he actually is in the majority, so he has the opportunity to take forward any bills he wants. We're not blocking it.

Yesterday the minister of addictions finally faced—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —her constituents and heard what the community feels about her injection site for illegal drugs.

The minister continues to mislead the citizens of Point Douglas. She files an application to the federal government for injection site at 200 Disraeli, but continues to insist no site has been determined. This is quite surprising, considering the money, time and effort put into promoting the sites.

The minister's staff were overheard telling participants that Memorial Park is also on the radar for the NDP for their injection site.

Will the Premier tell Manitobans where else is he planning for drug injection sites if the 200 Disraeli location isn't it?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to say publicly what I've already said privately to the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith): Great job. Standing up time and time again to listen to people in the community, to listen to your constituents, to go into a forum organized by other people, that takes courage. But, most importantly, it's about putting you first and listening to you, the people of Manitoba.

And, of course, when it comes to listening, of course the PCs have no idea what they're looking at, because they've never encountered anyone who could listen. All that they know about is being told what to do. That's why they went along with the landfill ads. That's why none of them said a peep about the stand-firm billboard here in Manitoba that everyone else in Manitoba, including their candidates who lost in the last election, have now come out of the woodwork to denounce. So everybody knows that it was wrong.

But why come in here now, after he supposedly said an apology, Honourable Speaker, to delay Bill 30, that would bring in accountability, accountability to prevent terrible attack ads like that in the future.

So again, while we're listening, we're putting public health—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Safe Supply Program Inquiry

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the only one who continues to come into this Chamber and put divisive rhetoric on the record is this Premier. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: He should try answering a question for a change.

The minister of addictions revealed what her priorities are when she told the community last night that she wanted to make sure people don't have to commit crimes to get the drugs that I, and I quote, need; that they need, Honourable Speaker. That's what she said. That's dangerously close to the failed safe supply

programs that we know she and her colleagues want to introduce.

Will the Premier clarify the minister's plan to introduce government-supplied narcotics to Manitobans accessing his injection site, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: We're not doing safe supply. What we are looking at is a supervised consumption site.

And it's the pinnacle of hypocrisy for the member opposite to talk about division when he comes here on this very issue and tries to divide Manitobans. Because the experts are clear; doctors will tell you one way we can save lives from overdose is by having a supervised consumption site.

And yet he and the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), with some slogans they pulled off of a bumper sticker somewhere, come in here and try to throw shade, not at us, but at the experts in addictions medicine. Good luck with that, just like the 2023 campaign that saw you relegated to the opposition benches.

We're going to keep bringing people together. I'm proud to stand behind a minister who listens to you, the people of Manitoba, and we will take our lead from you.

They, on the other hand—explain why you blocked anti-SLAPP legislation. Explain why you blocked legislation to prevent landfill ads in the future.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Is this not a second supplementary?

The Speaker: All right. My mistake.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition, on a final—

Resident Safety Concerns

Mr. Ewasko: I'm just checking with the timekeeper there. That's good. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

You know, Honourable Speaker, it's unfortunate, again, that this Premier stands up, puts misinformation on. We're not blocking anything. This Premier has the authority to do whatever legislation he wants.

Residents make it clear that they want treatment spaces and care. The only treatment beds this minister could reference were the PC RAAM clinics, Honourable Speaker.

Residents last night were shocked that only one NDP MLA could be bothered to show up at central plank for the NDP, and a public injection site.

One resident shared that earlier yesterday, their staff had administered multiple doses of naloxone, provided first aid, yet the ambulance didn't arrive for over an hour.

The minister heard this comment but refused to respond to the resident concerns about safety, whether physical or medical.

What assurance does the Premier have for residents that he will stop failing to provide emergency services when this minister has committed 24-hours ambulance stationed at the site, Honourable Speaker? And I table those documents for today.

Mr. Kinew: Our minister's doing a great job.

* (14:10)

You know who the MLA who was—who showed up to listen to the people of Point Douglas? It was their MLA who showed up, something that you'd never see in a PC constituency. The PC MLAs show up day after day for the barbecues and for the free lunches here at the Legislature, but when there's a real issue in their communities, where are they? The office is always closed, the parking lot is always empty.

So, yes, we're going to stand with people in the community to make streets safer. The streets don't belong to criminals; they belong to us as Manitobans. We're going to stand up against overdoses. We've got a great minister who knows what it's like to be out there, struggling, and we are working together with people with lived experience, the experts, law enforcement, local leaders, the feds, everybody, to make our communities safer.

What have they got? Absolutely nothing. They turn around and they can't face the facts. They can't even look at the problem for what it is; they want to stick their heads in the sand. Shame on the PCs—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Order, please. Just for clarification, that was the Leader of the Official Opposition's third question in that round.

Safe Consumption Site Site Proposal Inquiry

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Last night in an important town hall community meeting, we heard from Point Douglas residents who said overwhelmingly that the drug injection site is not what they want in their community.

The minister told the crowd—the crowded room that the proposed site at 200 Disraeli wasn't set in stone.

Can the minister tell us what other locations are currently being considered for the drug injection site?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Well, what I can tell that member is that we're continuing to listen to Manitobans, something that the previous government didn't do.

We're taking a harm reduction approach so that we can get people to the supports that they need. We are working with the police, and, in fact, we had the chief of police there last night, Gene Bowers, and I want to congratulate him on his appointment.

We also had Art Stanford [*phonetic*], who is the deputy chief of police; Scott Halley, who is the deputy chief; commander of downtown district, Helen Peters; commander of North End district, Elton Hall; commander of organized crime, dealing with the drug trade, Josh Ewatski; commander of criminal investigation unit, Jennifer McKinnon; commander of community relations division, Kevin Riel, superintendent—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Addiction Treatment Services Request for Additional Investments

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, I had the privilege to listen to many personal stories from Point Douglas residents last night, including a father who shared his impactful story, how he lost his son to fentanyl poisoning, and how a drug injection site would not have helped his son.

Is the minister willing to allocate the \$6 million in funding set aside for the drug injection site and expand education, access to RAAM beds and increased recovery and treatment to help save those young lives?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): So I don't know where that member was yesterday or if she heard our announcement, but, I mean, it was all over the radio, was in the paper, it was in the paper this morning. I'm not sure if they read the paper, but we made an— a really good announcement yesterday about Anne Oake recovery centre.

We're investing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Smith: You know, and I stood with the Families Minister yesterday, with Scott Oake. We're investing

\$1.5 million to ensure that women, along with their children, can get the recovery supports that they need.

That's the kind of government that we are. We're taking a balanced approach to ensure that folks get the supports that they need, unlike members opposite, who buried their heads in the sand for—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, balance is very necessary; \$1.5 million for treatment and six—almost \$6 million for a drug injection site is not balance.

Will the minister instead use the funding to open an additional 1,000 beds, which that \$6 million would cover, and end the waiting list of people that are waiting for treatment today?

Ms. Smith: What I will say to that member—I don't know if that member was listening to folks last night. There was one mother there that talked about her daughter overdosing last year and talked about the need for a supervised consumption site, the need to save her daughter's life, that there needs to be a balanced approach in terms of supporting to lead someone to get the supports that they need.

In terms of the PC's record, between 2019 and 2023, the number of people who died in Manitoba from overdoses grew by three times under their watch. We will take no lessons from members opposite. That's not treatment; that's not recovery; that's not saving lives.

We're taking a different approach; we're meeting people where they're at, and we're working collaboratively with—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mental Health Treatment Services Constituent Request for Out-of-Province Care

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Today, I want to share the story of a young girl named Anna, whose parents are here with us today. Anna is 14 years old. She's smart, athletic and full of potential. But she's also in crisis.

For years, she has battled severe mental health challenges. Her parents have tried everything: therapy, medication and even paid for private services when public support wasn't available. But despite their tireless efforts, Anna's conditions has worsened.

Just a few weeks ago, her mother found her attempting to take her own life. This family is out of options, and their greatest fear now is that they could lose their daughter. Anna needs to be in a therapeutic program where she will be safe, cared for and supported 24-7. These services just aren't offered here in Manitoba.

Will the Health Minister hear out Anna's family's request for out-of-province care?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I want to say thank you to Anna and her family for sharing her story and their story. It takes a lot of courage, a lot of bravery, to share your experience and to reach out for help.

We are a listening government; we've been very clear that we are always, and I am always, willing and happy to meet with families and folks who are looking for support. So, of course, very happy to sit down with Anna and her family and hear their story one on one, and see how we can offer support.

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

Mrs. Cook: Anna has now been accepted to the Sunrise Residential Treatment Program in Utah that offers the kind of intensive, therapeutic, 24-7 care she urgently needs.

This is not a choice made lightly by her parents; it's a decision borne out of desperation after years of trying every available option here in Manitoba. Sunrise meets the criteria for out-of-province funding, and other youth across the country, and previously here in Manitoba, have been approved for out-of-province care at this facility.

This is a family that has done everything right. They are not asking for special treatment; they are asking for the support their daughter needs to survive. They submitted a request in a letter to the minister on March 17 and have yet to receive a response.

What steps is the minister taking to ensure this family receives an answer and the help that Anna needs as soon as possible?

MLA Asagwara: Again, I want to thank Anna and her family for reaching out and seeking assistance. We are always very happy and willing to meet directly with families who have concerns.

As I stated in my previous response, I'm very happy to do that with this family and certainly can make

sure that they get a response or have a meeting with myself and the team as early as today.

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

Mrs. Cook: No parent should have to plead with their government to help save their child's life, but that is exactly what Anna's family is doing today.

Their story speaks for so many families in this province who are facing similar struggles. Navigating a system that is under strain, waiting months or even years for psychiatric care and feeling helpless as their children fall deeper into crisis.

These parents have been brave in coming forward, not just for Anna but for every young person in Manitoba who needs more than weekly therapy or medication alone. The care Anna needs just isn't offered here at home. She needs help and she needs that help now.

I'm very glad to hear that the minister will meet with them, but will they also approve the required funding for her out-of-province care and help save Anna's life?

MLA Asagwara: I think the member opposite understands why that's an inappropriate question to pose on the floor of this House. I have made clear that, of course, my door is always open for families, for youth, for folks who are looking for supports in terms of their health experiences.

I do look forward to meeting with Anna and her family, again, as I said, as early as today, and I say this as someone who worked on the front lines as a mental health provider for many years. I know that there are youth and families who are struggling with these challenges across our province.

Our government believes in strengthening those services and doing whatever we can so that no matter where you live, the care that you need is available, and certainly in exceptional circumstances, our government is here to listen and to work with all families in need.

* (14:20)

Green Team Program Funding Inquiry

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, the weather is warming. The AMM convention is under way. Grant season is upon us. Soon municipalities, community groups and not-for-profits will be finding out if they were successful in their applications.

Last year, camps and church groups were the target of this minister's cuts.

Can the minister tell us which groups will be left out this year from Green Team funding?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Thank you very much for that question.

As we all saw in our last budget, we are committed to investing in communities. That includes increases in Green Team, From the Ground Up. It also includes investments that—in municipalities such as the critic opposite to strengthen their communities. And we are proud of the work that the youth do in this province. We are proud to put them to work, and we'll continue to invest in our communities because we know together that's how Manitoba grows, together.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, in last year's budget, the NDP drastically slashed Green Team funding. Hundreds of applicants were denied vital funding that they need to provide services to their communities. This year's budget is more of the same. Green Team funding still falls \$1 million short of previous levels.

Honourable Speaker, will the minister do the right thing and restore funding to the 2023 levels, or will the community groups need to fill the gallery once again just to be heard?

Mr. Simard: We're investing Manitoba, plain and simple. We are investing in Green Team; we're investing in From the Ground Up; we're investing in Manitoba GRO. All across the province: fire trucks, bridges, roads, schools, all over this province.

Now, I don't know what AMM they were at yesterday, but people are saying, finally, people are listening. We can sit down with the government and have a conversation, a conversation about what we need, and you're actually doing it.

That's why we're building schools outside of Winnipeg and in Winnipeg. That's why we're continuing to invest in Green Team. We can say, oh, last year—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, this government has a habit of renaming previous successful PC programs,

then gutting them. Surprisingly, the Green Team has not been—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Perchotte:—voided but, boy, has it been defunded.

Honourable Speaker, with staggering inflation and economic uncertainty, we are relying on our community groups more than ever, and young Manitobans are relying on the income and job experience that the Green Team provides.

Why is this minister not restoring funding to the '23 levels for the Green Team?

Mr. Simard: You know we're restoring? Integrity in governance. That's what this government is doing.

We are investing all over this province. We know that our municipal partners know that they finally have a partner who comes to the table. They dig a hole, they throw them a shovel; we throw them a ladder. It's real simple.

Oh, in a—extraordinary situation, the PCs finally did something. So can you do it again and again?

We are very conscious. We are—we work with our partners. We target our investments. We make sure they make a difference for Manitobans. We just don't throw something at the wall and say, please elect us, please elect us. We have a plan.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Request for Government to Support Bill 227

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, today Ontario Premier Doug Ford joined premiers across the country by introducing legislation to tear down interprovincial trade barriers. All these provinces and premiers are taking action, but our Premier has been strangely quiet on the subject and has failed to reveal any legislation. We are saying time's up and our team is taking action where this Premier has failed.

Why has this Premier failed to bring forward any meaningful legislation to tear down interprovincial trade barriers and embrace labour mobility?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to provide an update to the House.

We have the Premier of Nunavut in town today to sign on to this deal to build our country, to build Canada, to build the transmission lines so we can make more money and create more jobs.

And guess what the member opposite may not know, either? Doug Ford called me while I was watching the Jets game on Sunday, and I said, Fordsy [*phonetic*], guess what? We're going to the cup this year. And he said, I believe it. Come to Queen's Park; we want you to sign on to this deal. I said, sorry, we're doing a nation-building thing in Manitoba instead. I'll be to Queen's Park soon enough so we can knock down barriers, knock down the Trump supporters and build up Canada.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, this Premier has had months to commit to removing interprovincial trade barriers and bringing forward meaningful legislation.

Yesterday, we introduced Bill 227, The Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act. This bill is almost identical to legislation brought forward in other provinces to tear down these barriers and make Canada a truly open market. Canada stands to gain \$200 billion in economic growth for our economy if we embrace complete internal trade. Timing is of the essence; other provinces have already brought forward legislation. We will be debating this piece of legislation tomorrow morning.

So will this NDP Premier stand up and support our legislation tomorrow?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, I love this country and I love the fact that I get to work with business owners here in Manitoba to support our great and growing economy.

Honourable Speaker, of course we're going to work with our provincial and territorial colleagues, and we've already done significant work. We're a national leader and, in fact, we are encouraging other provinces to take Manitoba's lead.

But when it comes to growing our economy, we are—instead of thanking Donald Trump for his tariffs, we are fighting back and restoring and building up our economy right here at home. That means investing in places like New Flyer, that are bringing shore an all-Canadian build to their electric busses. That means more jobs in Canada, growing our economy, and that puts—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, this NDP government has had months to bring forward meaningful legislation to remove interprovincial trade barriers.

Premier Doug Ford signed an MOU with Nova Scotia and PEI because they had legislation like this intact.

The NDP are failing to act in Manitoba's best interests by failing to bring forward meaningful legislation. We are saying that time is up, time is of the essence and we are taking action where this Premier (Mr. Kinew) has clearly failed.

So I ask this Premier: Will he commit to fast-tracking our free trade bill this spring so Manitoba's—Manitobans, workers and our businesses do not have to wait for the benefit of reaping this benefit from free trade mobility across the country?

Mr. Moses: Well, Honourable Speaker, the barriers that I actually hear about that concern Manitobans, the barriers of the folks put up who would rather thank Donald Trump for his tariffs and those who would endorse him. That's what we're seeing from members opposite.

Instead, we're going to break down those barriers. And you know—want to know how? By working together with our business community, by working together with our provincial and territorial partners. And that's the work exactly that we're doing every day.

If members opposite haven't heard, we're growing our economy. We just built a new gold mine—a new gold mine—right here in Manitoba. That puts hundreds of people to work.

That's how we build our economy. That's how we do it: together.

Manitoba's Research Community Underfunding Concerns

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Manitoba's research community plays a vital role in everything from public health to climate resilience and technological innovation. Over the last decade, due to stagnant budgets, our province's brightest scientists are feeling overlooked and underfunded.

Now we see that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is inviting American researchers to move here, and while we understand the global challenges in science right now, I'm hoping the Premier will explain why this government is prioritizing the recruitment of international scientists before restoring stable funding and infrastructure for the world-class researchers already here in Manitoba.

* (14:30)

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I really love that question, I have to say, from the member for Tyndall Park. Research is foundational to us having a strong health-care infrastructure, innovative opportunities to make sure Manitobans have the best health-care outcomes.

So when it comes to health-care research, certainly our government recognizes that for seven and a half years under the previous failed PC administration, not only was that not invested in or prioritized, but it was cut in many, many different, creative ways.

We're taking a different approach. We are standing up some really wonderful research opportunities. One of the first things we did, actually, as a government was create a fellowship chair at the University of Manitoba for HIV research, which has been filled and that work is actually being done.

And we know there's much more to do. We look forward to doing it and making those investments to the benefit of Manitobans.

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

Recruitment of American Researchers Investments Needed for Long-Term Retention

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Strong research requires infrastructure, grant programs and long-term investment.

An open letter from Canadian researchers earlier this month made it very clear that while Canada should welcome displaced American scientists, we are not yet ready to fully support them without immediate investment. Manitoba scientists have said the same: that without better lab space, more grant opportunities and a sustainable funding model, researchers won't stay.

Can the government explain what concrete steps they are taking to ensure that we have the capacity to support incoming researchers, while also addressing the present needs of the research professionals already here in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our government understands the importance of this area of research and we work across departments to do so.

Our minister of business, mining, jobs and trades invested—in our first budget, rather—\$200,000 into the clinical trial space dedicated to research. Our government in this budget is standing up clinical scientist

chair opportunities in our province. That's to recruit the best and the brightest internationally to Manitoba for these highly coveted positions.

We've met with many research-based organizations locally to understand their needs, to make sure they have the investment and support of government and a partner. What I heard from different research organizations in Manitoba is that the previous government wouldn't even sit down and have a conversation with them.

We're sitting down. We're having those meetings. We're learning about—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Consultation with Local Research Community

MLA Lamoureux: Research is collaborative and it's local, yet despite the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) announcement inviting American scientists to Manitoba, we've heard from several universities and research bodies that they were not consulted ahead of time.

This echoes the concern raised by over a thousand researchers across Canada in a public letter that calls for greater investment to protect our scientific sovereignty and strengthen our home-grown research capacity.

Did this government consult with any of Manitoba's research leaders before launching this initiative?

MLA Asagwara: We've been meeting with these research organizations since our government came into office, Honourable Speaker.

We've been meeting also with the Canadian Medical Association to learn about research opportunities and how to support folks who are coming from the United States who want to research here in Manitoba. We made investments in our very first budget of \$200,000 to support folks in the clinical trial space and to support those who are already in Manitoba. And we're going to continue to make those investments.

We're also looking at the area specific to women's reproductive health and women's health care in general, because we know that across the board, that area of research is underfunded and under-respected. Our government understands the importance of this area. We're making investments. We're listening to experts. And we're working in partnership.

Manitoba Municipalities Call for Bail Reform

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, for seven and a half years, the PC government froze funding to law enforcement, lost over 50 WPS officers, cut the bail program to the bone and left more than a quarter of correctional staff positions vacant. The safety of Manitoban families remains a priority for us.

Can the minister tell the House how Manitoba's leadership on bail reform—more about Manitoba's leadership?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you to the member for McPhillips for that important question.

Honourable Speaker, our Premier recently led all premiers in advocating to the federal government for meaningful bail reform. Yesterday, I joined with municipal leaders from across the province to build on that commitment and to amplify the call for immediate action on bail reform.

This, of course, is in sharp contrast to the members opposite who prioritized cuts and bail enforcement and closed jails across our province.

We took a different approach, one of action and one that the National Police Federation has endorsed. We're going to continue to work with our municipal partners, we're going to work across this province to make bail stronger and we're going to work to make sure the federal government listens—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Release of Repeat Offenders Call for Bail Reform

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Well, I'm certainly hoping that the Minister of Justice takes that advice on bail because, just on Monday, Winnipeg Police Service advised that they had made an arrest following another violent stabbing incident aboard a transit bus that occurred on April 2.

A 21-year-old victim, just trying to get home, was robbed and stabbed, requiring medical aid. So much for the Premier's promise, and I quote: we will end violent crime.

What Manitobans that I talk to find so upsetting in this most recent string of violence is that the two individuals are charged with robbery, assault with a weapon and fail to comply with conditions of their release order once again.

When is this minister going to slam the revolving door shut and have the violent criminals that are re-offending sentenced to jail, not bail?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, I believe it would have been helpful for the member opposite to spend time with those municipal leaders we were talking about earlier. If he would have spent time with them yesterday, listened to their concerns, he would have heard clearly that they are united with us in calling on the federal government to take real action on bail reform.

But we heard more. We heard that they appreciated the increased investment that's—we've made to local law enforcement and specifically on the issue of bail. Meanwhile, the member opposite, what did he say? He said Manitobans didn't need another funding announcement today. Well, I beg to differ, and the members of AMM certainly beg to differ.

We're going to continue to put our words into action and take action on making our province a safer place.

Universal Heights Homeless Encampment Request for Support Services

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): The Southwood homeless encampment is across the street from houses in the University Heights neighbourhood in Fort Garry. People have to be careful walking their dogs so they don't step on discarded needles. They never know if their lawn mower is going to be in their shed next time they need to use it, and the front street is crowded with discarded—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —shopping carts and debris.

Police and fire trucks are a regular presence. They've had six fires started just feet away from where their children sleep and I'll table the photos from the residents. It's clear this Premier (Mr. Kinew) is not in a position to house this encampment anytime soon, but the people living in the encampment and those next to the encampment need support.

Will this Premier commit to providing services like 'crean' drinking water, porta-potties, garbage—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): What I want to say to those members in encampments is they finally have a government who is listening, that is coming—that is

providing housing, unlike members opposite who sold off housing.

We are working with service delivery organizations who are providing wrap-around supports, and I know that those folks have been reaching out to them and that we just cleaned up an encampment just before the weekend, and I want to table the pictures from that encampment—nine folks this weekend.

And I want to thank service delivery organizations, Main Street Project, Sunshine House, who helped those nine individuals get housing, get those wrap-around supports. And we'll continue to do that work on behalf of Manitobans who sent us here to do that.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): On House business, I would like to table a list of the government-specified bills for this Second Session of the 43rd Legislature.

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: Could you please call second reading of Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees); followed by Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act; followed by Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools); followed by Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act; followed by Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act; followed by Bill 3, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act; followed by Bill 4, The Planning Amendment Act; followed by Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act; followed by Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act; followed by Bill 28, the Manitoba Hydro amendment; followed by Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts.

* (14:40)

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader has tabled a list of bills that we will be debating at second reading for this afternoon. No. My mistake. The honourable Government House Leader tabled a list of specified bills and then notified us of the bills that we will be debating this afternoon.

So the bills that we will be debating are Bill 39, Bill 6, Bill 19, Bill 11, Bill 26, Bill 3, Bill 4, Bill 21, Bill 15, Bill 28 and Bill 37 at second reading.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 39—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees)

The Speaker: And now we will start with Bill 39, second reading of The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees).

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (financement des campagnes électorales pour les élections scolaires), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: Manitobans care about education. That's why school trustee elections are so important as they give Manitobans a say in the education of children in their communities.

I want to uplift all of the school trustees in Manitoba and thank them very much for their service and dedication to improving education.

As elected officials ourselves, we know that it is not easy to put your name forward on a ballot and to run a successful campaign. Campaign financing is a key factor in many elections, including school board elections.

That's why it's important to have rules that promote fairness and prevent outside interference.

In Manitoba, school board elections are governed by The Public Schools Act, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act. Currently there is nothing in these acts that sets out rules regarding school board election financing, which leaves them vulnerable to outside influence and individual donors having significant impact on our elections.

In the Speech from the Throne our government committed to introduce legislation to protect our elections and democracy from a third party and foreign interference. This bill does exactly that by promoting equity, transparency and accountability in elections of school board trustees.

This bill will align Manitoba with other jurisdictions by amending The Public Schools Act to establish

campaign financing rules for school board trustee candidates.

There will be clear definitions of campaign expenses and the campaign period, and each candidate will have to register before soliciting or accepting contributions.

In addition, Bill 39 makes it so that only individuals who normally reside in Manitoba can make contributions to a candidate. This change protects our elections from outside actors who don't have any skin in the game.

Contribution limits will now be set at a maximum contribution limit of \$1,500. Candidates, however, will be able to contribute up to \$7,500 to their own campaign, but will be prohibited from incurring a deficit, limiting the campaign to the funds raised.

Candidates will also have to report on their contributions made to their campaigns and on expenses incurred, including reporting the names of those who donate \$250 or more. These reports will be posted publicly on the school division website.

To ensure everyone follows these rules, Bill 39 provides that failing to comply with these campaign financing provisions be considered a provincial offence.

Honourable Speaker, this bill is an important step to promote fairness, transparency and accountability, ensuring that school boards reflect the needs and aspirations of the families and communities that they serve.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

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 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. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to ask the minister: Will third-party interference be completely eliminated under this new bill?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): And while I wish that there were some piece of legislation, multiple pieces of legislation—we do have multiple pieces of legislation coming forward in this session—I wish that I could guarantee to Manitobans that there will never again be election interference here in Manitoba.

Unfortunately, I can't provide that guarantee. What we can do, though, is take this important step by enacting Bill 39, which will improve transparency, democracy and help us mitigate and avoid any third-party interference as best we can.

As a province, we're here to work for Manitobans. We're here to protect democracy, and we're here to protect your freedom.

Mr. Ewasko: So much like cybersecurity, Honourable Speaker, there's little confidence coming from this minister to Manitobans for any assurity to any kind of safety or fair playing by any rules.

Can the minister explain to perspective trustee candidates the purpose of the bill and what it means for them?

MLA Schmidt: I will never apologize for being honest and transparent with Manitobans. That's what you get when you elect the Manitoba NDP. You get straight answers, unlike members opposite, who will sell you any sort of story to try to gain themselves favour, to try to gain themselves a seat in this House. That's not what you're going to get from the Manitoba NDP.

Bill 39 is intended to improve transparency, to protect our democracy and to protect the freedoms that we hold so dearly here in Manitoba. I congratulate, celebrate and lift up everyone who has ever put their name on a ballot to run for school trustee. It is hard work. It can be thankless work. The member opposite and I know better than probably anyone else about that.

We think Bill 39 is only going to further improve—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the last question that I had asked was definitely not in a raised tone or meant for any type of controversy. So I'll ask again, because she didn't answer the question: Can the minister explain to prospective trustee candidates the purpose of the bill and what it means for them?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, I've been told my whole life that I'm too loud, that I take up too much space. I continue to hear that from the member opposite.

I'm going to repeat for him what I told him yesterday, which is to get used to it. If he doesn't like it, he better get used to it.

So the point of this bill: candidates will be required to register before soliciting or accepting contributions. They can only take contributions from individuals that reside in Manitoba, or persons or organizations active in Manitoba. It means that there's going to be no third-party donations. It means you have to live here in Manitoba. It means that you have to keep a track of your contributions.

We think that what this bill does is even the playing field, and ultimately protects our democracy, protects our freedoms and provides transparency that Manitobans are looking for. That's what the Manitoba NDP is here to deliver, and that's what the failed PC government—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: So once again, Honourable Speaker, the Education Minister—the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister—stands up, puts misinformation on the record. I never did once say in this House anything that she had—has accused me of saying, which, again, is nothing new for either the Education Minister or many members on that side of the bench.

So it's unfortunate, but I will ask her the lob question because she failed to answer the last question again. So easily: Who was consulted on Bill 39?

* (14:50)

MLA Schmidt: We've consulted with many, many, many Manitobans; we've consulted with Manitobans that participate in—have stood as trustees; we have consulted with organizations that think a lot about municipal and school trustee elections; and, frankly, we've just listened to Manitobans who told us that this is long overdue.

This is something that Manitobans were asking for from the previous government. The previous government failed to act. They do not care about protecting our democracy. In fact, Honourable Speaker, would it shock you to know that one of the leadership candidates for their party thanked Donald Trump and congratulated him for allowing foreign interference in our elections here in Canada?

That is absolutely shameful—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, I don't understand how the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt) stands up and thinks that she is, I don't know, grandstanding in place of her Premier (Mr. Kinew). Seems to be taking a page out of his showman type of book.

Asked a simple question. I don't know why the abbreviation—or, the acronym Manitoba School Boards Association, MSBA, is a tough word or group of individuals to even just have come out of your mouth that you've consulted with. I don't know why that's a tough thing.

That's what I've asked: Who did she consult with on the bill, Bill 39? MSBA—did you consult with MSBA or not, yes or no?

The Speaker: And just a quick reminder that always address your questions through the Chair and not directly to the member opposite.

MLA Schmidt: Again, we've consulted with many, many, many Manitobans. This bill is long overdue, and since the member opposite brings up the MSBA, I am so happy to put some words on the record, congratulating and thanking their outgoing president, Sandy Nemeth. She did an absolutely wonderful job in her role and we know that she'll continue to serve Manitobans in future roles.

And we also want to thank and congratulate and welcome Alan Campbell, the new president of the M-S-B-C-A. We have had a wonderful dialogue so far, and I look forward to continuing on this dialogue and working together to improve education outcomes here in Manitoba; and also, to improving school board elections.

Mr. Ewasko: So just because the minister stands and congratulates Ms. Nemeth on her exit from being the leader of MSBA—and I've had the pleasure of working with Sandy for quite a few years—matter of fact, probably closer to 12, 13 years, Honourable Speaker.

So the answer that I received from the minister is that no, she did not actually discuss this with MSBA, which is unfortunate, because it's the Manitoba School Boards Association.

So I will ask the minister: Is this going to—has she spoken to candidates—potential candidates, successful or not—about the campaign expense limits? Do they feel that they're too high or too low?

MLA Schmidt: If the member had read the bill, he would know that there's no campaign expense limits.

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, if the minister would have read her own bill, there are limits on—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko:—the amount of donations that individuals can get, and then as far as how that money then gets transferred after the election to or from the candidate to the school divisions. Can she explain that process without getting upset?

I'm trying to keep my tone low so that the minister can just answer the question, Honourable Speaker. This is a microphone, not a megaphone. Just answer the question, please.

MLA Schmidt: Again, I will speak in the tone that I find appropriate. I will take absolutely no lessons from the member opposite at all.

So again, he better get used to it. I plan on being here for a very, very, very long time, Honourable Speaker, serving with this great Premier and this fabulous team.

I wonder about his intentions. As the failed interim leader, he has failed—it's under—it's interesting. He stands up and asks these questions on Education bills.

I'd like to put on the record that it's been almost a month since the Education critic left, ran screaming from this building from this horror show that's happening across the aisle, and they have yet, in a month, have yet to appoint an Education critic. So, instead, the member opposite stands up and—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Order. Order.

I will remind members that when the Speaker stands up and says your time is up, that means don't keep talking. Don't try and scream louder than the Speaker. It means it's time to stop and take your seat.

Mr. Ewasko: I don't personally care how loud the Education Minister gets because the louder she gets, the more it shows Manitobans that she absolutely should be doing more homework on her own file of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

It's actually not me that's running for the bulk pack of earbuds; it's the Justice Minister, who has the displeasure of sitting next to the minister, Honourable Speaker.

So again, I mean, it's unfortunate that the minister seems to be jealous of Grant Jackson, who I wish well

in the upcoming federal election race, Honourable Speaker. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: But I would just like to know, so on—as to the limits, can the minister explain how those finances will get transferred to the different school divisions or districts post-election?

MLA Schmidt: School divisions will work with successful and unsuccessful candidates to do the appropriate transfer of those contributions. Look forward to the next question.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Is the House ready for the question? *[interjection]*
Aha, okay, well let's do that; let's have the debate.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): The tone that is—has set for this afternoon and evening on bill debate seems to be off to a bit of a rocky start, but, again, this is nothing new for this Education Minister, unfortunately.

And I think part of it, Honourable Speaker, when we start talking about Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees), I think it is a little alarming when the Minister of Education stands in her place and first of all starts shouting about things that are not even pertinent to the bill and starts talking about divisive tactics that her—and she's obviously—well, no. You know what? I'm going to stop myself from saying this, I guess.

But it's not that this is coming from her, that she's learning this from the Premier (Mr. Kinew). I think the Premier has gone and recruited and put his Cabinet ministers in the front bench that are all similar. And so the other day I was listening and asking questions to the Premier, and the Premier said, you know, you should stand up and ask questions to the Education Minister.

So I've asked questions to the Premier; don't get any answers. Asked questions to the—excuse me—asked questions of the Premier on behalf of Manitobans, the concerns of Manitobans. That's our job in this democratic society, this democratic province we have, of Manitoba, to be able to ask questions. That's our job as opposition, which, as the Education Minister mentioned, you know, I don't think we will be in opposition very long to the—to what Manitobans are seeing

in this not only the Education Minister's behaviour, which I think is unbecoming of an Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister. But I also say that about the Premier.

So I know that the Education Minister tries to think that this is a, you know, a male-female, they-them type of situation, but it's not. The problem is, is that it doesn't matter—and I know that the Justice Minister's just bubbling; he wants to get up and put some words on the record; he'll have the opportunity right away. But it's not. It's the fact that everybody in that front bench—and I don't know what's wrong with the Justice Minister. I'm not sure if we might need to call for some help. I mean, are you okay? Okay.

* (15:00)

So just to know that the tone, the yelling and the shouting, when they should be answering some questions, what they're trying to do, they're trying to deny, they're trying to deflect and they're trying to distract Manitobans from what is actually happening here in Manitoba.

And so when we start to talk about examples like Bill 39, again, we on this side of the House absolutely believe in free and fair elections which is absolute—is central and very healthy for our democracy right here in Manitoba. The voting public needs to have confidence that election processes are fair and transparent, without any third-party interference, Honourable Speaker.

And so when I asked the question about, will this bill keep third-party interference out of trustee elections, no answer. Matter of fact, what's upsetting is that this minister stands up and, because she feels—I don't know what she's feeling, but—and I can't say one way or another. She's the one who has to be responsible for her own actions.

But she has said on more than one occasion that even cybersecurity—so things like student data, which is in—which people, Manitobans trust, students trust, teachers trust, education staff trust. I mean, you know, we've kicked off Education Week and we've stated the fact that basically in Education Week, on how we want to make sure that all those staff and students are kept safe. But the minister has said on more than one occasion that she can't guarantee that.

So she also says how she not only can't guarantee that, the fact is also that she's telling Manitobans that they're going to have to get used to it, that they're going to have to get used to just realizing that their data is not safe.

So it brings me to some other information in addition to Bill 39, Honourable Speaker. What happens in health care? What happens in the child-welfare system? What happens if our—in our housing? What happens with that data? The Education Minister stood up today and again, in regards to making sure that third-party interference is not there, she couldn't guarantee anything. And she wants to say, well, hey, she's telling it—I don't know if I can say this or not, but she's telling the truth.

Okay, well that's great. Those are her words. But telling the truth, I don't think that instills confidence in this government in—when it comes to anyone's data getting protected, and sure as heck is not under this Education Minister, which we know had cancelled, single-handedly cancelled, the \$50-million project that we, as the Progressive Conservative Party, had put forward to make sure that we had an in-house, within-province system to make sure that you, Manitobans', students' data is safe right here in your own province.

We know that over time there's been growing and real threats to the democratic process at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, and evidence is what has happened in the US federal elections and other countries all around our world. And that's why we on this side of the House—once again I read—re-state for the good of not only Manitobans but also this Education Minister, who continues to put misinformation on the record.

We believe, on this side of the House, in free and fair election processes and trying to make sure that there are no third-party interference in elections. But it's obvious, by this Education Minister's answer, that we can't really trust this to happen under this Kinew government, and for sure not under this Education Minister.

We know that school board elections are typically held alongside municipal elections across Manitoba every four years. There's a potential and real threat to school boards from third-party interference by individuals, corporations and/or special interest groups. Not much is in the bill to deter that.

I asked the minister about different limits, and, of course, instead of answering the question, she turned and tried to throw shade, as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) would say, on our side of the House in regard to what is actually being asked, instead of just answering the question.

Limiting campaign contributions to a certain amount will prevent big money from influencing the election results. Yes. Yes, we agree.

Now, when you also look at, what does that also mean, we take a look at campaign advertising. You know, is there other parties, unions, arm's-length organizations that maybe have contributed to advertising pamphlets—things along those lines—that are distributed widely in a constituency, say, when there's maybe a by-election going on, which then influences—potentially influences the voter.

Well that, to me, Honourable Speaker, is illegal as well.

So when we start talking about Bill 39 and contributions and third-party interference, and the Education Minister, as an Education minister herself, which we ask the Education Minister to be in charge of our whole—not only our K-to-12 school system, but also our early childhood learning system, it does not instill confidence when the minister stands in her place and gives the answers that she's giving, no matter how loud.

Again, I don't care. I don't care how loud she gets. The only one, as I said earlier, Honourable Speaker, is first of all, when the mics are on, say as much as you want. When the mics are off, I know that the Justice Minister is busy covering up his ears because he has to put up with that all the time.

So that's great. So currently in Manitoba, there's no legislation—and you know what? I don't disagree with the Education Minister at times as well. I know the Justice Minister has gotten out of hand once in a while in the Chamber as well, with his vocals on the microphone as well.

But that goes to my previous point on it seems that that's a pattern and that's some of the training ground that the NDP get, whether they're in opposition or in government.

So currently in Manitoba there's no legislation governing school board election financing. Two other provinces, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, also do not.

In the absence of this legislation, there's a possibility, wide range, of individuals and organizations to potentially fund election campaigns of school board candidates as well as provide in-kind goods and services to contributions. This kind of activity by third

parties is perfectly legal within the present legislative environment.

So again, on this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, we look forward to sending this bill to committee. We look forward to giving the minister some more time so that she can actually speak to the Manitoba School Boards Association and, again, on behalf of the PC caucus, I wish Ms. Nemeth all the best on her next venture that she's going to be doing, and as to Mr. Campbell, good luck as well. I look forward to working with you again, Alan, on the many things that we're going to be moving forward on.

Just also to say that in the 2024 NDP Throne Speech, they promised to introduce legislation to protect our elections and democracy from third-party and foreign interference.

Great. So we're bringing forward Bill 39. But, again, as the minister said, and no doubt between now and third reading, the minister will fine-tune her answer on the third-party interference. I know the Ag Minister's looking forward to hearing that as well.

And I know that there's others, Honourable Speaker, that are going to want to put some words on the record, so with that I look forward to passing Bill 39 along and hearing what the public has to say at committee and then further debate on third reading on Bill 39.

Thanks, Honourable Speaker.

* (15:10)

The Speaker: Seeing no further members wishing to debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 6—The Public Schools Amendment Act

The Speaker: Next, we move now to second reading of Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

The honourable Minister of Health—no—the Honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: I'm pleased to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 6.

So public and independent schools have a common day to count enrolment, which is then submitted to the Province for public reporting and calculating of operating funding.

Historically, the enrolment count date was September 30 of each year, which now coincides with the national day of truth and reconciliation, also known here in Manitoba as Orange Shirt Day. The enrolment count date of September 30 is referenced in The Public Schools Act as part of the formula used to calculate the amount of special levy each school division must remit to the Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine.

As such, this reference in The Public Schools Act needs to be updated to reflect the new enrolment count date. In consultation with school divisions, the department has chosen to change the count date to the first Wednesday in October.

The changes will come into force on July 1 of 2025 before the '25-26 school year. Orange Shirt Day is an amazing opportunity for Manitobans to learn about reconciliation and acknowledge the impacts of the residential school system. It honours the survivors and remembers those that were lost.

This day serves to raise awareness about the painful legacy of residential schools and the lasting impact they've had on Indigenous children and families and our communities. Orange Shirt Day is important because it promotes reconciliation and acknowledges the trauma that Indigenous peoples endured and encourages reflection on how to support healing and justice for Indigenous communities.

On December 2023, our government, under the leadership of our amazing Premier (Mr. Kinew), designated Orange Shirt Day as a provincial statutory holiday providing all Manitobans with an important opportunity to reflect on the deep impact and lasting trauma caused by residential schools.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning has been working hard to further Indigenous education and is committed to advancing reconciliation here in our beautiful province.

We are working on improving Indigenous language programming opportunities. We have added an assistant Deputy Minister for Indigenous Excellence, Jackie Connell. You are amazing. And we are working on strengthening Indigenous education policies in schools and in child-care facilities.

This change to the enrolment count date is just one small way in which we are working on advancing reconciliation here in Manitoba. I look forward to the unanimous support of this Chamber.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, the floor is open for—the honourable Opposition—Leader of the Opposition. The honourable Leader of the Opposition—asking a question or moving on to debate?

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition still in question period.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Okay, so I was going to answer that question, Honourable Speaker, but my mic wasn't on. So the question to answer is yes, I'm going on a question.

So I thank the minister for bringing forward this bill. And she did mention that they had spoken with school divisions.

Now, when she talks about speaking with school divisions, did the minister consult with the Manitoba association for school administrations?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): The department did extensive consultations in regard to this bill.

There is unanimous support from the sector. There is no controversy here. We look forward to the support of the member opposite and the House in passing this bill.

Mr. Ewasko: Could have just stopped at the answer, Honourable Speaker, because really, you know, on

this side of the House, we are in support of this bill. And I just—asking a couple of questions is—in regards to clarity. And so she once again stated that the department has done extensive consultation.

The question I had asked specifically, she either doesn't know or doesn't want to say. So that's okay.

So I guess, how was the first Wednesday of October chosen for the date for reporting?

MLA Schmidt: During our extensive consultations with the sector, it was agreed that the first Wednesday in October made the most sense.

Mr. Ewasko: What does she mean by made the most sense?

MLA Schmidt: I so appreciate the opportunity to elaborate. It was the date that was reached by consensus, it's close to September 30, it's past September 30; and it gives the sector a couple of days to catch up after celebrating a historic new statutory holiday here in Manitoba, gifted to Manitobans by our incredible Premier (Mr. Kinew), finally acknowledging Orange Shirt Day as a statutory holiday here in Manitoba, something that Heather Stefanson refused to do.

On this side of the House, we acknowledge the pains of the past and we commit to never repeating them again, which is why we believe that all Manitobans deserve the time on Orange Shirt Day—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, simple question. Just looking for an answer, not trying to enflame or add any controversy in here. But the minister can't help herself, you know, as far as being divisive. That's okay.

So here's the question: What is the impact of pushing back the reporting data on calculations or on funding?

MLA Schmidt: Well, the impact, I suppose, is that there will be roughly two more days of enrolment that school divisions will be able to count and report to the department. So it should improve accuracy and should also make it, just administratively, more feasible.

Mr. Ewasko: So, once again, Honourable Speaker, we're not quite sure on the—that doesn't give, I don't think, Manitobans comfort. So is she, for certain, that's what the reasoning is, or that's going—what the impact is, or is she just doing hypotheticals? Just asking her to clarify her previous answer.

MLA Schmidt: What doesn't give Manitobans comfort, I'm sure, is to learn that the opposition party, the party that is sent here to hold government to account, had their Education critic run, resign, quit. He couldn't stand to see what was going on on the other side of the House—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: He couldn't stand behind this interim Leader. He couldn't stand behind the two leadership candidates so he ran away. And I wish him the absolute best. I think it was the right choice.

My question is: Who's next? They haven't—again, a month without a minister of Education, and the interim Leader stands up in this House and pretends like he is trying to provide comfort to Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: And again it seems, Honourable Speaker, that both leadership candidates and the former critic of Education, Grant Jackson, is living rent-free in this Minister of Education's head.

Here's the thing, Honourable Speaker. The fact is, is that the Education Minister is entitled to her own opinions, but not entitled to her own facts.

And this is what we see coming from the NDP, is that on the record they go ahead and put misinformation—most of the time it's disinformation, Honourable Speaker—but I don't even know if her last answer—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member has used language that's been determined to be non-parliamentary, so if the member would please withdraw it and apologize, and then we can carry on.

* (15:20)

Mr. Ewasko: I was—I thank you for your advice; I didn't realize that disinformation was not allowed and so I apologize for using that word, and I'll stop using that.

But on purpose, it seemed—or am I able to say that? On purpose, the Education Minister continues to put misinformation on the record.

Is that allowed? I'm looking at the Clerk.

The Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: It's disappointing that the member opposite, again, in the absence of any sort of Education critic on that side, stands in his place and prefers

to pontificate and to continue to insult me, to make allegations against me.

Apparently, I am, you know—I don't meet his standards. And I couldn't be happier; if I was trying to earn his respect, then I would have some serious questions about what I was doing here.

What I will tell you, Honourable Speaker, is that Bill 6 makes a lot of sense. School divisions are acting for it. We're a listening government. We're here to listen to you, we're going deliver—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And just before we move on, I just want to clarify that a member cannot say that a member is knowingly, purposely putting misleading information on the record. That implies that they know they are lying, and so therefore, that is unparliamentary.

Mr. Ewasko: So I guess, in contrast to what the Education Minister's putting on the record, I guess I will say that many of the things that have been put on the record—as far as what I may or may not have said, I can honestly say I have not said the things that this minister has said.

If the minister has not used her own educational background to figure out the fact that I am not only the Leader of the Official Opposition right now, but I'm also the critic of Education, considering I've got up and spoke to all the bills and everything in regards to education so far.

But I know, Honourable Speaker—I have a question for the—

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

MLA Schmidt: The people of Manitoba, please listen to the Leader of the Opposition. Please, I hope that you are listening and I hope that you're paying attention to the fact that he prefers to stand in this House every day and talk about himself.

On this side of the House, we are here to write new laws, to make life better in Manitoba. We are here to improve the lives of Manitoba in the education sector, in the health sector, in the agriculture sector and in Municipal and Northern Relations.

I'm surprised to hear that the member opposite is the critic. There was no announcement, and I wonder what the folks on his team think about that. That—his bench—

Some Honourable Members: We love it.

MLA Schmidt: Oh.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) will come to order.

And I'm having a great deal of trouble understanding what any of these questions, or any of these answers, have to do with the bill. So I would ask the members to please pay attention to the bill we're talking about.

No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): So I guess what the Education Minister's waiting for on Bill 6 is a formal announcement that—who is the critic on our side of the House.

See, in the PC team, we don't get hung up on titles and positions and those types of things, Honourable Speaker. We actually just get right to work. And that's the difference between the Progressive Conservative team and the NDP dysfunctional team, is the fact that they just want to do announcements without any action.

So when we continue to talk about Bill 6, I want to put a few words on the record on Bill 6. You know, I appreciate the sage advice. The fact is, is that I know that the Minister of Education got way off topic for a considerable amount of time, because the Education Minister, I think, instead of doing her homework on—in her own department, I think is too busy trying to worry about personal attacks, divisive language, bringing in hate and divisive comments. And it's unfortunate because that is unbecoming of an Education minister.

So as, you know, sort of, we roll along and we've asked some questions in regards to the impact of pushing back the reporting data on calculations or funding, her answer does not bring any type of certainty to the education field. I know that for a fact.

Speaking with many colleagues from all levels within the education world on, you know, Bill 6 and other bills that this Education Minister has brought forward, I think if they would have spent more time talking about the fact that—how they were going to cut the education funding that they did, and fully—fully, Honourable Speaker—go into double-digit tax increases by this NDP government on Manitobans, is disingenuous—disingenuous.

And I think that they should—the Education Minister, in the next bill, should start off her comments by apologizing to Manitobans. And she'll jot that down and she'll do some kind of other diatribe in her opening comments on the next bill.

Actually, Honourable Speaker, I did wanted to give the Education critic—or the minister credit for the length of time that she spoke on Bill 6 in her opening statement. It was almost four minutes. You know, it was almost as much time as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) spoke on his own budget. So—and actually that was more time than the Education Minister put forward on a few of her other previous bills. This is a one-page bill.

I think, moving forward, it is, you know, a bill that makes some sense. I guess more of the details would—will come out from what some of those stakeholders, those education partners, have to say to this, whether it is going to be more work or less work for them; how is that going to impact in various formulas.

Speaking of formulas, Honourable Speaker, we know that the Education Minister, as I said earlier, cut education funding and basically—I don't know. I guess their terminology on the NDP side is paused, but I think they've actually cut the new funding formula, and I don't know, I think the Education Minister—this Education Minister I think put on the record, even though we know that her NDP government, the Kinew government, puts education not even in the top five of the priorities for this government.

I think somewhere they said the new funding formula for Education will come online for the school year, I think, of 2027. I'm not sure what they've said. I know that for this coming year, you know, since we're talking about Bill 6 and talking about funding and moving the date for enrolment counts and that, under our government we were planning on rolling that out. Matter of fact, this coming fall, for the education funding for this fall, for 2025.

But, again, what this minister wants to do, we've heard it in various bills that we've seen come forward. We've seen many actions. Or actually, talk about actions but not really any actionable items yet, of them just carrying on or cutting things earlier and then reintroducing them, trying to put them under a—you know, paint them with a bit of an orange tinge and try to call it their own.

But we know that majority of everything that this Education Minister is bringing forward is from the hard work of our PC government trying to make life

better, a more sustainable and welcoming learning environment for Manitoba students in this great province of ours. And I think that's why parents and guardians are watching this Education Minister and watching the misbehaviour on the screens. And it's—it is unfortunate.

But those are the emails that I'm getting, Honourable Speaker, from various Manitobans—parents, guardians, students, former students—just talking about the fact that we just want, on behalf of Manitobans and those people that I've just listed, they just want some answers from this Education Minister.

* (15:30)

So I look forward to seeing Bill 6 go to committee. Like I said, it's a one-page document. The Education Minister felt that she should talk about this bill far more than the other bills. That's okay. That's her prerogative. Again, we get a certain amount of time in this democratic process when we bring bills forward.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to be able to put a few words on the record.

The Speaker: No further speakers? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 19—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools)

The Speaker: As previously announced, we will now go to second reading of Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools).

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you—oh, wow. Losing my voice.

I move, seconded by the minister of business, mines, trade and job creation, that Bill 19, The Public—

The Speaker: Order, please.

In order for someone to second a motion, they have to be sitting in their proper seat.

MLA Schmidt: My apologies.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (milieu scolaire sûr), now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: Oh, my gosh, it's—as minister, the safety of Manitoba students is my No. 1 priority. That's why we have introduced Bill 19, which will amend The Public Schools Act and enshrine in legislation requirements for all school division staff and volunteers to complete approved sexual abuse prevention programs.

This legislation will also require that all coaches and sport volunteers complete approved sport-focused abuse prevention programs. School divisions and districts will also need to ensure training is renewed at least once every four years. Student safety is a top priority for our government.

We have heard from folks with lived experience, educators, volunteers and coaches that they want their government to take action and to protect Manitoba children and families, and our government is delivering on that. We are proud to align this legislation with other Canadian provinces and territories who already have statutory safeguards in place for students, staff and community members who are involved in school sport and recreation activities.

Bill 19 will also require school divisions and districts to develop policies to identify appropriate and inappropriate interactions between students and staff, on and off school property. This will include supportive processes for students and their families to report inappropriate concerning interactions that have taken place.

This legislation will require that these policies are actively communicated and shared with families across our province. In every school across the province principals must inform students and families about these policies at the beginning of each school year. This mandatory annual communication will ensure that children and families have the resources and support they need if any issues arise.

Honourable Speaker, this bill complements Bill 21 introduced by the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy) that will strengthen preventative training and abuse-reporting processes. Together, these two bills will enhance the protections for Manitoba children and families by creating train-

ing, policies and communication requirements for all individual coaching and mentoring—for all individuals, pardon me, coaching and mentoring our children in sport and those who are supporting youth in other volunteer capacities.

With that, Honourable Speaker, I will conclude my squeaky remarks on this bill. There are many educators and coaches in this Chamber, and we are looking forward to receiving the unanimous support of this House to ensure the safety of all Manitoba children.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): So I will ask the minister: Who has she consulted on Bill 19?

Thank you.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): We—the department performed extensive consultations with the Manitoba School Boards Association. We have connected with parents, stakeholders and sports organizations, like Sport Manitoba.

This is an important bill, it's an important intent, an important objective. And so we're going to make sure that we're listening to all Manitobans so that we get it right. There is nothing more important and sacred than protecting our students and our children here in Manitoba.

Our government takes this extremely seriously, and we look forward to receiving the unanimous support of this House on this important bill.

Mr. Ewasko: It's great to hear those words come out of her mouth. Manitoba School Boards Association and, of course, Sport Manitoba, I think, is what she said as well.

So as we—as she mentioned also Bill 19 and Bill 21, protecting youth in sport, which was introduced also in this session. What is the difference between the two bills?

MLA Schmidt: Thank you for that very important question.

As the member opposite will know for his—from his time in government, you know, here in Manitoba, we've done a lot of great work on protecting youth in the school system. There was a ministerial directive back in 2022. Bill 19 enshrines that directive into law within our education system, and Bill 21 is a complementary bill to ensure that we are protecting children no matter where they are practising sport, whether that is in a school setting, whether that's in an extracurricular setting, in a club setting, in a community club setting.

We have the support and the collaboration and co-operation of Sport Manitoba and other like organizations who, like government, have been doing a lot of great work.

These bills—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: So again, just asking the minister the difference between the two bills. And if both bills are brought forward—again, Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools) and the protecting youth in sports, so bills 19 and 21. I'm not looking at the answer of the difference of 21 subtract 19, which is two.

I'm actually asking, within the bills, what is the difference? And I'm asking, is this going to only create confusion with coaches, teachers or volunteers?

MLA Schmidt: Thank you for the opportunity to provide further clarification.

Bill 19 amends The Public Schools Act. We are talking about protecting youth in sport at school, which we can do through instruments like amendments to The Public Schools Act.

That being said, we know that children here in Manitoba practice sport outside of a school setting. They might play soccer with a soccer club. They might do gymnastics at a gymnastics school. And so what the excellent bill, Bill 21, put forward by the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy) does is ensure that the same protections that we're providing to youth that participate in sport in school receive those same protections and assurances when they are practicing sport outside of a school setting.

So the two bills are complementary and will serve to protect all students across Manitoba, whether or not they are playing sports in school or outside of a school setting.

Mr. Ewasko: So yes or no: once every four years the school staff, coaches and volunteers must complete the sexual abuse prevention and school sport abuse prevention programs, as proposed in the legislation.

MLA Schmidt: I apologize to the member. I'm not sure I fully understood his question.

What I think he is asking is whether or not coaches, educators, people working within the school system, will have to renew their training every four years. If that was the question, then the answer is yes.

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks to the minister for that answer. Why not yearly or even every two years?

* (15:40)

MLA Schmidt: At this time, based on the consultations that we've done within the sector, we believe that four years is appropriate. However, again, we're a listening government. We're always here to do better. We will always act in the interests of students and certainly nowhere is that more true when it comes to the safety of students.

So, happy to speak further with who I've now learned is my new critic, and we can discuss those suggestions going forward.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, so I'm not sure if—that's great, Honourable Speaker, that that's what it took: just for me to say that, yes, in fact, I'm the Education critic for the tone to change and the collaborations start to come forward.

And I will be happy in the future, Honourable Speaker, working with this Minister of Education because I do believe, as I did when I was Education minister, that there are no trademarks on good ideas. So I look forward to working with the Education 'minister.'

What is the penalty, if any, of failing to complete the Manitoba—mandatory course or training, Honourable Speaker?

MLA Schmidt: Well, it is a—it will be a workplace policy, so this will be a—and now it is in—previously, this was simply a policy directive from the department to school divisions. This will now be enshrined into law and so it will be a requirement of—a condition of employment, and so just like any other condition of employment, it must be met in order to successfully continue on in your employment.

We know that educators across this province are dedicated to this sort of learning. We know that it's

been rolled out very successfully. We want to thank the Respect Group that we've been working with to deliver and provide this training since 2022. They're doing an excellent job, and we know that educators value very much this training and look forward to renewing their training when it's most appropriate.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, so does this pertain to chaperones, as well, on school trips?

MLA Schmidt: Yes. This will apply to all folks within the school system that are engaging with youth in sport.

Mr. Ewasko: Okay. So then is there going to be some sort of waiver or something that somebody has to sign or declare that they've either received or not received this training? Is the training going to be mandatory to those individuals that are strictly chaperones?

So what happens if there's a, you know, field trip—hypothetical, just a field trip, say to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Does the chaperone have to have that mandatory training, as well, or is it just strictly just sports?

MLA Schmidt: Again, the safety of all students across Manitoba is of paramount importance to our government and to myself as minister.

Bill 19 is specific towards sport-focused abuse and prevention programs, so this will apply to coaches, volunteers, anyone working within the school system that is delivering sports curriculum or is engaged with students in sport.

And we know that this bill, combined with Bill 21, will go a long way to protecting students and ensuring that some of the atrocities that we've seen occur here in Manitoba never, ever, ever occur again. That is the intention of this bill and that is why we hope and pray that this—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, once a complaint is made, how much time is given to review the complaint?

MLA Schmidt: Complaints will be reviewed in a timely and appropriate manner, again with the focus being on the safety, security and the protection of the student at hand.

Mr. Ewasko: Who reviews the complaint?

MLA Schmidt: There will be a third party that will be reviewing the complaint.

Mr. Ewasko: Third party as in—can the minister elaborate?

MLA Schmidt: Well, I can speak for Bill 21—pardon me—Bill 21, the complementary bill that was put forward by my friend and colleague, the minister of sport, culture, tourism and heritage—I don't think I got that right.

In Bill 21, that will establish a third-party organization, a disciplinary review panel that will review all complaints and mistreatment of athletes outside of the school system; within the school system, that will be a matter for the administration.

Mr. Ewasko: The question that I asked earlier in regards to the timing of recertification and having to retake the course on the four-year span. Information—we know that information changes very rapidly nowadays, and that type of thing, and so does technology, so does methods and tools.

And so does the minister still feel, even with that, that the four-year period will suffice to try to cover all those things off, Honourable Speaker?

MLA Schmidt: Again, we are a listening government. We are going to always ensure the safety of our students is put at the forefront of all of our decision making.

Since we have rolled out this directive in 2022, it's been delivered in a very effective way. Educators, coaches and school staff, I know are appreciative of the learning opportunity. And if, in the future, four years is no longer an appropriate time, then we're—we'll be happy to revisit this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: When a complaint is made, are police agencies brought in immediately to investigate serious allegations?

MLA Schmidt: Yes, thank you for that question. Honourable Speaker. Absolutely. Obviously, each situation is going to be different, and it's going to depend on the facts of the case, but absolutely.

Immediately, the school division would be engaged, and then, based on the determination of what they know of the allegation, absolutely police would be involved, CFS would be involved. School divisions will involve all the necessary institutions to ensure that the student is protected and that the incident is thoroughly investigated and resolved, and that we're always learning.

The point of this is to always be learning and doing better to protect kids and to ensure that, again, some of the atrocities that we've seen here in Manitoba—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

Seeing no further questions, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act—oh, once again, we've got to do some debate. I'm sorry, I apologize.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): And also, Honourable Speaker, the critic of Education.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And the way I used to always mention this role is the advocate for education. Because not everything, as we're hearing in the last while, is controversy—controversy—

An Honourable Member: Controversial.

Mr. Ewasko: Controversial, there we go. Tough getting that word out, been doing lots of talking last few days.

And I'll tell you, Honourable Speaker, if I would've known earlier this week, last week, that just by mentioning the fact that I am now the education critic, would've brought the level down a notch on the heated and the divisive wording coming from the Education Minister, I would've done that as soon as Grant Jackson had left to embark on his next adventure of being an MP for the federal government—the upcoming federal government.

* (15:50)

Now, that being said, Grant is often mentioned here in these Chambers, and really, what I can see happening is a little bit of jealousy over on the NDP benches, because I know that a few of them who had their hearts set on Cabinet ministerial positions who have not yet received.

But I think, from what we've seen this week, there's going to be a bit of a Cabinet shuffle happening. We see the minister—or, not the minister, the Premier

(Mr. Kinew) taking on, you know, a lot of the questions that are being directed to his ministers, because I think he's actually losing faith in their capabilities to be able to answer and to remain on either his messaging or some kind of messaging; or they're telling Manitobans, maybe, too much, so then he's putting the seatbelt light on and making sure that they're buckled in tight and not getting up from their chairs to answer any questions.

Honourable Speaker, so we were talking about Bill 19, the—honourable Deputy Speaker, I apologize—Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools). So we've got lots to talk about.

It's nice to hear that we're going to have this cordial relationship, the—with myself and the Education Minister, because it brings me to the fact that why is respect in schools, respect in sport, mandatory training for teachers and coaches and that, why is that happening? It's because of bringing forward a—directives from the minister of Education, which I had the pleasure to be at the time, but also carrying on the good work from my predecessors, as well.

And it came with exactly what I think is going to be happening moving forward: working with the Education Minister on mutual beneficiary topics to help with our students—the great students in this great province of ours in Manitoba.

So I'm hoping that that will actually come to fruition, because I know that the MLA for St. Vital, the MLA for St. James and the former member for Transcona and I, and others on our side: the former member for Portage la Prairie, the former member for—or not the former member, the present member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and even the former member for Morden-Winkler had worked on things within Education because it was a collaborative approach.

We are all students of the K-to-12 education system at one time or another in this great province of ours, and I think we bring different perspectives. And not everybody is a teacher, you know, coming into these roles as MLAs, of course, but it's important to take those perspectives. But not only the teacher's perspective; it's also very important to reach across the aisle and speak with other members.

And the other member that I failed to mention who is, you know, still a representative, of course, is the MLA for Tyndall Park, the leader of the Liberal Party right now, too.

And that came from the fact that there was some very horrific things happening in our province that

were unchecked for quite a few years, and so it was our government that decided to do something about it and start making mandatory courses. Because in some cases, Manitoba—whether it's parents, guardians, volunteers, students, bystanders—bystanders, they don't quite know, necessarily, honourable Deputy Speaker, what to watch out for, what are some of those red flags.

And so that's why it was very important when a lot of these infractions, the major infractions in our province, happened under the Doer and Selinger time, that we took a really good look at the fact of—even though you're not going to be able to prevent absolutely everything, you have to make sure that you are diligent on trying to put things forward, you know, making sure that you're still trying to fix things, trying to prevent things. As opposed to throwing up your hands and saying, well, you know what, these things are going to happen; we're going to have to learn to live with them.

That's not the way this should work, honourable Deputy Speaker. We should actually look to other resources, whether it's the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, whether it's the Respect Group, with Sheldon Kennedy. I had the pleasure of working with both organizations over the last quite a few years on various different things when it comes to child protection, and we, on this side of the House, absolutely believe that Manitoba students deserve to feel safe and respected, not only in school, but within the community.

And so that's where I go back to the fact that working with the MLA for St. Vital, who's now a minister, working with the MLA for St. James, who is now a minister, working with the former Education minister and then-critic of the time, the MLA for Transcona, coming together and having those conversations and just saying, this is what we're going to be doing; do you have any ideas as far as, you know, how can we strengthen the legislation and the directives going to schools to—for coaches, parents, guardians, volunteers and the like.

But you can't just stop there, because you have to then train—as we mentioned today, you know, we spoke about Education Week. It's not just teachers, coaches, volunteers.

The Speaker in the Chair

It's educational assistants; it's support staff; it's administration; it's senior administration; it's custodians; it's bus drivers. These are all individuals that are seeing the students on a day-to-day basis. And we have to make sure that they're all—they all have those tools

in the tool box to make sure that they're able to see some red flags.

So respect in schools, respect in sport, you know. I know also that we talk about, you know, another great program that I know that we put as a choice to school divisions, is Commit to Kids.

And so those three programs, in conjunction with Manitoba School Boards Association, Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba superintendents administration, Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Sport Manitoba, of course, because they have all their sport bodies encompassing within there. It's very important that we know what the options are and what we can be taking.

And so I am a little concerned that the two bills—the minister says that Bill 19 and Bill 21 are not going to be confusing to individuals, but, you know, I guess to try to overprotect kids is, I guess, the best way to go.

So we're going to see how they both shake out and pass and then just see what the public has to say at various committees, specifically on Bill 19.

We do know that the Education Minister talked about some funding and that, and, you know, when I think about listening to teachers, I think about back when we brought forward the teacher idea fund, and I know that there's some teachers in here, on all sides of the House, remember the teacher idea fund, and some of them are nodding their head.

It's unfortunate, though, that this NDP government went and cancelled—got rid of—and cut the teacher idea fund. They talk a good game about wanting to listen, and there—they say that they're, you know, that listening government, but I don't see the action and the proof on that, Honourable Speaker.

So I think the fact to reinstate the teacher idea fund, I think, would be a really good thing, so if the—when the—you know, I know the Education Minister is listening attentively on ideas, and because we've got this new working collaborative messaging that we've all of a sudden stumbled upon here on this last bill of debate, hopefully she'll take that back to her department—actually, take it back to her Finance Minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and say, it's unfortunate that you two, the Finance Minister and the Premier, cut the teacher idea fund, but let's reinstate it, because good ideas come from the teachers who are working at the front lines, and I just think that that's a beneficial program.

I also think the fact of cutting education this year was a horrendous mistake. I think Manitobans are going to pay dearly for it in the next few months, matter of

fact, within the next week or two when the tax bills start rolling out. I don't think that they're going to be very happy. And I'm encouraging all—

* (16:00)

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The hour being 4 o'clock, I'm now interrupting debate.

Today is the 14th sitting day after the first reading completion date. All government bills that had first reading moved within 20 sitting days of the Throne Speech and have been identified by the government as specified but not selected by the opposition as designated bills are eligible to have second reading moved today and have the question put.

For each such bill, the minister can speak for a maximum of 10 minutes, followed by up to a 15-minute question-and-answer period. Critics of recognized parties and independent members may then speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill, following which, I will put the question on second reading of the bill.

If such a bill had previously—if such a bill had been previously called for debate, any remaining actions just identified for each bill will be dealt with before the question will be put.

The House shall sit until midnight, and points of order and matters of privilege are deferred until all votes have been completed.

As announced, the list of bills that will follow this process today will be the following: Bill 19, Bill 11, Bill 26, Bill 3, Bill 4, Bill 21, Bill 15, Bill 28, Bill 37.

Accordingly, I will now call Bill 19, and just for everyone's information, the honourable Leader of the Opposition will have 10 minutes remaining to debate the bill.

Mr. Ewasko: Yes, we're into that timing of the various different bills and then—now, a shortened amount of time for opening statements, second reading, of course, committee and then—or, not committee—question and answer and then the response from the critic or another member.

So where I was going, Honourable Speaker, was we were talking about here debating, of course, Bill 19, keeping schools and—keeping students safe, and looking at the three different programs that I mentioned. But also, I was going on the fact of the cuts to education funding.

The cuts to education funding, Honourable Speaker, and where I was sort of saying is that within the next

few weeks—within the month—Manitobans are going to be receiving their tax bills, and they're going to see the implications of this NDP education cut, which then, in turn, is going to create and has created more than double-digit tax increases to Manitobans on their houses and properties. And we're also going to see the increase on rental units as well.

So when we also talk about respect in schools, respect in sport, Canadian Centre for Child Protection, we talk about Commit to Kids as well, these are very important programs to bring forward to the schools and give them those options.

Another incredible program, which would be nice to see as we are starting to roll out, as the Education Department when we were still in government, was to put some emphasis on Kids in the Know. Because I think there's a lot of situations out there right now, Honourable Speaker, where there are students that are going online and, again, not necessarily seeing the pitfalls and the red flags that are coming up.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And that's why it's also good that we, when we were in government, made it very important to emphasize the fact that it's also important to train the bystander, honourable Deputy Speaker.

So with that, I look forward to Bill 19 moving forward to committee, hearing what some committee—some community members have to say.

But before I do, I did want to mention that we—in 2022, we did put forward a quarter of a million dollars to develop and implement that Pathway to Safer Sport program and expand the training requirements for coaches and staff who work in the K-to-12 school system. And I guess, just so that the—I know that the Education Minister is listening very closely, and so what I'm hoping that they will take back and think about is, then, what are we doing for those students, those kids, those children in the early childhood learning sector?

So with that, honourable Speaker—honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to put a few words on the record, and I look forward to passing this bill to committee, hearing what members of Manitoba committee—at committee stage has to say in regard to Bill 19, and then look forward to debate on third reading.

Thanks, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Is there leave for the House to call the hour as midnight once the question been put on second reading of

Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts?

The Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for the House to call the hour as midnight once the question has been put on second reading of Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further speakers on Bill 19?

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 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools).

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 11—The Oil and Gas Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le pétrole et le gaz naturel, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Moses: I'm pleased to stand up today for bill—second reading of Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act. Purpose of this bill is to ensure a secure, stable and safe supply of essential fuels for Manitobans.

Currently, there is no specific requirement for pipeline licensees to promptly notify government of a shutdown. This lack of timely notification impacts contingency planning for both provincial and municipal governments to optimize pipeline shutdown planning.

Going forward, this amendment is intended to apply in the following scenarios: First, if a pipeline operator finds an anomaly that could impact the safe operation of a pipeline and the pipeline needs to be shut down immediately, then the operator must provide notification to the minister within 24 hours of shutdown. The operator will also need to provide

additional information on—or records as requested by the minister.

And, second, is if a pipeline operator plans an anomaly that could impact safe operation and the pipeline needs to be shut down soon, and if that shutdown interrupts the supply of refined petroleum products in the province, then a shutdown can only proceed by notification and consent of the minister.

The third is if a pipeline operator finds an anomaly that could impact its safe operation and the pipeline needs to be shut down soon, however, the shutdown will not interrupt supply of refined petroleum products in the province, then the process will remain unchanged.

In a cross-jurisdictional analysis of pipeline notification requirements, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan currently have notification requirements in specific circumstances only, such as natural causes, accidents, issues with infrastructure, et cetera.

* (16:10)

Manitoba's amendments takes a leading and balanced approach by responding to both the needs of industry and protecting the economy, economic security interests of Manitoba's public.

Further updates to the act include the department being able to put, rescind or vary additional terms or conditions on a permit licence or approval. Also, this additional flexibility will allow the department to address and change—address changing industrial and environmental concerns for long-standing projects that could not have been reasonably foreseen.

The director will be granted power to establish programs of inspection for wells, pipelines and other equipment used for the production of oil, gas, helium and natural hydrogen. While inspection provisions are present throughout the existing act, these provisions are being added to allow for clear maintenance and inspection controls and scheduling.

The minister will be able to enter into agreements allowing the exploration for and the production of natural hydrogen. This amendment addresses incoming industry requests relating to natural hydrogen. The change will allow for requests to be handled in the same way as other gas exploration and production as natural gas and helium.

In addition, the bill aligns the law with the needs of the industry and operations of government with the following updates: as the holders of wells, well-holders will now need to enter into agreements with the minister before disposing of saltwater in spacing

units that include Crown oil and gas rigs. This amendment will granting—would be granting authority to the minister to issue saltwater 'dispisal'—disposal permits under the saltwater disposal agreement. This will allow for the continued disposal of saltwater even when oil and gas rights have expired.

Another amendment being made is that the person who holds a lease or a private oil or gas rights will have to abandon the well or oil and gas facility in the leased area within 180 days. Currently, there is no requirement in the act for the well to be abandoned within 180 days after oil or gas lease on private freehold lands. This amendment will equalize the treatment for freehold and Crown oil-gas leases.

I want to end my comments by stating that this bill aligns with multiple economic and environmental priorities and ensures oil supply for Manitobans, a safe and secure oil supply. It updates our Oil and Gas Act, and ensures the steady, reliable supply of essential fuels while minimizing the burden on pipeline operators, taking care to protect our environment through more regular, thorough inspections.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I'd like to thank the member for bringing this bill forward, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act, Bill 11. I do have a number of questions for the minister, starting with—the first question is: Who has the minister consulted with on this particular bill?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): I appreciate the comment from members opposite, and I think it's very warranted to understand the consultation process for this. Obviously, we consulted with many of the pipeline operators, and I'll just name the largest, Imperial Oil. Had specific conversations with them regarding this bill.

And it's important for us to understand that this bill is aimed to protect Manitobans, the safe and reliable supply of oil products into our province. That's exactly what this bill aims for. And we have consulted with many people, and I'll hope to and will continue to listen to Manitobans in many facets in many areas to make sure that this bill and all of our bills ensure that

we're keeping safe, reliable economic interests and environmental interests at the heart of what we do for all Manitobans.

Mr. Wharton: I can appreciate the minister, certainly, consulting with Imperial Oil because, really, it's probably an understanding to most Manitobans listening and watching today that this bill is probably in a response to the fact that Imperial Oil had to shut down their pipeline recently under the NDP watch, knowing full well that it was going to 'cause chaos for Manitobans and particularly in Winnipeg, where gas was being shut off. So we can appreciate why there is going to be more oversight.

What I want to understand a little further, though, is the minister said he—Imperial Oil and said many, many others, will—I guess, basically, will the department be imposing—

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

Mr. Moses: I, you know, respect the member's ability to bring these to the Chamber and I want to have a very good dialogue with him throughout this question-and-answer period. Respectfully, I didn't hear the question there, so I'd appreciate if the member could answer—ask the question again and I'd be very happy to respond and answer.

But I do want to just say that I'm glad that he had, you know, signalled and mentioned the issue with the shutdown last year. That's exactly why we want to bring this bill forward: to ensure that Manitobans have that safe, reliable supply of oil products into the province.

Mr. Wharton: Appreciate the opportunity to finish my question; obviously a very important piece of legislation.

The minister's department, will they be imposing any additional terms or conditions on developers after the—an issue—the licence has been issued?

Mr. Moses: There's no other conditions that are going to be applied other than this—what's already in the act and what is proposed in this amendment. Obviously, this amendment speaks to existing pipelines, their operation and specifically around if they're asked, in an anomaly, the cause of the shutdown of the pipeline.

And so we really want to make sure that those oil products can flow into the province with reliability, with stability, with safety as our chief concerns. And so this bill aims to strengthen those, make sure that Manitobans can count on a government to protect our economy and our environment at the same time.

This bill does that, strikes a leading approach but also a balanced approach. And so we're happy with this bill, being able to put it forward for all Manitobans.

Mr. Wharton: Minister, just for the record, said that there wouldn't be any additional concerns for licensees going forward or any additional terms or conditions. However, in the explanatory note, the minister or director, and I'll quote, are—or an inspector may impose additional terms or conditions on a permit, licence or approval, or rescind a various term or condition with previously imposed.

So I'm not sure. Maybe the minister can explain what the difference is about new conditions—new, older conditions or putting additional conditions on a licence holder.

Mr. Moses: So as I said in my opening comments around this bill and my statement, the changes in the act are not imposing any new restrictions on producers of oil. It is really saying that there are cases when projects—the parameters of the projects—requires more flexibility from the director.

And so it empowers the director to have that flexibility to understand and adjust what the real-world situations that all producers are facing; give them the flexibility that the, quite frankly, industry has been looking for from a director, to be able to respond in real time to some of the changes without having to go back to adjusting legislation.

So we're very comfortable with the approach that we're taking in this bill to both protect Manitobans, the industry and making sure that we're doing so in a very balanced approach.

Mr. Wharton: Again, I appreciate the answer from the minister and saying that there wouldn't be any new—really there's nothing new here. However, in the explanatory note, as well, paragraph 2, it talks about natural hydrogen being added and helium.

So I know I met with the minister's staff. Unfortunately, the minister couldn't join me at the time during the bill briefing, so maybe he can explain today exactly where we're going with helium and natural hydrogen.

Mr. Moses: Appreciate that—I appreciate the question.

This is a new and emerging industry, and we want to have legislation that reflects it. These changes are meant to protect Manitobans, but also to modernize the efforts that we have and we can—industries that we might potentially have here in Manitoba. We've heard from industry: helium and natural hydrogen are two

areas that are very new and novel for our province, and we want to have legislation that can respond to that.

* (16:20)

So that's why those two are now included in the act, and will allow industry to continue to grow and explore in those areas, and make sure that we are reflective of the actual realities as going on in the oil and gas sector. So that's why we bring forward these additions to the act, make sure that Manitobans protected in this industry.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Wharton: I thank the minister for that clarity for Manitobans.

Also, just building on that, we know that the government, and particularly the minister, talked about and was confirmed in the bill briefing with his staff, about a hydrogen strategy that was coming. It seems like the cart before the horse a little bit when we're talking hydrogen in this bill, when we don't have a strategy for hydrogen and helium going forward.

So I ask, Minister, today for Manitobans listening: When is that strategy going to be ready?

Mr. Moses: Well, I think it's really important for us to both focus specifically on what's going on in this bill, which opens up new avenues for helium and natural hydrogen. It also protects Manitobans with a safe and reliable approach to our oil supply throughout Manitoba.

I appreciate the minister's asking—the member opposite is asking about strategies, and so I'd like to point to him for our terrific and amazing critical mineral strategy that we released a few months ago, which outlines very extensive approach to doing critical mineral projects in the right way in Manitoba, investing and streamlining approach with industry, partnering with First Nations and the Manitoba Métis, as well as making sure that we do so with the strongest environmental and human rights standards.

Very proud of that strategy, and we'll continue to do that good work on behalf of all Manitobans.

Mr. Wharton: Certainly we can appreciate the duplication of the critical mineral strategy the member—the minister announced because it really is a mirror image of we announced back in 2022-23. So, critical minerals, as we all know, are very important to our grain economy going forward. But that's not the question today. What I'd like to know from the minister is,

again, will there be new conditions for an environmental licence for Alamos Gold?

Mr. Moses: This bill very clearly speaks to pipelines, and so that's the focus of this bill. Obviously, we know, with the incident with Imperial Oil last year, the shutdown of their pipeline, that we wanted to respond in a strong way, in a way that Manitobans can count on, count on a government that's going to ensure the safe, reliable and environmentally friendly response to ensure that safe supply of oil into the products, so we can move our economy forward and Manitobans can move about in their daily lives. That's what this bill does: leading, national leading, but—yet balanced way. And we'll continue to do that good work for Manitobans.

So I'm not sure—I'm very proud of the Alamos Gold project, but I'm not sure that that is very relevant to this specific bill, but I'd love if the member has a follow-up question, I'd love to hear it.

Mr. Wharton: I appreciate the minister allowing me to just quickly reiterate that we're very proud of the Alamos Gold mine that we started back in 2021, and certainly, we're happy that the NDP agreed with us and actually went up and cut the ribbon that we did, so thank you for that.

Second of all, what kind of message does this send producers that lease agreements that can be nullified simply with a stroke of a pen by either the minister, the director or a staff member?

Mr. Moses: Think the narrative, honourable Deputy Speaker, that the member opposite uses is not the—an accurate characterization of the bill.

The bill allows for—if the member's looking specifically on page 5 of the bill, which references abandonment of oil and well facilities, that perhaps that might be the area that the member is looking at: requires 180 days after the lease it disposals or—cancellation. This is where we want to allow the director to actually work with companies and give them that flexibility to, say, if they have a 'particularler'—particular issue that would cause them to not abide by that 180 days, well, they can work with the director and have that ability to continue their work in their project, on the oil project, and do so in a way that makes sense for their project—

The Deputy Speaker: Time has expired.

Debate

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

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Again, it's always a privilege to get up and a pleasure to get up on behalf of Manitobans and talk about legislation, and certainly today with Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act.

As I've mentioned to the minister in just casual discussion, because, unfortunately, he wasn't available to have—to provide a briefing directly, but the staff, again, did a wonderful job and were very—acceptance of some of the issues that we heard—concerns that we had for Manitobans, and certainly were—I'm sure they passed them on to the minister.

Of course, we'll talk more about what some of those concerns were when we look at getting this to committee and having a chance for Manitobans to actually step up and issue their concerns, and maybe in some cases their support. But we'll certainly let Manitobans make that decision based on giving them the information they require to make an informed decision.

But, you know, today, again, I just had some concerns I wanted to get on the record. I know we have a lot of business to deal with, and I'm looking forward to third reading and getting to committee. So what I wanted to do is just ensure that, again, we certainly would be supporting legislation that protects Manitobans, and I don't believe that anybody wants to see another Imperial Oil incident happen; and I know that industry doesn't, in talking to industry direct myself.

And certainly they are good 'stewarts' of what they do, and they know they provide, whether it be energy or fuel to Manitobans on a daily basis and how important that responsibility is for them, and ensuring that government has the right tools in place is an important act, and certainly we agree with that.

Some of the concerns is the overarching issues I have with the minister's ability to, you know, essentially halfway through a licence, or could be a month in or six months in, determine that there may be some changes coming to that licence.

Now, whether that's changes because of pressures environmentally or other areas yet to be determined, we don't know. But I'm concerned about industry being concerned and looking in their rear-view mirror, saying, well, we're going to make hundreds of millions of dollars investments in Manitoba, but we're going to

get a licence, and that's great; hopefully, it goes quicker than it has under the former NDP government.

I know we were well on our way to getting those licences approved within anywhere from 45 to 60 days, much better than what it was under the current—or the past government—so, the NDP government. But I can tell you that industry is—doesn't want to come and invest that kind of money and look in the rear-view mirror and say, uh-oh, the minister's office called, they're looking at putting a new regulation in on our current licence that we've been operating for a year and a half. And industry is definitely going to be up in arms.

So I want to make sure that when we get to committee and the minister is there, and there's stakeholders and business there and industry there making their concerns public to the minister, that the minister has eyes on this particular issue. Because I know I've heard it from folks and business folks around the province and in the city of Winnipeg, and they're telling us: Be careful, because we need to ensure that we're not only growing our businesses locally here to help grow our economy here in Manitoba, but also not putting too much red tape and too much what-ifs in the back—in the rear-view mirror, honourable Deputy Speaker.

So those are areas that we're concerned about and that industry is concerned about, and that's why I'm happy to be able to stand up here today during second reading and put those few words on the record, and also look forward to meeting with the minister and their staff in third reading when the public has an opportunity also to weigh in on this very important legislation, Bill 11.

So with those few words, honourable Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the time, and again, it's always a pleasure to get up here on behalf of Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 26—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by minister of—honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (16:30)

MLA Sandhu: Currently, under The Vital Statistics Act, persons wanting to change their sex designation are required to submit a supporting letter from a health-care professional as part of their application process.

The Vital Statistics Branch has received a number of requests from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to remove this requirement from the act.

Obtaining a supporting letter from a health-care professional to confirm a change of sex designation that the applicant identifies with can be difficult and may create an obstacle for individuals. This 'precess' also adds unnecessary work for health-care professionals who must take care—take time away from patient care to fill out the required document for the applicant.

The bill represents government's commitment to support the rights of a gender-diverse person and to advocate for the right of self-expression and identification for all Manitobans.

It will also align Manitoba with other jurisdictions that no longer require a supporting letter from a health-care professional under their respective legislation. All other supporting material and alternate documentation prescribed under the act, including a signed and witnessed statutory declaration and evidence of legal name, place of birth and residency, do not change.

The amendment also updates the act with gender-neutral language.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I'll keep these questions brief. This is a very important bill.

How would this bill impact transgender and gender-diverse people in Manitoba?

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

Again, as I said in my preamble, that, you know what, this is a—reduce the barriers that currently have it on there, where they need—required a health professional's letter saying—supporting document. This will eliminate that, and it will make it easier for a person who wants to change their sex designation if they're 18 and above.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Perchotte: Can the member tell us which stakeholders were consulted regarding this bill?

The Speaker in the Chair

MLA Sandhu: As I said in my preamble as well, you know what, the community has been reaching out to the Vital Statistics. And it's not only for currently reaching out to the government; it has been reaching out to the previous government as well. And the bill—seven and a half years, they did nothing, and we are taking action.

We want to make sure we are respecting everyone in Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Perchotte: Were health-care professionals consulted on this bill?

MLA Sandhu: Again, as I said, we are freeing those health-care professionals to do—to look at—you know, to work with the patient. This is where they should be providing those services.

Again, we are an always-listening government. It's not only the health-care professional; we listen to all Manitobans. It's not only here in the legislation—Legislature that we listen too; we go out into the community and listen to people as well.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Perchotte: I want to conclude my questions now.

I just want to thank the minister for bringing this forward and to ask if he has a personal experience that he can share with the House, how this can impact people in our community.

MLA Sandhu: As I said earlier, that you know what, this will make it easier for those who want to change their sex designation from where they don't require this health-care professional's letter anymore. This will make it—going to make it easier. Again, as I said, we respect all Manitobans, and this is one of the ways we are making it a little bit easier for those folks who want to change their sex designation.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Thank you again, Honourable Speaker. I'm very proud to stand up and just get a few words on the record regarding this bill.

As we've said before in this House, that we are here to represent all Manitobans. And a bill like this coming forward does just that. When we take a look at the communities that we need to represent—and the PCs have established programs in the past and different things in support of our two-spirited and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

We have done a number of things, including the Gender Equity Manitoba Secretariat, which is now called the Women and Gender Equity. The PCs invested over \$3.2 million in the Rainbow Resource Centre Place of Pride. That was Canada's first 2SLGBTQ+ campus. The PCs also invested \$150,000 in 2Spirit Manitoba's Medicine Wolf Healing Place. The previous PC government supported the Reel Pride International Film Festival. That's Canada's oldest 2SLGBTQ+ film festival.

And we need to work towards the future where all Manitobans have a sense of belonging, including two-spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people. It'd be very disingenuous of me to stand up here and say that I understand the challenges facing transgendered or gender-diverse people. It'd be extremely disingenuous. But what I can do is I can stand here and tell you, as a person of compassion, of understanding and empathy, I can feel for people who have the strength to come forward and say that they want to claim their identity, their true identity.

And myself, as a man, I've identified as a man and I've been doing that my entire life. And I didn't have to convince anybody that I was a man. I didn't have to go see a doctor and have the doctor confirm that I was a man. And I think that it is degrading to make anybody do that. You identify how you identify because

you know inside yourself that is who you are. You don't need anybody else to confirm what you know, no more than you would need somebody to confirm if you love your children or you believe in your god. This is something that we must do for everybody in our community and stand up for the rights of all people.

And just on those few words, I want to say thank you very much for the opportunity to speak and thank you very much for bringing this bill forward.

The Speaker: No further members wishing to debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 3—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 3, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy), that Bill 3, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg et la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire, be now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (16:40)

Mr. Simard: Honourable Speaker, Bill 3 will amend The City of Winnipeg Charter and The Planning Act to reduce delays to local zoning amendments by establishing higher and more reasonable thresholds for items being referred to the Municipal Board. Reducing delays to local zoning amendments will speed up development approvals and make it easier for municipalities to build new housing to address housing shortages.

Bill 3 amends The City of Winnipeg Charter and The Planning Act by the following: increasing the number of local objectors required to trigger a public

appeal of a zoning bylaw to the Municipal Board from 25 eligible persons to at least 300 eligible persons for a municipality or planning district with a census population of at least 6,000; increasing the number of local objectors required to trigger a public appeal of a zoning bylaw to the Municipal Board to the greater of 100 eligible persons or 5 per cent of the census population for a municipality or planning district with a census population of less than 6,000; the bill also repeals existing provisions which require the Municipal Board to hold a hearing when objections to a zoning bylaw is received from 50 per cent of the total number of owners of property within 100 metres of the affected property.

There are two reasons why we have brought this bill forward. The first is to enlighten the load of the Municipal Board, who has overseen many zoning appeals that overshadow the other services they can offer municipalities as they grow. Bill 3 removes the restrictions that the previous PC government put on municipalities in the first place when they brought in bill 37. The top-down approach jammed the Municipal Board and municipalities who are trying to do their part to build up our province.

The second reason is about autonomy, a municipality's autonomy to build homes for their residents to more economic opportunities and to make their own decisions as an autonomous level of government. We came to this understanding after countless hours of listening to mayors, reeves and many locally elected officials.

I am confident that the increase to the threshold for public appeals balances local decision-making autonomy with the value of public participation in the land-use planning process. At the end of the day, municipalities included in the planning of the Capital Region—oh, yes, and that we want to be a partner as we build Manitoba together. That's why these changes to The City of Winnipeg Charter and The Planning Act will deliver this—will deliver on this idea as we work in collaboration with municipalities to expedite approval timelines and ensure their freedom to land-use planning in their communities.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thanks for the opportunity to ask some questions on behalf of Manitobans and, of course, municipalities.

My first question to the minister is, how does Bill 3 ensure that the voices of Winnipeg and municipal residents are adequately heard during zoning bylaw amendments, given the increased required number from objections of 25 to 300?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): There are a number of processes that currently exist within municipal processes where people can come in and speak on issues affecting their community. This raises the threshold in terms of having a public referral in order to slow-to speed up the process for the Municipal Board.

Mr. King: The next question to the minister: How will the changes to objection thresholds affect smaller municipalities or planning districts with the population under 6,000?

Mr. Simard: Smaller municipalities under 6,000 will either have 100 objectors or 5 per cent, whichever is greater.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, to the minister: What measures are in place to ensure transparency in the decision-making process for zoning bylaws under the amended City of Winnipeg Charter and Planning Act?

Mr. Simard: This bill seeks to change a threshold that the 'transparency' that exists within The Municipal Act can—is still there and that the processes that are within these autonomous governments will continue to be in place to ensure the integrity of the process.

Mr. King: Just with the housing development, I want to ask the minister, how does Bill 3 aim to balance the need for faster housing development with community concerns?

Mr. Simard: Although residents are able to voice their concerns in front of councils as delegations and present on the issues that affect them, raising the threshold to a number that requires objectors in a higher volume should speed up the process.

Mr. King: I'm wondering if you could clarify how transitional provisions will be applied to zoning bylaws that were already under review before this bill was enacted?

Mr. Simard: Well, we are working with the Municipal Board to—and they are continuing to do their reviews and working on those items. And this is a question which basically underscores the value for this

amendment to make sure that less frivolous appeals are made and progress can continue.

Mr. King: I'm just wondering, why has the minister eliminated the ability of neighbouring property owners within a hundred metres of a proposed development to request a hearing?

Mr. Simard: The reason for this is to continue on the same answer path which I was sharing earlier, that I—a collective of people need to come forward to be able to voice their concerns in a manner in which is non-frivolous.

And the more that we can provide opportunities for those members who live in that hundred-metre area to be able to voice their concerns in open council, those will continue. But this is about the public referral.

Mr. King: Thank the minister for that answer.

The City of Winnipeg council passed a resolution calling for the number to be set at 150 objectors.

Just wondering why the minister and the department decided to go to 300 objectors to require a hearing instead of the 150 that the City of Winnipeg recommended at first.

Mr. Simard: As we worked through the consultation process and as we dealt with the frustrations that exist in municipalities and local governments on the speed in which the Municipal Board can work through all of these different appeals, the number that we settled on is the number that we settled on.

Mr. King: At one time, a City councillor expressed some concerns about the City allowing larger housing developments up to 48 feet high within a hundred metres of a transit way.

Since there are transit ways throughout the city, most of the city will be opened up for these developments, even where it's mostly single-family dwellings, changing the character of many neighbourhoods. So Winnipeggers will find it difficult to object or get a hearing if they need to have 300 people sign an objection.

So how is that respectful to local input? Does the NDP not want to listen to homeowners about new developments in their neighbourhood?

Mr. Simard: Nothing of the sort. We continue to listen to our citizens and as well as local governments are doing that. And when bylaws are set forth by local governance, there is many steps along the way in which local objections can be made.

This is about the public referral and having a larger threshold to prevent frivolous appeals.

* (16:50)

Mr. King: I'm just wondering, does this minister maybe think that this legislation favours the developers over residents?

Mr. Simard: As stated earlier, this legislation favours the Municipal Board's ability to have a volume of appeals that have been credible and a volume of appeals that will continue respective of the legislation.

These appeals can go forward, these referrals can go forward; we are just seeking a higher threshold.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: Then the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thanks for the opportunity to get up and speak and put some words on record on behalf of not just all Manitobans, but municipalities and councils throughout the province.

I want to give a shout-out to the councils and mayors and reeves and the AMM for the great work that they do, and welcome them to Winnipeg the last couple days—having some great deliberations, great breakout sessions. And I had the opportunity to get over there and chat with many of the councils that—I had the opportunity to work with some of them over the years, and no, it's a great opportunity.

My colleague mentioned earlier today in question period how their door is always open and the lines are always open, but I heard the contrary from certain council members today, that those doors are locked and sealed and they can't get in, and the phone lines are cut, just like many of the municipal programs such as the Green Team and the Building Sustainable Communities.

But having said that, I want to congratulate the municipalities on the great work that they do for their communities.

So I want to take some time here, seeing as how we don't have much, just to state some of the concerns—some of the good things about this legislation and some of the concerns with this legislation.

So some of the good things, support—that would support this bill are just the streamlining of the development process; raising the threshold for objections, of course, reduces the number of Municipal Board hearings, speeding up approvals for zoning changes.

We see that for sure. This is something—this legislation is something that we can support, because, you know, over a number of years, even the years that I was on council, this is something the councils have been asking for, just to speed up some development and maybe not—cut some of the red tape.

Of course, again, though it reduces delays and red tape, developers often face delays due to small number of objections, triggering these hearings which can slow down projects for months or possibly even years. The bill helps ensure that only significant opposition warrants further review. So, yes, it's definitely—cuts down on some red tape and some huge delays for sure.

And it helps, of course, as the minister mentioned in his comments, that it supports some economic growth. Faster zoning approvals can attract more investment and development in Winnipeg and across Manitoba, Honourable Speaker.

Another support for this bill would—that it lines—it aligns with larger cities also within Canada. So many larger cities have higher thresholds for triggering hearings, ensuring that only broad public concern leads for a further review. So it brings us in line with many other cities in Canada.

Some concerns with the bill, Honourable Speaker, and I mentioned many of them in my questions to the minister throughout the question period, was it reduces the public participation for sure. Like, the jump from 25 to 300 objections makes it harder for residents to have their voices heard. And smaller community groups may struggle to reach 300 signatures, reducing their input in important zoning decisions. So definitely a concern that I'll raise here today in the House, and possibly at committee we'll hear it again from other residents and councils.

Another concern would be it does favour—I believe it does slightly favour the developers over the residents. Some argue this change tilts the system in favour of developing—developers, making it easier for them to push through projects with less community oversight. So could lead to overdevelopment, poorly planned projects in some areas.

Another disadvantage for small and rural communities is outside of Winnipeg, the requirement for 100 objections or 5 per cent of the population makes it difficult for smaller towns to challenge zoning changes. So rural areas may feel powerless against large-scale developments.

Another concern is that it reduces transparency and accountability. Public hearings allow communities

to see and question zoning decisions. This bill could mean fewer public discussions. And without as many hearings, more decisions could be made behind closed doors. Little bit of a concern there that I've been hearing.

Could lead to some more legal challenges out there, too, to delay some. So if people can't voice their concerns through public hearings, they sometimes resort to legal action, which could lead to some costly court battles.

So, the balance here: supporters say the bill will modernize the zoning process and prevent unnecessary delays, encourage growth. And the concerned side argues that it limits public participation, weakens community influence and could lead to unbalanced development.

So, Honourable Speaker, those are just some of the main pros and cons, I guess you could say, of this bill. And I'm happy that I got the opportunity to put them on the record.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: No further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 3, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):
On House business, Honourable Speaker.

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

MLA Fontaine: Is there leave for a 45-minute recess that would take us to quarter to 6 p.m., with a five-minute bell ringing?

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to take a 45-minute recess with five-minute bell ringing to call us back? That would take—we'd come back in at 5:45. Is it agreed? [Agreed]

The House is now recessed.

The House recessed at 4:58 p.m.

The House resumed at 5:45 p.m.

The Speaker: Order, please. We are now back in session.

Bill 4—The Planning Amendment Act

The Speaker: And, as previously announced, we will now move on to second reading of Bill 4, The Planning Amendment Act.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy), that Bill 4, The Planning Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Simard: Our government understands that the best way to build communities across the province is to bring them in as willing partners committed to working together towards a united vision. This is a significantly different approach from the previous PC government's heavy-handed implementation to the planning of the Capital Region.

The PCs failed municipalities when they took away their decision-making power over their own land use, ignored their concerns with the planning process and damaged relationships with rural Manitobans. Communities outside of Winnipeg, if they want it, should be preserved, as they deserve the freedom to maintain who they are: an independent Manitoba municipality.

Our government understands this and no one should be forced into amalgamation. That's why we did the work. We sat down with mayors, reeves and local leaders and had a frank conversation about the experience they had to endure with the Capital Planning Region process under the PCs.

Just by listening, we're already hearing what needs they want us to address: being tough on crime; increasing affordable housing, and protecting our waterways. But, most importantly, they want their provincial representatives to respect the autonomy of municipalities and their freedom to make decisions for themselves and their communities.

This bill does just that. It will reset the relationship with Manitoba municipalities in the Capital Region. Voluntary membership means that municipalities will have a choice to sit at the table.

Bill 4 will amend The Planning Act to deliver on our government's commitment to give current member municipalities of the Capital Planning Region the

freedom to choose whether to continue to be part of the planning region.

Key features of the bill include enabling current member municipalities of the Capital Planning Region to voluntarily withdraw—voluntarily withdraw—from the region by passing and seconding—and sending a council resolution to the minister. Municipalities can initiate the steps to withdraw once the bill becomes law by royal assent and then up until the next general municipal election in October 2026 when it's held.

The bill also provides future opportunities for a council to withdraw from membership in the Capital Planning Region at the time of the 10-year review of the plan. Bill 4 also enables municipal councils that wish to become a new member of the Capital Planning Region to do so at any time by holding a public hearing, passing a council resolution and sending it to the minister.

Finally, Bill 4 extends the deadline by which the Capital Planning Region board must adopt a regional plan bylaw to January 1, 2027, or dates later prescribed by the minister by regulation.

A renewed Capital Planning Region board will reset and reshape the relationship going forward with the freedom and choice being its guiding principles. By working together, Capital Region municipalities, Indigenous partners and the Province can clearly focus on key shared priorities such as transportation improvements, water and waste water investments, more affordable housing and safeguarding the health of our waterways for future and current generations.

Regional planning must be flexible and adaptable to regional as well as local needs. It must address broader shared priorities through co-ordination and cost sharing where possible.

Thank you.

* (17:50)

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): It—once again, great to get up and ask some questions for municipalities.

Question to—the first one to the minister is: How does the bill ensure that municipalities have sufficient flexibility to join or withdraw from the Capital Region while maintaining regional collaboration?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): As stated in my opening remarks, municipalities can join at any time. That seems pretty flexible to me. Also, prior to the date of January 1, 2027.

So when you think of something like that, it allows municipalities to make a decision and then act on it. But to make a plan work, you need to work at it, and that's why regions that opt in are committing a 10–to a 10-year process to continue to work this—on this plan with their partners.

Mr. King: In regards to public hearings, can the minister tell me what steps are being taken to ensure that public hearings are accessible and inclusive for all community members when municipalities decide on their membership in the Capital Region—in the Capital Planning Region—sorry.

Mr. Simard: Excellent question. We're doing it right now in this House. We have debate; we're being—passing it to committee. People will be able to come and speak at the public hearing.

But in addition to that, they will have the opportunity to attend municipal councils' meetings and ask questions about the benefit of being part of the planning region, or voice their concerns against it.

So I think that's a win-win for democracy, when you can put something in front of people and say, what do you really think about this? And that's what they did when they elected officials, and then that's what we're doing by giving the power to decide what they want.

Mr. King: Just in regards to regional planning, can the minister tell me how will the bill improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional planning processes, particularly in terms of infrastructure and land-use development?

Mr. Simard: People achieve great things when they work together and when you have a willing partner ready to sit down with you and be a part of something. And that's what the previous iteration of the Capital Planning Region did not have. People were forced to participate, against their wishes possibly. I don't think that set the conditions for any winning planning or any working together, when you're forced to come to the table.

I think by allowing people to make that choice to say, we are in it; we are in it with our partners; that's how you succeed big things—with big things.

Mr. King: I've been hearing from some municipalities—just some concerns on the contiguous municipalities.

What criteria are used to determine which municipalities are included in a planning region, and how does this impact regional cohesion?

Mr. Simard: Excellent question. And we understand that when the entire region is included and they all work together and everyone is holding hands through the process, that's great.

But we also understand that each community understands their own need, and when—we understand regional planning to some degree already exists; we're just strengthening that. And when we have regions that are willing partners that are bordering the Capital Region to do big things together and to have a shared benefit, I always think that's a winning condition, and that's the most important thing.

And the attraction of working together to accomplish big economic development, I think, is always a great thing to see.

Mr. King: In regards to the review process, how frequently will regional planning bylaws be reviewed, and what mechanisms are in place to ensure they remain relevant to evolving community needs?

Now, he mentioned earlier in an answer that if you opt in, you're in for 10 years. Does that correlate with the review—the bylaw review process?

Mr. Simard: Another great question.

And what we are—what this is about is about a commitment to our regional plan that takes time to develop and actualize. And we're talking about major projects in housing, sewer, transit, road construction, and you just can't do that over one year.

If we just judged the opposition's performance over 18 months, I don't think it would be very good. So some things take time and we'll just continue to work on realizing a good future for the Capital Region.

Mr. King: Now in regards to the financial obligations here, are there provisions in the bill to address financial obligations for municipalities that choose to withdraw from the Capital Planning Region?

Mr. Simard: What we're really, really excited about is the financial benefit of willing partners working together to make big things happen. And being able to actualize those things with the strength of—in numbers and the financial benefit that occurs when people work together and put their boots on and their work

gloves on to be able to get great things done is really important.

Of course, there always has to be a commitment from each municipal body to be able to say, we're in this and we're going to be working together to make sure things happen. And those are always worked out with willing partners.

Mr. King: I'm not sure, maybe I didn't make my question clear enough, but there is certain financial obligations to these municipalities in the metro region that they have to pay as an annual fee to be part of the planning region.

Now, my question is: What are the financial obligations to those municipalities now, whether they opt in or opt out?

Mr. Simard: I just redirect the critic to the financial benefit of working together to actualize large projects for the region—large and small.

And when we work together to be able to actualize a plan that makes sense for everyone and to maximize the benefit of federal dollars or provincial dollars, it's always a good thing. And we believe that in the long run, groups that work together to make big projects, as well as small projects real, the financial benefit is extremely high.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, I'm going to ask the question one more time and maybe I'll be a little more clear.

The municipalities that are involved in the Capital Region at this time have to pay an annual fee per capita to belong to the Capital Planning Region.

I'm wondering what those financial obligations are now moving forward if the municipality opts in or opts out of the region.

Thank you.

Mr. Simard: We'll continue to—and I'll continue to reiterate my response, and that's what this is all about, is debating this issue, going to committee and providing the clarity that people want. They—people want clarity to see whether they're in or they're out, and they were forced to do it prior.

They are being asked to participate. The details for each individual municipality will be very clear before making that decision, and they'll be able to weigh that decision based on the realities that currently exist within their community.

Mr. King: I'll just move on to another question, Honourable Speaker, because I've got a number of them here. Hopefully by committee, maybe we can get the answer to that one.

I was just wondering, Honourable Speaker, who the NDP consulted with before they made this decision to make the metro region optional for the members—member municipalities.

Mr. Simard: I would ask the member to ask the question again. I didn't catch the very first part.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, my question was: Who did the minister consult with before he made this decision to make the metro regional optional for the member municipalities?

Mr. Simard: Every single municipality that was involved in the Capital Planning Region. We are open door. We heard loud and clear their concerns, and we are working toward alleviating them.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, my next question to the minister: Does this mean the end of the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region?

Municipalities and councils that change every few years decide to opt out or opt back in. Will that give any stability for business, homeowners and developers on the rules and regulations within the municipalities?

* (18:00)

Mr. Simard: Absolutely not the end of the Winnipeg Metro Region. What we are doing right here is we're resetting the table and we're coming with a fresh approach that will ensure success of the region rather than forcing it to the table with no willing partners or some unwilling partners. You can't succeed that way. And we'll continue to respect individual municipalities, autonomous municipalities, to set the agendas for their communities rather than having them set for them.

Mr. King: I'd like to ask the minister: What will be the drinking water regulations that the minister is still requiring municipalities to comply with?

Mr. Simard: Well, we absolutely would have high drinking standards of water. That is not what we're discussing here. What we're discussing is a participation in a planning region and a planning region with the high standards that Manitobans inspect and deserve.

Mr. King: Could the minister tell me, Honourable Speaker, what some of the things are that municipal regions can accomplish by working together on

infrastructure, economic development, roads, waste water and water management?

Mr. Simard: I can think of no better example than the facility of CentrePort, which was a joint venture between the RM of Rosser and the City of Winnipeg, as an example of what regional partners can do. And this was a success because of the willing partnership between the City and that particular municipality as well as the Province that guided them through that process.

There are opportunities across the region, whether it's building high- and low-density buildings, whether it's building roads, whether it's increasing water capacity, whether it's increasing waste water treatment, whether it's contributing to a collective approach to be able to maximize the economic benefit in whichever opportunities arise.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, I've been hearing from some municipalities involved in the Capital Region that they feel a little bit with the deadline of being right before an election, a municipal election, that they feel kind of it is a challenge whether they should run again, and they're worried about some of the people that will be running because they won't.

So I'm just wondering if—have you given more thought to the deadline on the opt-in or opt-out, as it certainly—they find it a challenging deadline as to whether they want to decide to run for their community again.

Mr. Simard: I can appreciate the question, but what we want to provide to each individual municipality is the clarity to make a decision for that current council at this current time to make a decision for their community. They will be able to make that decision with clear eyes and with the intent to communicate that to whichever voter they want to entice, whether it's one that is for or against the participation in the CPR.

Mr. King: Just a question for the minister: Will he put more money into water management plans, water pipelines, reservoirs, flood management and mitigation infrastructure and regional highways to encourage regional development projects throughout the province and the Capital Region?

Mr. Simard: Absolutely. We're already doing it. We're doing it across the province. We're doing it across the Capital Region. Just this week, we announced a number of waste water and water projects through the Manitoba Water Services Board, which will continue to do its great work. We fund projects whether they're part of the Capital Region or not. We do it for

Brandon, we do it for Swan River and we do it for Melita.

So that will be consistent, that will be steadfast and will continue.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Once again, I'm happy to stand here and put some words on the record for all Manitobans and, again, our hard-working municipal councils and the councils in the Capital Region, which I actually have a number of in my own constituency of Lakeside.

So I have been definitely talking to a number of these municipal officials that have had concerns over this bill and over, of course, the—what caused it all was the Plan20-50, which was the Capital Region plan.

So again, I did some research and did some questioning, did some talking with some of those people and came up with some benefits of this bill and I—and some concerns with this bill. So one of the—we'll start with the benefits, of course; the pros and cons here and what we want to see for our municipalities.

Number one is local autonomy and this is certainly something that gives the municipalities—they can choose whether to participate in the Capital Region rather than being forced into it. I don't think there's anybody more familiar with the term, forced amalgamation, than the former NDP government.

So forced amalgamation is something that the minister used; the term here in his opening remarks. It's certainly not something that we want to see ever again for our municipalities because that's certainly a term that scares them, especially when the NDP say it. So it gives local governments more control over their own development priorities.

Number two on this bill—benefit of it is it, again, reduces bureaucracy and red tape. Municipalities that don't see value in regional planning won't have to attend meetings or comply with regional policies, and it saves time and resources by eliminating unnecessary administrative burdens. So certainly, back in the red tape department, it reduces some of that.

The bill encourages voluntary collaboration. Municipalities can still partner with neighbouring communities when it makes sense for them. A perfect example right now: my area of Lakeside is—the town of Stonewall and the RM of Woodlands is currently working on a

regional reverse osmosis water plant to serve both of the communities and expand on their water systems. So there's two—one municipality is in the Capital Region and one isn't. So we're—you know, regardless of what goes forward here with the Capital Region planning, we hope that all the neighbouring municipalities can continue to work together like that.

The terms of regional co-operation is based on mutual benefit rather than legal requirements, so it's not two municipalities being told that they have to work together, they just voluntarily do it.

Another one is it provides more flexibility for the smaller municipalities. Rural or smaller municipalities may not have the same urban development needs as, say, the city of Winnipeg. It allows them to focus on local concerns, such as agriculture, small-scale industry and community services.

This bill, it certainly could lead to some faster decision making in our municipalities. And that's one thing I enjoyed about municipal government compared to where I am now; it was much faster decision making and much more productive.

So those are some of the benefits of this bill. Now, I'm going to talk about some of the concerns in the time that I have remaining here. So the—my concerns with this—and these are all reasons for the Capital Region planning.

So now, with this bill, it'll weaken the regional planning and the co-ordination. The Capital Planning Region was created to ensure municipalities work together on land use, infrastructure and growth. Municipalities withdraw, it could lead to an uncoordinated urban expansion and inefficient land use.

Another one would be infrastructure and cost-sharing issues. So regional planning helps share the costs of major infrastructure projects, roads, public transit, et cetera. Some municipalities leave: costs will increase for the ones that remain. Rural municipalities might struggle to fund major projects on their own, and that's what we see with a lot of these smaller municipalities; they just don't have the tax base to fund these projects on their own, so they rely on partnering with other municipalities.

Another one would be potential for uncontrolled development and sprawl. Now what that means is, without regional oversight, municipalities might approve developments that don't align with their broader planning goals. This could lead to urban sprawl, environmental concerns and inefficient use of resources.

* (18:10)

Another one is uncertainty for business and investors. Regional planning provides stability for businesses and developers. That was another huge advantage of the metropolitan region, was the fact that developers have the infrastructure already there or can connect to it to make things work. So if municipalities enter, leave the Capital Region, it will—at will, it could create uncertainty about zoning, infrastructure and long-term investment.

Now, Honourable Speaker, one of the final concerns I'm going to talk about here, of course, is the environment and climate concerns with this bill. Regional planning helps manage those climate risks, such as flood mitigation, green space, conservation and emission reductions. So if municipalities withdraw, environmental protections could become weaker in many areas.

So there you have it. I'm not going to go on too much longer. I don't have much time anyway, but just a summary of those two things. Bill 4 is—really is a trade-off between local control and regional co-operation, and while it gives municipalities more choice, it also raises concerns about fragmented planning and higher costs for remaining members.

So, yes, we hope that we can still move forward at some point with the metropolitan plan, and we certainly support municipalities having their own autonomy and making their own decisions. There's—nobody knows their own communities better than the ones that live there and their own elected officials.

So thank you, Honourable Speaker. We'll be supporting this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to get up and put some words on the record.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any further speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 4, The Planning Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 21—The Protecting Youth in Sports Act

The Speaker: As previously announced, we will now move on to Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act.

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I move—sorry.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act; Loi sur la protection des jeunes sportifs, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Kennedy: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to speak in the House today about Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act. We all know how important it is to keep kids safe, and our government is committed to supporting a culture of safety for youth across Manitoba's amateur sport system.

This bill supports a safer sport environment for young athletes by requiring sports organizations to adopt safe sport policies and training, and all coaches will need to complete courses on how to create a safe and positive environment for young athletes.

Bill 21 is the result of significant collaboration with Sport Manitoba as a key leader for safe sport in our province. Sport Manitoba will be instrumental in leading a safe sport environment for the benefit of all young athletes, coaches, parents and other participants.

This framework is being built to address and ultimately prevent maltreatment in sport. Our government is committed to supporting a safe and equitable support-sport system, free from racism, where every child knows they have the right to play.

This bill also supports a broader approach across government to increase safety for kids in school and in their communities.

With this, I ask my colleagues on all sides of the House to support this bill to strengthen the safety of youth in sport.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Seeing no questions, is the House ready for—
[interjection] Oh, I'm sorry.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): How is Bill 21 similar or dissimilar to Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act, introduced this session?

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I thank the member for the question.

This bill specifically, Bill 21, is discussing amateur sport for youth, and this would be a bill that is outside of the school system. So schools have their own sports that occur there; this particular bill would be about sports that occur outside of school time.

Thank you.

MLA Lagassé: Will this requirement be only for coaches or does it relate to those involved such as parents who drive kids and athletes from different events? What about chaperones that go on different trips with the kids?

MLA Kennedy: So with regard to this bill, this is going to apply to parents, coaches, anyone who is in contact with the youth. It's aimed at keeping youth safe in sport, and so any type of maltreatment can be reported, and that there's going to be behavioural regulations that are set out.

That would mean that parents, coaches, anyone who's involved within the sporting system, would need to be making sure that they are following these codes of conduct.

Thank you.

MLA Lagassé: Can the minister explain how, after a complaint is made, how much time is given to review it, and who reviews the complaint?

MLA Kennedy: So with regards to who reviews the complaint, there will be a third-party adjudicator who will be reviewing all complaints that are made. So it will be a third party; it will not be a sporting organization; it will not be Sport Manitoba.

And I'll have to double-check—I don't know that I have the information right in front of me, so I can actually get back to the member about the timeline because I don't want to put any misinformation on the record. But it will be a third-party adjudicator that does look at the complaints that come through.

Thank you.

MLA Lagassé: Okay, with complaints, are police agencies brought in immediately to invest serious allegations?

MLA Kennedy: So within this legislation, the duty to report, there's nothing in this act that affects an obligation or duty to report behaviour that is prohibited under the Criminal Code. So if something comes through, a third party—like, a third-party adjudicator can look into the allegation of maltreatment.

But that doesn't negate someone actually reporting to police as well. So, of course, that would be encouraged if it's a very serious incident that, of course, you know, people, whether it be a coach or a parent or otherwise, are encouraged to report to police if a criminal action has taken place.

MLA Lagassé: Can the minister explain if—let's say someone's falsely accused of something. Is there any kind of appeal process, and is that independent and separate from the disciplinary board or the third party that is assigned to investigate these things?

MLA Kennedy: So I'm really sorry. That just totally went—can I ask the member to repeat that? I was focused on one part and I didn't catch the whole thing.

* (18:20)

MLA Lagassé: Yes, I was asking the minister—let's say that there's an allegation that's put out there. Is there any kind of appeal mechanism or process that is independent or separate of this disciplinary board or third-party investigator?

MLA Kennedy: So this process hasn't actually been determined as of yet. So this is the first step, is putting this legislation forward that would protect youth in sport, and a lot of the next steps are things that are going to be determined, including this.

MLA Lagassé: So for my last question, given that Sport Manitoba receives provincial funding, why doesn't those affiliated with Sport Manitoba adhere to the government code of conduct and respectful work policy?

MLA Kennedy: So I don't believe that that's actually the case. Of course, they would be expected to follow code of conduct. There is respectful coaching; there are standards that are there. This is specifically to do with maltreatment towards athletes, and this could occur whether it be from a parent, another teammate, it could be from a coach.

These are things that the third-party adjudicator will look into, and certainly there are policies in place

to ensure that people are following a particular code of conduct.

MLA Lagassé: No further questions. I'll just get into my speech.

Debate

The Speaker: If there's no further questions, the floor is now open for debate.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Honourable Speaker, we can all agree sport plays a vital role in the development and well-being of individuals and communities. It's essential that all participants, whether athletes, coaches or parents or volunteers, can engage in sport in a safe and respectful and inclusive environment. To that end, the Red Deer Declaration, signed in May 2019 by all federal and provincial territorial ministers responsible for sport, marked a national commitment to eliminate abuse, discrimination and harassment in sport.

This commitment has been reinforced through the implementation of an updated universal code of conduct now in place across Canada. In May 2022, the former Progressive Conservative government took further steps to support the vision by investing a quarter of a million in Pathway to Safer Sport program. This initiative was designed to build awareness, provide prevention and strategies and resources, and expand access to maltreatment support services for children and youth as well as for coaches, parents and volunteers who support them.

Collaboration with Sport Manitoba has strengthened the qualifications of coaches and educators, ensuring a safe and more supportive environment for all those who participate in sport. These efforts reflect and continued commitment to fostering safety, equity and integrity in sport across our province and our country.

And with these few words on the record, I look forward to this bill moving forward to committee.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: If there's no one further in debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: So the question before the House is second reading of Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act.

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

The motion is carried.

Bill 15—The Real Estate Services Amendment Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 15, the second reading of the Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by—[interjection] Thank you.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services immobiliers, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Well, Honourable Speaker, I'm so delighted to have this opportunity to speak to this important bill, Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act.

This act governs the regulation of the real estate brokerage and property management industries in Manitoba and is administered by the Manitoba Securities Commission, which is part of the Manitoba Financial Services Agency.

The regulatory framework for these industries was updated when The Real Estate Services Act replaced the former real estate brokers act on January 1, 2022, under the previous government. Since coming into effect, however, significant deficiencies in that legislation have been identified. Let me explain.

As it stands, the Manitoba Securities Commission is seriously impaired in its ability to perform its public interest function. The current legislation drafted by the previous government does not give the Securities Commission the power to freeze bank accounts maintained by a person or a company that is required to be registered under the act but have not registered.

Let me put it simply. If you're a bad actor in the real estate sector, and therefore you obviously haven't registered your business under the act with the Securities Commission, the government currently has no power to stop you from behaving badly. This makes no sense and leaves the real estate sector open to fraud and abuse.

Honourable Speaker, our government is going to fix the PCs' seriously flawed legislation. We're going to give the Securities Commission the power to freeze the bank accounts of unregistered actors, actors who by law should be registered, so we can protect Manitobans. It's as simple as that.

We can't have a financial sector where individuals can flout the law without any real consequence. We can't have a system that encourages bad actors. Manitobans deserve a government that protects their interests from negligence and creates a system grounded in transparency and fairness.

Honourable Speaker, I also need to bring your attention, and through you to all Manitobans, to another problem with the PCs' legislation that we are going to fix. The current legislation does not contain timing parameters indicating how long the commission has before commencing prosecution under the act. By not setting a specific time frame for the commission to act, the PCs' legislation created a regulatory environment where delays and inaction are not only possible, but likely. Our government, however, believes all people and businesses should be treated equally under the law, and therefore our amendments will impose a two-year limitation period on prosecutions.

For the benefit of all members, I should highlight that the two-year limitation was actually previously in place, but either through an act of omission or negligence, or perhaps worse, it was excluded by the previous government when they made their legislative reforms. Whatever happened, Honourable Speaker, when the PCs were in power, our government is going to fix that issue and those issues.

So, in conclusion, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Manitoba Real Estate Association for their collaboration as we bring forward this bill. As I've often stated, we are a listening government. It's by working with partners like the MREA that we can bring forward strong legislation like this bill, legislation that protects consumers and treats everyone fairly.

So, Honourable Speaker, with that, I'm pleased to present this bill for the House's consideration.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): So this bill seems to be addressing a relatively minor problem, dealing with a few bad actors.

So I'm curious of how often that this has been a problem within the province of Manitoba, or is this a

bigger problem in other provinces with higher population and higher housing?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Yes, this was identified, again, by our team within the MFSA as a serious concern, as a gap. And, again, the MREA—the real estate association—also agrees that this is a concern, that we have these holes in the current legislation.

* (18:30)

So this is something we want to make sure we respond to. We do not want to have legislation that can permit crime or fraud to be perpetrated. And as a government, we want to make sure we close loopholes.

That's what this bill does, is it ensures that we're protecting Manitobans and that we're going to ensure that when Manitobans engage in seeking out real estate services that they know that they're going to be dealing with good actors who are registered and that we have all the requirements in place to make sure that in those instances where somebody is a bad actor, that we're going to pursue that and ensure that that action is shut down.

Mrs. Stone: Why does this minister feel that this bill is a priority for him to bring forward when there are so many other priorities and challenges facing Manitobans including housing shortages and unaffordable housing? So why this bill right now as opposed to addressing real challenges that impact many, many Manitobans in housing shortages and housing affordability?

MLA Sala: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the unbelievable work being done by our minister of housing and addictions who's bringing on new social and affordable housing online. This year, we announced over 600 new units of social and affordable housing that we committed to with funding. That builds on commitments from last year.

So our government can, you know, walk and chew gum at the same time. We can respond to the bigger concerns that Manitobans are facing, whether it's a shortage of housing or a health-care system that was decimated by Conservatives. We can do that while we move forward in closing loopholes that are putting Manitobans at risk.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, so the powers given to the Manitoba Securities Commission within this bill are not universally granted by similar legislation in other provinces. So if the minister could please explain which provinces they looked at when drafting this bill.

MLA Sala: Yes, I appreciate the question. So, again, we're working with partners like the Manitoba Real Estate Association and, of course, the good folks working within the Manitoba Financial Services Agency who identified this as a gap that was left to us by the previous government—a gap that, again, could encourage crime, fraud and abuse of a system that's there to protect Manitobans.

So this will simply ensure, again, that we have the ability to go after bad actors and make sure we shut down those kinds of activities—something that, again, the former government left an open door to with their failure to ensure that the legislation protected Manitobans. We're doing that work of ensuring Manitobans know when they're accessing real estate services that they're going to be able to access real estate services with those who are qualified and that in those instances where they aren't, that we have an agency that can do the work it needs to do to shut that down.

Mrs. Stone: Have these bad actors been a significant problem in Manitoba, and can the minister please provide a couple examples as to where this has taken place?

MLA Sala: Yes, this was of sufficient concern that this was identified as a major hole in the legislation—again, a hole that was left to us by the previous government. Just, you know, not too dissimilar from the \$2-billion hole they left us on a deficit side, this is one of many holes that they've left us to have to fill in.

But that's why we're here. We're here because Manitobans know that this team led, by our Premier (Mr. Kinew), is fixing the things that the former government left us to fix and that there's no shortage of work to do. This is one of many things that we've needed to respond to.

And, again, we're doing the work of closing holes that the former government left in this important legislation to protect Manitobans from real estate fraud.

Mrs. Stone: It was actually the NDP under Greg Selinger that introduced and passed bill 70, The Real Estate Services Act, in 2015, the very same act that this minister now seeks to amend. What other flawed NDP bills will this minister seek to amend in the future?

MLA Sala: Yes, so The Real Estate Services Act replaced the former Real Estate Brokers Act on January 1, 2022. So last I checked, it was the members opposite who were in government during that time.

So, again, we're doing the work of cleaning up the mess that the former government left, not just here but, of course, when it comes to health care, housing, child care, affordability—across the board. We're getting the work done. They left a big hole and a lot of problems for us to solve, but Manitobans can count on us to get the job done.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: Floor is now open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record on Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act.

Before going into the specific contents of the bill, I would like to first recognize the real estate professionals in our province who contribute to our economy, support buyers and sellers in our market with their market knowledge and that who provide other expertise and services to their clients.

As we know, real estate professionals are regulated in Manitoba through the Manitoba Securities Commission, which does protect investors from scams and frauds that, on occasion, do happen.

The changes to this bill seem to be predominantly focused on the bad actors, as this bill will allow the Securities Commission to freeze the assets of persons who are required to be registered under The Real Estate Brokers Act, but who are not, and who have contravened or about to contravene the act. So this bill appears to close some potential loopholes that do—that may allow unregistered persons to carry on activities that would have otherwise led to a freezing of assets of a registered party.

It is—from our side of the House, it is the utmost importance to protect the public interest and current or future investors in this province.

There have been many changes to The Real Estate Services Act in Manitoba over the past number of years. It was first introduced by Ron Lemieux in 2014 and then passed in 2015. Further changes were then made in 2022 by the former PC government, who introduced a new regulatory framework for Manitoba's real estate industry that provided consumers with enhanced protections while also modernizing and streamlining business for industry professionals.

The legislation in 2022 did close further loopholes to enhance public protection, because the 2014

NDP bill that was brought forward by Ron Lemieux was deeply flawed, and the PC government fixed that during that time. So to enhance public protection, some of those loopholes that were closed included fines for misconduct, requiring written service agreements between brokerages and home buyers or sellers prior to providing those services. This ensured all parties were fully informed on what service would be provided and/or carried out. The act also enhanced the ability to take action against persons carrying out unregistered activities.

This last point is where the piece of legislation brought forward by the minister today is expanded on with the intent to close another loophole on persons engaging in unregistered activities by allowing the Securities Commission to freeze those assets.

Now it is important, Honourable Speaker, to point out that while this bill closes an apparent loophole, it does nothing to address the housing challenges that Manitobans are facing today, nor will it create growth or create new jobs. Manitobans are facing a worsening housing and affordability crisis on top of cost-of-living challenges and the highest foodflation in the province. This bill does nothing to address housing affordability or access to affordable housing.

In fact, economists are predicting an economic recession in Canada is inevitable, and Manitobans are fearful they will not be able to even pay their mortgages and some are fearful they will lose their house altogether. This government has clearly shown over their 18 months that they do not prioritize affordability, as was evident with the NDP's most recent budget.

Now, I do want to be clear, Honourable Speaker, that protection of the public in these regulated industries is absolutely critical; I've made that point earlier in my comments. The point that I'm trying to make right now is that the NDP has yet to bring forward any meaningful legislation to support homeowners and address Manitoba's housing shortage and affordable housing challenges.

So while the NDP is closing a loophole, it only addresses a very small number of bad actors, and this bill does nothing to support the majority of Manitobans who are struggling to pay their mortgages or even purchase a home. This bill does nothing to encourage housing development, it does nothing to create new jobs in the sector or make it easier for families to find homes that they can afford. At a time when Manitobans do need real action on housing and affordability, this NDP is focused on reworking legis-

lation instead of tackling the root causes of the housing crisis.

Manitobans need real policies right now that will actually expand housing stock and make home ownership more affordable. However, this NDP government has shown that they do not prioritize affordability, and they've shown that with their lack of focus.

To reiterate, Manitobans are in a cost-of-living crisis, faced with the highest foodflation in the country and are bracing for a possible economic storm.

* (18:40)

We've also seen this minister increase property taxes on Manitobans to double-digit numbers across the province in every school division in the city of Winnipeg, where Mayor Gillingham has even said that these historic increase—that these are historic increases.

I've presented these hard facts in the Legislature through question period, and the reality is, is the NDP is increasing education property taxes on homeowners, cottage owners and commercial properties.

So as we stand here to debate Bill 15 today, Manitobans are currently faced with higher taxes on their homes and properties; Manitobans are faced with an affordability crisis and cost-of-living crisis; and they're concerned they will not be able to afford their mortgages.

So while the NDP may bring forward legislation to close loopholes that address a small number of bad actors, the reality is, is Manitobans are concerned about their ability to pay for their homes and this NDP's continued tax grab on their properties.

Manitobans need real action on housing and affordability, and this minister appears to be distracted. We need policies that expand our housing stock and make home ownership more affordable.

So with those brief comments, Honourable Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to put a few words on the record as it relates to Bill 15.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 28—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations, that Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: Any day that I get to stand up in this House and talk about Manitoba Hydro is a good day.

I'm very pleased to have a chance to talk about Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act. This is a key piece of legislation that helps to implement our Affordable Energy Plan, which I was very honoured to co-develop along with Minister of Education when she was in her previous role, and that we released late last year.

For decades, Manitoba's abundance of clean, affordable energy has given our province a unique advantage. Our clean baseload power has driven our economy and helped build our province. It is our natural advantage.

However, as we highlighted in our Affordable Energy Plan, one of the things holding our province back is Hydro's current requirement to energize requests on a first-come, first-served basis, with no consideration of the potential benefits to Manitobans, whether in terms of job creation or economic diversification or provincial revenue generation.

Late last year, we committed to ending this first-come, first-served approach to allocating new energy. As I've toured this province and spoken with business leaders and Manitobans, I've heard universally that this is the right approach.

Honourable Speaker, the legislation before this House follows through on our commitments in the Affordable Energy Plan to end the first-come, first-served approach to allocating industrial loads in Manitoba. The regulation-making authority in this bill enables flexibility and the timely allocation of energy in alignment with the Province's economic, environmental and social priorities.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba Hydro continues to see a large volume of requests for energy from large commercial and industrial proponents. And as the world electrifies, we need to ensure Manitobans get the best value for our clean baseload power. And that's exactly what this legislation is designed to do.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very proud of our Affordable Energy Plan. It includes a historic commitment to create 600 new megawatts of new Indigenous-owned wind. It speaks to our commitment to geothermal energy, to rebuilding and refurbishing Hydro's infrastructure, to strengthening energy codes for homes and buildings and to building EV charging stations.

I can go on, Honourable Speaker, but, simply put, our Affordable Energy Plan is our government's blueprint for the next generation energy that will build our province. It's a vision for our energy future, a vision which the previous government sorely lacked when it came to Manitoba Hydro; previous government that didn't plan, didn't build one single megawatt and allowed Manitoba Hydro to fall behind.

We're taking a different approach, a better approach. Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to present this bill for the House's consideration.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): This bill—the minister's—in this bill, is giving himself sweeping powers to pick winners and losers when it comes to grid connections.

So can the minister please explain what kinds of requests for power will be deemed ineligible by Manitoba Hydro and his office under the new changes in this act?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, you know, the members opposite, when they were in government, brought in a moratorium on crypto and energizing crypto operations. The reason they did that was because crypto operations were identified as being low in terms of job density, low in terms of economic potential for Manitoba.

That's why they used those powers to put a moratorium to stop Manitoba from energizing crypto

operations. This is essentially doing this type of similar work which is ensuring that, as we allocate industrial loads as a province and as Hydro, that we're getting the greatest value for Manitobans in doing so, in terms of jobs and economic growth.

Mrs. Stone: How is this minister defining what is an economic priority, and how is he going to avoid not picking winners and losers according to his ideology and what he wants to push to the top of the list?

MLA Sala: Well, we're doing a lot of really important work, Honourable Speaker, and my colleague is leading the development of a new economic development strategy. Of course, we're building new trade corridors, so there's a lot of really important considerations that will go into how we determine how we prioritize those loads.

But one thing we can say for certain at this point is that we're going to make sure that we get the most for our industrial load allocations in terms of jobs, economic growth potential, and we're going to ensure we solve this issue which was holding us back. Previously, if a proponent came forward and they had a huge energy ask with a very small number of jobs, if they were next in line, we had to serve them first.

What we're going to make sure is that, going forward, Manitoba gets the very most out of our very valuable clean baseload power for all Manitobans.

Mrs. Stone: Can this minister please explain who is creating the criteria to determine what is a sufficient economic development project to be prioritized under this act?

MLA Sala: We're a listening government, and we're going to be listening to a lot of Manitobans as we do this important work. And that's very different, Honourable Speaker, than what Manitobans had for seven and a half years under the previous government.

You know, one thing I know I, and I'm sure my ministerial colleagues hear all the time in meetings, I, oh my God, this is so incredible that we can actually have a conversation with somebody from government. I hear that over and over and over again. The bar was set so low, it's hard to even imagine how hard these guys made it for members of the public or anyone in Manitoba to actually have a conversation with them about things that mattered.

We're listening to Manitobans, we're going to engage and we're going to make sure we get this right to get the very most out of our clean baseload power here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stone: So can the minister please explain to the House, if Manitoba Hydro believes that a project should be prioritized, will he—and he disagrees, will they be interfering with Manitoba Hydro's decisions?

MLA Sala: One of the important things that we're trying to achieve here, Honourable Speaker, is that we create clear and transparent guidelines. And what that means is that this will be visible to proponents who are interested in investing in Manitoba, and they'll be able to see with clarity what those guidelines look like so that they can come to Manitoba and have confidence that, when they go to apply for an energy source or apply for an industrial load, that they'll know in advance whether or not they meet those criteria.

This will be clear. It'll be transparent. Again, we're going to work with Manitobans to get this right, and we're going to make sure that we do the opposite of what the members across the way did for seven and a half years, which was set Manitoba Hydro back.

We're moving the province forward, we're going to make sure we grow our economy and we're going to do that with the changes we're going to make in this legislation.

* (18:50)

Mrs. Stone: Again I ask this minister: Who is setting the guidelines? Is it his office and his Cabinet colleagues, or is it Manitoba Hydro?

MLA Sala: Yes; again, we're going to be working together with Hydro and many other stakeholders to ensure that we get this right. And again, this is about making sure we make the most out of our clean, baseload power.

Right now, as it stands, there's a first-in, first-out system, where a proponent gets in line—and again, if they've got a huge energy ask, 300 megawatts in two jobs, and the proponent behind them has a 100 megawatt with 200 jobs—a 100 megawatt ask with 200 jobs, we still have to serve that first proponent.

So what we want to do is ensure that our incredibly valuable clean energy, which is very costly to produce and very scarce—and, of course we know, increasingly valuable in our current energy landscape—that we make the most out of those megawatts to create the greatest number of jobs and the greatest number of—greatest amount of economic growth possible—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, if a project proponent puts in a proposal and this minister bumps it to the

back of the list, what sort of appeal mechanism does that project proponent have under this act?

MLA Sala: Again, we're going to set out to create clear, transparent guidelines that will ensure that proponents will understand what it is that we're focused on when it comes to allocating industrial loads.

Look, this is simply about getting the most for our energy. And for years under the former government, they took no action in responding to this issue. This is something that we hear from—this basically universally welcome when we speak with proponents, because it makes sense.

And, again, the members opposite took an action which essentially replicates the core of what we're trying to achieve here with their moratorium on crypto. That's what they did. They did that—again, took that action. I assume it was on the basis of seeing that that wasn't a great allocation of our megawatts.

We're trying to ensure that we use our energy in the smartest way possible that creates the greatest benefit for Manitobans. This is key—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: So what I've heard today is that this minister is giving himself sweeping powers to pick and choose winners and losers according to what his beliefs are for economic priority. We've also heard that there is no appeal process if a project proponent gets booted to the bottom of the list.

So it sounds to me like this minister has every intent to interfere with Manitoba Hydro. How is he going to ensure that that doesn't happen, and that project proponents have their voices heard?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, what we've brought forward here today will ensure that we're doing things in a clear and a transparent manner. And, again, you know, for seven and a half years, the members opposite did absolutely nothing—and I mean that, absolutely nothing when it came to Manitoba Hydro.

I ask the member who's asking the questions, my critic: Can she speak to a single thing that the former government did, one positive action, when it came to Hydro or energy? I know she won't have an answer to that, because they didn't take one step forward. They didn't create one megawatt, they had no vision, they took us backwards. The only thing they did was jack up rates. It's a shameful seven-and-a-half-year history.

We're moving Hydro and we're moving Manitoba forward.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, the only one jacking up rates today is this minister with an 11 per cent rate increase over the next three years. He's planning to raise rates by 3.5 per cent every year going forward.

Can this minister explain what this legislation does to protect Manitoba ratepayers?

MLA Sala: Well, to the question, it will ensure that we get the most of our energy to—which will create more profits for Hydro and will ensure that Hydro is better positioned to respond to the needs of Manitoba ratepayers.

But again, our rate increases are responsible, and we're doing that while we're actually getting the job done. We're building Manitoba Hydro. Our rate proposal is less than the members opposite charged when they were in power, and you know what they did with those high rates, Honourable Speaker? With all the profits they generated? Absolutely nothing. They didn't build one single megawatt.

So they raised rates faster on Manitobans while they did nothing; we're bringing forward responsible rate increases while we get the job done. That's why Manitobans sent us to the Legislature.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, we're hearing across the province that economic development projects and residential developments are waiting to be connected to the grid.

So with this bill in practice, does that mean that residential communities in southern Manitoban and Westman will be prioritized?

MLA Sala: Residential developments and the like will always receive priority, and that will ensure that, again, Manitoba can move forward.

What we're talking about is industrial load requests for economic development purposes. This is the kind of thing that, right now, we have a major issue with that the former government never responded to over seven and a half years.

And, again, that's because they didn't do anything over seven and a half years when it came to moving Hydro forward. That record is unbelievably shameful, Honourable Speaker. Why? Because they left us in a challenging position. They left us in a position where our government—and we've taken up this challenge—has needed to move at a very fast pace to ensure that we brought forward a plan to have the energy we need

to meet the needs of our businesses and homeowners. They left us behind. They want to talk about economic—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, I'd like the minister to explain if he already has the directive to ensure projects move forward, then why is this legislation needed to begin with?

MLA Sala: One of the challenges we have is we have a long queue of proponents, many of whom, again, have major megawatt requests but have really low job density or economic growth potential attached to it. We want to make sure that we get the most out of our energy. This is not hard to understand, Honourable Speaker, and that's why Manitobans are responding to this very positively when we go out and we have conversations.

This is something that seems to be universally supported in our conversations with stakeholders because they know that it makes sense for us, in this current context, where in an environment where clean energy has never been this valuable, that we work to get the most out of it.

We are going to move Manitoba ahead. We're going to grow our economy, and we're going to keep doing the good work that we're doing of moving Manitoba forward.

Mrs. Stone: We just heard this minister say that there are those that are waiting for hookups or connections onto the grid. Yet his boss has repeatedly flip-flopped and made major policy announcements about Manitoba Hydro on a whim.

So can this minister please explain to the House where he stands on additional capacity within the Province of Manitoba?

MLA Sala: Happy to. We're going to build 600 new megawatts of wind with First Nations, a first of its kind partnership. And that's something that this team—and I know folks on this side of the House are incredibly proud of. It's economic reconciliation.

We're going to create a huge number of jobs through this work, and it's something that we know is important to moving the province forward, is working closely with First Nations and the Métis nation in Manitoba to advance our province.

And that's what Manitobans can count on this government to do: to work in collaboration, to work in partnership, to move our province forward.

Mrs. Stone: Many large-scale industrial projects require natural gas hookups. We know that there's a proposal for \$1.3 billion to build a new natural gas plant here in Manitoba that's been brought forward by Manitoba Hydro.

Does this minister support that project?

MLA Sala: Well, I'll correct the member and say that we have not brought forward a \$1.3-billion natural gas plant. At this point, this dispatchable power is currently agnostic to the type of fuel that it uses. That work is still ongoing.

We know that the development of dispatchable power resource is important to support the wind that we're moving forward with, as well as ensuring that we have diverse set of energy options as we move forward in an environment where hydrology and climate might start to affect the water that moves through our province. This is about ensuring reliability, it's about ensuring affordability, and, again, those are two things Manitobans can count on us to deliver on.

Mrs. Stone: And I believe the term that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) used was it would be powered by some miracle fuel.

What I'm curious of is if this minister supports adding additional capacity and diversifying Manitoba's energy needs through natural gas.

MLA Sala: You know, again, the focus of our government, Honourable Speaker, is to ensure affordability and reliability. And that's exactly what our affordable energy plan supports, that's exactly what the 600 megawatts of new energy we've brought forward supports, and that's what we're going to do.

Again, seven and a half years. What did the members opposite do? They didn't build one single megawatt. They didn't make one investment that we can speak to about enhancing or increasing reliability in Manitoba, and they had no vision about our energy future. They seemed to completely abdicate their responsibilities when it came to ensuring that we had the energy we needed, not just for Manitobans to keep their lights on and their beer cold, but also to make sure that businesses can do the important work that they need to do.

* (19:00)

Mrs. Stone: This minister promised to switch 5,000 families over to geothermal, which is really not that many. Can the minister provide an update on how many families have been switched over to geothermal, where these projects are located and how this legis-

lation that he's brought forward today will help facilitate or work in tandem with that project?

MLA Sala: I'm proud of the commitments our government has made when it comes to geothermal: again, forward looking, vision, something that we lacked for a very long time in Manitoba. We know here we have a really great opportunity when it comes to electrifying heat in our rural and northern communities. Geothermal creates significant opportunities for homeowners to reduce their costs and for us to save energy, which we can send back to the grid to either sell abroad or make use of here in Manitoba.

I'm proud to work with Minister Moyes who's doing amazing work with his team at—

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would just remind the honourable minister we can't use the member's name. It's either their constituency name or their ministerial title.

MLA Sala: The Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Proud to work alongside him in that important work in bringing forward—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The time for questions has also expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today to put a few words on the record on Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

First and foremost, I do want to put on the record that Manitoba Hydro should be prioritizing grid connections to grow our economy, because their mandate is to deliver safe, reliable services at a fair price to its customers. I am, Honourable Speaker, however, very skeptical of this NDP government bringing forth legislation to decide who gets electricity and when.

This minister and this Premier have consistently mismanaged Manitoba Hydro since taking office. Phony rate freezes that didn't save Manitobans significant dollars, while jacking up rates by 11 per cent over the next three years, was a political stunt that Manitobans will be paying for well into the future.

At the same time, this Premier's regularly on the record flip-flopping on Manitoba Hydro and creating major policy decisions on a whim, like we saw this week, without costing it out. First, the Premier claims Manitoba Hydro will be net-zero by 2030, then he flip-flops and says that's not attainable. Next, he fires

Jay Grewal for saying Manitoba needs extra capacity. Then he considers a \$1.3-billion gas plant. Next, he says Manitoba needs extra capacity, then says he wants to export more to the US and then flip-flops and then cancels contracts.

Then, just this week, he actually announced that he's cancelling those US legacy contracts and redirecting while building a power line that he has no ability and no plans to pay for, all while the Crown corporation is \$25 billion in debt and needs \$31 billion in infrastructure maintenance and capital upgrades.

This has clearly shown that this minister and this Premier do not have a solid direction for Manitoba Hydro. So I remain very skeptical and concerned when this minister brings forward legislation giving himself sweeping capabilities for himself and his Cabinet colleagues on who gets hydro capacity and who does not.

We all know this NDP government is against industrial development, and so this means that major projects that could bring billions to the provincial economy could be pushed off the list if they do not ideologically align with this minister and this NDP government.

So although the intent of this legislation, in principle, could be used to advance economic development in the province—which I do fully support the principle of it, in advancing economic development—this legislation as written that gives this minister and his colleagues sweeping powers can be easily exploited by political will, political ideology and favouritism to have—whoever has direct access to this minister.

Now, with those comments in mind, I do want to speak to the importance of economic development and some of the challenges that do exist with the current system. Currently, as Manitoba Hydro does operate on a first-come, first-served basis, this could mean that major economic development projects could be delayed if they are not first in queue.

Timely hookups is critical to businesses investing sometimes significant dollars in the province through green fields or expansion. Businesses do need certainty, and projects that will benefit Manitoba, and Manitoba's GDP should not be delayed as a result of NDP government bureaucracy.

However, this issue goes beyond Hydro's current directive of a first come, first served. The reality is that Manitoba Hydro is short on energy capacity, and this is one of the reasons why projects are not getting access onto the electricity grid in a timely manner. We

heard from the former Hydro CEO, Jay Grewal, when she said in a public speech Hydro would need new sources by 2030, and the most efficient way to do this would be to consider sourcing from private power sources.

She was then fired by the ideologically rigid NDP government. Now we're in a situation where delays for power connections to the grid are a regular occurrence across the province, so much so that this NDP government has flip-flopped again and pulled back on their commitment for net-zero by 2030 and considering the \$1.3-billion natural gas plant.

Manitoba Hydro is clearly in a predicament with their debt maintenance costs and future capacity needs, and the NDP has clearly taken energy options off the table. This is not smart business, not is it smart governing, Honourable Speaker.

This NDP appears to be ideologically against diversifying our energy market here in Manitoba, despite more efficient, reliable and cost-affordable options that are available. We've seen this in Alberta and Ontario, where they're exploring and making major investments in nuclear energy. But this isn't an even an option that this minister is looking at.

So this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this minister talk a big game about energy independence, but when it comes time to put words into action, they clearly struggle with the implementation. So they either don't understand Manitoba's high-Manitoba Hydro's energy needs, or they're caught between ideology and reality and are unwilling and incapable to make a decision.

So as you can see, Honourable Speaker, the issues with connections to the grid that this bill is supposed to address go much deeper than the first-come, first-served system that Manitoba Hydro currently operates under, and there are many additional concerns with this bill and how this minister is giving himself the power to direct Hydro as to what projects the independent Crown corporation must prioritize, and he has decided to enshrine that into law.

So with this—the way that this piece of legislation is written, Honourable Speaker, despite the minister's many, many comments regarding independence of Hydro, it undermines that independence, and as a result, the minister's own public confidence in the Hydro board and corporation leadership.

So from what we can glean from this legislation is the entire need for this bill is a lesson in NDP double takes. This minister is bringing forward legislation to pick and choose what new projects are getting power,

and which ones are denied without any appeal mechanism for those project proponents. And this is a key gap in this bill, that there is no appeal process.

If a development project does not align with this minister's ideologies, and this minister kicks it down the list despite being an important economic investment for Manitoba, there is no mechanism to appeal that. This is particularly concerning as it again gives this minister sweeping powers to pick and choose winners and losers with no recourse for those selected as losers.

This legislation makes the province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro bad business partners, mandating that even if Hydro has entered into an agreement to provide power and set a reasonable rate, that agreement is nullified and walked back.

As I've mentioned earlier, we've seen this minister and NDP mismanage and interfere with Manitoba Hydro in their short 18 months in government. They've interfered with Manitoba Hydro's rate applications, they've passed legislation to allow themselves to set Hydro rates at the Cabinet table, so the fact that this minister is allowing himself and his Cabinet colleagues to again interfere with Manitoba Hydro is again concerning for Manitobans ratepayers. Let's remind the minister: Manitobans own Manitoba Hydro, not this minister.

So despite the intention of fast-tracking major economic development projects, which, as I have mentioned, I do support that intention, but in practice this could actually have the opposite effect. So there are clearly a lot of concerns that we have with this legislation, Honourable Speaker, that this minister has brought forward.

* (19:10)

And I know I'm running out of time and only have a couple minutes left here, but I do want to say that there is nothing as it speaks to the specific details of the bill. There's nothing laid out in this legislation that defines what a key economic project is that would allow it to be streamlined or prioritized for grid connection. There is also no clear direction in this bill that outlines what this criteria is or what this criteria will be, which is really the only meaningful way to truly measure whether this bill will have a positive impact or a negative impact on economic development and job growth. Again, this raises significant concerns in what this minister will do in regulation. The devil's in the details when it comes to this piece of legislation, which does increase our skepticism of this minister's intent.

As mentioned in my comments throughout this bill discussion today—and I'll just wrap up here, Honourable Speaker—there are many, many, many unanswered questions as it relates to this bill in practice. We're skeptical of the NDP picking and choosing winners and losers on their whim or on the minister's mood of the day, and we are concerned with the NDP's continued interference with Manitoba Hydro since they've taken office.

So giving these sweeping powers to this minister and this NDP government who do not seem to have a grasp on the energy needs of our province is incredibly concerning and should be concerning for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No further members wishing to debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 37—The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts

The Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts; Loi sur l'Autorité des services financiers du Manitoba et modifiant diverses autres lois, 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 Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised, and the message has been tabled.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, again, very pleased to rise today and have an opportunity to speak to this important bill, Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts.

This bill will modernize the regulatory structure in Manitoba by reconstituting the Manitoba Financial Services Agency, which is currently a special operating agency within the Department of Finance, to a board-governed statutory corporation that would formally operate at arm's length from government.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans must contend with a financial services landscape that has never been more complicated or filled with potential risks. Manitobans now have a wide range of financial service providers from which to choose: banks, discount brokers, mutual fund dealers, full service brokers as well as a growing number of fintechs that are providing services online. These providers offer a myriad of products carrying various levels of risk. Unfortunately, some of the products that are pitched to Manitobans are fraudulent, ranging from romance scams to cryptocurrency frauds.

In this environment, it's important that the financial services regulator be equipped to deal with the challenges of the modern financial services landscape. That's why we're modernizing the structure of the Manitoba financial services authority.

Honourable Speaker, this legislation will bring Manitoba in line with the provinces who've taken the steps we're proposing today many, many years ago. British Columbia made this change in structure in 1996, Ontario in '97, Alberta in 2000, Quebec in 2002, New Brunswick in 2003, Saskatchewan in 2012.

Honourable Speaker, you have to wonder why the previous PC government failed to modernize our financial regulator as well. Did the former government not care about the financial sector? Were they too preoccupied with other affairs? We'll never know, but we're here to fix this issue.

So I don't know, again, the answer to those questions. Our government does take financial regulation very seriously. We take consumer protection seriously. And that's why we're modernizing the Financial Services Agency and bringing it into the modern world.

The agency will have statutory responsibility for the administration of six financial statutes, including The Securities Act, The Commodity Futures Act, The Real Estate Services Act, The Mortgage Brokers Act, The Insurance Act and The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act.

It will be led by an expert board appointed by Lieutenant Governor-in-Council that would oversee the regulation of securities, real estate, insurance and credit union sectors in the province in a way that is streamlined, consistent and efficient.

As I said, Honourable Speaker, we are bringing the MFSA into the modern world. I'm very pleased to present this bill for the House's consideration.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, who did the minister consult with in the development of this legislation and this new authority?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I'm proud—again, proud—to bring this forward knowing that every single other province in Canada has taken this action, and for good reason.

As I outlined in my opening speech, Manitobans face an increasingly complex financial services landscape. They deserve to have a modern regulator in the MFSA. And that's what we're doing; we're bringing forward modernization here and we're going to ensure that they have the tools they need to protect Manitobans when it comes to financial services.

Mrs. Stone: So as the authority is also giving statutory responsibility for The Insurance Act and The Credit Union and Caisse Populaire Act, what has the Credit Union Central and Manitoba credit unions said about this legislation?

MLA Sala: We know that our good folks at the Manitoba Financial Services Agency have identified the importance of making this change. We know that this is something that's been done in every other province in the country and for good reason, because this shift—to give it this, again, added degree of independence—will offer the MFSA the ability to provide the quality services that Manitobans rely on when it comes to this wide swath of different financial services that they oversee.

So again, a change that modernizes Manitoba, something that, again, the members opposite didn't seem interested in doing for seven and a half years that they were in government. We're bringing it into the modern age.

Mrs. Stone: So the fact that credit unions will now be included under this new authority, were they asking for this legislation?

MLA Sala: Again, what we know is Manitoba was behind in this area and it was because seven and a half years, the members opposite didn't seem interested in modernizing this act to ensure that Manitobans could be afforded the important protections that they needed to be afforded when it came to their financial services.

This is just simply bringing us into alignment with what's in place in every single other province in the country.

Mrs. Stone: What kinds of administrative efficiencies will this new financial authority generate?

MLA Sala: I can't speak to specific efficiencies, but I can say that we have an incredible team at the MFSA. I'm very proud. I want to call out Dave Cheop, who's currently running the Manitoba Financial Services Agency, for the amazing work that he does in support of Manitobans. He's an incredible individual; does really great work on behalf of all of us.

And again, we know that they're going to do more good work as we bring this agency into the modern age with this change.

Mrs. Stone: How does this bill make this new regulator—new authority—more arm's-length from the government and from the minister's office?

MLA Sala: Well, again, we're simply moving into the same direction that other provinces have gone for the last, I think, 30-something years to create one step removed from government to ensure that, again, we're giving this MFSA team the tools that they need and the ability to protect Manitobans.

Again, it's a increasingly complicated financial services landscape that Manitobans need to navigate. This will help to modernize the work of the MFSA, help them to be able to do what they need to do to protect Manitobans as they navigate their financial needs.

Mrs. Stone: If the minister can answer how this legislation will ensure better protection of the public?

* (19:20)

MLA Sala: Again, we know that Manitobans are facing an increasingly complicated financial services landscape: fintechs, for example, offering a variety of services online that have never been offered before.

As that landscape gets increasingly complicated, we need to make sure that we have a Manitoba Financial Services Agency that can meet the moment and respond to these complexities that Manitobans are navigating, to make sure they're protected as they access financial services in our province.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland—has no further questions.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): It is—again, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record tonight, this time on Bill 37, the financial services authority act.

You know, so as we've already heard, this bill establishes a new financial authority, replacing the regulatory and adjudicative functions currently carried out by Manitoba Securities Commission.

And it sets to expand the authority's oversight over The Insurance Act and Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, in addition to the existing oversight of The Securities Act, Real Estate Services Act, Mortgage Brokers Act and Commodity Futures Act.

So in a nutshell, this is an extensive bill, and it essentially serves as a consolidation bill of the regulated financial services sector.

Under the previous PC government, quite a bit of consolidation was done of various financial regulators to bring them under a single roof at the Manitoba Securities Commission, which did create a significant amount of synergies and share of resources in areas of financial, pensions, securities, regulations.

So Bill 37 does appear to be following that next logical step of consolidation with the implementation of this act. However, it is a very extensive piece of legislation and does require the appropriate scrutiny.

So I would be interested, and we do want to hear from stakeholders and the public on what they think about this new financial regulator during committee, and the minister needs to better explain how this will better protect Manitobans of the public and the financial sector.

So it still remains to be seen whether this minister has gotten this bill right and who he's consulted with on these major changes to legislation and the regulatory framework.

So with that said, Honourable Speaker, there are still quite a few unanswered questions with the bill and its intent. I do look forward to hearing more at committee and more from the industries that have been impacted or will be impacted by these changes as the bill moves through the next stages of the legislative process. It does seem to be like it's moving in the right direction for consolidation.

And, as mentioned, with the consolidation that did take place under the previous PC government, this appears to be just the next logical step.

But, again, Honourable Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to put a few words on the record as it relates to these changes and to have had the opportunity to speak to Bill 37, the financial services amendment act.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Any further speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts.

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

I declare the motion carried.

And now, as previously agreed to, once the question was put on Bill 37, the leave request was to call it midnight. So therefore, it's midnight, and this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Green Team Program	
Introduction of Bills		Perchotte	1353
Bill 228—The Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act (Farmer's Identification Number)		Simard	1353
Hiebert	1343	Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada	
		Stone	1354
		Kinew	1354
		Moses	1354
Ministerial Statements		Manitoba's Research Community	
Education Week		Lamoureux	1355
Schmidt	1343	Asagwara	1355
Ewasko	1344	Recruitment of American Researchers	
Lamoureux	1345	Lamoureux	1355
		Asagwara	1355
Members' Statements		Manitoba Municipalities	
Tammy Mitchell		Devgan	1356
Corbett	1346	Wiebe	1356
School Bus Driver Day		Release of Repeat Offenders	
Ewasko	1346	Balcaen	1356
Lemay Forest		Wiebe	1357
Cross	1347	Universal Heights Homeless Encampment	
Sara and Kate Manness		Wasyliv	1357
Stone	1347	Smith	1357
Latinas Manitoba Inc.			
Lamoureux	1347		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Lemay Forest Expropriation		Second Readings	
Ewasko	1348	Bill 39—The Public Schools Amendment Act	
Kinew	1348	(Campaign Financing for School Trustees)	
Safe Consumption Site		Schmidt	1358
Ewasko	1349	Questions	
Kinew	1350	Ewasko	1358
		Schmidt	1359
Safe Consumption Site		Debate	
Hiebert	1351	Ewasko	1361
Smith	1351	Bill 6—The Public Schools Amendment Act	
Addiction Treatment Services		Schmidt	1363
Hiebert	1351	Questions	
Smith	1351	Ewasko	1364
Mental Health Treatment Services		Schmidt	1364
Cook	1352	Debate	
Asagwara	1352	Ewasko	1366

Bill 19—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools)		Debate	
Schmidt	1367	King	1386
Questions		Bill 21—The Protecting Youth in Sports Act	
Ewasko	1368	Kennedy	1388
Schmidt	1368	Questions	
Debate		Lagassé	1388
Ewasko	1370	Kennedy	1388
Bill 11—The Oil and Gas Amendment Act		Debate	
Moses	1373	Lagassé	1389
Questions		Bill 15—The Real Estate Services Amendment Act	
Wharton	1374	Sala	1390
Moses	1374	Questions	
Debate		Stone	1390
Wharton	1377	Sala	1391
Bill 26—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act		Debate	
Sandhu	1378	Stone	1392
Questions		Bill 28—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act	
Perchotte	1378	Sala	1393
Sandhu	1378	Questions	
Debate		Stone	1394
Perchotte	1379	Sala	1394
Bill 3—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment and Planning Amendment Act		Debate	
Simard	1379	Stone	1397
Questions		Bill 37—The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts	
King	1380	Sala	1399
Simard	1380	Questions	
Debate		Stone	1400
King	1381	Sala	1400
Bill 4—The Planning Amendment Act		Debate	
Simard	1383	Stone	1401
Questions			
King	1383		
Simard	1384		

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