



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 8, 2025

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.***The Speaker:** Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 217—The Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the member from Tyndall Park, that Bill 217, The Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: Today, I'm proud to introduce The Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act, a bill that tackles one of the hidden drivers of Manitoba's housing crisis, the cost of heating inefficient homes.

Too often, renters and homebuyers walk into a property with no idea how much they'll be paying in energy bills. This bill would require property owners to complete an energy efficiency audit and disclose that information upfront, providing an efficiency score and an estimated annual heating cost. This protects renters, empowers buyers and gives builders and landlords a clear incentive to invest in energy-efficient upgrades.

In the long run, this measure could make housing more affordable, reduce emissions and create green jobs across Manitoba.

I'm honoured to have Green Party of Manitoba leadership team members Janine Gibson, Dennis Bayomi and Laura Potts in the gallery today to support this bill.

Thank you.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Social
and Economic Development
Third Report**

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Social—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 7, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 21)** – *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act /Loi sur la protection des jeunes sportifs*
- **Bill (No. 24)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*
- **Bill (No. 29)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*
- **Bill (No. 44)** – *The Matriarch Circle Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Ribbon Skirt Day)/Loi sur le Cercle des matriarches et modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs (Journée de la jupe à rubans)*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Min. FONTAINE*
- *MLA LAGASSÉ*
- *Mr. NARTH*
- *Mr. OXENHAM*
- *MLA PANKRATZ*
- *Hon. Min. SCHMIDT*

Your Committee elected Mr. OXENHAM as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA PANKRATZ as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received during Committee proceedings:

- *Hon. Min. KENNEDY for Hon. Min. FONTAINE*
- *Hon. Min. MARCELINO for Hon. Min. KENNEDY*
- *Hon. Min. FONTAINE for Hon. Min. MARCELINO*
- *Ms. BYRAM for MLA LAGASSÉ*

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following one presentation on **Bill (No. 21)** – *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act/Loi sur la protection des jeunes sportifs*:

David Grant, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 24)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*:

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

John Christian Barrion, Private Citizen

Paul Moist, Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees

Your Committee heard the following nine presentations on **Bill (No. 29)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*:

Paul Moist, Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees

Fernanda Vallejo, Latinas Manitoba

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

David Grant, Private Citizen

Ingrid Mushinski, Private Citizen

Shannon Hancock, Private Citizen

Blaine Duncan, Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union

Nick Kasper, United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg, IAFF Local 867

Laura Duncan, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 44)** – *The Matriarch Circle Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Ribbon Skirt Day)/Loi sur le Cercle des matriarches et modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs (Journée de la jupe à rubans)*:

Sandra Delaronde, Giganawenimaanaanig

Dawn Olivence, Winnipeg Indigenous Executive Circle - Strengthening Families

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 29)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*:

Chris Perry, Manitoba Professional Fire Fighters Association

Scott Atchison, Private Citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 21)** – *The Protecting Youth in Sports Act/Loi sur la protection des jeunes sportifs*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 24)** – *The Workers Compensation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 29)** – *The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 44)** – *The Matriarch Circle Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Ribbon Skirt Day)/Loi sur le Cercle des matriarches et modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs (Journée de la jupe à rubans)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports—no, sorry. The honourable member for Kirkfield Park.

Mr. Oxenham: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Annual Report of the Manitoba Watershed Districts Program for 2023-2024 and hard copies of the audited financial statements, as required by the Office of the Auditor General.

The Speaker: Prior to moving to ministerial statements, I have a statement—

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: Before recognizing the Honourable First Minister, I want to take a moment to recognize this historic moment.

As I mentioned earlier this week, this will be the first time in the 154-year history of this Assembly that we will be providing live, simultaneous interpretation of an Indigenous language to members in the Chamber and those participating virtually during our proceedings.

As your Speaker, I believe this is a very important step in advancing the Assembly's commitment to reconciliation.

I would now like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the west message room door where we have with us Elder Dr. Ellen Cook who will be providing the interpretation from Cree to English today.

Doctor—Elder Dr. Cook is joined by her apprentice, Miranda Mcleod, who is learning to be fluent in the Cree language.

We welcome you both to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and thank you for the historic service you are providing today.

For those watching the broadcast, interpretation is currently only available to members. And I would also advise members that the interpretation is available through the same earpiece we use for interpretation of French.

Spirit Bear Day / Jordan's Principle

manito maskwa kīsikāw

Cree spoken

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): opīkiskwēw, nīpasikōn anohc kā-kīsikāk, ta-wīhtamān, mitātaht kā-itakimiht sākīpakāwi-pisim, oma kīsikāw, Spirit Bear day kā-isi-kiskēnihcikāṭēk, ē-kistēnihtākwani, mīna ē-kiskisināniwanik Jordan River Anderson opimātsiwin, ēkwa ē-ohpinikāṭēk kiskēnihtamowin awāsisak kwayask ta pamihihcik opimātsiwin, mīna mitoni ta-kistēnihtākwak Jordan's Principle.

awa napēsis Jordan, kinosēw-sīpihk ohci, Norway House Cree Nation, ispiy kā-nihtāwikit misiwē kī-isi-animihtāw, misiwē ēkī-itāspinēt, kapē kā-pimātsit ahkosiwi-kamikohk kī-kanawēnimaw, ina mwāc ohci kaskihtācik ta-itasowēcik awēna ta-tipahikēstamawāt kisāspin kī-pakitinīht ta-kīwēt—Canada kihci-okimānāhk, ahpo Manitoba okimānāhk. ina ēki-tasi-ohtami-anwēhtahkik ta-tipahikēstamawācīk opamihihēwiniw, ēkwani mwāc ohci kiwētahāw Jordan, itē takī-kanawēnimikot mīna takī-sītoskākot onīkīkwa, owīcisana, owahkomākana, mīna takī -wicīhikot owici-ininīma, māka kapē ē-isi-cimāsinik o-pimātsiwin kī-pamihāw āhkosiwi-kamikohk. ispiy kā-pōni-pimātsit, kī-wanāstāniwan Jordan's Principle, wanasowēwin, kēhcināc ininiwi-awāsisak kwayask ta-pamihihcik, kahkinaw kēkwan ē-isi-natawēnihtahkik, pamīstākēwina ta-miskahkik—ta-kiskēnihcikāṭēk awēna ta-tipahikēstamāket awāsisī-pamihiwēwin ohci.

oma kīsikaw kika-kiskisinaw mona ina poko wanasowēwin, ohci, māka ininiwi-awāsisak sākōc

ta-otihtahkikh pamihiwēwin ēkwa wicihiwēwin kā-isi-natawēnihtahkik, mona ina āyīṭaw ta-anwēhtahkik ta-wicihiwēcik onikāniwak.

omisi itastēw Jordan's Principle, mona pēyak awāsis ta-kakwātakihṭaw mīna mona pēyak ta-wanikisitotawāw, pēyakwan ta-isi-pamihāw tāpiskōc kotakiyak awāsisak. kwayask-itōtākēwin ta-kiskēnihtahkik awāsisak, ta-kistēnimihcik, ta-mino-pamihihcik kākē, mino-ayāwin asici nikanēnihtākosiwin ta-wāpahtahkik kapē.

ē-isi-kistēnihtakwahk Jordan's Principle ahpo Jordan River Anderson opimātsiwin kiskisowin, poko ta-kanawāpahtamahk manotēwak kākī-pē-otinaskēcik, ēkwa anihī kākī-nakatamākawiyahkok, poko mitoni sōhki ta-māmawī-atoskātamahk kwayask ta-pamihihcik ininiwi-awāsisak, mona nōhta kwayask ta-kanawēnihcikāṭēni otinīnākosiwināwā.

* (13:40)

Honourable Speaker, oma kā-nakiskamāhk nisitanaw askiy aspin kākī-nakataskēt Jordan, kistēnihtākwaniw okiskisiwin, opimātsiwin, ēkwa kitasotamāsonaw tahto awāsis kwayask ta-itōṭawāyahk, manācihiwēwin ēkwa minwātsiwin, asici kisēwātsiwin ohci.

kiwapahtēnaw osōhkātsiwināw Jordan owāhkomākana inikohk kākī-atoskātahkik kwayask ta-itastāniwanik ininiwi-awāsisak -pamihiwēwin, kākī -kēhcinahocik mona wīhkac kotak ininiw ta-itāpahtahk kākī-itāpahtahkik wīnawāw. kinanāskomitināwāw kākī -miniyaḥk Jordan otācimowin ēkwa owīnowin, mino-wāhkohtowin ta-kiskēnihcikāṭēk, mīna ta-mino-wicēwitoyahk.

asici mīna, niwī-kīhkāyēnihtākohānān Dr. Cindy Blackstock, kākī -wāpahtahk Jordan-a kākī-ispānihikonit, kinwēs ēki-atoskātahk kwayask ta-isi pamihihcik ininiwi-awāsisak. Dr. Blackstock ēkī-nīkāniskahk, ēkī -kēhcināhot ta-atoskēmākahk oma wicihiwēwin misiwē ota Canada, ta-astēk tipahikēwin, kahkinaw awāsisak kwayask ta-pamihihcik.

Jordan kikistēnihtākohitinān.

ēkosāni, kinanāskomitinān.

ēkwa kīnawāw kahkinaw kinanāskomitināwāw.

Translation

Honourable Speaker, today, I rise to recognize May 10th as Bear Witness Day, also known in Manitoba as Spirit Bear Day—a day to honour the memory of Jordan River Anderson and to raise awareness about children's rights and the importance of Jordan's Principle.

Jordan was a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation born with complex medical needs who spent his entire life in hospital because governments could not agree on who should pay for his in-home health-care costs. Those delays meant Jordan was never able to be at home, surrounded by family and his community; instead, he lived his short life in hospital. After his passing, Jordan's Principle was established to ensure that First Nations children receive the services they need and do not face gaps, delays or denials, caused by jurisdictional disputes.

This day reminds us that Jordan's Principle is more than a policy—it is a powerful expression of children's inherent human rights. It ensures that First Nations children receive the services and supports they need without delay and without being caught in jurisdictional disputes between governments.

At its core, Jordan's Principle affirms that no child should suffer or be left behind because of systemic inequalities. It is a tool of justice, designed to uphold the dignity, health, and well-being of children by placing their needs first—always.

Honouring Jordan's Principle and the memory of Jordan River Anderson means confronting the legacy of colonialism and working actively to ensure fairness and equity for First Nations kids who deserve nothing less than the full protection of their rights.

* (13:40)

Honourable Speaker, as we mark the 20th anniversary of his passing, we honour Jordan's memory, and we recommit ourselves to treat every child with dignity, fairness, and compassion.

We recognize the strength and advocacy of Jordan's family, who pushed for needed changes within public health systems and who fought to ensure that no other family would have to endure the same injustice. Thank you for gifting all of us with Jordan's story and his name as a call to action so we can walk in a good way.

And, finally, we also acknowledge Dr. Cindy Blackstock for her work to ensure Jordan's experiences show us how to make things better for First Nations children. Dr. Blackstock's leadership across Canada has helped turn a principle into real action for thousands of children.

Jordan, we honour you.

Thank you.

And to all of you, we thank you all.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):

Honourable Speaker, I would like to start off by recognizing the Premier (Mr. Kinew) for reading his statement in Cree and making history in this Chamber. I would like to thank the interpreters. I would like to recognize the importance and significance of today's events in this Chamber. One step in working—in walking towards truth and reconciliation.

Honourable Speaker, when adults bicker, children suffer. This is the harsh reality that bears witness to the purpose of Jordan's Principle. Jordan River Anderson spent almost—spent most of his five years of life in a hospital because the governments of Manitoba and Canada could not stop arguing over who should pay this boy's medical bills and needs.

No child should ever be deprived of medical services or essential supports because of government neglect. But that was the case for Jordan, solely because he was a First Nations child.

Jordan died in 2005 before he could experience even one day in a loving home. We have the power today to ensure that this never happens again.

In honour of Jordan's Principle, we, as the adults, must recognize our duty to always put children first. And we must ensure that First Nations children receive the care and support they need, where and when they need them. That applies to all areas of government.

In recent months, however, funding for Jordan's Principle has been put in jeopardy. At this very moment, Manitoba is seeing very difficult times. School divisions cut hundreds of educational assistants for Indigenous children, and northern families are being denied accommodations in Winnipeg to receive health services. This provincial government's response has been to blame the federal government and the federal government's response has been to blame the provincial government. The adults are fighting again and the children are suffering once again.

Jordan Anderson would have been 26 this October. In his memory, we urge all governments today to not allow more children to fall through the cracks because of the adults bickering.

Let's put the children first. Dignity, fairness and compassion.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux)—no, okay.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: So then, at this point in time, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today, for Spirit Bear Day, Jordan River Anderson's family: Ernest Anderson, Jordan's father, and Harriet Hart.

Jordan's siblings: Jerleen Sullivan and her daughter, Journey; Chasity Sullivan, Ernest Anderson's daughter; Caroline Anderson and her daughter, Mary Jane Anderson; Garland Anderson and Tony Clark and their children, Jada and Karson; Moses Anderson and his spouse, Elissa, and daughter, Zendaya; Aaron Anderson; Dale Anderson.

Staff from the First Nations Caring Society: Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Brittany Matthews, Stephanie Wellman.

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today for this historic day.

* * *

The Speaker: Now, I have a leave request for the House, but before I ask for leave, I want to provide some background for all members. The honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) will be making a member's statement recognizing the 80th anniversary of VE day. As part of this, we are joined here today by many guests in the public gallery for this significant day, including three World War II veterans: Len Van Roon, Bob Watkins and Percy Rosamond.

I believe that their service to our country should be honoured further, and that as a sign of respect by this Assembly, that these three veterans should be granted the privilege of being seated at the bar of the House during members' statements on this significant day.

Therefore, I am seeking leave of the House to allow Len Van Roon, Bob Watkins and Percy Rosamond to be seated at the bar of the House for the duration of members' statements today.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted, and I thank all honourable members.

We will now take a moment to set up chairs on the floor, and once that is ready, I would ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the guests into the Chamber.

Please be seated.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I seek leave to allow a member from each

party and each independent member the opportunity to egress—address the guests in the Chamber and gallery prior to their departure immediately following the member's statement from Waverley.

* (13:50)

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow each member from—or, a member from other parties and independent members to make a statement immediately following the member for Waverley's (MLA Pankratz) member's statement, prior to the guest leaving the Chamber? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Victory in Europe Day—80th Anniversary

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Today, we mark Victory in Europe Day, a day that reminds us what can be accomplished when ordinary people rise to make extraordinary contributions to their country. On this day 80 years ago, the guns fell silent in Europe, and the world took a collective breath of hope.

We remember the courage. We remember the cost. And we remember the people who made victory possible, some of whom are here with us today.

In our gallery here in the Chamber, we have—we are honoured to welcome three Manitobans who answered the call in our nation's hour of need: Robert Watkins, who served in the Canadian Navy, guarding convoys across the Atlantic.

Percy Rosamond, a mechanic in the Royal Canadian Air Force, who kept aircraft flying.

And Len Van Roon, who landed in France on D-Day; who helped liberate Europe town by town in a Sherman tank; and who still owns—and has shown me, has them here today—the boots he wore on D-Day.

These men didn't ask for recognition. They just did their duty. And in doing so, they helped bend the arc of history toward freedom.

Last June, with our Premier (Mr. Kinew), I stood on the shores of Juno Beach and spoke with veterans who had landed there in the early hours of June 6, 1944. One veteran I spoke to for quite some time. I thanked him for his service, for our freedoms, our democracy. He listened, and then he smiled and he simply said: You're welcome. Now make sure you enjoy it.

And that moment has stayed with me because that's what they fought for; not only for freedom but our chance to live it fully.

So to Robert, Len and Percy, thank you. On behalf of all Manitobans: We are here because of you and we will remember.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, 80 years ago, the world witnessed the unconditional surrender of the evil Nazi regime, the demise of Adolf Hitler, a victory in Europe and a turning point for all of humanity.

The six years of war in Europe, which saw millions upon millions of lives taken, homes and cities decimated, suffering of entire nations and families broken, had finally come to an end.

While the fight against fascism was not over and its consequences continued to be felt long after the war, VE day marked a breakthrough against cruelty and evil.

This was not simply a victory for Europe; it was a triumph for all humankind, for democracy, for goodness and peace.

We would not be here today if not for the generation of young Manitobans and Canadians who fought to make this triumph possible, with over 45,000 giving their own lives.

We know the Canadian army fought the Nazis right to the very end, including the liberation of the Netherlands on May 5.

It is the bravery, determination and virtue of our veterans who put their lives on the line for our democracy that I am able to address you today in this Chamber, Honourable Speaker.

As the years go on, the opportunity to say thank you face-to-face to our veterans, has all become more rare.

It is a blessing and privilege to be joined by our guests in the Chamber. And to apologize to them that myself and my colleagues will never be able to provide them what they have provided us.

But as long as we stand in these hallowed walls, we owe them to never take our roles for granted, to respect our democracy and to work for the betterment of all people.

Len Van Roon, Bob Watkins, Piercy Rosamond and all veterans here and throughout Canada, we are forever indebted to you.

Thank you.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Today, on Victory in Europe Day, we take time to honour the courage, sacrifice and service of those who fought for freedom during the Second World War.

Today marks 80 years since the official surrender of all German military operations and a victory over fascism. It is a profound privilege to acknowledge the presence of three remarkable veterans in the Chamber: Leonard Van Roon, whose regiment landed on Juno Beach in the first wave on D-Day; Lieutenant Commander Robert Watkins, Manitoba's oldest known living naval veteran of the Second World War; and Percy Rosamond, who served as an air force mechanic. Your service, bravery and commitment helped shape the Canada that we know today.

Your stories remind us of the costs of peace and the responsibility we share to uphold it. Perhaps now more than ever, it is important to recognize Canada as a free and sovereign nation and recognize the challenges still faced by many in our world.

On behalf of everyone here today, I thank you and all veterans for your service, your sacrifice and your enduring legacy. We are forever grateful.

The Speaker: At this point in time, I would ask that the clock be stopped and if members wish to go and congratulate our veterans, please feel free to do so.

* (14:00)

O Canada was sung.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Just before we resume members' statements, there are some more guests in the gallery that I'd like to introduce. We have with us today some Portuguese veterans: Pedro Correia, Carlos Oliveria, Leonel Vieira, Albino Felizardo, Antonio Carvalho, Alcides de Almeida, Pedro Jorge Correia. And they are the guests of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, the honourable member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino).

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

Further, we have seated in the public gallery from Springs Christian Academy, 50 grade 9 to 11 students under the direction of Brad Dowler. And they are guests of the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

We welcome you all here today.

The Speaker: We will now return to members' statements.

World Ovarian Cancer Day

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Today I am wearing teal in honour of World Ovarian Cancer Day.

Ovarian cancer is sometimes called the silent killer because its symptoms are non-specific and there is no reliable screening test. By the time many women are diagnosed, ovarian cancer has already progressed to a late stage. Each year in Canada, over 3,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and unfortunately, more than half will not survive beyond five years.

This topic recently hit much closer to home for me, when my very good friend and constituency assistant, Jackie Maxted, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer earlier this year. Jackie had no idea she was sick until Christmas Eve, when she was hit very suddenly with excruciating abdominal pain and ended up spending Christmas in urgent care. Waiting for appointments, waiting for results and waiting, facing the unknown, it was an incredibly scary time for her and her family.

Following blood work, an MRI and a referral to CancerCare, Jackie had a successful surgery and is now undergoing several months of chemotherapy. Luckily for all of us who know and love her, Jackie's prognosis is very good and she's expected to make a full recovery. A nurse at CancerCare told Jackie that she is the first person with stage 1 ovarian cancer she's ever met, and that needs to change; we need more survivors.

Recognizing her own good fortune, Jackie has already turned her incredible energy and focus towards advocacy about this disease. It was Jackie who suggested I get up in the Chamber today and use my voice to amplify the need for greater awareness, earlier detection and stronger investment in research. After all Jackie has done for me, it was the very least I could do for her to honour that request.

To the advocates at Ovarian Cancer Canada, researchers and front-line health-care workers who fight ovarian cancer alongside their patients, thank you.

And to Jackie, who is watching at home, as she does every day, we are all cheering for you as you beat this disease. You've got this, and we've got you.

Portuguese Veterans of Manitoba

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, today I pay tribute to the Portuguese veterans of Manitoba, deeply respected elders whose steadfast service has become an integral part of the story of our province. They

served bravely in regions of conflict as well as in international peacekeeping efforts. Their commitment to global peace and security has shaped the Portuguese diaspora and defined Manitoba's strong legacy of service and multiculturalism.

Upon arriving in Canada, many of these veterans bore the psychological weight of their past experiences. PTSD was a silent burden, often carried alone due to limited resources, language barriers and the deep fear of judgment.

* (14:10)

Yet, they remained steadfast in rebuilding their lives and supporting one another, and something extraordinary emerged: through the efforts of distinguished veteran and Notre Dame community leader, Mr. Pedro Correia, the Liga dos Combatentes Núcleo of Winnipeg was brought to life. This Manitoba chapter is a beacon of support for Portuguese veterans, their families and community.

They stood up and recently added to the first Portuguese veterans remembrance monument in Canada, a sacred space of reflection, honouring the service of veterans, recognizing the history of the Portuguese community in Manitoba since 1958.

Manitoba's Portuguese veterans represent our province nationally and globally, including the United Nations conference on PTSD in Paris, and they continue to play an active role in Remembrance Day ceremonies, historic battle commemorations and local initiatives such as the historic memorial Canada project, an initiative that supports young Manitobans in having direct contact with a veteran during school presentations throughout Veterans' Week.

Portuguese veterans stand in solidarity with Indigenous veterans and contribute to Calls to Action aimed at building a future that honours all who have served, regardless of background, culture or nation.

To all Portuguese veterans and the members of the Liga dos Combatentes Núcleo of Winnipeg: Obrigada. [Thanks.] You have served the honour—with honour and have built a legacy of remembrance, resilience and unity that will live on for generations in Manitoba.

Thank you, merci, miigwech and obrigada.

Lac du Bonnet Constituency

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): The beauty of summer in the Lac du Bonnet constituency is like a hidden treasure waiting to be discovered. With its stunning landscapes, vibrant communities and exciting

attractions, this area offers something special for everyone. Exploring the wonders of Lac du Bonnet not only provides unforgettable experiences, but also highlights the charm of the local communities and the rich heritage they embody.

Victoria Beach stands out as one of the best summer spots in the region. With its sandy shores and crystal-clear waters, it invites families to enjoy swimming and sunbathing. The beach is perfect for picnics and relaxation, making it a popular gathering place for locals and visitors alike. Nearby, the community of Powerview-Pine Falls offers access to beautiful walking trails and parks, which showcase the area's natural beauty. These outdoor spaces are ideal for hiking, biking or just enjoying a peaceful day in nature.

Lac du Bonnet itself is known for its friendly atmosphere and welcoming spirit. The local shops and restaurants serve delicious food that reflects the area's culture. Events such as the summer markets and festivals bring the community together and provide entertainment for all ages. The Winnipeg River Heritage Museum in St. George tells the story of the area's history and showcases its unique culture, making it a must-visit for anyone curious about the region's past.

The communities of Tyndall and Garson add even more charm to the Lac du Bonnet constituency. Tyndall is known for its unique provincial stone, Tyndall Stone, which is used in many local buildings and landmarks. This stone is not just a material; it is a symbol of the area's identity and pride.

Beausejour, Pinawa, the RM of Whitemouth, the RM of Reynolds host various events throughout the summer, allowing residents and visitors to connect and celebrate the local culture in a joyful atmosphere.

Honourable Speaker, exploring these attractions will create lasting memories and foster a deeper appreciation for the wonderful communities that make up the Lac du Bonnet constituency.

Embrace the magic of summer in this beautiful area and discover all it has to offer.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mabuhay District

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): One cold evening after being freshly elected, I attended a film screening with my dad to support my friend MC de Natividad's film called Bumalik, which actually featured the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino). This film

took us on a journey to rediscover what it means to be Filipino on Treaty 1 territory. It evoked real emotion and provoked inspiring conversation.

One of these conversations that I had was with the host venue's chef, Allan Pineda, who passionately made the case for what I'm about to share next.

Since the first large wave of Filipinos migrated to Manitoba in the 1940s, we have become the province with the largest per capita population of Pinoys. We lead the country with the highest concentration of Filipinos who have chosen to call our province home, Honourable Speaker.

Because we are many, we are irreplaceably woven into the fabric of Manitoba's cultural richness and economic strength. This is something realized by the work of the Mabuhay District, an intergenerational business zone that envisions a permanent cultural and economic hub for Manitoba's Filipino community.

The Mabuhay District will incubate key builds like the Filipino—like a Filipino seniors home, a national Filipino heritage museum as well. The project's leaders envision the Mabuhay District becoming a generational hub for belonging, community, tourism and collective discovery.

Over a year and a half later, Honourable Speaker, I am proud of the support the Mabuhay District organizers have cultivated across Manitoba, and in the wake of the recent tragedy in Vancouver and the grief that has reminded us of the need for safe spaces, the Mabuhay District gives our community a vision and action grounded in legacy, community resilience and collective hope.

Honourable Speaker, I am thrilled to uplift the Mabuhay District for their inspiring leadership and to recommit my support to this transformative journey. Together, as a community, with everybody at the table, we can make this a vision that becomes a reality within our lifetimes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Major Infrastructure Projects in Manitoba Premier's Letter to the Prime Minister

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, moments ago the world's 1.3 billion Catholics were introduced to the first American pontiff, Pope Leo XIV. We want to add our congratulations and look forward to his papacy.

Honourable Speaker, the Premier's letter to the Prime Minister reminded Manitobans that he just

doesn't see eye to eye with him. The Premier made no mention of major infrastructure projects like the widening of Kenaston or Chief Peguis, no mention of a North End water treatment plant or the Arlington Bridge.

Since the Premier did not mention any of these projects to the Prime Minister, does that mean that these projects are either fully funded or that this Premier just doesn't care enough about them to even bring them up with the Prime Minister?

Which one is it, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I'd like to take this opportunity to extend a congratulatory message to all the Catholics in Manitoba who are rejoicing at the papacy of Leo. Of course, it's a significant appointment in many ways, but for those Manitobans, people of faith, who work directly with the Catholic Church or people who work in interfaith initiatives, this is an important moment. And, of course, all of us who have been on the journey of reconciliation recognize the significance of this as well.

I want to thank the member opposite for bringing in the list of projects the PCs never built while he was in government. The difference is, on this side we build, build, build the greatest country on earth, which is Canada, Canada, Canada.

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

Manitoba's Mining Sector Request for Projects in Development

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, in Manitoba it is clear by that non-answer, another non-answer by this Premier, that he doesn't even care enough to bring up major projects to the Prime Minister. It's shameful, and it's embarrassing for this Premier.

What else is embarrassing is that Manitoba has moved to second last in mining development in this country. So it's understandable that this Premier would take credit for a PC-started gold mine. On top of all this, this Premier has cancelled 14 projects in the mining sector.

Is the Premier now willing to start up his projects, and which ones will he greenlit?

Thank you.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to let the people in Manitoba know that we're hard at work building the economy with you, the people who bring this economy

to life each and every day. That's why I was proud to write to the Prime Minister and say we want to build a trade corridor in Manitoba to light up the west and light up the North.

At the same time, we want an ag hub here in Manitoba to power that backbone of our economy. When we're talking about major infrastructure projects that involve roads, hey, the trucking corridor made the list. And, of course, mining and Indigenous fair trade was also on our list of priorities.

* (14:20)

What was the priority for the members opposite in government? Well, we'll soon find out when the Conflict of Interest Commissioner delivers his report on Sio Silica.

But when it comes to mining, mining stopped in Flin Flon under their watch. You well know that's the most miningest community of all the mining communities in all of mineland. What did we do on the other hand? Within 18 months we got a new gold mine to shovels in the ground. We're building up Canada. They couldn't get it done.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Major Infrastructure Projects in Manitoba Government Plan for New Policies and Legislation

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Honourable Speaker, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce disagrees with this Premier. They, quote, the economic horse is not getting the attention it needs, end quote.

In a letter to the Prime Minister, this Premier buries within it a quote, and I quote: New policies to fast-track our own regulation, end quote. The Premier seems to think that we are living in a democracy. He might operate his caucus that way but he needs to bring those policies to the Legislature. It is clear—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Khan: —that this Premier is trying to dodge accountability all while blocking the only real plan brought forward, Bill 227, the member from Midland, to remove interprovincial trade barriers that this Premier has blocked and stopped.

If the Premier has new plans for policies and legislation, will he table it today for Manitoba to see?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I realize the member opposite was getting worked up, perhaps a little emotional. He may not have realized what he actually just said so I'll offer a gentle, very soft correction on the record here.

This is a democracy. So not only do I think I'm living in a democracy, I actually am living in a democracy. And that's why we're knocking down the trade barriers. We're knocking down opposition to Canada being the greatest country on earth. The only thing that we're not knocking down is the idea that the members opposite ever contributed anything to building up Manitoba.

They closed emergency rooms. They never built a personal-care home, and they fired people who go to work each and every day, building our country's GDP. We're taking a different approach. We're working with you to build up Canada and unlike him, we'll never thank Donald Trump.

Provincial Unemployment Numbers Out-Migration Concerns

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, under the PCs in 2022 unemployment was 3.9 per cent; 2023, 4.9 per cent, to add some context. While under this NDP Kinew government, unemployment has grown to over 6 per cent. The Premier is steering this economy right towards a disaster while driving us to a recession with unemployment rising.

Can the Premier tell us today how many jobs have been lost under his watch?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): We're adding jobs. We only have to look at the health-care system. Where they fired 300 nurses when he was in government, we've added—thanks to this amazing Minister of Health here in Manitoba—600 net-new nurses.

And there's more. There's more people working in every industry across this great province.

But if you want to go economic stat for economic stat, let's talk inflation, the No. 1 issue when it comes to you and the economy. What was inflation under his watch in government? One, two, three, four—no, you need two hands to count it: 8 per cent—8 per cent. Since we've taken office, average inflation has been in the target range for the Bank of Canada. We had the lowest inflation rate in all of Canada because we cut the gas tax. They sat on their hands and you paid more. We got into government; we got to work and we saved you money. When it comes to the economy, let's keep

working together to build up Manitoba and build up Canada.

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, we have some clear NDP math right here. He thinks that an increase to 6 per cent is less. He thinks that job losses of over 900 to the Ag sector, a 5.8 increase—per cent increase in unemployment is less. This NDP math just doesn't work. Eleven hundred workers lost their jobs last month under this NDP. Young people are leaving this province for greener pastures to our neighbouring provinces with lower taxes and more job opportunities. After 18 months, nearly two years under this Premier, the economy's gotten worse and unemployment has risen.

Can the Premier tell us today: What are unemployment levels in Parkland and north Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: People are going to work again in Manitoba. Under the PCs, the endangered species that was added to the list? It was the building crane. We made a change to that. The building cranes, they're all over downtown, they're all over Manitoba. The building crane has returned to Manitoba and so have working people.

You want to talk about the Parkland? The number one threat to the Parkland's jobs are Trump's tariffs. That's why it's so puzzling that the PCs just chose a new leader who thanks Donald Trump. Thank you. I would say thank you. That's a direct quote that he said for the 25 per cent tariff threat. That is a mistake.

We're taking a different approach. We're standing up to Donald Trump. Canada will never be the 51st state and we're standing with you, the people of this great province, putting folks to work, cutting inflation and building up our economy.

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker and Manitoba, the full quote is: Thank you, thank you, he's gone, and the next quote will be thank you, thank you, Wab Kinew—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —is gone. Honourable Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. The government bench needs to come to order. I can't hear the question, I'm sure nobody else can.

The honourable—and I would remind the honourable Leader of the Opposition that he can't use a person's name directly, you have to use their ministerial title or their constituency title.

Mr. Khan: Thank you, thank you, this Premier will soon be gone.

Parkland's unemployment is up to 11 per cent in just two years under this NDP. People are fleeing Manitoba under this NDP government. They're heading for provinces, not here in Manitoba.

Can the Premier tell us why over 2,500 Manitobans left this province in just the fourth quarter of 2024 under this NDP government?

Mr. Kinew: The member opposite wants to talk about his thank-you to Donald Trump. These are the exact words, and I quote: The 25 per cent tariff threat—direct quote—I would say thank you. I would say thank you. End quote. That is bizarre—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —for somebody to say right now when Manitobans are worried about their jobs. But I'll leave it to him to explain.

He wants to talk about PC math. Yes, they chose him as leader even though he got less votes than the other guy. Go ahead and explain that when you are talking about math.

And when we're talking about people coming to Manitoba—go to the Whiteout party. People are coming here; they love it. People aren't leaving Manitoba. In fact, just think about the recent federal election. Who came to Manitoba to pay us a visit? To pay your government a visit? Mark Carney, Jagmeet Singh and even the guy that they all voted for, Pierre Poilievre lining up to do what we do best: work with you, the people of Manitoba and build, build, build Canada.

Education Property Taxes Rates for Winnipeg in 2025

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, Winnipeggers are receiving their property tax bills as we speak. And they are in for a shock.

While this minister irresponsibly eliminated the 50 per cent education property tax rebate, Winnipeg families are going to be paying more as a result.

How many hard-working families will be paying more in education property taxes this year?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition was busy thanking Donald Trump for the tariffs or thanking him for interfering on our sovereignty or whatever they're trying to spin it as now, what was this team

doing? We were busy working to make life more affordable in—Manitobans with our recent budget announcement. We, of course, announced that we are increasing our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit from \$1,500 to \$1,600 to save Manitobans more money.

Now, of course, we know that that's going to save 80 per cent of Manitobans more money than they saved under the previous government's approach and, of course, that's just one thing that we're doing to make life more affordable. That's one element among many others.

For example, our 10 per cent permanent cut to the gas tax; our hydro rate freeze, which is keeping energy costs low for Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

* (14:30)

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, that was an embarrassing answer because this minister clearly announced a tax policy without doing his homework.

In a City of Winnipeg analysis, in 2024, 50,000 properties in Winnipeg would have been worse off under the NDP system. I table that for the minister. That number is expected to be significantly higher this year.

How many hard-working families will be paying more in education property taxes in 2025?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we know that our approach is going to save 80 per cent of Manitobans more money than they did under their approach. End stop.

And that's, of course, the Department of Finance standing behind those numbers. And we're proud to know that we're doing that work of making life more affordable for Manitobans.

That's very different than what Manitobans experienced for seven and a half years under the members opposite when they raised costs on renters by increasing taxes on renters, when they raised Hydro rates, when they raised costs on producers, our farmers, by raising Crown land leases.

We know their record. Their record is clear: it's one of increasing costs. They love fuel taxes. We gave Manitobans a holiday for a year and now a permanent 10 per cent cut.

Where they raised costs, we keep them low. That's what we're going to keep doing for Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Stone: The numbers don't lie, Honourable Speaker, and where this minister failed to do his homework, the City of Winnipeg did.

According to City of Winnipeg finance chair, that number has exploded to 132,000 properties in Winnipeg. That is almost 50 per cent of properties in Winnipeg that will be paying more under this NDP government. I table that letter for the minister.

Will he stand up and apologize to those 132,000 property owners that he is targeting with his high taxes?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, again, for seven and a half years, the members opposite made life more expensive for Manitobans, and that was in addition to the other work that they focused on, which was cutting, cutting, cutting all manner of important services for Manitobans. Whether it was destroying health care, cutting education, cutting child care, all across government, they made cuts everywhere while they were making life more expensive, and worse, generally, for Manitobans.

What is this team doing? We're focusing on keeping your costs low. This year in our budget, 25 new ways to save for Manitobans. And that's in addition to the important work we're doing repairing health care, repairing education, making Manitoba safer.

Manitobans know they can count on this team to keep making life better. We're going to keep doing that work every single day.

Education System Funding Staffing Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Manitobans know, Honourable Speaker, that this minister's working hard to make it less affordable here in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank Dr. Cook for doing the translation earlier today.

Yesterday, I asked the Education Minister about the Manitobans who are losing their jobs. I've also asked the Education Minister yesterday about the students who are losing their supports and the educational assistants who are losing their jobs. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: The Minister of Education had the nerve to say that funding was cut as a result of changes to Jordan's Principle.

How does this minister feel that it's appropriate to say that these jobs were cut based off of a disagreement over who pays, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It's a great privilege and an honour to get up on—today on Spirit Bear Day in the presence of the family of Jordan River Anderson and so many incredible folks that have done the work of—it really shows.

I think about this a lot in my role as an MLA. One of the greatest privileges of this role is getting to meet with folks like the family of Jordan River Anderson, who take such a terrible tragedy and a personal experience they have and turn that into advocacy and changes that have impacted our entire nation.

So, on today, on Spirit Bear Day, when we're talking about Jordan's Principle, I would like to really ground us—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Just yesterday, Honourable Speaker, the minister took no responsibility for anything. Matter of fact, didn't even come close to answering the question. This minister has so much that she has to answer for.

Under the NDP, Manitobans are paying record property taxes due to her funding cuts on all Manitobans. The minister wants to fight over who pays for what, and students are the ones paying the price, Honourable Speaker. That's wrong on many, many, many different levels.

I ask this minister: How many EAs have been fired as a result of this minister's funding disagreements and cuts?

MLA Schmidt: The truth of the matter is, on this side of the House, we know and we believe and we put into action the truth that every single child here in Manitoba deserves a right to and equal access to education. And that's exactly what we're doing on this side of the House.

The Manitoba NDP—we will always be here to support all children in Manitoba, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, living on-reserve or wherever they live in Manitoba. Our department, our government, will be there to support all of these students. Our department and our government has been working very closely with our partners at Indigenous Services Canada, which we are happy to partner with.

We are working with partners like the Southern Chiefs' Organization, who I have had the great privilege of meeting with—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, just yesterday, this minister was asking me to go do her job and talk to the federal government. I have had those conversations; I'm just wanting to know when she's going to—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —start actually doing her job, Honourable Speaker.

Back in November, this minister sat on her hands, and 93 educational assistants in Hanover—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —were fired.

Now, Honourable Speaker, 40 more in Swan Valley School Division for the same reason.

Can the minister tell Manitobans how many more students—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —are going to lose their educational assistants—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) will come to order.

Mr. Ewasko: Like to start over, Honourable Speaker.

Can the minister tell Manitobans how many more students are going to lose their educational assistants, their programming, their support—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: Let's talk about some real cuts that the Swan Valley School Division was facing. And I quote: For Swan Valley School Division, the reduction was about \$240,000. Every department and area is facing cuts. The cuts are happening as follows: one school psychologist position; the junior kindergarten program; educational library assistant hours; one and a half teaching positions; cuts to the budgets of transportation, maintenance, student services, technology, band, early years music and physical education.

Where was that reported, Honourable Speaker? In the Star and Times in the riding of Swan Valley in

2017, under the leadership of the failed previous minister of Education, the member for Lac du Bonnet.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

The honourable Minister of Health will come to order as well.

Mental Health Services Supports Needed for Rural Manitoba

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, throughout Manitoba, police are having to spend large portions of their shifts addressing mental health issues and calls. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) told local media, mental health workers need to assist in such cases.

How many workers have been assigned to rural Manitoba?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister responsible for Mental Health): We are taking a whole-of-government approach, which is something that the previous government never took. For seven and a half years, they ignored issues that members brought forward, whether it was policing, whether it was rural municipalities, whether it was the mayors of these different places.

We're not taking that approach. We're working with municipalities; we're ensuring that they're getting the services that they need.

We brought Your Way Home forward; we're getting services that folks need. As we brought forward yesterday, crime stats are coming down because we're working together, alongside policing.

* (14:40)

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

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, in Altona, Morden, Winkler and other rural communities, local police forces feel this additional strain with every shift.

When is the minister allocating additional resources for southern Manitoba region?

Ms. Smith: And, again, for seven and a half years, they ignored that. On this side of the House, we're working towards hiring 100 mental health workers in this province.

We're going to continue to work collaboratively across our province to ensure that municipalities, mayors and different reeves are getting the supports

that they need, something that the previous government never did.

We know that there's an addictions crisis in our province. We know that there's a mental health crisis because the previous government ignored it for seven and a half years.

We're getting people the supports that they need. We're getting them housed with the supports. And we're going to continue to do that, something the previous government never did. That's why they're on that side.

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

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, there is a six- to eight-month waiting list to access mental health services in rural Manitoba. That is unacceptable and fueling this crisis.

The minister promised more mental health clinicians earlier. How many new positions—and I'll ask again—how many new positions have been assigned to rural Manitoba communities?

Ms. Smith: For seven and a half years, members opposite focused on closing emergency rooms; they cut services to policing; they ignored the issues.

We're cleaning up their mess. It's going to take some time. We're working with municipalities. We're hiring 100 mental health workers. We're supporting people, taking them out of tents, putting them in homes.

We're not going to take the approach that members opposite took. They ignored the issue. They were okay with people living in bus shacks, living in tents. They sold social housing. They sold housing under people's feet. They're holding up Bill 12.

Whose house are they going to—whose house do they want to sell next?

Duck Mountain Moose Population Request for Population Numbers

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Earlier this week, I asked the minister to make public the moose surveys. He refused. There are concerns that the Duck Mountain moose population is low.

Will the minister tell Manitobans today what the current population is?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): The PCs did a terrible job of managing moose hunting here in Manitoba.

For us, what are we doing? We're taking a scientific approach to be able to do that. We're doing that with concrete scientific proof. We're enhancing the moose aerial surveys, something members opposite never did: head in the sand, tried to hope that this issue went away, hoping that the population somehow came back on its own, somehow those numbers were self reporting.

We're doing this in a concrete way with Indigenous communities, with the Wildlife Federation, with the lodges outfitters, because that's what Manitobans expect of a good government.

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

Mr. Wowchuk: Manitobans are not happy with this minister's non-answers.

The minister is suppressing data. At public meetings in Roblin and Swan River, department officials said the winter 2023 interim hunt was authorized based on a population of 2,400 moose.

Can the minister confirm that the population of 2,400 moose is a fact?

Mr. Bushie: I encourage the member to maybe lean forward and tap the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) on his shoulder and ask him why he was failing moose hunting across Manitoba, why he was failing the moose population here in Manitoba, why he did not engage hunters, why he did not engage Indigenous communities, why'd he not engage the Wildlife Federation, why he did not engage the Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters.

Each and every day, they failed, failed, failed.

What are we going to do? We're taking a collaborative approach to be able to do this. We're doing scientific with investments all across Manitoba. And when those numbers come up, we'll share that with Manitobans—something members opposite never did.

Request for Conservation Closure

Mr. Wowchuk: Well, sorry to say, that was a priority when we were in government: to get those surveys to the public as soon as possible.

Dr. Vince Crichton, a very respected moose biologist in the department, cautioned in 2011 for a conservation closure when the population approached 1,300, as this signalled a potential collapse.

Does the minister support Dr. Crichton's science on this threshold for a conservation closure?

Mr. Bushie: The only thing that collapsed is their government, because simple—each and every day, they did not engage. They did not take a true effort and did not invest in this hunting survey. They did not invest in aerial surveys across Manitoba. They did nothing but decimate the Conservation Officer Service. They did nothing but try and alienate every aspect of moose population, and they did it each and every day.

So when members opposite came forward and they asked question, they talk about advocating on behalf of hunters, advocating on behalf of Manitobans, we know, very well, that the fact of the matter is they're not doing that; they never did that. The doors were locked, phones been unanswered, emails went return to sender, because that's what they did.

They did not engage anybody, every day.

Personal-Care Homes Location Selection for New Facilities

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, across our province, families are doing everything they can to support their aging loved ones. Oftentimes, people are having to leave their communities and move away from their family, friends and the life that they have built.

How does the department determine where to build new care homes, and will they share these findings with the House?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) for that really important question. I appreciate that she's acknowledging that our government is building personal-care homes here in Manitoba, something that didn't happen for seven and a half years under the previous PC government.

The decision in terms of where personal-care homes are built, that's determined by working directly with the regions, working directly with communities, working with our provincial clinical experts who help determine where community needs and pressures are that we have to alleviate.

And we're going to keep doing that work in partnership, because that's how you get results for Manitobans.

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

Staffing Levels and Quality of Care

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, there are thousands of individuals here in Manitoba, from

personal support workers to nurses to maintenance staff, that our long-term-care systems rely on.

Families are exceptionally grateful for the compassion of care workers, but are also deeply concerned about the short staffing and inconsistent care quality in long-term-care facilities. Health-care workers continue to express how stretched thin they are. This was evident from yesterday's rally.

What is the minister doing to ensure care standards are being upheld as workers continue to express feeling burnt out?

MLA Asagwara: I want to thank health-care workers working across long-term-care homes across Manitoba for everything they do for Manitobans. Housekeeping staff, environmental workers, nurses, health-care aides, medical directors, we thank you for what you do.

We also know that every single one of those groups of health-care workers had their wages frozen for years by the former failed PC administration. They were treated with contempt and absolute disrespect for seven and a half long years.

We know that there's work to do—more work to do to repair that damage. We're restoring relationships with the front lines, and one of the most important things we've done is successfully ensure that they have fairly bargained agreements across different health-care sectors.

We're going to keep treating them with respect, making sure that they get fair deals moving forward, and strengthening—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Request for Province-Wide Plan

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, public trust in health-care planning comes from transparency. People want to know that decisions are being made fairly and based on need.

If this government is serious about equitable health care, then it must be transparent in how it's allocating resources and which regions remain underserved.

Will the minister commit to publicly releasing a province-wide plan that clearly outlines where these personal-care-home investments are going, the data used to make these decisions and how the government is prioritizing underserved communities, particularly those in northern and rural Manitoba?

MLA Asagwara: The information that the member is looking for is largely laid out in our '25-26 budget,

which sees health care getting \$1.2-billion increase to overall spending, \$780 million of which is going directly to the health-care workers who provide care at the bedside every single day.

And in terms of making sure that underserved communities' needs are being met, on this side of the House, we believe that every single Manitoban, no matter who you are, how you identify and where you come from, deserves the best health care possible.

On that side of the House, they thank Donald Trump. They thank Donald Trump for an approach in policies that disproportionately negatively affect diverse communities and underserved communities.

* (14:50)

We won't take that approach. We believe all Manitobans and all Canadians deserve dignified, accessible health care that meets their needs.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Tuxedo—no. The honourable member for Tuxedo.

An Honourable Member: Transcona.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona.

US Tariffs on Canada Leader of the Opposition's Comments

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): Honourable Speaker, Trump's tariffs are hurting Manitoban and Canadian businesses. On this side of the House, we're fighting to protect businesses, but on that side of the House, the MLA for Fort Whyte shamefully thanks Trump for his tariffs and refuses to apologize for doing so.

He thanked Trump to win the PC leadership race, but he still lost to Wally Daudrich. Members opposite can try to rewrite history all they want, but Manitobans know that he thanked Trump.

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism remind this House what exactly the MLA for Fort Whyte said to thank Trump for his tariffs?

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, all of us were shocked to hear the MLA for Fort Whyte thank Trump for his tariffs. And because he's confused as to what exactly he said while losing the PC leadership race, I'll read the full quote to refresh his memory.

Quote: Trump wants a win, and I think one of his clear wins—and a lot of Canadians' wins—was a change in federal government. He wanted JT gone and thank

God he's gone. How much of an influence did the 25 per cent tariff threat have on that? I would say a lot, and I would say thank you. I would say thank you; he's gone now.

You know what? While the PCs thank Trump, on—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Kennedy:—this side of the House, we'll continue to thank Manitoban businesses for supporting our team Canada approach.

Construction Season Tendered Projects for 2025

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, spring weather is upon us, and so should construction season. Each of us on this side of the House travel the roads that span our province each week, and we see the importance of quick and significant investment in infrastructure.

Could the minister tell us the total dollar value of highway projects that are tendered and ready to go?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I'm excited to get up and talk about all the work that we are doing to build up this province. It is construction season. It's come a little earlier this year, but that's like birthday season for transportation department.

So I'm excited to say that we have—over 80 per cent of our projects have been tendered and we are seeing a lot of building going on in this province.

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

Mr. Narth: That's not what we're hearing. Part of being effective—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth:—is being efficient. Construction—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth: Construction companies have delayed calling back seasonal workers. These workers will be looking for employment elsewhere, making construction more difficult later in the season.

Can the minister commit to a timeline when the majority of this season's infrastructure tenders will be released?

MLA Naylor: I—you know, thank the member opposite for that question. I want to be clear that because I'm in almost daily contact with the industry, with municipalities, with folks in the department who are doing design and engineering for our projects, I know that it's a little late in the game for his question.

The industry wants—what they asked for when we first came into government, something they never saw from the members opposite, was 80 per cent of tenders released by the end of February. And that is what we've endeavoured to do two years in a row.

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

Mr. Narth: The only think that industry is raising—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth: —is the pace of this government's tendering process. And that makes sense. According to the minister's own performance measures, this year's target for the percentage of pavement that is in fair or good condition has been downgraded.

Manitobans have not lowered their expectations for highway conditions, so why has this minister?

MLA Naylor: Honourable Speaker, trust me, my standards are high.

The challenge that our government came into was that the previous government not only cut the Transportation budget, both for capital and for maintenance year after year, but they underspent year after year. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Naylor: Not only did we spend more last year and actually spent what we budgeted, but this year we budgeted 10 per cent more for our infrastructure and we will spend that, too.

Intersection of Highway 8 and 67 Timeline for Safety Upgrades

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, last year I called on this Minister of Infrastructure to respond to a letter from the RM of St. Andrews to install basic safety upgrades at the intersection of highways 8 and 67.

So, when will this happen?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I had several conversations with that MLA last year, so it's—I would need to actually look

back on the particular letter that he's asking about and the particular project.

But I am more than happy, if he wants to reach out to the office, to give him the information that he needs.

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

Mr. Perchotte: The last time we spoke, she told me to check the website and I did, and much like the answers we're getting today, it says: no data. I table that for the House.

If she thinks the problem is going to go away by ignoring it, it won't. We need an answer.

When will that intersection get the attention it needs?

MLA Naylor: Well, again, one of the challenges in this role is the years and years of neglect—seven and a half years of neglect and damage—under the previous government, so imagine coming into this role and understanding that there is so much work that needs to be done in this province to make up for those years of neglect.

Then we work with municipalities, we work with First Nations, we work to prioritize which projects we can do first and we move forward, working with industry to build, build, build this province.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Death of Jordyn Reimer—Judicial Review Request

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On May 1—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

If I could ask all members to either take their conversations to the loge or out in the hall. I can't hear the member that has the floor, so—*[interjection]*

Apparently nobody's listening to the Speaker, either.

Mr. Balcaen: (1) On May 1, 2022, Jordyn Reimer, 24 years of age, was killed by an impaired driver while she was acting as a designated driver.

(2) There are two people legally culpable for the death—sorry—for her death: the impaired driver and the

accomplice. The driver was charged, but the second criminal, the accomplice, has not been held accountable.

(3) A concerned citizen took the keys from the impaired driver earlier in the evening to ensure he could not drive impaired. The accomplice retrieved the keys from this citizen under false pretenses and knowingly provided the impaired driver with access to the vehicle.

* (15:00)

(4) The Winnipeg Police Service's, WPS, investigation provided adequate evidence to meet the charging standards and recommended charges be laid against the accomplice. The Crown prosecutors declined to prosecute the accomplice.

(5) The family of Jordyn Reimer has called for the prosecution of the accomplice and that the decision to not prosecute be reviewed independently.

(6) As recently as 2022, there is precedent to refer criminal files of decisions to not prosecute with prosecution—or, sorry—not to proceed with prosecution to extra-provincial departments of justice for review. This was done with the Peter Nygård file, which ultimately led to a reversal in the decision to not prosecute, and charges were laid.

(7) An out-of-province review is supported by MADD Canada, MADD Winnipeg and by Manitobans.

(8) The family has exhausted every avenue within the existing system, and, in the absence of a prescribed process when a disagreement exists on charging standards, the only option is to request an independent out-of-province review.

(9) In December 2024, the WPS reported an alarming number of impaired drivers in the holiday Check Stop program. Extending criminal culpability beyond the driver to those who engage in overt actions to facilitate impaired driving will save lives.

(10) Manitobans deserve to have confidence in the provincial government and justice systems to make decisions that achieve true justice for victims and their families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to order an out-of-province review of the prosecutor's decision to not prosecute the accomplice in the death of Jordyn Reimer.

Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by Sandra Brown, Dennis Brown, Irene Chernetz and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On May 1, 2022, Jordyn Reimer, 24 years of age, was killed by an impaired driver while she was acting as a designated driver.

(2) There are two people legally culpable for her death: the impaired driver and the accomplice. The driver was charged, but the second criminal, the accomplice, has not been held accountable.

(3) A concerned citizen took the keys from the impaired driver earlier in the evening to ensure he could not drive impaired. The accomplice retrieved the keys from this citizen under false pretenses and knowingly provided the impaired driver with access to the vehicle.

(4) The Winnipeg Police Service's, WPS, investigation provided adequate evidence to meet the charging standard and recommended charges be laid against the accomplice. The Crown prosecutors declined to prosecute the accomplice.

(5) The family of Jordyn Reimer has called for the prosecution of the accomplice and that the decision to not prosecute be reviewed independently.

(6) A recently—as recently as 2022, there is precedent to refer criminal files of decisions to not proceed with prosecution to extra-provincial departments of justice for review. This was done with the Peter Nygård file, which ultimately led to a reversal in the decision to not prosecute, and charges were laid.

(7) An out-of-province review is supported by MADD Canada, MADD Manitoba and by Manitobans.

(8) The family has exhausted every avenue within the existing system, and, in the absence of a prescribed process when a disagreement exists on charging standards, the only option is to request an independent out-of-province review.

(9) In December 2024, the WPS reported an alarming number of impaired drivers in the holiday Check Stop program. Extending criminal culpability beyond the driver to those who engage in overt actions to facilitate impaired driving will save lives.

(10) Manitobans deserve to have confidence in the provincial government and justice systems to

make decisions that achieve true justice for victims and their families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to order an out-of-province review of the prosecutor's decision to not prosecute the accomplice in the death of Jordyn Reimer.

Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by Claire Patteson, Brad Seigmiller, Rupinder Dhaliwal and many, many more fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: Seeing no further petitions, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):

I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2); Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act; Bill 22, the environment amendment and waste reduction prevention amendment act; Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act; Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act; bill three two, the victims-232, sorry, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act, commemoration of days, weeks and months act amendment.

And, Honourable Speaker, can you please resolve the committee in-the House into Committee of Supply for consideration of departmental Estimates.

The Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2); Bill 11, The Oil and Gas Amendment Act; Bill 22, the environment amendment and waste reduction prevention amendment act; Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act; Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act; and Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act, commemoration of days, weeks, months act amended.

* * *

The Speaker: And, as previously announced, we will now resolve into the Committee of Supply.

The Deputy Speaker will now take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ROOM 254

HEALTH, SENIORS AND LONG-TERM CARE

* (15:10)

The Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'd like to start today with health human resources and the number of health-care workers that the government says that they've hired.

I'd like to know, of that 1,600 number, how many are net-new, how many were existing positions, how many are full time, how many are part time, and if we could please get a breakdown of where in the province those positions are located, as well as what the positions are.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

* (15:20)

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): There was a question asked by the critic yesterday regarding breast health specific to mammographers, so I'm happy to provide a little bit more information today in that regard.

So the number—the current number—of mammographers is—we've got 18 FTEs, and, as I stated yesterday, we've been working at proactively identifying tech students—technology students—as they're doing their training and reaching out to them proactively to offer them a training opportunity specific to mammography, and, of course, offering them job opportunities where we need an increase in capacity for that service.

We were successfully able to identify almost 10 students through that proactive outreach and a partnership with CancerCare Manitoba. Three of those have already graduated and are actually working as

mammographers right now, which is really exciting. And I think that's a really important thing to talk about because it highlights the benefits of proactively reaching out to learners—health-care learners—engaging with them, and offering them opportunities to enhance their education and training and job opportunities within the health-care system.

Again, this is an approach that our government undertook for the first time. This has not happened previously under—certainly not under the previous PC administration, but I don't know that we can identify a time when this has really happened in this way previously.

And so if we think about the fact that we know our government is doing the work of lowering the breast cancer screening age, also actively doing the work to ensure that we hit that Canadian national target of screening 70 per cent of eligible populations, we know that's going to require more health-care human resource, and so we cannot do things the way they've been done. We have to think outside the box, and if we hadn't proactively worked with CancerCare Manitoba and our partners, Red River and other folks, to reach out to these health-care student learners, then we would have three fewer mammographers practising right now in Manitoba.

So, you know, our government values each and every health-care worker that is a part of our health-care system across the province, and so I want to thank those three mammographers who are working in breast health right now in Manitoba.

Thank you for being open to the opportunity to get that additional training right after you completed your program. Thank you for being willing to be gainfully employed as a mammographer in Manitoba.

You are part of a health-care system, a team and program that is saving the lives of women and those who need this care across our province. So the work you do is invaluable and my hope is that these folks and others can really spread the word about why working and pursuing this path of education and career in health care matters.

I had the opportunity, with the MLA for Seine River, to actually go to the breast health clinic here in Manitoba and meet with a technologist who's been doing the job for, I believe she said—I could be mistaken, I don't want to misspeak—but it was decades, a couple of decades, I believe.

And she provided a lot of information in terms of what that career path has looked like for her, the

evolution of technology in this space, and really opened my eyes to the opportunities that we have as a government to strengthen this area of health care.

Minister Fontaine, who is the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) in our government caucus—Cabinet, has a family member—folks may be aware she's won awards for this—who is developing mobile breast cancer screening technology that is very novel, that will support the ability to get breast cancer screening to more communities that need access and have limited ways of doing so.

So right here in Manitoba we have really incredible women doing really amazing work and leading the way for how we can strengthen breast cancer care in our own province, and I think that's really exciting.

And as a government, we value greatly the relationships that we're building so that we have this information, so that we have partnerships that allow us to reach more Manitobans and improve the health-care outcomes of women across our communities.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

For all members, a gentle reminder that, in Committee of Supply, please address the members by their title or their constituency.

Thank you.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you to the minister for that additional clarification on the topics we were discussing yesterday.

I would just like to draw the minister's attention back to the question I just asked. Hopefully, they've now had enough time to gather some data from the staff.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

* (15:30)

MLA Asagwara: Our government has shared this information previously.

I—we have—and more recently, we've talked about the 1,600 net-new hires in terms of health-care capacity. And, you know, at first, months ago now, when we were reporting on where we were in terms of the 1,000 net-new health-care worker target that we had established, we reported 1,255. We moved beyond that pretty quickly and were at 1,509, and very quickly got to 1,600.

I've given examples before in this Estimates committee of experiences that I've had when I've been out in community at different events that are health-care

related and seeing the growth, just the growth in the sheer participation of health-care workers, which I really think tangibly illuminates the impacts of all the work and partnership across departments and with stakeholders that we're seeing in our communities and in terms of health care and the recruitment, retention benefits that we're seeing of this.

And I believe I also talked a little bit about the fact that when I came into this role, there was no real structure in place, no foundation in place, in terms of how to track this information, which to me was really outstanding, like—or not outstanding; it was actually terrible. But it was concerning, rather. It was really, really concerning that there was no established practice of how to gather and disaggregate that information and then use it to make informed health-care decisions, investments in policies that would support improved health-care outcomes by way of having people on the front lines to provide care. And this is something that nationally, when you talk to other health ministers or listen to other premiers in other provinces and territories, you begin to see very quickly how important it is to have that information and the impact of having that information, what it means in terms of your ability to be strategic and take an informed approach.

And so our team worked very hard, the department worked very hard, at establishing a strong foundation and also making sure that we are sharing that information clearly and transparently with unions. It's really important for us that the unions feel confident in the information that we're sharing and we're talking about while recognizing that for the net-new numbers that we have been able to see be a part of our health-care system, it's not nearly enough. You know, it's just not nearly enough. There's much more work that we have to do. There's much more work that we are doing.

Our '25-26 budget adds an additional 176 health-care training seats. That really speaks to the urgency of making sure that we have more training capacity in order to make sure we have net-new health-care workers on the front lines.

The number, the 1,660 number, in terms of net-new, the breakdown of that is 166 allied health-care professionals, 591—so nearly 600—health-care aides, 647 nurses—which is a huge gain. Under the previous government, we had a net loss of 300-plus nurses. Now we're seeing a net gain of 600—nearly 650 nurses in one budget, in one budget effort. For PAs and CAs,

position assistants and clinical assistants, we've got 33; midwives, seven; residents, 49; and physicians, 167.

The midwives number, although, you know, may not be as exciting as some of the other numbers like 167 physicians or 647 nurses, that number's really, really important. And beyond the net-new seven midwives, we've been working directly with the Midwives Association of Manitoba to understand what the needs of midwives are across our province, where we need to ensure they have job opportunities. And so what we've done, similar to other—to all health-care learners, is make sure that midwives have job opportunities, letters in their hands from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and myself, before they complete their studies.

And we've created job opportunities, actual positions for them, across Manitoba, in different regional health authorities so that they know there's a job waiting for them as soon as they are done their studies. So that's more work that—that's work that we're doing, the work that we're going to continue to do.

And I want to thank midwives. I know they had a rough go with the previous government who cut their programming, cut their training at UCN and didn't treat them with respect. We respect you folks. We appreciate everything you do for Manitobans. And we cannot wait to keep strengthening this area of health care alongside you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: I just have a couple of follow-up questions.

I didn't hear, and maybe I missed it, the number of allied health professionals. And I'm wondering if I could get a breakdown of allied health professionals that are included within that 1,600.

I'm also wondering, of the 650 nurses that the minister mentioned, if that's 650 FTE, or how many FTE do those 650 individuals account for?

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Roblin.

* (15:40)

MLA Asagwara: While we wait for a few pieces of information, I can talk a little bit about the nurses. And so the 647 net-new nurses, those are individual people, not FTEs. Those are individual nurses who have been hired into the health-care system.

Ideally, it'd be great to see nurses—each and every one of those nurses—perhaps pick up a full-time FTE or a 0.8 FTE, 0.7 FTE. We know that there are a whole wide range of reasons why nurses may choose to pick

up or be employed under a particular FTE. I remember back when I was a new grad and a new practising nurse, during that time, a lot of nurses—I would say most nurses were trying to find a full-time FTE. That was really the thing that new grads wanted, and it was difficult, actually, at that time, to find that, you know, find a full-time FTE exactly where you wanted to practise, in the—you know, the site you wanted to practise, in the region, the unit you wanted to practise on, the way that you wanted to practise.

And so, you know, sometimes you had to find a job and start maybe with an FTE that was a 0.6 or something else and pick up shifts, or float, or, you know, a 0.5 in one location and then maybe a 0.4 or something somewhere else. And things over the years have changed a bit, right? They've actually changed a lot where in some cases, in a lot of cases, yes, nurses are looking for that, but they're also looking, maybe, for slightly lower FTEs to allow them a bit more professional flexibility, maybe to accommodate work-life balance or dynamics in their own personal lives and what their needs are.

And our government recognizes that it's really important to meet nurses where they're at and to support them working in the public sector. First and foremost, we want nurses working in the public health-care system. And so the process of, first of all, making sure that nurses can get to the table and bargain fairly was really, really important. That's really where you're able to have a lot of those important conversations and work out those details.

Under the previous government, nurses couldn't even get to the bargaining table for years and years. And what was able to successfully be negotiated and built into a pretty historic, collectively bargained agreement was the ability for nurses to work full-time hours and be flexible in the way that they work up to those full-time hours but also work slightly under those full-time hours, not a 1.0 FTE truly, and benefit from a full-time incentive, which is novel. It's not something that we've done in the province before. I don't really know that it's—I don't believe it's happening anywhere else.

And, actually, the way that it's structured—and this started rolling out on April 1, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, April 1, that if you're a nurse and you work full-time hours for six months, let's say, out of the year, then you'll benefit from that full-time incentive because the incentive is distributed biannually, twice a year.

So, again, you know, even that model being structured in a way that allows for nurses to have flexibility in being able to meet their needs and being able to support a strong public health-care system. Think that's a really important approach, and being able to implement an approach like that in partnership with the Manitoba Nurses Union, who recommended the agreement to their members and who advocated for this particular full-time benefit, incentive benefit to be in place. It's also really important to take a look at what the impacts of that are, and so—being able to measure that—and we intend to do that as well.

So to answer the member's question again, the 647 net-new nurses, those are all individual nurses practising here in Manitoba at various sites, and we look forward to another 647 net-new joining the front lines.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: Yes, certainly flexibility is something that nurses—but, in fact, a lot of health professionals and people across all fields seek, depending on what stage of the—their lives that they're in.

But I'm wondering if I could also get a breakdown of the allied health professionals that are included in that number, that 1,600 number. How many and from which job classifications?

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Roblin.

* (15:50)

MLA Asagwara: So in regards to the allied health-care professionals number, that was—it was 166, and I'm happy to take under advisement getting some more clarity on a breakdown of that for the critic.

I can share a bit of information in regards to the net-new hires across regions, the caveat to this number being that it doesn't include doctors in residence. Those are—those numbers are held elsewhere, so this number will be a little lower, but it's because it doesn't capture those folks. And separately—so as part of this, it's not captured in our notes, but I'll share this with the member, that the Interlake regional health authority has five of the midwives, and the northern regional health authority has two.

So there—the further information in terms of the breakdown of the net-new health-care workers. We're looking at 35 at CancerCare; 128 for the Interlake regional health authority—Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority; 58 for the North; 99 for Prairie; 310 for Shared Health; Southern is 178; and the WRHA is 632.

That totals one hundred—sorry, 1,440. So as I said, it doesn't include physicians or residents, and that list didn't include midwives, but I've given you the breakdown for midwives and where they are.

In terms of the net-new hires, you know, we know that there are some regions that—and there are folks, rather, that don't work—and the physicians, rather, to clarify, the physicians piece, they don't work for the regional health authorities; that's why they're not captured in these numbers. But, in general, in terms of the distribution, the critic, I know, is well aware of some of the challenges, regionally, in terms of hiring, and, you know, not all regions can hire equitably, quite frankly, with the same level of ease.

There are some different approaches and creative approaches that need to be taken in terms of hiring in the North or Prairie Mountain, just as two examples, and the retention and recruitment office has been working really hard to build relationships with every single regional health authority to understand their unique needs.

Even as much as a site-by-site basis, to work with the sites and work with the municipalities to do that work, what we've really come to learn is that one: first of all, collaboration partnership makes a huge difference, but regions, municipalities were sometimes unintentionally almost competing with one another, because they're all, you know, looking for resources that, for a long time, had been tough to find.

And so the retention and recruitment office really serves as a way to streamline those efforts, and a unifier, right? The retention and recruitment office does a lot of work to alleviate some of the pressures that these folks were navigating, and really making it easier to do some of this work.

On the physician side, that's just one example—I think that's a really strong example—because we've got two physicians at our retention and recruitment office who are really wonderful folks—so Dr. Klassen and Dr. Rezazadeh—who are phenomenal physicians, but they're people who really understand how to talk to their colleagues. And I heard this a lot from physicians, that the best people to recruit doctors are other doctors.

And so they've done a really great job helping to guide the work that we're doing and build those essential relationships with municipalities and with regional health authorities who, I think, previously had a bit of a lack of trust, or feeling like they would be heard by government.

And now, you know, over time, they're starting to see that through partnership we can get a lot of good things done. It takes time.

So these numbers aren't where we want them to be yet, but they are net new, meaning they account for people who have retired or left the system for a whole variety of reasons—these are net new numbers—and we have to do more, we're going to do more, and we are going to keep doing that in partnership so that we can keep seeing the net benefit of that on the front lines.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

I wanted to take a moment to appreciate everyone for the meaningful questions and answers in this Committee of Supply.

Mrs. Cook: Well I think I speak for probably both sides of the table when I say that we appreciate your efforts as well, honourable Chairperson.

Can the minister identify what their hiring targets are for this year? I know that in previous—in the previous fiscal year, they had stated publicly, sort of, what their targets were for different types of health professionals that they wanted to hire.

I wonder if there are targets for this year as well?

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook).

* (16:00)

MLA Asagwara: Our government, even before the last 2023 election year, was talking about what we needed to do in order to staff the health-care system, what approach we needed to take, what targets we needed to set and establish.

We knew that there was a net loss, just as one example, of nurses under the previous administration—a net loss of 300 nurses. And we knew that we needed to go further. We needed to ensure that we could have a net gain of those lost health-care workers but, you know, go further than that.

And so we articulated a target of four, three, two, one, as a plan to retain, recruit, train, have net-new numbers in our health-care system, and we've been working really, really hard to meet those goals. And we've built some really important partnerships along the way in order to do just that.

It was a priority that was articulated in my mandate letter. It was explicitly stated that, you know, the priority that I needed to address as Health Minister was first and foremost staffing the front lines of our

health-care system, that you can build hospitals and personal-care homes, as our government is doing, reopen emergency rooms. But the only way that you can actually provide care and quality care, is with people, with the experts at the bedside to do just that.

And so we are focused on getting people—as many people as possible—on the front lines of our health-care system. We know that, fundamentally, one of the most important pillars in doing that work is retention; it is about retaining health-care workers.

And so, again, I've said this before, but one of the ways that you can retain and improve culture in health care is by making sure that health-care workers can bargain fairly. It's showing up to listen to health-care workers.

I've had the pleasure to be at many different sites now across the province for the listening tour, which is ongoing. And even outside of the listening tour, the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) special adviser on nursing and safety, the MLA for Tuxedo, she's been doing great work in outreach, talking to nurses and health-care workers. I had the opportunity to meet with folks on the front lines with her, including in the North. I believe we were in Thompson together, talking to nurses there and health-care workers there.

And I think you can tell by the way that the Premier—our Premier has structured our team and the mandates that he's given to me and he's also given to other ministers and the roles; that he's had really amazing, history-making MLAs, like the MLA for Tuxedo, in, should tell Manitobans and really signal that we take retention and recruitment in training of health-care workers very seriously.

We've come a long way in a pretty short amount of time in terms of our net-new health-care worker numbers, but we recognize, again, there is so much more work to do.

And so that target of four, three, two, one that we talked about during our campaign remains a really important target for us as a government and we've also, along the way, set new ones. The critic is correct; we set in our first budget a target of 1,000 net-new health-care workers, and we really blew past that.

Our priority is getting as many people as possible on the front lines of our health-care system. Manitobans deserve to go anywhere they need to access health care and have the people there to provide it.

But in that, there's also an understanding that we need to have health-care workers that look like the

people they serve. We need to have representation on the front lines of our health-care system.

And so we've been working with folks like Dr. Anderson, who's an anti-racism and equity expert here in the province, who's internationally renown for her work. We've been working with the University of Manitoba, with the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) to ensure that we are taking the necessary steps to encourage and support diverse communities in pursuing post-secondary or non-post-secondary health-care training opportunities.

We know that when you have a representative workforce, that you improve the health-care outcomes of the people that you provide care to. And that's a fundamentally important approach that our government sees—knows there's a lot of value in. The data backs that up. The evidence backs that up. There's more than enough research to say that's the right approach to take, so we're going to keep doing just that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: I just wonder if the minister has had time to look at what their targets are for this fiscal year for hiring.

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook).

* (16:10)

MLA Asagwara: The four, three, two, one breakdown was 400 doctors, 300 nurses, 200 allied health and 100 health-care aides. Those were the targets.

And in terms of what our targets are for the '25-26 budget, it's a great question. Our government built into this '25-26 budget—it's a massive increase; it's a historic increase to health care. It's \$1.2 billion, 14 per cent increase overall globally for Health, \$780 million of which is paying the wages of health-care workers.

And, you know, folks have asked, the media's actually often asked me: That's a lot of money to spend on health care; that's a lot of money to spend on health-care workers. And as a government, we say: Yes, and it's worth every single penny.

We're investing in health-care workers. We're investing in the people and investing in taking care of the people who take care of us, and that's really, really important.

And you know, as a government, we want to make sure that we are doing what we can, recognizing it's going to take us many years—like, many years—to really repair the damage that was done and see some

of the larger improvements that we all want to see in health care.

We certainly do not—you don't fix seven and a half years of that kind of damage to health care overnight. You don't fix it in a year and a half. And I've heard a lot of experts tell me, you don't fix it in one mandate—takes time; talking about many years of work that's going to go into repairing health care and making it—the public health care as strong as Manitobans deserve.

But we're committed to doing that work. We're absolutely committed to doing that work, and it really is an all-of-government approach in getting that work done. Our government has been laser-focused on ensuring that health care—we action that health care is our top priority. We action that we're making health care better for Manitobans, no matter where they live.

And so our priority in terms of what's our target for health-care workers in the '25-26 budget: as many health-care workers as possible—as many health-care workers as possible.

We've seen what can be done when we all work together and put our resources together at the table transparently. We, again, blew past the 1,000 net-new health-care worker target. We've added additional training seats and we're actively piloting innovative ways to get more folks on the front lines, including the internationally educated health-care worker pilot program, specifically for nurses, which we're going to see about 80 graduates of that program.

When I came into this role as minister, the former PC administration had spent millions of dollars to establish a program to recruit nurses from the Philippines. In July of 2023—that was their target window—they said that they would have 300 net-new nurses in Manitoba as a result of those millions of dollars spent.

When I came into the ministerial role, it would have been in October of 2023, there was one person hired. *[interjection]* I know it's bad, it's—that's why the window is slamming that way; it's emphasizing how dismal the performance of that program, that effort under the previous government was.

And, you know, under our administration, we've been able to modify that program, modify that effort, and as a result, we have dozens of internationally educated nurses who have joined the front lines of our health-care system. Like I said, we've got a pilot program that's going to see about 80 of these nurses join the front lines, which is great, but again, we know there is much more work that needs to be done.

And so to answer that—the critic's question—as many health-care workers as possible. We have added additional seats, so those numbers are going to increase. And I also want to shout out, just for a second, the Nurse Practitioner Association of Manitoba.

I know that the MLA for Tuxedo has friends who are nurse practitioners, as do I. We've been able to meet with the representation from NPAM: Ashley, who is their president, is just a fantastic nurse practitioner and a great leader—an advocate for NPs. And there is something really unique that's happening in Manitoba, as of 2026, with the training.

So in our first budget, our government doubled the nurse practitioner training seats, and by 2026 we're going to see nurse practitioners be able to specialize in their training so that their focus is outside and broader than family medicine, which is really exciting.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: I will say I am a little surprised to hear that there are no hiring targets specifically for this year. I think targets are a way to measure progress, and without targets, the bar is really low. I mention targets specifically because I have some questions about paramedics.

In the previous year's budget, the government promised to hire 90 net-new paramedics, and they fell very, very short of that target, and so maybe that's why there isn't a target now. I don't know.

But that target at the time, in speaking with some folks who provide paramedic education, they told me that even if every paramedic training program in the province graduated folks at full capacity, they would never be able to turn out 90 paramedics in one year.

So I would like to ask the minister: What is the status of the 90 paramedics? I think at the last update where specific numbers were provided, there were 14 paramedics of the promised 90.

And what is the plan to increase that number?

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook).

* (16:20)

MLA Asagwara: On page 44 of our '25-26 budget, we have a section entitled retaining and recruiting paramedics. After expanding the advanced care paramedicine program, we are now providing financial support to students. Additionally, this year, we will add a position to our recruitment and retention office dedicated to recruiting more allied health profes-

sionals, of which paramedics fall under that category of allied health professionals.

Our government has taken significant steps to find innovative ways to retain, recruit and train allied health-care professionals, including paramedics. I do find it interesting that the critic is talking about, you know, 90 paramedics and—I think rightly—asking, how are you going to achieve that target.

We've set ambitious targets for ourselves as a government because Manitobans went many years without a government who had ambition to improve health care; the ambition was the opposite, was to harm health care. They deserve a government that sets ambitious targets in terms of staffing the health-care system and making it better.

Ninety paramedics were lost under the previous government; it's a substantial number of paramedics. But it's not just about the loss—the net loss of 90 paramedics.

How does that happen? Like, one has to ask themselves, how does that happen? And how that happens is when a government chooses to, for six years, freeze the wages of paramedics, of allied health-care professionals, and refuse to bargain fairly with them, shut them out of career advancement opportunities, training opportunities, shut them out of practising to their full scope across rural Manitoba and the North.

And the damage that was done as a result wasn't just the loss of 90 paramedics, it was the loss of an appetite to pursue that career path because for years people said, well, why would I? My wages are going to be frozen. I'm not going to be respected. I'm not going to be able to practise to my full scope. I can't train in ways that would advance not only health care but, you know, my skills as a front-line provider in communities. It was really doing everything they could to de-incentivize a really important, really critical part of our health-care workforce in the province.

And our government, beyond setting this target of net-new paramedics as part of our allied health care net-new numbers, has been doing the work to improve the conditions so that we're able to see an improvement in culture, see an improvement in relationships and see folks be motivated to choose that as a meaningful career path.

We've taken real steps like doubling the advanced-care paramedic training seats, allowing advanced-care paramedics to be hired into practice in rural Manitoba, which every time I say it, it just—I cannot understand—I can't wrap my head around

why a government would think that it is okay to deny advanced-care paramedics the opportunity to practise in rural communities. It's just jaw-dropping to me.

And that was one of the decisions our government knew we had to make right away, was making sure that ACPs could practise in rural Manitoba. And we're thrilled that that's happening.

I was able to meet a paramedic who was taking the ACP training, that we made sure was available, at the opening of the sim lab at Red River College. This guy was, outside of being like a really cool person, just a really cool human being. He was just so excited talking about paramedicine and this training that he's getting, skilling up and getting his further education, what that means for rural communities where he lives and serves.

And we want to see more folks have that opportunity and be just as enthusiastic about it.

We have been working through the retention and recruitment office, through this new role of—a new allied health-care professional role and lens to find creative ways. I—there's a gentleman, actually, who was a paramedic in Mexico who recently moved to Manitoba, who really wants to practise in Manitoba and previously would have had no way to find a connection to government or a path forward. And our retention and recruitment office was able to connect with him and support him in finding a path forward to practise paramedicine in our province, which is very, very exciting.

Now, we've had interest in terms of paramedics who have been trained as far away as Australia that we're exploring. And of course, our near and dear neighbours, the United States, we know that there are health-care workers—allied health-care workers who want to come and practise in Manitoba. I met a paramedic when I was at—with the MLA for St. Boniface skiing one day at Windsor Park Nordic Centre, the paramedic from the States who is also considering coming to Manitoba.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Cook: I thought we were doing so well with the tone of our questions and answers 'til about 20 minutes ago. I don't know what changed.

I just want to cede the floor for a few moments to my colleague from Lac du Bonnet. I think he's got a couple of questions for the minister and their staff.

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook).

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I've got a question for the Health Minister.

On behalf of a constituent of mine, the family of—the mom and dad are Kelly and John Vincent, son is Ty, suffering with dysautonomia. I wrote a letter to the Minister of Health in July and another one in October and another one, I believe, in December and then another one just recently.

* (16:30)

The Vincent family has received a letter back. Just taking a look for the certain date, just to make sure I'm right. So from July when I called or wrote a letter to the Health Minister's office, and then the Vincent family sent in a package over the summer discussing and talking about their son's situation, and then multiple letters after the fact. Finally did receive a letter from the minister's office and the minister was cc'd on this as of May 6, 2025, so just recently received a letter.

It talks about how an absolute referral from specialists were sent—were not sent—that's what the department is saying, but within the package it absolutely states on how professionals within our great province of ours, actually there were referrals to Edmonton and Montreal and several in Winnipeg and they were rejected.

Just wondering if—I believe the letter was signed by Assistant Deputy Minister Shaffer—I'm just wondering if maybe, just to clarify some of what's in that letter, if the minister can possibly get the assistant deputy minister to actually give the family a call so there's no misinformation back and forth through letters, which seem to be taking quite some time, considering that my first letter I sent in was in July and we've got some form of response from the department.

I do understand that the assistant deputy minister was tasked with this case file, but I just figured I would put it on the record today and hopefully the Health Minister can look into it. I know that they were cc'd on the response to the Vincent family.

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Lac du Bonnet, for your question. I would request you to tie it back to the Estimates, if you can.

Mr. Ewasko: So I have no problems tying this back to the Estimates process, because we know that out-of-province surgeries in various different things have been cancelled.

And I know that under extreme situations the Health Minister has said in the past that they would

look at situations, and this situation has been taken forward and because it has to do with finances and also the—sort of the rubber stamp from the Health Minister and her department to be able to go and get these—

The Chairperson: Order, please. I would remind all members to use proper pronouns for honourable members sitting around us.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Chairperson, if you take a look back into Hansard, and I'm taking your advice; I have used the proper pronoun.

This time absolutely was an accident, so I absolutely apologize to the Health Minister for using the wrong pronoun, but I was just basically stating my case as far as how this ties into the Estimates process, because this would require some approval through the Health Minister to get this case moving forward.

The Chairperson: Once again, thank you, member for Lac du Bonnet, for your question.

I would give you another chance to tie it back to the Estimates, a supplement of Estimates. That's what we're discussing today. So you can try once more to tie it back to the Estimates before the minister has an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Ewasko: So, I didn't realize, Mr. Chair, that we were going page by page in the Estimates process, but I thought, possibly, they were—the critic and the Health Minister—was going global.

And so this definitely has something to do with the Estimates process in regards to the finances from the Health Department.

And so in order for Manitobans to get the care that they need, deserve, I'm asking if—a simple question—whether there can be that conversation to see the—if this is doable or not within the budgetary allotments that the Health Minister had bragged about earlier today, putting in—I believe they said \$1.3 billion extra into the health-care system.

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

* (16:40)

MLA Asagwara: The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), I'm sure, given how long he's been elected and has been participating in Estimates, would understand and appreciate that that's a question better posed and more appropriately posed not here, which is the reason why the honourable Chair has—had offered some advice several times here.

So I would encourage and ask the member to direct that line of questioning and inquiry to my department—my office. We're more than happy to look into that expeditiously and get him the feedback and get the family clarity that they need, should they need it.

In terms of out-of-province care, I do think it's important for us to talk about the different approach that our government is taking than the previous administration. Our government is prioritizing building capacity in our own province, which, you know, I have to say, meeting with experts, local physicians, nurses, other folks, they've made really clear that for years they have been wanting to build capacity right here in our own province. I've met with a number of surgeons, just as one example, who were very eager to sit down and have a conversation and talk about the ways that we can strengthen care right here in our own province.

On page 89 of the '25-26 Estimates book, it—there's a line, you know, in black and white there in terms of out-of-province program—the program and what's allocated there.

Now that budget line, I think it's really important to note and to understand that the way that really maximizes our out-of-province program is by actually ensuring that we invest in more capacity in our province so that those resources for that budget line are allocated to cases where—and we have a clear protocol and process for folks to access the out-of-province program resources so that those dollars are really invested in families and Manitobans who meet the criteria—have gone through the protocol and for folks who really—who aren't able to access that care in Manitoba—we just don't have, for whatever the reasons are, the capacity here in our own province.

Previously, that would have been spine care, as an example. But our government has made the investment so that we have the first-ever spine program right here in our own province, whereas the previous government was sending Manitobans out of the country for spine care that we can provide in our own borders, at 10 times the cost per surgery—10 times the cost per surgery.

And by working with our partners locally and listening to these wonderful surgeon experts right here on the ground, we have been able to stand up a historic spine program, the first of its kind, in our own province.

Orthopedics is another great example. Our government invested less money than the previous administration spent on the salaries of folks working on their

task force in adding almost 1,000 new surgeries for orthopedics, hips and knees in our province, 800 of which is going to Selkirk Regional Health Centre.

And that was an existing—we're not—they're not building a new operating room. Those were existing operating room spaces. These are surgeons who are right here in our province. Just by working in partnership, building capacity in our own province allows for us to maximize the resources for out-of-province care and to really ensure that we are approaching this responsibly and sustainably and affecting Manitobans in the best ways possible.

So I—again, I appreciate that the member wanted to bring that question here today. It's not the appropriate place to do so, but, certainly, our team will be awaiting his question at our department level. We're happy to engage with the family and get them the answers as quickly as possible.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the minister for their advice. As I've shared multiple letters to the department asking for some assistance, I—hopefully, the minister can say yes or no, the assistant minister can give the family a call. It's all I'm asking for, considering it's taken three or four letters over a course of roughly 10 months. So, a yes or no answer to that one question.

The other question I have is, within the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, due to funding and this year's budgetary, it seems to be some form of constraints: how many doctors are leaving or set to leave out of the public health system. I'm not talking private clinics; I'm talking the public health system within Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, specifically on the east side of Lake Winnipeg—Pinawa, Pine Falls and Beausejour—but you can give me more of a global answer for Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

MLA Asagwara: I welcome that question about physician capacity in the Interlake; it gives me the opportunity to talk about one of the most exciting personal-care-home builds in Manitoba, the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home.

My goodness. So excited. I wish I had a pair of pompoms I could pull out right now like on the day that we went to Lac du Bonnet. And, literally, there were folks from the community there with pompoms,

so excited that our government was there to make the announcement.

The commitment to build the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home, which will need physician provider in order to help support all the wonderful residents there, that was a commitment that was made by the previous government and never delivered on. Never delivered on.

And our government came in, met with the community, met with leaders and made that happen. And we wanted to reassure folks in the Lac du Bonnet community that this wasn't another empty promise like they experienced under the previous PC administration.

You know, the announcement when we first went there was so exciting that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) himself was there enjoying tea and cookies that we had out and was really there to celebrate that our government was delivering on this commitment that the community had advocated for for decades.

And so we wanted to make sure that the community knew this was going to happen and we were going to follow through, we were going to deliver. And so we went back out to the community—I believe it was in December. It was December; folks were very much in the holiday spirit. I remember that.

And we went up there to actually put up some of the signage that was a part of the fencing, and there was machinery out there on the grounds of the site. And we went out and we actually put up the sign ourselves with the community, to let them know that the work is under way, shovels in the ground. And it was a really wonderful day.

* (16:50)

And I look forward to being back in the Interlake, being back specifically in Lac du Bonnet this summer, meeting again with the community, talking about how we can continue to work together.

You know, to the member for Lac du Bonnet's question, we do need more physicians in our province, certainly in the Interlake.

I want to thank and I want to acknowledge the incredible work of the CEO of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, Marion Ellis. She is just a force, really a force, somebody who cares deeply for all Manitobans but certainly cares very deeply for the residents, constituents of the Interlake and has worked really in partnership with our government to take steps to improve staffing capacity, to address really impor-

tant issues like anti-racism in health care, you know, truth and reconciliation in health care. And her leadership has really been key in us being able to take steps like opening a transitional care unit in Selkirk, a 15-bed TCU that is honestly providing some of the highest quality care, really meeting the needs of folks in the Interlake.

And, you know, as I stated earlier in my response to the critic: in terms of the numbers, the net-new numbers, we don't actually have—because the regional health authorities don't track the numbers of physicians, we don't have those exact numbers available to us right now.

But what I can say is that we—as of just a couple of weeks ago, the deputy and I and our team, we were talking about positions that we know are going to be going to different places in the Interlake, including Pinawa, just as one example. And when we go out to the Interlake this summer, we look forward to meeting with folks directly and getting a better understanding, community by community, what the needs are.

So I want to thank Marion Ellis and her team for all the incredible work they do, for being such a great partner, and we look forward to adding more net-new physicians to the region and going further than we have so far. We know there's much more work to get done.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Ewasko: So, again, I received no answer on whether the Health Minister will have her department—their department—[*interjection*] Mr. Chair? I'm going to ask you, Mr. Chair, for some advice on the language that the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) is using. [*interjection*]

The Chairperson: Order, please. Order, please.

For the information of all members, the Chair does not rule on the comments made offline, but I would request everyone—everyone—to be nice to each other and keep a good decorum around the table, please.

Mr. Ewasko: I think that the language being used by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine)—[*interjection*—and the Minister of Families, unfortunately, is not, again, in her Estimates process and now is berating me from across the table, Mr. Chair. But that's okay. This is just what she does. This is just what she does. But I'm not going to get off topic.

So I've asked the Health Minister to direct their department to have a conversation with the family that I had mentioned earlier. I was looking for a yes or no.

That was it. Didn't receive an answer in the Health Minister's response.

Also did not receive a response from the Health Minister on the number of physicians. They said how they are working towards increasing the number of doctors. How will they know whether they've done that or not if they don't know how many physicians are in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority?

So I guess an additional question to that is, I know from May 1 to May 15, the Pinawa Hospital, which the Health Minister has referenced, only has one day that is open for emergency department services. The Beausejour ER is open part-time, 13 of those 15 days, and the two other days they're not open at all.

So is there planning for the remainder of May, June, July and August? And if the Health Minister does not track the amount of physicians, how are they even going to set any type of bars or targets in order to recruit physicians in the public health-care service industry on the—in Interlake-Eastern health authority, not just Interlake?

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

MLA Asagwara: You know, the member for Lac du Bonnet has a hard time; I know that. He has a hard time, for some reason—despite having worked with one another for years—respecting pronouns. It's pretty straightforward, and then when he behaves as though he is, he does it in a very sort of patronizing, silly tone that really is dismissive of the seriousness of respecting a person's pronouns, which to me is sad, because I know the member for Lac du Bonnet was an educator for years.

And I will say that, as frustrating as it might be for someone like me—although, to be frank, it's really not—I'm okay, you know; I'm a full-grown adult here in Estimates doing my job. I'm very proud and grateful to be able to do this work on behalf of Manitobans.

I do—I am—I reflect on the fact that, you know, he's not an educator at this point—he was for many years—and I am relieved that he is not able to subject students to the way he subjects me in this Legislature. If he cannot respect a colleague's pronouns consistently, I really—my heart breaks to think of kids who would experience that in our communities and our schools.

And so I just want to say here in Estimates, that no matter where you are—whether you're sitting at an Estimates committee table or you're in a classroom or

you're in a workplace—you deserve to have your pronouns respected. It's very straightforward. It's part of the reason why we brought Bill 43 forward, and I want to thank the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) for that.

Now, in terms of the '25-26 Estimates, if the member for Lac du Bonnet was paying attention, he would know that our government has set targets in terms of recruiting new physicians: a really important target of 400 net-new doctors.

We do have doctors—new doctors—working in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority; I'm thrilled to say that. We've been able to do that successfully by working in partnership with leadership there.

As I stated earlier, I'm looking forward to providing more clarity on a breakdown of those numbers—just didn't have them handy in front of me today; that doesn't mean we don't have them. The member should know that sometimes in Estimates, it takes a little bit of time to get that information.

All of that being said, I look forward to our government doing more work. The shifts that the member for Lac du Bonnet referenced, there is a plan in place to address all of that coverage. So our government has been making sure and working with the Interlake to establish a plan that would see those shifts covered by physicians; so that's great news.

In addition to that, we have new doctors who are going to be working at the hospital and beyond that, as well. So the work is under way to repair the damage that was done to health care by the member for Lac du Bonnet for years. And the work is also being done by our government to repair the harm that that member and others have done in terms of diverse—gender-diverse communities, and we're going to keep doing that work.

So I hope that, moving forward, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) can—you know, for however he might feel about me as a person or a legislator—that he can show people, especially young people, that respecting pronouns is not that hard, and that we can put our best foot forward to make sure that that's a practice we have in our province.

I'm really proud to be part of a team that works hard every single day to make our province safer and better and healthier for all people, regardless of where they come from, how they identify, what their lived experiences are.

And, you know, I take very seriously the opportunity to make sure that we're setting that example—

The Chairperson: Order, please.

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise.

ROOM 255

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:20)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of Executive Council. Questions will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): We're going to jump right into a question here on proposed injection site that the Premier says is not finalized, and yet they've applied for a federal approval on that location.

So I'll ask the Premier: Is the location of 200 Disraeli, the proposed injection site, is that going forward, yes or no?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The Progressive Conservative approach to addictions medicine has been shameful, to say the least.

There is a purposeful intent to inflame the issue by choosing words which are not used by those with expertise in the area. You can look to the member's preamble for an example of that, or you can look at numerous questions from question period from the current PC caucus to illustrate the issue.

When we talk about supervised consumption sites I think it is important to get the words right, because this is about saving lives, and I think the gravity of the situation requires us to show necessary respect and seriousness to the issue.

We are joined here at the table with my colleague from Waverley, who front-line firefighter, first responder—firefighter/paramedic. Some of the stories he's had to share about what goes on as a result of addictions are pretty stark.

The member opposite was part of a government in which numerous ministers, including the former First Minister that he decided to attach his name to, lied. And it is, of course, parliamentary because none of those people are MLAs anymore.

They were defeated, in part, because they took this approach of trying to wedge-politic their way through issues that demand seriousness and a smart

approach. I take an optimistic view of the people in Manitoba. I know that you're smart people, and so I treat you with maturity and seriousness.

When we talk about a supervised consumption site, the reason why we use that term is because there will be different types of consumption taking place there. People across Manitoba know that the scourge of drugs is being pursued in many forms.

Some people are popping pills, other people are smoking substances, some people are shooting drugs. Those are different forms of consumption, and a tabloid-news-style approach to trying to inflame sentiment by purposely choosing language that is not used by the medical experts, I think, demeans the seriousness of the issue.

So that speaks to the word consumption. Site: obviously it's a location. So that leaves the first word in terms of the technical term supervised: medical supervision. Nurses, paramedics, people who are trained to be able to intervene and save lives.

Under the PC government, the bathroom at Tim Hortons became an unsupervised consumption site, and now they want to sloganeer their way back to making that situation worse.

We're saying: Listen, we're investing in recovery, Anne Oake recovery centre being a signature investment that we're proud to work on with the private sector and family foundation. We're expanding access to addictions medicine, we're investing in mental health workers, we're ensuring that harm reduction approaches are there, backed by the science, alongside approaches that focus on recovery and spiritual growth as well too.

So it is a comprehensive approach. And among those approaches, the experts in addictions medicine, the people who went to medical school, medical doctors who practise in communities everyday—like Swan River, like Winnipeg, like Brandon—tell us that it is important to have a comprehensive approach.

* (15:30)

Now of course, when we talk about a supervised consumption site, we're only talking about Winnipeg and, really, right now we're only talking about one small part of Winnipeg. But what the experts in addictions medicine tell us is that a—such a site will save lives.

But it's important to get it right. What happens outside of a supervised consumption site is just as important as what happens inside, so we have to work

with law enforcement, we have to work with community. And I'm proud of the fact that our minister showed up, not just for town hall meetings that we organize, but town hall meetings ignored—organized by others. Cannot think of a single example of PC ministers doing that in the past government.

So yes, we are proceeding with the supervised consumption site. Will it one hundred per cent be at the Disraeli location? No, we can't say that. That option's on the table and it's out for consultation, but we're going to listen to the community before we make a determination about opening doors.

Mr. Khan: The Premier's (Mr. Kinew) right, language does matter. I'll use the term he wishes and experts have used: supervised consumption site. That was a slip of the tongue, didn't mean to—anything by that. But what does demean the process is that the Premier takes five minutes to answer a question that he answered in the last 30 seconds.

Manitobans, you can see it here, himself. So we're talking about demeaning the process, I apologize; I will say supervised consumption site. Premier, four and a half minutes to answer a question that took him 30 seconds.

So I'll ask him, if we're going to continue on this topic here, can the Premier please tell Manitobans: How many needles were handed out in 2024? How many needles is his government planning to hand out in 2025? On top of that, how many of these needles were returned safely in 2024? What is this Premier's budget for the needle exchange program in 2025-26?

Mr. Kinew: It's impossible to compare accurately how much the budget is bigger than it was under the PC government, because the budget under the PCs for safe needle collection was zero. And so if you're doing an equation where zero is the denominator, it's going to be tough.

Lowest common denominator, of course, is what the PCs specialize in when we think about the various ad campaigns they ran in the last election, and also when we think about thanking Donald Trump. Not a good idea. Manitobans know better than that, but member opposite does not. Not only thanks Donald Trump, today in question period, doubled down.

I don't know how many times it's been, but it's multiples now. Nodded his head vigorously when his words were read back in the House, so there you go: Thank you, Donald Trump. Quote, unquote by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

The reason why I invoked the previous government's needle distribution program, which our government has continued, is because it highlights the hypocrisy of the PC caucus.

When they sat around the government table on their way to defeat at the hands of Heather Stefanson, they funded needle distribution programs in Prairie Mountain Health, in Winnipeg and other parts of the province. Now those same programs continue under a different government and they want to make a political issue out of it. It's not only what turns people off politics, but it's also irresponsible because public health is at stake here.

We have a number of challenges in the public sphere when it comes to public health: vaccine hesitancy, the need to educate folks about access to primary care, stopping the transmission of infectious disease. And all of these things would be improved if we had a mature, evidence-based discussion on health care that didn't try to resort not only to the lowest common denominator, but the cheapest possible slogan. Unfortunately, that's what we see in question period on a day-to-day basis.

So across the province, we've listened to communities that are dealing with addictions. We've listened to communities that have challenges with infectious disease. We've listened to communities where vaccine hesitancy is an issue, and we've listened to communities where needle collection was identified as a priority.

And we responded with action, not with empty cheap slogans, not with trying to politicize the issue, not with trying to say, oh, our government never did that, when, in fact, they did—which is of course what the PCs did in Swan River, in Prairie Mountain Health. But we responded with action. So we decided to fund needle collection programs.

There's more work necessary to combat addictions. There's more work necessary to combat infectious disease. There's more work necessary to combat vaccine hesitancy and the opioid crisis.

But you don't combat those things with the ostrich approach that the PCs follow, by sticking your head in the sand and then waving your tail feathers around and trying to purport that that is sloganeering in the face of science and could, in some way, be effective.

No. You got to work with the experts. You got to work with community. If there's a gap in understanding or a gap in communication between experts and community, it's the role of responsible government to bridge that gap, not to inflame sentiment.

The fundamental flaw of the landfill ads, the parental right ads, the line of questioning that the member is trying to go down, is that it's an 'abdication'—an abdication of one of the core responsibilities of any leader in the public sphere. Somebody that I respect very much said that one of the core responsibilities of a leader in our society is not to inflame divisions within the society, and yet that's what the members opposite do. And they just lost government and they hand—they had so many tail feathers handed to them because of this approach.

So if they want to repeat this, we will gladly march into the Lakesides and Interlake-Gimlis in the next campaign and hand more walking—oh, yes, no—Willard Reaves is definitely going to be in Fort Whyte—definitely.

Mr. Khan: It's funny that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) mentions Willard Reaves. He should check his membership, and he'll be pleasantly surprised to see where he is.

But Manitobans, you see it here. Five minutes of absolutely nothing. Didn't answer any questions. And the Premier should know his fiscal year ends. Wasn't talking about '23-24; NDP were in power '24-25; '25-26 is this budget. It's a simple question.

He's talking about 'slogering'—sloganeering. There's no 'snoglering.' I'm asking for questions—answers. Sloganeering? Sloganeering. Don't know that's a word. What was that—[interjection] So clear?

Anyways, we're asking for answers here, Premier. We don't need five minutes for you to go on and absolutely just—whatever you want to say. We're asking for questions: '24-25 when the NDP was in power versus '25-26 when the NDP is in power, how—what was the budget for the needle exchange program? That's it. What is the budget for the needle exchange program '24-25 versus '25-26?

We're not talking about in previous PC governments. It's your government; we're looking for answers. Manitobans have a right to hear the answer.

Mr. Kinew: Members opposite want to throw the stone and hide their hand. They want to ask a leading question and look away because they know that what they're doing is wrong and they're ashamed of it.

The reason why I mention the track record of the former failed PC government is because it's relevant to understanding the context in which this question is asked. They have a great interest in trying to politicize the issue of harm reduction in Manitoba after being

handed their walking papers from a government that practised harm reduction.

If you can't see the hypocrisy in that, then I think it is valid for me to spend five minutes at a time for an entire afternoon beating down the walls of ignorance and letting the light shine on through.

And while we're at it, I'm sure that folks in Interlake-Gimli, Arborg in particular, would wonder why the members opposite are politicizing these issues instead of discussing: What about the great plans for this new personal-care home that we're going to get?

When we're talking about Lac du Bonnet, I'm sure the member there—still lying down from—encounter that he had with the Education Minister earlier today. They would probably want to see their constituents have some of these questions answered.

* (15:40)

So the member opposite also had a quote-unquote encounter today when he tried to raise the issue of math, and so I propose to him that the math he's looking for to answer his question is: What is 30,000 divided by zero? You know, kind of refer to my cellphone here, open up that calculator app: undefined.

What that means is it's incomparable, it's undefinable: the contrast between doing nothing and taking action. So our government took action after listening to folks and decided to fund needle collection programs.

The members opposite, in any Facebook post, in any conversation with people, whether that's in Swan River, the Swan Valley, Swan Lake, outside a performance of Swan Lake at the concert hall in downtown Winnipeg, they should begin by saying: We never funded any needle collection programs. However, as a penance and as an act of apology, we would very humbly like to take your questions about harm reduction forward and, oh, by the way, we agree that harm reduction is backed by the evidence and backed by physicians with expertise in addictions medicine.

But they won't do that. What they'll do is try to portray the current government as, in some way, being the creator of needle distribution programs in Manitoba, which is not true. They rolled out these needle distribution programs; they oversaw them and expanded them, year after year.

And now, in opposition, rather than trying to create understanding towards an evidence-based approach to combatting the addictions crisis that is taking lives in every community from people from

every socio-economic background and every cultural community; rather than try to help, they want to sow division by purposely using words and lines of questions that they know are wrong and not backed by the science.

What do I mean by wrong? I mean that the member opposite knows full well the track record of his government, and yet he tries to chastise me for mentioning the proper context in which any program we're making reference to in this community comes about.

And when I say misguided, I say because, again, the heady days of Monday, when he was giving a speech about how it's all going to be different and then 20 minutes later, he's heckling the Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism. It mirrors the same misguided approach to try and politicize the issue of supervised consumption and harm reduction and needle collection programs across Manitoba.

So, again, what do you do when you don't have the facts? What do you do when you don't have the values? You make up invented issues, such as, oh, he should answer in 10 seconds instead of five minutes.

But the point is this: It takes time to break down ignorance and even political mistakes. And so, again, let's spend an afternoon together, five minutes at a time, breaking down the ignorance that persists on the progressive side—Progressive Conservative side of the aisle. And let's continue to let the light shine in, light, of course, being a metaphor for truth.

Mr. Khan: Yes, let's shine some light in here. So 15 minutes now, I asked the Premier (Mr. Kinew) some pointed questions, and no answers. And these aren't questions—there's no politicizing of the questions here; they're simple numbers.

What was—did the NDP government budget for '24-25 versus '25-26 for the needle exchange program? No answer, 15 minutes.

How many needles were handed out in '24? No answer; '25? No answer.

How many are they expecting to be returned this year? No answer.

We're not talking—we're not criticizing anything here. Premier wants to continue to go down this path and this narrative. I know I'm not Heather Stefanson, I'm not Brian Pallister. I know he wants them to be sitting here. I've been here for three years. The Premier wants to continue to attack and attack and attack.

We're asking questions. Manitobans have a right to these answers; he refuses to answer them. To take the Premier's word, he wants to shine the light in here. If he wants to have understanding, it's hard to have understanding when the Premier refuses to answer any questions. None.

He talks about the Anne Oake recovery centre; well, let's talk about the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre. Who funded that? The Premier talk about who gave money to that program?

An Honourable Member: Sons and Daughters of Italy.

Mr. Khan: And? Keep going; Premier knows this light. He knows the answer. He knows the answer to this one. Oh, yes, he doesn't want to answer: the previous PC government did.

Previous PC government investments created over 1,000 treatment spaces; 1,000 treatment spaces, previous PC—now he wants to continue. We're not talking about the past. We're talking about—[interjection]—honourable—I mean, this is really—okay, continue to go.

So this is—[interjection] No, you—so Manitobans can see, Premier refuses to answer and wants to heckle, just like the rest of his MLAs.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Just like to clarify for the record that the First Minister has been providing answers to the questions. The member opposite may not like the answer all the time or the substance of that answer, but the assertion that you're making when he's not answering would imply that there's a failure to follow procedure where none has occurred.

So I would suggest that maybe to remind the member from Fort Whyte that he should be following procedure here. [interjection]

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), on the same point of order.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, that is obviously not a point of order. A dispute of the facts does not imply a point of order, so I'm sure the Chair will find it easily dismissed, this ridiculous assertion.

The Chairperson: Any other speakers on the point of the—point of order?

So, obviously, we know this is not a point of order. But at this time, before reintroducing the Leader of the

Opposition, I'd like to gently remind all members on both sides that whoever's holding the floor should be able to speak without other members speaking over them. And I'd ask that all members show some respect for the member who holds the floor, regardless of who that is.

* * *

Mr. Khan: It shows the member from Waverley doesn't have a simple comprehension of finances or math. I've asked a math question, a number question: what is the budget?

There was no number the Premier (Mr. Kinew) gave; therefore, he didn't answer the question. Member from Waverley might want to understand that. Premier might want to understand we're asking numbers, we're asking about money. Manitobans have a right to know. I don't know why the Premier doesn't want to answer that question. *[interjection]* It's very unfortunate that he doesn't want to, and the Premier wants to continue to heckle now.

We'll continue down that. The government, his government, committed to hiring 100 community mental health workers to work with police. But we know that people have been waiting years for this service, for community mental health services.

So can the Premier talk about what are the wait times for community mental health services in each region in Manitoba under this Premier? How many new positions have been filled for working with police? Maybe the 'cremier' could—Premier can finally shine some light on some numbers. How many of the 100 community mental health workers have been hired, in what region? I know the Premier is—we'll leave it there and see if we get an answer.

* (15:50)

Mr. Kinew: It is really something to see the member get emotional so easily, you know, he's—tell at the quickened pace of his words, and look at that, just jumped out of his chair when a simple wind blew through the room.

So, the numbers that were shared, 30,000 divided by zero, is the fact that the first needle cleanup program we funded costs 30 grand, as opposed to zero, under the PCs.

I'm sure the people listening in the PC staff room caught the reference, but the member did not. Would have thought he was doing his homework for the past six months when he was not showing up for question period.

Mr. Kinew: There you go.

An Honourable Member: That's a point of order.

Mr. Kinew: Took you long enough, holy cow.

Oh, oh, second point of—point of order. He didn't actually say point of order, I get to go first.

An Honourable Member: I actually said point of order.

Mr. Kinew: No, I said it first. No, I said it first.

Point of Order

Mr. Johnson: You can't reflect on somebody's presence or absence in the Chamber or a committee.

The Chairperson: The honourable First Minister, on the—at this Leg. point of order.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I'll withdraw the comment, and instead say, when people don't show up for work for six months.

Now, I'd like to raise another point of order after you rule.

The Chairperson: We have to address the first point of order. Does anyone else want to speak to this?

Okay, so obviously that wasn't a point of order, but we'll move on to this second request for a point of order.

Mr. Kinew: The member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) said, and I quote—

An Honourable Member: Point of order. That isn't—

Mr. Kinew: No, I withdrew the comment, though, in my response. All right? So, it's been resolved.

An Honourable Member: You can let the Chair decide what's been resolved.

Mr. Kinew: Actually, that's the point we're going to get to right now.

The Chairperson: Okay, so, we're going to take a moment to confer with the clerks. *[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

We're going to take a moment to confer with the clerks so we can stop challenging the Chair, and everyone will stop for a moment. Thank you.

Okay, that was, in fact, a point of order, but the First Minister had withdrawn his comment and we can now consider the point of order resolved.

Point of Order

Mr. Kinew: Yes, on a point of order.

The member for Interlake-Gimli said waiting for the Chair to do her job, quote and end quote. Clearly, reflecting on the Chair, which is a violation of the rules, and so I'd ask either that the member apologize to you, or that, you know, you can take that under consideration to rule that was a violation of order.

The Chairperson: Thank you. Any—the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I think if the member refuse—reviews Hansard tomorrow, there will be no comment of such sort on there, and therefore no point of order.

The Chairperson: So we're going to take a moment to review, thank you.

All right, so that was not a point of order as the comment was made off the record. I would offer a general caution to all members about the decorum going on, on both sides in this committee.

* * *

The Chairperson: The honourable First Minister had the floor prior to those alleged point of orders.

Mr. Kinew: I appreciate your guidance, and thank you for pointing out that the comment was made; but it was made at a time when the member for Interlake-Gimli was not recognized to speak, which means that he was also heckling, which is a violation of order.

Again, I want to point out for the record that the member, in spite of that, tried to claim that the comment did not happen in contravention of, I guess, your recent guidance.

So with that in mind, I'll return to pointing out the rickety line of questioning that the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) is pursuing here.

So, again, 30,000 divided by zero is a reference to the fact that the first needle collection program we funded cost \$30,000. And the fact that I include a denominator—again, an oblique reference to the fact that the PCs always play to the lowest common denominator of zero—is because they never funded any needle collection anywhere in Manitoba.

Now, the member, you know, throws a stone, hides the hand: oh, I'm just trying to ask some questions about numbers, when he knows full well what he's trying to do. Day after day he puts up people in question period who try to inflame this issue and make misguided and ultimately harmful points, and use slogans to try and I inflame what should be a conversation about science and evidence when it comes to

harm reduction. These questions are clearly part of that overall strategy and scenario.

So, again, I've provided answers to every question that has been posed here. I have provided numbers.

* (16:00)

The member is curious about the needle collection budget in total: \$165,000 divided by zero. Again, you cannot define the nature of the increase relative to the zero action that the PCs oversaw during their time in government.

This is the action that we took. This is the answer that was provided. The member opposite was not aware of the fact that an answer was being provided, but that's okay. We can use more of his time to repeat said answer.

When we turn to the issues of mental health and addiction services, I can tell this committee that there has been a significant improvement in wait times under our government. When we took office, the wait times for withdrawal management services, to use one example, was at 15 days. We reduced that to eight days as of Q3 '24-25. Still too long. Still more work to do. But it's a sign that progress is being made.

Waits for supportive recovery housing, similarly, still too long, I'm sure, in the eyes of everyone in government, including the hard-working civil servants who show up every day to improve services and deliver what you need as Manitobans. But it is an improvement over when we took office, picking up from a slack PC government. Specific numbers that the member's interested in ascertaining: 36 days on the last day of his being a minister of the Crown under Heather Stefanson; 23 days a year later. So, again, a lot done, a lot to do. But if the PCs were ever to be anywhere near the gears of power, there'd be a lot to lose.

When we look again at the question of staffing up mental health, what happened under members opposite? What was the work done to support first responders and their valiant efforts? It's very little. Very little. When we talked about staffing up 100 new mental health positions, the first three that we identified were to support first responders: firefighters, law enforcement, paramedics. From there, the next 29 positions are devoted to responding in community to mental health crises. Where they did nothing, we are taking action.

Mr. Khan: I don't know what the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) talking about. He's talking about slogans.

There's no slogans being said here at all today. I know he wants to live in the past and he wants to attack previous PC leadership. No slogans on this side; we're just asking questions.

He wants to talk about there's science or no science; yes, math is based in science. Science is based in math. If the Premier doesn't want to give us an answer, there are clear questions on how many needles are going to be returned. He wants to keep going back to the previous PC government. I know he wants to live in the past.

It was a question on his government, the two years of his NDP government. How much money is being spent in '24-25, '25-26? What's the increase? How much did they budget for the needle program?

He doesn't want to talk about that. He wants to live in the past. So we'll do a little trip down memory lane since the Premier's obviously not going to make any effort to answer any question in a reasonable time.

Let's talk about previous PC government. Let's talk about that—the Prairie Mountain Health. Up to 150—it was 150 medical management spaces were created, 125 intensive day program—60-day intensive pay-day program spaces were created.

Let's talk about Southern Health. Up to 75 medical and mobile withdrawal management spaces. Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, up to 75 medical withdrawal management spaces and 125 mobile withdrawal management spaces.

We can go on and on here. Bruce Oake Recovery Centre: up to 200 bed-based treatment spaces; genesis centre: up to 24 bed-based treatment centres.

And the Premier won't see it, but Manitobans can see it. He's just putting misinformation; he wants to say whatever he wants to say because he thinks no one is going to hold him accountable. Well, we are. And Manitobans deserve answers. He's not giving them.

Let's keep going. Two Ten Recovery: up to eight supportive recovering house. These are all—in June 2022, 2023—these are all funded and—base programs that the Premier doesn't want to talk about; he wants to just keep saying that they're slogans, and we're attacking, and we're putting misinformation on the record and we're trying to create a divide. There's no divide being created here; just looking for answers. That's it. How much money—how many needles were returned?

He wants to attack—and it's clear as day, they can see that the Speaker has called his government to

order a dozen times this week and not once on our side. He wants to say there's heckling—I—we haven't been called once. His team has; shows the maturity under this leadership. That's where they get it from: backyard brawler. Someone who wants to make an enemy out of everyone that holds him to account.

Well, we're going to hold him to account and it is unfortunate that the Premier thinks he's above the law. We can look at his past, we can look at him currently; doesn't think he needs to answer any questions. It's unfortunate—Manitoba, that's what you have to deal with—but times will change.

If the Premier can please answer—I think we'll, you know, put that aside now we'll talk about children. And I know he's going to pivot to previous campaigns. This is a genuine question that parents have—but we'll see. We've heard from community critical programing for children and youth.

Can the Premier just talk about the mental health services for youth? Legitimate question, my son asked me this the other day—we talk a lot about politics—and I said you know that's a good question.

So just asking the Premier. And he can take his time; what services are we offering there? What—legitimately for kids in schools, community, community centres—a little bit going off-script here actually, to be honest with you, because I think it's an important question to answer—to ask this Premier (Mr. Kinew) on funding for mental health supports for youth.

Is there a 4-year spend—or maybe '24-25 budget—the Premier's allocated for that specifically? Does he have an idea of how many kids are waiting for services for this, and what the wait times are for kids? It's a genuine question; I hope the Premier can actually give this one some real consideration and answer it.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

Mr. Kinew: With regards to the awe-shucks-I-didn't-engage-in-wedge-politics preamble that we just heard there, I want to point out for the committee that the member opposite makes a number of claims about press releases that were put out under the previous government, but I just—in the previous answer—illustrated the actual wait times that they left people with in Manitoba, and then I provided the update on how progress is being made to reduce said wait times.

So, again, if the member were paying close attention to what's going on in the committee that he's participating in, he would see that Manitobans are getting

better government today than they were under his time in office.

What's more, if he was so proud of the record of him and Heather Stefanson, why didn't they run on that? It was bizarre to run on the landfill and parental rights when they had this belief that things were strong under their time in government.

Why didn't they talk about that? He's gotten a newfound interest in the economy; why didn't they talk about that in the last campaign? They chose these wedge issues because they thought it would be their—to their political advantage. Manitobans were mature and saw through those cynical tactics and decided not to support them.

When we're talking about youth services, the member touches on a number of topics, each of which are important. But it's important to notice that we have a comprehensive approach to helping youth in Manitoba.

One of the most profound investments that our government has made is universal school food program. When I was at Wayoata School during I Love To Read Month, a school where they know our former colleague Nello very well, there's a young child there who said, oh, yeah, the food cart program, I thought that was so awesome.

When there's something government does that a small child can understand, you know it's tangible, it's real. When you think about the social determinants of health—meaning how healthy are people going to be over the rest of their lives and what's that going to mean for not just the health-care system, but also how successful they are—investing in nutrition at an early age is good.

When you think about educational achievement and how that increases lifetime income for people, school food program is bringing kids to school who were absent to—one too many days in previous years; and that is a social good.

* (16:10)

So we could go on, but I think members around the table understand the gist of what I'm saying here, which is that universal school food program—or the food cart program, as one child at Wayoata said—is an important way for us to intervene in the lives of young people.

At the same time, members opposite have raised numerous public safety questions in question period, and so I know that there are important considerations there. I notice that they haven't asked about public

safety the past few days, likely because the Winnipeg Police Service said that crime is down and youth crime is down. And we took a comprehensive approach there too. Again, there's the preventative nature of the investments around school food and recreation facilities like the one in Lorette, which is currently under construction and others around the province.

But, again, there's other young people who are on a negative path and need help turning things around. So we're also investing in educational services and rehabilitation services for those youth. And here I'm thinking of my colleague from Kirkfield Park who's worked on the front lines with young people who need support in terms of finding a positive path and many other good people in the community doing things like that too.

Action therapy comes to mind as one particularly powerful example where instead of opening an office and launching a service and expecting the youth in crisis to come to you, instead they flip the model on its head and the therapists go out into the community in trucks and cars and go find the youth in crisis and bring them to positive events like feasts and walks and neighbourhood cleanups and powwows and community events and rallies and all sorts of important things. So our government is supporting initiatives like that as well too.

When we look at the investments in mental health and addictions, there's often a youth component to these initiatives. So, again, when I think back to the public safety summit we had, I believe it was at the end of last April, there were many young people in attendance, and they identified the role that law enforcement and the justice system has, but they also talked about recreation, education and investment in community. And so we're delivering on all of that.

Mr. Khan: I don't think anyone would disagree that it's everyone's responsibility, especially government and people in government, to—no kid should go to school hungry. I support that. I think it's passed—may he rest in peace—Nello Altomare, that he passed that, I think it's a universal school program. We might disagree on what the rollout is; we might disagree on how much and how it's done. But I think we all agree, of course, and I will actually commend that for feeding kids that go to school. It's a great, great program, great idea on how to do that.

The question I was asking the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was, you know, mental health supports as well. And, yes, this pay—plays into it. He didn't want to touch on any of that stuff, so I'll move on to the next question.

As the head of the Executive Council, the Premier is ultimately responsible for actions of all his ministers, including the Health Minister. Yesterday, we saw that the Health Minister was given a grade of a D- by the Manitoba Nurses Union, and the Premier gave her an A+. I think there's a large disconnect between the Manitoba Nurses Union, Darcy [phonetic] Jackson. He's either saying it's completely out to lunch by giving a D- or the Health Minister's completely out to nuts by giving an A+. So, you know, it's not an A+ versus a B; it's an A+ and a D-.

So which one does—it seems like the Premier's pretty obviously calling out the Manitoba Nurses Union, that they don't know what they're doing, they have no idea what they're talking about by assigning a D- grade. It's unfortunate that he takes that approach with the unions seeing how he relied on them heavily the last election.

Early in his mandate—early in their mandate, the Health Minister quickly cancelled the provincial surgical program and shut down its diagnostics and surgical task–recovery task force. Two years later we're still seeing—we're—actually, not still—wait times were going down under the PCs. And now wait times are going up, two years later. Two years, and they campaigned on fixing health; we'll fix health right away. And they're still on a listening tour.

Still seeing growing wait times and delays in surgeries, and all the progress that was made by the previous government is gone under this NDP and their partisan ideology. And now they've turned the nurses union against them, and the doctors. Pretty much all of Manitoba will be turned against this NDP soon enough.

And on May 1, the minister does a release announcing a new lower wait-time team for emergency wait room–room waits, and nothing. Seems like the minister—they're there for a year and a half establishing the new team; could have just kept the old team. Maybe traded some players and expanded to whatever it was so Manitobans could have got the services they need.

So I asked the Premier—maybe, I mean, it's—the Health Minister reports to him—if the Premier regrets that, and leaving Manitobans in pain and suffering for almost two years to announce essentially the exact same thing that was being done before. And the Premier admits that he and his Health Minister have made a mistake, and because of their mistake, Manitobans suffered in pain when they didn't need to.

The Chairperson: Leader of the Official Opposition, are you done?

An Honourable Member: I think that was the question.

The Chairperson: That was it? Just, before I stop the clock.

Mr. Kinew: Well yes, no—no one was clear on whether he was done because no one knows what he's talking about, including himself. Shall we list the examples in the preamble there? The head of the nurses union's name is Darlene. Small example, but still one.

When the member opposite talks about we shut down the provincial surgical program, like it's just simply not true. Shutting down the provincial surgical program would mean that you cancelled every operating room, including private surgical facilities, in the province. Like, obviously that didn't happen. Obviously, there's thousands and thousands of surgeries going on all the time, on ortho and, you know, all sorts of—cataract and heart and all sorts of things. So obviously that was wrong.

The member also conflates the announcement that the Health Minister made about reducing emergency room waits with the diagnostic and surgical—project of farming out surgeries to America that the former Heather Stefanson government had, that he participated in.

The other mistake that he's—had made in his preamble is that he said progress was being made. What progress? Progress on closing emergency rooms? Progress on firing nurses? Those are the only indicators that we saw under the PC's terms in office.

So what do we do with the ER group? The member makes reference to building teams, and what I would say is, we went out and we built a very strong team. We built the Avengers of health care to help us deliver better emergency services for you, the people of Manitoba. We brought in people who we know well, and that were highly recommended to us. We brought in people who were critical of us, including in the 2023 election campaign, people who criticized us on the record. We said, you know what? Dissent makes the final outcome stronger; let's bring those folks in and hear what they have to say.

We brought in people who were already there, who had already been appointed under the former PC government. I would say we did the same thing under surgeries too. There's people who were appointed under the PCs that we kept in the role. Because, again, we're not taking an ideological approach; we're taking a made-in-Manitoba approach. Who are the best

people that we have in this province to help us fix health care? They know the ideas, they know the solutions from working on the front lines.

And so that's what we're doing. The member opposite, in the preamble, in which he is trying to chastise a government that is fixing the mistakes that the PCs made, he betrays the fact that he confuses emergency services with surgeries. He confuses the names of people; he confused opening new facilities with closing them.

So, again, if we want to talk about health care in the next election campaign, I will be very, very happy, and I will gladly engage in any debate, particularly after seeing the confusion that the member opposite shows.

* (16:20)

Now when we're talking about progress that's being made, yes, I would like things to move faster. But I encourage the members opposite to hold a press conference at the end of the month when ER wait times are released. I encourage the members opposite to join us in communities like Arborg and Transcona and other parts of the province that are seeing personal-care homes—beds built that never happened under them. I encourage the members opposite to do their own research, FIPPA the number of nurses working on the bedside today compared to when they took office. FIPPA the number of physicians, FIPPA the number of health-care aides.

Progress is being made on staffing. Progress is being made on safety. Progress is being made on waits. Progress is being made across the board on health care.

Now, is it where I would like it to be? No. I want the wait to be zero. I want the staffing to be 100 per cent in every area, and I want that all delivered yesterday and on budget. But we're on a journey towards being able to get there.

And so these are important considerations for the people of Manitoba to keep in mind, and the Health Minister, they're a very high performer. They don't need me saying nice things about them, but I do anyways.

Yesterday they went out and spoke to the nurses at the rally on the steps. Can you imagine one of the PC Health ministers going out to speak at a health-care rally at Seven Oaks or the Vic, or even the exact same rally that the nurses had on the front steps? No, you can't.

The Chairperson: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you.

Mr. Khan: And I thank the Premier (Mr. Kinew). I apologize to Darlene Jackson, not Darcy *[phonetic]* Jackson. That was—apologize, he's right, so thanks for pointing that out.

The Premier wants to talk about numbers and facts. Let's get some facts here Three months ago the wait time was 24,000 patients in line for an MRI. Yesterday there were 28,479. That's an increase of 4,479, in case the Premier wants to pull out his calculator for that.

Some more numbers for the Premier: three months ago it was 6 to 8 months for wait time and now it's 10 months. That again is an increase of four months for that.

So the question to the Premier is simple: he talks about numbers coming down and down and down. These numbers clearly show on Manitoba's Health website, on their own website, these numbers have gone up. Can the Premier please explain why the numbers have gone up on his website when he's standing here in committee or sitting here in committee telling Manitobans they've gone down?

Mr. Kinew: Because the member's got to hit refresh. That's the answer.

Mr. Khan: You know, the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) got a sense of humour. Sometimes it's nice to exchange some pleasantries back and forth, and I do actually give the Premier credit for that and I hope he knows when that's given genuinely.

But this is a serious question, and he wants to refresh. I have my iPad right in front of me. We've hit refresh right in front of us and it's showing that. So I hit refresh, still showing numbers have gone up under his government. It's not a joking matter. If you could please answer why the numbers are going up on his own website, and he's saying they're going down here in committee.

Mr. Kinew: Yes. As I said in some detail we're making progress on health care. Where the members opposite cut staffing, where they didn't hire any institutional safety officers, where they closed emergency rooms, where they hired American companies to deliver health services at the same time that they were firing people in Manitoba, we're changing all that.

We're changing the approach to health care, and instead of bringing in people from out of province,

we're turning to the local experts, because we believe Manitobans know the solutions here at home.

So, again, the refresh button that needs to get hit is on the PC approach. They continue to want to talk about sending money out of province, or privatizing services. They should focus on hiring nurses, hiring health-care professionals, hiring physicians and delivering for you, the patient.

We're proceeding with reopening emergency rooms. We've opened some in rural Manitoba that were previously closed. We've got community consultations underway for two other emergency rooms that we committed to in the last election and we'll be moving towards shovels in the ground on those very soon.

We're working on staffing up other facilities that will be coming online and ensuring that instead of having empty wards, which we saw under the Stefanson and Pallister governments. Instead, we'll have bustling facilities focused on keeping people healthy at home in the community.

So these are important measures of success and important priorities for us to invest in. We're taking steps to ensure that the staffing, which is a prerequisite for opening new facilities, expanding care, that that's all moving forward. And we're bringing back targeted services, such as the Mature Women's Health Centre in south Winnipeg, which of course is going to serve people in south Winnipeg, but it will be really a province-wide centre of excellence.

It'll help people as they age to be able to stay healthy in the community. This builds on the investments that we had in this year's budget, announced with our Pharmacare bilateral with the federal government to bring in Pharmacare coverage for hormone replacement therapy.

Now the members opposite, I'm sure they want to talk about parental rights, but what we're actually talking about here is people who are experience menopause and peri-menopause. And as women in our society experience menopause earlier, there's a greater demand for hormone replacement therapy. And now we're covering that free of charge. So not only is it a health-care investment, it's also an affordability measure, which is good.

So the members opposite want to litigate the details of the improvements to health care that we're making. That's great. We're litigating the repair job that we're doing over the cuts that they caused.

So, again, after you bash a hole in the wall, you can criticize the handyperson who comes by to fix the damage, but it kind of lacks credibility. Well, not kind of; it does. Full stop. Lacks credibility.

So, again, we can continue to talk about those investments, and we will. The Mature Women's Centre would build on HRT being publicly covered under Pharmacare by also ensuring that not only is there prevention when it comes to primary care, but also prevention for secondary and tertiary care as well too. Meaning, if somebody does suffer an injury or somebody does become sick, how do we help them from becoming more injured or how do we prevent them from becoming sicker in the future. So those are important investments that we're returning.

So, again, the member opposite is criticizing new investments that we're making and saying that, oh, there's an issue with the wait time or we're not standing up the new service fast enough when, in fact, they closed this facility when they ended that program. There is no Mature Women's Health Centre in south Winnipeg or in Manitoba right now because of the actions of the PCs.

Same thing with surgeries, diagnostics. You look at the sleep centre and the initiatives that they tried to privatize from there. What's the status of that now? It's not going well. The privateers ran away, and now there's a serious need to staff up the public system to deliver those sorts of diagnostics and services.

Similarly, when you fire nurses in the province, it makes it harder to staff an operating room; 600 more nurses will help, but there's way more to do.

Mr. Khan: Manitobans can clearly see this Premier (Mr. Kinew) is talking about nothing he's doing and just wants to live in the past. He wants to live in the past and attack the previous PC, yet he's two years under his government.

Clearly asked him a defined, quantitative answer on wait times: 24,000 on his website and the Manitoba government's website, and that's grown to 28,479. No answer. You saw that yourself, Manitoba. He wants to live in the past. He wants to attack, attack, attack in the past when—and that's what someone does who has no answers for what they're doing right now.

He has nothing. He has nothing to talk about when it comes to making health care in this province better. He wants to continue to attack Heather Stefanson and Brian Pallister and he doesn't want to be held accountable for his own lack of improvements under his government.

Six to eight months was under his website three months ago; now it's over 10 months. These are direct results of this Premier and his failed Health Minister.

He wants to talk about previously. Yes, previously there was 85,000 procedures, including diagnostics, tests and surgeries under the Diagnostic Surgical Recovery Task Force. Eighty-five thousand Manitobans got that service and he cut it. He says they don't want to send them out of province; they don't want to pay for their treatments.

* (16:30)

Well, his concern and his focus should be treatment for Manitobans, should be doing whatever it takes to get them healthier, helping them where they're at. Not having a political, partisan, ideological—saying, we're going to cancel it, and then two years later just announce another version of what they're doing, to say they're going to listen to more people and travel around the province and not actually do anything to make life better.

You've got Portage la Prairie hospital foundation: \$5 million for an MRI that they have said they will commit to this project. And the Premier and Health Minister, what did they say? No, we don't want it. We don't want \$5 million for that.

We have 28,000 Manitobans waiting for procedures, and he doesn't want to do it. I'd say there's nothing more ideological than that right there.

The Premier doesn't care about making your life better, doesn't care about getting you health treatments. He cares about scoring political points against previous leaders. It's unfortunate Manitobans have to suffer, and they're seeing that day in and day out under this Premier.

So question for the Premier now is there's a new hospital in Portage, Neepawa as well as Boundary Trails. Are these counted as new beds that the NDP keep touting on their press releases and within their budget?

Mr. Kinew: No. The new beds that we're talking about are beds that were closed in the health region where the PCs closed emergency rooms at the Vic, the Conc [*phonetic*] and Seven Oaks.

Straight-up answer. Still got more to say, though, because there's important context here. There really is.

The member opposite, and I quote, he said, another version of what they're doing. And I just want people on the committee as well as any Manitobans

who ever read a future version of Hansard here to understand that the member is still confusing a working group to address surgical waits with a task force to address emergency room waits.

Perhaps his team can, like, you know, do a little pull aside later and just explain that surgeries and emergency departments are different things. Right? Like, that's what we're talking about here. So, again, diagnostic and surgical plan to send people to America is very different than the emergency room wait time task force that the Minister of Health announced.

So, it's no surprise, then, that he's apparently got his chart upside down when it comes to surgeries. Here's a flag: we are completing hundreds of more surgeries than the PCs ever did. It's about 35 per cent more in 2024 compared to their last full year in government.

When we look at the wait times that that increase in surgeries represents: cardiac, it's going down compared to the PCs. Cataracts—which, again, for the members who are just starting to think about health care for the first time ever, is different from cardiac—wait times are going down compared to what it was under the PCs. When we look at hip and knee procedures, wait times, again, down compared to what they were under the PCs.

So the member's eyes sparkled with glee when they loaded the fact that there is a transparently available dashboard on the website, but they neglected to compare it to their own record and see that wait times were longer for so many priority procedures during the time that they were in office.

Probably behooves me to leave some of those stats on the record. Cardiac surgery specifically, when was the peak for that? It was in February 2022. Who was in government February 2022? That's when cardiac waits peaked. Cardiac sciences is important. The members opposite themselves have raised the issue. We're repairing the cardiac centre at St. B that they decimated. It was a national—nationally recognized, very renowned place to deliver heart services, and now it's one of the many things we're trying to repair in health.

Cataract surgeries, again, peaked under the PCs time in office. February 2023, who was in government then? Member opposite.

Hip and knee wait times peaked under the PCs again. Well, maybe I should have done a bit more showmanship and said wait times peaked in 2022 and then asked rhetorically who was in government in 2022.

So, again, these are some—not all—of the priority procedures that Manitobans are interested in. And again, if you hit refresh on your approach, if you hit refresh and stop the cuts, if you hit refresh and bring in a new government that's focused on staffing up the front lines and improving workplace culture, listening to concerns about safety, opening new facilities, you start to make progress.

But I want to be very, very clear. When I say progress, I'm not saying that we're satisfied with where we are now; there's still a lot more work to do; and that is absolutely serious, I think we can all agree on that.

But the way we're going to make progress is not by returning to buying private health services in America or closing emergency rooms. The way we're going to fix health care is by investing in Manitobans and opening new facilities here at home, which is exactly what we're doing.

Mr. Khan: I have many, many more questions, but something else has called me away—duty in the office—so I will cede the floor for 24 minutes to the member from Fort Garry.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Thank you.

Now, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) on June 2, 2019, just prior to his first election, gave an interview and was talking about the NDP climate change policy, and he said that it would include a carbon tax. I'm going to quote him: If the current federal tax that's—[interjection]

The Chairperson: Okay, order. Order.

We can't hear the person speaking, so we need to make sure that the back and forth stops on both sides, regardless of who is speaking.

Mr. Wasyliv: So I'll repeat that quote: If the current federal tax that's being imposed now gets repealed, we're going to find a way to bring a price on pollution here in Manitoba that ensures large emitters pay, that gives more money back to lower-middle-income people, and that could include a cap and trade. End quote.

So it's very clear, the Premier said that not only did he favour a carbon tax, if the federal government repealed theirs, he was going to impose a made-in-Manitoba carbon tax.

Now, obviously, he has now done an incredible flip-flop and says he's opposed to it. So I'm wondering if the Premier can tell the committee why he's now imposed, when he made that decision that he was no

longer in favour of a province-of-Manitoba 'carbon' tax, and why he flip-flopped on this issue.

Mr. Kinew: The member tabled a bill to see greater representation in government. Why doesn't he resign his seat and we'll elect a BIPOC woman right away?

Mr. Wasyliv: You know, I think it's a sad state of affairs in Manitoba when a Premier speaks to and attempts to demean another MLA doing their job.

Now, it's not me asking these questions; I'm asking them on behalf of the people of Fort Garry. So the Premier isn't disrespecting me, he's disrespecting the people of Fort Garry, and I think it just shows and highlights just how toxic and dysfunctional this government is—the fish rots from the head down—that this is a legitimate question and the Premier will not give a respectful, legitimate answer.

Manitobans want to know. In 2019 this Premier favoured a carbon tax so much so that even if the federal government got rid of it, he was going to bring one in to Manitoba and make the big emitters pay.

So what changed? Why the flip-flop? Why the change? How do Manitobans trust this Premier that says one thing on a Tuesday and another on a Wednesday? What was the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) position, why did it change, and when?

Mr. Kinew: The member gets so emotional so easily; gets worked up, raises his voice, starts to speak more quickly. Want to talk about the people of Fort Garry? They voted for the New Democratic Party. He should resign his seat and test his mandate, see if he really does speak for the people of Manitoba. Probably not. How about the people in the constituency of Fort Garry? Probably not.

* (16:40)

Anyway, he's being emotional at committee because you can see that he tries to chastise me for some, you know, standard of behaviour, and then he resorts to name-calling a second later. You want to have a debate about the environment? Keep it on the environment. If you want to come after me as the Premier, then be prepared to answer questions as well. I say that through you to the Chair.

When it comes to the issues around output-based pricing, when it comes to large emitters, here in Manitoba, the most important thing that we have is low-priced hydroelectricity. That is how we are going to address the climate crisis. And so that's why we brought forward an affordable energy plan.

I was very proud that one of the signature announcements that we made for that affordable energy plan with the very talented, very qualified minister responsible, a minister of the Crown, somebody sitting at the Cabinet table, invested with the power to make decisions, and doing a good job of it, was actually at a facility in Fort Garry, a facility that manufactures transformers. And it was a great announcement because we're there with the blue collar; we're there with the engineers; we're there with the people who care about the environment, and folks are saying the affordable energy plan makes a lot of sense.

Now, what is a fundamental precept or underlying proposition beneath the affordable energy plan? It's the idea that Manitobans want to do the right thing when it comes to the environment and will do so when it's affordable for them to do the right thing by the environment.

So how do we do that? It's not by making life more expensive; it's by making life more affordable. So that's why we froze hydro rates. Again, the member opposite is always trying to, you know, spend hours online contorting up various theories so that he can spring the gotcha question when he neglects to focus on the most important solution, which is help people, make life more affordable, make the climate-friendly choice—or has—he's taken to recently saying, the green choice—more affordable, and people will flock to it.

So we're doing that on transportation. We're doing that on home heating. We're doing that across the board. And the single greatest threat towards climate justice and action on global warming is if we lose a generation of Manitobans. And what happened over the past few years is that the carbon tax alienated people who were suffering from 8 per cent inflation. And so Manitobans needed help.

And that's why I was very happy that we came into office and we cut the gas tax to zero. That helped people in Fort Garry. That helped people who live in the apartment buildings along Pembina; that helped people who live in the bungalows and in the single-family homes, in other parts of the constituency.

I've heard it time and time again, at the hockey rinks and at the shopping malls in the area and in surrounding communities: it was a real help. And so what did that do? That built public support for a government that is focused on climate action. And so if you alienate the working class, if you alienate the middle class, if you alienate the blue collar, you are not going to be able to receive a mandate to help move forward on climate-friendly policies.

We're moving forward. We received a mandate from the people of Manitoba. The member opposite is lucky to have been able to get a side gig through that mandate that we received from the people of Manitoba, and now we're using that to help on affordability and health care and also to take action on climate.

So the member opposite, again, can come here and sub in for a new Leader of the Opposition who does not have the temerity, perspicacity or staying power to be able to sustain a single question period, much less an afternoon in Estimates. But, again, this is all pretty straightforward stuff.

Mr. Wasyliw: Yes, I don't think the people of Fort Garry would appreciate their Premier taking personal cheap shots at other MLAs or the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan). It's not mature; it's not respectful. I think they want their Premier to reflect themselves; they wouldn't conduct themselves in that way, and it's embarrassing when the Premier conducts himself in that way.

The Premier should know that many people in Fort Garry don't have cars. So borrowing \$340 million for a gas tax holiday doesn't help them. In fact, transit has not been funded by this Premier (Mr. Kinew), and transit fees have skyrocketed in the last two years, so it actually has made life less affordable for the people of Fort Garry who need it most.

So the Premier says: Well, you know what's changed? Well, we have clean, renewable hydro energy. Well, yes, that's very interesting; that sounds very much like Brian Pallister. In fact, that's exactly Brian Pallister's logic when he came out with his environmental policy and this Premier criticized and rejected in 2019, saying no, that wasn't good enough; we needed a carbon tax.

And of course, he's now flip-flopped. So, there was affordability issues in 2019. We had clean hydro in 2019. We had to get working people onside for our green platform in 2019. So what changed? What changed and when did it change? Why was he a carbon-tax advocate, and now, you know, a Pierre Poilievre acolyte?

Mr. Kinew: I don't know. I guess it's the same sort of question as why is the only photo from the 2023 election of the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) standing behind a podium sign that has my name on it? I'm sure the folks in Fort Garry who voted for the NDP would probably want to know the answer to that.

When it comes to issues of climate, again, I love talking to the activists who come here to the steps every Friday when folks are outside. And, again, the number is far smaller than it was in past years, but there's commitment. It's just as intense; I stop and talk to them.

But 'wif you want to move mountains when it comes to global warming and climate justice, you don't just need to talk to the activists; you need to be able to go to the Whiteout party outside of Canada Life Centre and have your policies receive support there.

That's what we're doing. We can go to a Jets game. We can go to a Bomber game. We can go to a local soccer field, a local baseball diamond, and the things that we're doing in government make sense. People are taking advantage of the programs that we're rolling out. We're bringing Indigenous nations along.

The member opposite has tried to criticize some of these steps because, again, didn't win at the game: took his ball, went home. That's okay. That's fine with me. Criticize away, but the reality is, if you criticize a joint venture with an Indigenous nation, you are criticizing an anti-poverty mess—measure on reserve.

Put that in the pamphlet and let's go to Fort Garry. Put your comments in court in a pamphlet and let's go to Fort Garry—regarding impaired driving. Let's do that.

I'll happily talk about the carbon tax. I'll happily talk about the much better policies on the environment that we have. I'd even go to a green rally. I'd even go to some sort of forum in the next election to talk about these issues because I'm sure we'll have to.

We'll go to the debate and we'll hear the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) confuse surgeries with emergency departments. We'll answer questions about how making life more affordable on climate-friendly initiatives helps to gain popular support for those initiatives. And we'll even have people in constituencies across the province making the case that another mandate is going to be helpful for us to be able to achieve climate justice.

Some really exciting things are happening in government right now around wind power. Folks in the environmental movement have been waiting years for renewables to get the necessary attention and scope of investments. We're backing that up in this year's budget with an Indigenous loan guarantee program so that

Indigenous nations can not only help connect renewables to the grid, but also put people to work in good-paying, blue-collar union jobs.

These are important measures and I'm sure the member opposite will, you know, jump in with the fluoride conspiracy crowd soon and talk to us about the high-pitch frequencies of windmills and the birds that get killed and oppose that, too.

That's okay. It's important to hear fringe views from time to time, but we'll continue to make the investments that will make sense, hopefully, to folks in the environmental movement, but also will make sense to folks who are at the Whiteout party tomorrow night cheering on our beloved Jets, will make sense to seniors who are living in assistive-living facilities, will make sense to people in the North, will make sense to people in the Pembina Valley or even Portage la Prairie.

Might not be on our target seat list just yet but, who knows, a few years into the future.

* (16:50)

And so these are some of the considerations that go into environmental policy. And, you know, I know that the tone of belligerent condescension backed up by falsely exaggerated claims of expertise are one way to try and influence government policy.

But another is to talk to experts, talk to community and build a critical mass around doing positive things. So our government has chosen to do the latter. I'm very proud of the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), Minister responsible of Manitoba Hydro, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Efficiency Manitoba (MLA Moyes), and everyone else who is contributing to the great steps forward that we're taking on the climate.

Really, at the end of the day, if the member cares about climate, he should support our government and support these measures.

Mr. Wasyliw: So I just want to chart the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) evolution here on this issue. So he was for the carbon tax, and then he adopted Brian Pallister's position that, because Manitoba has a clean hydro grid, we shouldn't be subject to carbon tax, but he also adopted Brian Pallister's position that it was okay for other provinces that didn't have green hydro to have a carbon tax.

Then on March 28, 2024, the Premier meets with his ideological fellow traveller, Pierre Poilievre, and

it must have been some kind of meeting, because afterward it was sort of a road to Damascus moment. He has his conversion and he comes out and now he no longer agrees with Brian Pallister, he agrees with Pierre Poilievre: he doesn't think there should be any carbon tax anywhere.

So, again, another huge flip-flop, and if people—Manitoban heads weren't spinning from that, three days later he meets with the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who challenges the Premier at that time to come up with a creditive alternative to a carbon tax to reduce emissions.

Now the Premier says he accepted Justin Trudeau's challenge and would be announcing a credible alternative to the 'cardon' tax, and then nothing. No announcement, no credible alternative.

So the Premier has said that Manitoba is going to reduce carbon emissions by 45 per cent in the next five years, and I guess my question to the Premier is: Are we on track to meet that, and based on what policies that he's brought in, and what is his credible alternative to the carbon tax? Because EV rebates is not going to get you there.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, we've got expert analysis that shows our existing policy framework is taking us to net zero in Manitoba by 2050. I shared this with the Prime Minister, the current Prime Minister, and said hey, if you want the case that we can get to net zero in Canada without a consumer-facing carbon tax, let's have other jurisdictions follow Manitoba's lead in what we're doing right here.

It's a good message. So what is the member doing at committee here today? He's riding on the train to a climate-friendly future, and he's complaining and shouting at the sky: Where is the train that is going to take me to a climate friendly future?

My answer—through you, the Chair—is, you're riding on it. You are on the vehicle, you are on the trajectory, you are on the path right now that is taking you to net zero. It's there for everybody, and we're all participating in it.

When he tries to score political points by comparing me to Brian Pallister, my climate policy is nothing like Brian Pallister. Brian Pallister brought in a carbon tax. Go read Hansard: Who blocked it from being passed in Manitoba? It's a rhetorical question, but it was me.

I used the five bills that we could use to delay, procedurally, in the House. I used one of those spots to block the carbon tax from being brought in.

So, unlike the PCs, who have flip-flopped back and forth on the issue of the carbon tax, and I see a shocked look from my friend from Portage la Prairie who asked Brian Pallister for donations for his campaign—but yes, Mr. Pallister did actually bring in a carbon tax, right?

And all the colleagues who were there voted for it. We stopped it. So I don't think you can compare me to Brian Pallister in good faith.

When you talk about Mr. Poilievre, I talked to Mr. Poilievre this morning. I talked to Mr. Carney yesterday. I've spoken to everyone who has a chance to lead at the federal level in western Canada. My responsibility is to Manitobans. I'm not the Premier for the NDP. I'm the Premier for Manitobans.

And so we're making good decisions. We're making a difference for people. We're making life more affordable as we tackle issues like global warming. Transit? We brought in a new funding model for municipalities. We've increased funding; they've got more money than ever before.

We funded NFI Group to be able to not only manufacture zero-emission buses but to onshore manufacturing and create new blue-collar jobs in Transcona. That's in Manitoba. The member opposite might want to run to his next rally and talk about a just transition while he turns his back on a government that is actually funding the creation of blue-collar jobs in the advanced manufacturing zero-emission mass transit transportation industry.

He can continue to ask questions, which is his right, and we'll continue to take actions which will make his life and everyone else's life better.

Mr. Wasyliv: Well I don't think this Premier (Mr. Kinew) has to worry about anybody accusing him of being Premier of the NDP. I've certainly heard from many NDP members who've been—felt betrayed by this government and by this Premier and how much there's been a continuation between the policies of Brian Pallister and this Premier.

But in that June 2, 2019, interview, the Premier also made a second pledge: that he would pass a law to require Manitobans to cut carbon emissions by 40 per–45 per cent by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2025 and would require annual progress reports.

Now been two legislative sessions, halfway through his mandate; no such law. Has the Premier flip-flopped yet again and has no intention of bringing in a law that would require Manitoba to legally cut emissions?

Mr. Kinew: Again, the member is so worked up about his supposed gotcha question that he ignored the answer he just got. We are on a path to net zero by 2050. That's what everybody wants. Everybody says net zero by 2050. There's no other date in mind. There's no other emissions target that is being widely circulated. We've got the evidence to show we're on that trajectory with the policy framework we've already bought in—brought in place.

I'm sure the member opposite wants rationale to bring in private members' bills so he can justify his time here; that's fine, go ahead. But we're taking the actions to actually do the work.

When the new federal government comes around to talking about climate, guess who they're going to point to when they're asked, how does a jurisdiction decarbonize while still keeping life affordable and putting people to work? They will point to Manitoba, and we'll gladly talk to other jurisdictions about how they can do the same.

Of course, Manitoba is in a unique position because Manitobans have been investing in low-carbon electricity for the better part of 60 years. But at the same time, there's additional steps that need to be taken, and we are making those investments. We're making those investments when it comes to advanced manufacturing and blue-collar jobs; we're making that when it comes to bringing renewables, more renewables onto the grid; we're doing that when it comes to exporting power that will help to decarbonize other jurisdictions.

I'd encourage the member opposite to do some back-of-the-envelope math and think about how much power that we just repatriated from the United States of America would move in terms of GHG emissions in Saskatchewan and Alberta and then perhaps bring the pompoms to the next question period and say: You know what, this government has the right idea. They're going to displace carbon in other jurisdictions while building wealth in Manitoba.

We've got an EV rebate program. The member drives an EV. What are you criticizing, my friend? You're trying to close the door behind you—through the Chair. I think everybody deserves to have a shot at an affordable electric vehicle. I think every transit

service should have a zero-emission bus that's manufactured in Manitoba, and I think our grid should have more wind turbines on it.

What does a climate-friendly person have to criticize with that?

The Chairperson: The hour being 5 o'clock, committee rise.

CHAMBER

JUSTICE

*(15:10)

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of Estimates for the Department of Justice.

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

As per subrule 77(15) questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to resume discussions today. I'd like to start my opening comments—opening question—on bail reform.

And my question for the minister is: After he touted five-point-plan bail reform that has been brought forward, statistically have we seen a decrease in the number of people that are being kept in custody or released under this minister's watch?

The Chairperson: Before the minister answers I'll give the critic an opportunity to introduce the staff.

Who's joined you?

Mr. Balcaen: Certainly. And thank you, honourable Chair. Joining me today is Mr. Shannon Martin, researcher for our team.

The Chairperson: I'll give the minister a chance to introduce staff who've joined him.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Perfect. Thank you very much, honourable Chair.

Once again, it's my pleasure to introduce Jeremy Akerstream, my Deputy Minister for the Department of Justice, as well as the ADM for Public Safety, Owen Fergusson, who I think is well-known to—not only to many Manitobans in many communities; he does incredible work in reaching out to folks across

the province, and he's well-known and well-liked in all those circles, but I think even in this room. Not that there's be any question that any of our wonderful public servants would be more liked or less liked than any others, but we—I think we've got agreement that Owen is second to none.

* (15:20)

So I appreciate that the member opposite is zeroing in on an important initiative that we've undertaken with regards to bail. Course, the member opposite knows that, for seven and a half years, the issue of bail was simply used as—well, I've characterized it as a political football. And I think the analogy is apt, because what we saw for years under the Heather Stefanson and Brian Pallister governments—when Heather Stefanson was, in fact, herself the minister of Justice—was that there was a willingness to use this issue in a way that, you know, focused solely on the actions of the federal government while taking no accountability here in the province of Manitoba.

And, you know, in that way I think it was a way to sort of pass off this political football, hope that the federal government would fumble it or fail it, and then use that as a—as fodder to say, well, they're not doing enough and that's why this issue continues to affect our communities.

What—we took a different approach. In fact, we took an approach that was recommended by the National Police Federation, and the National Police Federation made a number of recommendations to governments, both the federal and provincial governments. And, you know, the member opposite would know this.

I know certainly his predecessor in this role knows it; and again, Heather Stefanson knew very well what those recommendations were. Because it just so happens that I was sitting right beside her when the National Police Federation delivered those recommendations directly to her. And they did so to Premier Ford and Premier Smith and—trying to remember if it was Premier Eby at the time, but it was certainly premiers from across the country who came to say, what can we do on the issue of bail?

Now some premiers continue to do this, you know, sort of the political football or play with a political football or turn this issue into a political football, and I would suggest that the premier here in Manitoba at the time definitely did that. But we took a different approach. We said, these are good recommendations and we are going to follow them.

From that—those recommendations, we found five recommendations that were applicable to the province of Manitoba that we could take action on right away, and that really spurred our action. And so not only did we continue to lobby the federal government and push them on the issue of bail, but we also started to take action here.

And one of the main recommendations that the National Police Federation made was that provinces should do a better job in collecting data and then sharing that data, not only amongst law enforcement in the provinces and in the jurisdictions that they have jurisdiction over, but also with the federal government. And so what we did was we committed additional funding to the—to make sure that information was starting to be gathered and starting to be shared in a way that's useful.

Then, fast-forward to my time here in this role and my first federal-provincial-territorial meeting, sitting around the table with provinces, the federal government, and what—lo and behold, what does the federal government say? They say, well, we need more information; we 'need'—need more of this data. And, you know, they had to look over to Manitoba and say, why don't you all follow Manitoba's lead, because they are starting to gather this information in a meaningful way.

We've started to track it in a better way. We've started to share it in a better way amongst law enforcement. And we've started to have that credibility with the federal government that's going to ultimately make a big difference when it comes to tackling this issue.

Now, this is just one step, and of course, again, five-point plan, including electronic monitoring, which the members opposite cut. But we've brought it back and we have started to turn the tide when it comes to violent crime, when it comes to crime in our province.

And, you know, this is just the beginning. Because we know as we continue to take real action, not just use the federal government as a boogeyman, but in fact keep pushing them, keep pushing them on the issue of bail, stand with the law enforcement, stand with municipalities, stand with communities to push the federal government, we're going to make a bigger difference.

And so we're starting to see that difference. We're starting to get better results, and we're going to continue to push on bail, and we're going to continue to make our province safer because of it, unlike the

members opposite who just wanted to continually pass the buck.

Buck stops here, in my department.

Mr. Balcaen: Appreciate, again, the opportunity to continue to probe a little bit about this failed bail plan and dig a little deeper. So in light of the many violent criminals released under this minister's watch, has he issued any additional direction to Crown attorneys since the fall of 2023, or is he satisfied with the release of pedophiles and other violent, repeat, prolific criminals?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, I'm appreciating that the member opposite is paying attention to the good work that we're doing, and I think we asked yesterday that maybe he wants to come out and just maybe just endorse some of these policies—say, hey, that's great, great work, and you're headed in the right direction. And then—well, I mean, sure, he can always build off of those, and, you know, maybe he can say sorry while he's at it about the terrible job that the Stefanson government did.

Yesterday he wanted to claim he—when he knocked on doors he never endorsed any of the things that the Stefanson government did, and he certainly wasn't talking about how terrible the job we were going to do. I don't know what he was talking about on the doorstep, but, anyway, we won't spend too much time, I'm sure, there.

I do think, though, it's an important issue because it is one that highlights, again, the fact that there was completely no action under the previous Stefanson government. This set of directives that was issued to our Crown attorneys was, in many ways, you know, a way for us to communicate very clearly about the seriousness with which we take the issue of bail.

And, of course, we know that; Crown attorneys, they certainly understand the impact it has on communities. You know, this wasn't news to them or anything new, but I think it was just a way for us to communicate clearly as government that it was very, very important for us to make clear our position and our direction that we were moving in as a government: that bail was a focus and we were going to do everything we could here in this province to keep people safe.

We were also going to try to restore some of the trust that may have been lost in the justice system when there was inaction from a provincial government—a disinterest, maybe you could say. And, you know, and it was 'opportune' for us to say we're going

to put additional resources, we're going to show you additional supports, and we're going to make sure that you see that bail is a focus of this government.

So we did that in February of 2024. I think the last time that the—that any kind of directive was revised was back when it was an NDP government before, so, you know, complete abdication of any responsibility by the former PC government. And we made that directive—or, we took that directive in February of '24.

Now his question is maybe, have we had subsequent conversations with our Crowns? Absolutely. In fact, I really appreciate the meetings that I have, you know, in a more formal sense—setting. We love to have folks into the office to talk about policy, but there's also an opportunity for me as minister to go out and travel the province and actually get to see some of our Crowns out in the communities that they serve.

* (15:30)

And so, like, they really—it really highlights to me the importance of their perspective and their care and concern for the communities because they live in these communities. They're raising their families in these communities, and so in many cases this is not only an important job that they do but it's part of, you know, it's part of their identity and it's part of the work that they want to do for everyone.

And then, you know, so I get to see them out in the communities they work in, and then I also get an opportunity, just like—just this morning, was at a Crown conference speaking to our Crown attorneys at the Convention Centre here in the city of Winnipeg, and I think we had over 100 at least—I'm not good at counting or estimating crowds—but there was over 100, I would say, of our Crowns, which is great, and it was really good to get to know some of them.

I spent some time before I officially brought greetings and spoke to some of the leadership, but I also spent time beforehand just having a cup of coffee and chatting with a few of the folks in the room, getting to know them a little bit better, understand a little bit of their perspectives. And it really, really does help me in understanding the kinds of work that they do and how we can support them.

So when it comes down to bail, they understand the impact that a lack of action from the previous government has had on the issue of bail. I think there is a recognition that we're doing more and that we want to do more. We're going to continue to take every step we can here.

And then they're also probably, you know, personally—they don't express this to me in a formal way—but they're probably feeling the same way about the federal government and their role that I am and asking for bail reform at a national level as well.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Chair, appreciate, again, the opportunity to ask a little bit about this—the concerns that Manitobans have brought forward with regard to this government's actions on bail reform. And really, we know it's not bail reform; it's bail monitoring. And the name was spun to bail reform to just try and appease the minister's mandate letter which he's obviously failing on.

So my question is: In December, Justice expanded electronic monitoring to some rural communities. So how many ankle monitors are being used here in Winnipeg as compared to what's being used in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: So if I can just backtrack for the member opposite, honourable Chair, just quickly. He was asking about bail, the number of violent offenders that were out on bail or probation, and some of those numbers in terms of the city of Winnipeg were released yesterday.

So just to give him the numbers here for the record on committee: 20.4 per cent of violent offenders were on bail or probation in 2022; in 2023, it was 18.8 per cent of violent offenders were on bail or probation; and now the latest numbers that we have in 2024, it's 18 per cent. So it's about a 10 per cent decrease in the number of repeat offenders that are on bail or probation.

Of course, that's not isolated to just bail, but it's bail or probation. And, again, it's just a snapshot from within the city of Winnipeg. I think there, you know, are additional numbers and figures and facts that we can pull together but that's—gives the member opposite a bit of a snapshot of what's going on right now.

Also maybe just, if I could, because I'm on the—back on the issue of bail, is to talk a little bit about the—about MIVOAU, the Manitoba Integrated Violent Offender Apprehension Unit, which—we've got the acronym all unpacked for the member opposite this time—but I—you know, I mentioned it yesterday. We talked a little bit about it.

I'm happy to dig in a little bit more if we'd like to, but this is a really highly effective unit, and we really appreciate the work that they do because they go not only in the city of Winnipeg; they go across the province. And the communities that they go into, they're

incredibly effective, and the work that they do is really targeting some of these violent offenders, the repeat offenders, the prolific offenders, that we've heard from so many communities are, you know, are such an issue. And so I just wanted to put on the record once again that we just respect and honour the work that MIVOAU does on a day-to-day basis.

With regards to the ankle monitoring program: now I want to caution the member opposite, just because this is a slightly moving target in the sense that I think just earlier this week we had all 100 ankle monitors deployed, and since then, that number, I think, has gone down. It goes up; it changes almost daily.

But if he wants just the latest snapshot that we have, the latest information is 91 of the monitor—of the 100 monitors are deployed; 79 of those are within the city of Winnipeg; 12 are outside of the city of Winnipeg in communities, First Nations and municipalities and cities and towns across the province.

That being said, you know, this is 91 ankle monitors more than we came into office having because we know that Heather Stefanson—I mean, this is something that, really, we have to take just a moment to note that it was actually Heather Stefanson as Justice minister. And I just cannot understand how she could come into the office that I now get to occupy, and one of the first acts that she did, one of the first things that she did, was to say that she wanted to get rid of the ankle monitoring program and cut the program and cut its use completely in the province of Manitoba.

Again, this is at a time when, you know, bail was already—people breaching their conditions on bail was already an issue and this is a useful tool, an important tool that we can use, and she cut it. And then time went by and then maybe members opposite started to feel a little bit of pressure, and they thought, oh, maybe this is something they should bring back. But, of course, they never did.

And it was only when our government came in that we were able to bring that program back, expand it—first of all, build it within the city of Winnipeg and then now expand it outside of the city of Winnipeg.

* (15:40)

It's being well implemented. We know that there's going to be further demands on it because it is effective, and we know that it can make a real difference, and so we're continuing to work with communities to make sure they have the right amount of resources.

The member opposite will know that's how we determine how and where we would roll this out is where communities had the resources to enforce the monitoring that was being taken place, but ultimately it's about keeping people safe, it's about, you know, stopping these particular offenders from breaching their conditions and we've seen a lot of success.

Mr. Balcaen: Following along on these ankle monitors, just wondering how many units are currently inactive due to tampering or break down? How many have been pulled out of service, prior repaired and brought back in, and how many are presently in the queue for repair?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, I appreciate the member opposite has renewed interest in this program, and, again, maybe this is one of the issues; he never knocked on a door and said, you know, we shouldn't bring back the ankle monitoring program. The NDP says we're going to—they're going to bring it back, and I don't think you should vote for them, because they're going to bring back the ankle monitoring program.

Maybe he never said that. Maybe he said: I'm a bit conflicted because I'm running as a PC member, my premier is the one who actually cut the program in the first place, but I've still decided to run for her, and her party. I—maybe he did that. I'm really not sure how he squared that circle in his own mind as he went door to door and he talked to the people of Brandon.

But I guess we'll never know. All we know is that maybe he's starting to come around. He's starting to see the value of this program, and maybe privately he said before: Boy, the Tories should've never cut that program. I'm not sure, I—maybe he can answer that in the next set of questions. I'm sure he'll clarify for the committee and for Manitobans how he was able to come to those conclusions.

That being said, I want to just clarify for the committee and for Manitobans the nature of the contract that was signed, in this case with the Commissionaires for the ankle monitoring program. This uses a really, you know, a new set of technologies, and there's actually a lot of value to employing some of these new technologies.

I've talked a lot about—in the past, about how we're not only using it for, again, for repeat offenders, for violent offenders, for folks that need that additional supervision and monitoring, but we're also using it in the cases of intimate partner violence, and it's available for those cases where we want to ensure that we're protecting victims of intimate partner violence.

And the kind of technology that we're talking about allows for proximity—based on GPS technology—proximity alarms and individual warnings and information that's able to be shared, in this case, with victims in particular.

And so, the technology is there, it's available to be used in that way. And again, we wanted to make sure that was part of the suite of technology we were bringing on.

I mean, these things are also incredibly high tech. The member opposite will also understand this—that it's not only, you know, the GPS capabilities; there's an alarm built into the ankle monitor so it can make an audible sound. But then it also has two-way communication, believe it or not. So not only can it create an alarm, but somebody can actually speak through the ankle monitor to the offender, and then they can talk back. Like, it's actually like a communications device. We got a chance to learn a little bit more about the technology. It was really, really fascinating.

And as we learned a little bit about it, we understood that, you know, this deployment is novel in the sense it—novel for this province of Manitoba. It's not new in other places. This is being used in a lot of provinces. We fell behind; again, Heather Stefanson cut this, so we fell behind seven and a half years.

But when we got back into this technology, what we found was that, you know, these aren't owned by the Province of Manitoba, these ankle monitors. It's part of the service that we've contracted with Commissionaires in this case, and so they provide the equipment; they provide the monitoring, and then we are able to use them in the justice system.

As of right now, there are three ankles monitors that are not in use, that are being held for evidence or being used in evidence. So in terms of the overall pool, I don't know that I want to characterize it as we—you know, we had 100 and now we have 97, because it's a program where we are contracted for the monitoring and contracted for the 100 ankle monitors that in terms of the actual physical ankle monitors themselves, three are not in use—are not being able to be used right now, but that doesn't necessarily mean that that's the number that are deployed throughout the province.

And really, it's about the need that's out there and the opportunities to use them as more and more knowledge is understood about the capability of these and how they can be used to keep communities safe. We expect them to be well used. And we know that

this is an important way that we can keep people safe and keep communities safe.

Mr. Balcaen: So hearing that there's three ankle monitors that are out for evidentiary purposes, can the minister confirm that's because they have been tampered with?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I'd be very cautious. The member opposite knows about commenting on any ongoing cases that are being investigated or before the court.

So I would just—I'll just leave it at the fact that they are being used as—for evidentiary purposes right now.

Mr. Balcaen: So these three ankle monitors that are being used for evidentiary purposes—are the charges connected to mischief to property?

Mr. Wiebe: Just, again, a caution to the member. I'm—you know, as Attorney General, I'm going to err on the side of caution in this case and ensure that there's no further comment on any ongoing cases or any ongoing investigations.

So we'll hopefully move on to a new line of questioning.

Mr. Balcaen: As the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) for the Province, he must know that when charges are laid, they're made public and they're publicly open data.

So I would ask again: Are the charges linked to mischief to property?

* (15:50)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I think I hear the member opposite saying that he has the information in front of him, so I'm not sure why he's asking for it. He says it's publicly available, so he's got the information there. His crack researcher, Mr. Shannon Martin, has done that work and so he's got that in front of him. And if he wants to enlighten the committee, I'm—I know he'll do that.

And I think, you know, again, we've talked a little bit about this in the past with regards to a few different issues the member opposite has brought forward in front of the Legislature. And, I mean, really, at the end of the day, it's not for me to tell him how to do his job as an MLA. It's—he, you know, he gets to conduct himself in whichever way he sees fit.

But, you know, I think there is maybe certainly a higher standard that people expect from us as MLAs, as folks who come in to this place who not only represent our constituents—and, of course, in that way,

we need to be free to ask the kinds of questions that our constituents expect of us. That is absolutely the role and the right of every member who gets elected to this place. And then, on top of those duties as an MLA, there's also a duty to uphold the democratic rights of every Manitoban, to uphold the rule of law and to very clearly communicate to our constituents what the boundaries of the law are.

And, again, as a member who should very well know what those boundaries are, I sometimes question the motivation of the line of questioning that—and the choice of words that he uses in this place. You know, we've heard him say in the House, for instance, that he believes that the Attorney General of the Province of Manitoba individually releases people from jail or from custody or makes determinations about charges that would be laid. And he knows that's not true. He knows that that's inflammatory. He knows that that's actually damaging to our democratic system.

And so, once again, with respect, I've laid out a fairly clear boundary that, you know, I think as Attorney General is very clear here, and with regards to ongoing cases, ongoing charges, ongoing investigations that I'm not prepared to risk any comment that would influence or impact any case. I'm being as straight up as I can with the member opposite. He knows that. He understands the role. And then he still continues to go down that path.

Now he shakes his head. He doesn't understand the role. And I really question, then, what he did as the—not only as a Brandon police officer for a couple of years and as the chief of police, I think, at one point too. Like, this was his job, and he's saying he doesn't understand the law. That is very concerning. And I just think it just doesn't pass the sniff test. I think it actually calls into question his motivations more broadly, what he's willing to say and what he's willing to do to, I guess, score a political point here in the afternoon on a beautiful Thursday afternoon when we're trying to get some answers to questions that are posed.

So I'm happy to go through the details. I believe very strongly in the ankle monitoring program. I really do. You know, members opposite know I've been talking about this since long before I was granted the privilege of being the Minister of Justice. I believe that this is an incredible tool. I think that the—it was wrong to be cut by the previous government. I think they really should have continued to enhance and build off of the program, not cut it. I do believe that

they're—you know, can make a difference in making communities safer.

And, you know, member opposite can disagree with that, but to then question—and I'm happy to answer all the questions he has. I'm being pretty clear here about what I'm willing to comment on and what I'm not. I hope the member opposite will take his duty as an MLA, as a former law enforcement officer, very seriously. You know, tell the people of Manitoba the truth and make sure that the—always the truth is the cornerstone of what we do here.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

A gentle reminder to all members that staff shouldn't be brought into the debate.

With that, the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen).

Mr. Balcaen: I'm happy to tell the Manitobans the truth, and the truth is even this minister's Premier (Mr. Kinew) has said when they make it personal they're losing.

And that's what's happening here, and what we're witnessing is that this minister is actually losing his composure and his ability to answer the questions. We know that the questions are coming from the MLA for Brandon West and the critic for Justice. It's his role to ask these questions and to get answers for Manitobans. When 2.6 or 2.9 million dollars has been invested into a program, Manitobans deserve to know, and when the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) hides behind a veiled privilege that's really not there because this is public information.

You know, I can't help that he's spent a lifetime as a bureaucrat and doesn't understand the law and has to ask questions and doesn't understand the answers and doesn't understand his role as the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) and uses that. So I just wanted Manitobans to know the truth about what's happening here. It's dodging, deflecting and really not looking at answering any of the questions that are posed to him. You know, people in Manitoba are asking about the faults in some of these bracelets, and obviously that's not coming from this minister. So I'll move on to the next one.

The minister noted that 24-7 monitoring of these ankle bracelets includes real-time voice detection through the device, and my question is, how is this relayed to the offender? He mentioned that it's under contract with the Commissionaires, but is this monitored 24-7? Is it live voice, or does it utilize an AI?

* (16:00)

The Chairperson: Before I go on to the minister, I'll just remind all members that strongly encouraging other members to tell the truth implies that they may not be telling the truth, which is also lying, which is unparliamentary. A learning opportunity for everyone in the room.

Mr. Wiebe: Good reminder. And, you know, I think it—look, I think what it speaks to is the fact that this is an unserious member of the Legislature, someone who doesn't want to take his role seriously, he doesn't want to learn, doesn't want to respect the role and the rules of how we should conduct ourselves as MLAs.

You know, the only advice that I'll give him, and this is honest and serious advice that I think he would be wise to take, and that is that the people of Manitoba spoke loud and clear about their opinions of Heather Stefanson and about the previous government. That's not up for debate. There's no question about that. That's the reason why we sit on this side of the House and the members opposite sit on that side of the House. That's just the way it is.

That's democracy. And, you know, whether we like it or not, that is how our system rewards the good work of one group of people, or good ideas of one group of people and punishes, in a way, if you can characterize it that way, another set of ideas. And we can go through all of those ideas. I'd be happy to. I think we can take some time later on to talk about all the bad ideas that we've seen coming from the members opposite.

But what should be sacrosanct, what should be above reproach, what should be beyond any of the questioning within this place is that once that decision is made, that we take the roles that we have very seriously and we do them in the kind of way that respects the institution of this Legislature and respects the democratic process.

And there will come a day—I'm telling the member opposite right now, there will come a day when the NDP government will be voted out of office. Now, that might be in 2035 or it might be in 2042, or I don't know what year that would be, you know. *[interjection]* The year 2100 maybe, I hear, maybe as some other members are suggesting. I don't know. The reality is that at that point they're going to want members opposite to do their job in a serious way, to take their role very seriously. And that's not what we're seeing here today, and that's a shame.

I think it is important for us to, you know, to take the facts as they come, to make sure that we're clear. The member opposite has talked about the amount of money that's been spent on the program. To date we've spent \$445,000 in monitoring. As I said, those folks in community with our ankle monitoring technology.

And we're making sure that it's being done in a responsible and a respectful way. The total commitment is over the, you know, a period of time. We're going to continue to work with Commissionaires to implement the best technology that they have available to them, but at this point that's real human beings who are watching other real human beings, and it's live monitoring.

I did talk about how it was 24-7, the voice communication, two-way voice communication, is being done by real people and by live operators who do really, really important work, because they're able to monitor sort of the overall picture across the province, and they have direct contact with law enforcement, so we know that they can get the resources there, if needed, very quickly.

And so, you know, we can talk a little bit more about the use of AI more broadly and generally in the Justice space. We know that we've been deploying more and more cameras. Of course, we're funding cameras not only for individual use through our secure-home security rebate, we're also empowering communities who want to use CCTV or cameras in their communities. There's a lot of ways that there's more and more information that's coming in to law enforcement and to the Justice system more broadly.

Now some of that—those questions might be better posed to the minister for—yes, MINT. Again, we know acronyms, and sometimes we—Innovation and New Technology. The M stands for Manitoba, so it's Manitoba Innovation and New Technology. But we've got a very capable minister who's taking a very close look at AI more broadly in Manitoba; we're working very closely with him to understand the implications in the justice system as well. And so I'm happy to have a conversation in whatever way we can here, but ultimately it's the good technology that we have to deploy—again, through an investment that was cut under the previous government—we've now reinstated it. We know that we're catching up with other provinces, and we're going to make a difference in communities by making them safer.

Mr. Balcaen: I appreciate the minister sharing with me his advice about respect within this Chamber and decorum.

And, you know, it would be important if that was followed by the minister, and—actually I can quote the Speaker of the House, who chastised the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) saying that the honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order, but I do look forward to him following his own advice in the future about decorum.

It's the same Speaker of our House that has actually made mention of the unprofessional behaviour of this minister during times when we were in this House, and the belittling of other members, and thrice now been called out for accusing me of lying, and I appreciate that.

So I do hope—as the Speaker suggested back on April 14—I do hope that the minister takes his own advice and brings that decorum back and doesn't accuse other members of falsehood and really diminish the people's House and what Manitobans expect here for professionalism. And I understand he's never had the opportunity for the same sort of level of decorum training and, you know, professionalism that many others are afforded, so, again, I hope that that opportunity avails itself.

Moving forward, hate crimes are on the rise—especially anti-Semitism—and I appreciate the creation of a hate-crimes working group comprised of Crown attorneys. So I have a few questions under the hate crimes that are happening here in Manitoba: How many Crowns are specifically assigned to this? Is this a permanent placement or do these Crowns work on other files? And then, how many hate-crime investigations did the working group participate in, and how many successful prosecutions have occurred?

* (16:10)

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate the line of questioning from the member opposite. And I know he's read our public safety strategy, you know, cover to cover a few times. Probably it's right beside his bed; he reads it every night.

But it's—one of the areas that we specifically talked about focusing on in that public safety strategy was the commitment to assign a lead for specializing for our—in our—to assign a lead from our Crowns specifically for prosecution of hate crimes.

And the overall team that we're talking about here is about 10 members of our prosecutors. These are—and again, we have a lead prosecutor, but then we have senior prosecutors who are assigned to this group. They are—not only do the work on a day-to-day basis, but they're committed to additional training and

making sure that they are, you know, well-informed about this particular space, ensuring that they have the tools that they need. And then, of course, they work with our law enforcement. They work with WPS. They work with others in Winnipeg, in the city of Winnipeg.

Again, we have the stats very hot off the press, very fresh here. In 2024, there were 44 cases of hate-motivated crimes in the city of Winnipeg. I know that there are some that happen outside of the city of Winnipeg, and if there's any particular case that the member opposite is interested in or, in terms of numbers, which communities, we can certainly try to find that.

But with regards to what we see in the city of Winnipeg, that's the bulk of what we've seen, and we know that, you know, this is something that we need to continue to be vigilant on.

We know some of the biggest threats that have happened have been against the Jewish community, and the rise of anti-Semitism in other places certainly gives us pause. And we need to be vigilant here in the city of Winnipeg and in the province of Manitoba that we don't allow this kind of hate to take hold.

The member opposite may be asking a little bit about, you know, a recent high-profile case where we worked with the federal government on terrorism charges and ensuring that we were taking this very seriously to ensure that we had all the information about any links outside of the province and the motivations that were part of that. This is the kind of work that we know that our prosecutor is going to be able to undertake.

And I'll also just mention that, you know, the federal government has started to pay a little bit more attention to this issue. The member for—sorry, the Minister of Innovation and New Technology (MLA Moroz) recently travelled on behalf of the provincial government out to Ottawa to talk with his counterparts and with colleagues about the federal government's role in stopping hate and in ensuring that we do what we can.

And so there's a lot of work that's being done. And the commitment that we have from our government is really that, as I said, it's about vigilance; it's about taking the action that we can to ensure that we're working with communities, we're keeping people safe, we're giving them the confidence that we're going to shut this down. And, you know, this—our work of our Crown prosecutor, in this case, and all the team are really, really invaluable in that work.

And so I talked a little bit earlier about how I had an opportunity to talk to our Crown prosecutors this morning at a conference, but—and I expressed to them directly, individually and then publicly at that event, my thanks for the work that they do. But I'll say it here too on the record in the House and in the Chamber, just to be very, very clear about how much we appreciate their work. And that goes throughout the entire team.

But of course, as we're talking specifically about this hate-crimes prosecutor and the team that they—that we have working on this, we just—we cannot thank them enough for doing this extra work, having—you know, learning and having the tools available to them. We know that they're going to continue to work and support community, make sure that we're stamping out hate every opportunity that we get.

Mr. Balcaen: Just continuing on with that question because I didn't get it fully answered.

You know, the community will certainly have confidence in this and will appreciate this when they see some tangible results. And tangible results in this case are successful prosecutions.

So of the 44 cases that the minister mentioned, how many have been successfully prosecuted?

* (16:20)

Mr. Wiebe: I think maybe part of the challenge that we're having with this particular question is around the exact language that's being used here: successfully prosecuted. So I have a chance to put on the record for the member opposite about the 44 charges that were brought in by—that was identified by the WPS in 2024.

And I think it's worth noting at this point, like many of the stats that we've been working with, that—you know, that we've been analyzing over the past number of days, this is another area where we saw growth. We saw the crime rate go up when it comes to hate-motivated crimes under PC government. So last year was 46, that's 20—or, sorry, 2023, so the year before the stats that we're looking at here. So the last year of the PC government, it was 46.

So now we're starting to see that number come down. Prior to that, well, it—there was, of course, a COVID year, but it was on the rise otherwise, going up every single year. And, you know, we know that this is a real issue. And, of course, what we did in identifying a lead prosecutor, assigning them to this file, was—it's a step in the right direction. It created capacity; it created more resources for law enforce-

ment, for the overall prosecutions team to look at these in an important way to have—to make a difference in bringing that number down.

So, you know, we're going to see, hopefully, that number continue to come down because of increased investments and increased support for law enforcement and, as I said, for our prosecutors in this case.

What I can say is that, you know, we want to make that if he's talking about stamping out hate and stopping these crimes from happening, that it—we're on the same page with regards to that. That is exactly why we know that additional enforcement and additional resources to be able to react and act when it comes to hate crimes is done by law enforcement. That comes with funding and with support to—directly to law enforcement.

But, again, we can't discount the importance of having the resource of the lead prosecutor and the team that they've assembled to be able to look at these cases and give the best advice possible as we're—as police are laying charges and we're, you know, taking the cases forward.

This is a, you know—and there's a number of cases that we can talk about; horrendous and terrible things that have happened to many different groups. I think maybe the member opposite is talking—is referencing issues we've seen even in the city of Brandon, right, which is otherwise an amazing place, a welcoming place, right? It's a place where there's folks from so many different backgrounds and so many different perspectives in that city, and my experience has been that everyone is welcomed in such a positive way.

That's why I think the city of Brandon is growing and is seeing such success, is because of their acceptance of newcomers and of all people from all different parts of Canada and all different parts of the world. But we also know that there's been, also, even in the city of Brandon, there's been cases where serious assaults have taken place, where—sometimes involving youth. And these are hate-motivated instances that are incredibly concerning.

And so that's why it's important for us to refocus our efforts on this. You know, for seven and a half years, the issue was ignored; it wasn't acted on. This was a step that we could take. We could build our Crown prosecution capacity; we could add Crown prosecutors. The member opposite knows we added 35 new crowns.

And then, you know, give them the tools and the expertise that they need and the opportunity to do this

kind of work in a meaningful way that we know is going to ultimately make a big difference.

So, you know, he talks about successfully prosecuted; again, he maybe wants to spend some time explaining exactly what he means by successfully prosecuted, but what we will say is we want to stop this crime, and that's the focus that we've been taking with this investment.

Mr. Balcaen: Successfully prosecuted: being brought before a judge or a justice and either being found guilty or sentenced for a crime would be a good start to evaluate successful prosecutions. I would also consider if there was some sort of sanctions brought against individuals.

* (16:30)

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I think I just want to pick up on where—maybe where I left off with regards to cases that we've seen in the province of Manitoba that give folks pause. And we don't need to talk too much about the details, but I think I talked about a case in the city of Brandon involving youth and a very serious assault that took place. And in that case, that was deemed to be motivated by somebody's skin colour in that case, right. And, you know, again, the—that is just no way reflective of the people that—of Brandon, right? That's exactly the kind of thing that I know that they want to see stopped and stamped out.

We talked about—earlier about the impacts of anti-Semitism and the impact in the Jewish community. And, you know, I don't need to tell members opposite about not only the high-profile cases, because those have made lots of headlines. And I think people are confident that the investments that we've made, that our prosecutors are doing amazing work with regards to reacting very swiftly to these kinds of cases and prosecuting them to the fullest.

But I also wanted to just mention—I mean, these are important and—but they're not—it's not the only cases that we see because we know in a province where we—you know, we have—so many of our folks in this province are Indigenous and they are—we are ground zero for the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls epidemic.

They—you know, there's a renewed focus from our government in supporting the community, but we also know that there have been cases where the motivation, the hate motivation, is against Indigenous women. And so we were talking about a case just recently where the hate motivation factor was considered in sentencing, in the sentencing of an individual. These

are hateful comments against Indigenous women and—Indigenous females. They were able to use that as an aggregating factor in the sentencing of that individual, and that resulted in a 32-month sentence, right.

And so this is an example of where it—you know, the rubber meets the road, so to speak, of how the work that we do can actually make a difference in how our prosecutors handle a case and in this case, when it comes to sentencing.

And I think that's maybe the point that I think is important to note here, because whether we're talking about sentencing, we're talking about diversion programs or other opportunities, we need to have a very clear picture as to, again, the motivation of those—of the individual when it comes to hate crimes.

And so it's not always necessarily in the laying of the charges—the initial laying of the chargings—charges, but it's also about the sentencing. And, you know, this is where the breadth of knowledge that the lead prosecutor will bring as our lead to the team but also all the support that they have from those—from that group. That, I think, is where we're going to see the strength come from and the ability to be a leader in the country.

You know, the—we're setting precedence here. So this is our opportunity to lead the nation in some of these cases and to make a real difference. You know, this is anything from uttering threats to racist comments, white supremacy. I mean, it just boggles my mind that this kind of stuff can exist in a beautiful province like Manitoba where I think most people are so good and so kind-hearted, so accepting of one another, that this is the kind of stuff that still exists out there.

So we need to do everything we can to stamp that out, and that's why, you know, we're continuing to take action. This is real investments; it's going to make a real difference. And it's the kind of stuff that ultimately wasn't taken before under the previous government, but we're going to take action; we're going to get it done.

Mr. Balcaen: Different question here. Just wondering—the minister has indicated a significant amount of video data is being turned over to the Department of Justice from municipalities, from individual homeowners. You know, obviously, he's well aware of this with the camera initiative. We hear regularly from people about data breaches and cybercrimes.

My question to the minister is: How is this data stored and, more importantly, what safeguards are in

place to protect this data and ensure that the integrity of the data is kept intact?

* (16:40)

Mr. Wiebe: It's an important line of questioning that the member opposite is bringing forward and it is one that is a new and emerging area that I think all of us are very conscious of and ensuring that the work is being done.

And, you know, to the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) credit, to our government's credit, the fact that the Department of Innovation and New Technology has been established is, I think, really a nation-leading initiative. I think it's really quite forward-looking, because we recognize that this is an area—as we're going to talk about now—that impacts the Justice Department and the, sort of, public safety space. It's certainly not unique to that space.

And to take that kind of whole-of-government approach, to sort of look across government about the impact of cybersecurity, of technology more broadly—and then of course the member opposite earlier talked about AI and certain tools that are being used. By having one minister who's now laser-focused on that, on the emerging technologies—and the member opposite will note I did say laser-focused just for his benefit, because I know he loves that phrase so much.

So the member opposite will appreciate that the minister for MINT is in a very—an important role. He's doing a good job, and I'm not sure when he's up in the process. I would suggest that if the member opposite wants to close off the Justice Estimates, we can move on. And maybe MINT is in here right away, and he can ask this exact same question of the member for—or the Minister for Innovation and New Technology. But I'm not sure where he is in the rotation, so maybe it's not quite right after us.

But that being said, it's an important issue and one that right now we're taking very seriously within the Department of Justice. And so we have some legacy systems, we have some new technologies that we're rolling out and that we're using. But the scale and the volume of the information that's being gathered and shared is now exponentially larger than it was even, you know, if I could say, probably a year ago, and certainly two years ago, three years ago, five years ago, and we can continue on.

So that's why it's important that we continue to keep the communication open. We've been in active conversation, of course. So he—I think he's identifying

maybe a few different elements, and I'm not sure exactly which one he wants to pursue, but if we're talking about circumstances or situations where municipalities are—they're—are gathering information themselves, where private individuals are gathering information themselves, those are systems that, you know, we—they have control over, and then they would be responsible for. Again, a different minister might be able to answer a little bit more about what some municipalities are doing versus others.

When it comes to other law enforcement agencies, whether that's the WPS or whether that's law enforcement in communities across the province, they have their own systems that they've been scaling up, and they're hitting now that critical point where the information that's being gathered is much more complex and needs to be shared in a different way and needs to be parsed in a different way.

And maybe I've already mentioned it, but just to say that the RCMP, of course, is on this path as well, and so we're starting to see all of these different data sets that are now coming forward and coming to us. And we can do what we can do in our—on our side with regards to digital evidence management, but what we know is that now it's time to take that to the next level.

And so additional funding has been allocated. Of course, under the previous government they—I've said this a few times privately—I'm not sure, maybe even to the member opposite—but I came into the office and I heard technology is going to be one of the main things that we talk about in our department because of the new emerging technologies that are coming out. And I was told that nothing was done. I was coming into a—you know, into a space where there was no work, no funding, no commitment whatsoever to advancing us—none at all.

And the member opposite is shocked. He's sitting very close to where the former Justice minister was sat, so maybe he can ask him next time he sees him because I really think this is an area we need to focus on. That's why we're putting more funding towards this, and we're going to continue to work with our law enforcement partners.

Mr. Balcaen: Continuing on with my questioning here, process. More of a comment since I'm wrapping up here; I won't have any further questions.

But I would just like to take this opportunity to thank Deputy Minister Akerstream and Assistant Deputy Minister Fergusson for their time and their expertise.

And I know the assistance that they provided the minister, bringing answers forward. Again, thank you very much. I'd like to thank Mr. Shannon Martin for being here and assisting in the process and of course, honourable Chair, yourself for monitoring the situation and ensuring that it went without any pause.

So, at this time, I have no further questions.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll move to the—passing the resolutions.

Resolution 4.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$73,322,000 for Justice, Crown Law, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,655,000 for Justice, Legislative Counsel, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$271,339,000 for Justice, Correctional Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$89,178,000 for Justice, Courts, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

* (16:50)

Resolution 4.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$354,534,000 for Justice, Public Safety, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 4.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,667,000 for Justice, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

For the information of the committee, there are no monies allocated for resolution 4.8 this year, so there does not need to be a vote on this resolution.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 4.1.(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 4.1.

Mr. Balcaen: In regards to this line item, of course, Manitobans are concerned. Manitobans are fearful for their safety. Manitobans have reached out many times. We can look at the paper, where news articles—just today alone, and there's 10 or 12 significant events on the safety of Manitobans here in the city of Winnipeg.

I know just recently this week, an individual at the Brandon Correctional Centre, a officer was attacked and stabbed by an inmate. The number of cases of assaults on officers has increased under this minister's watch, and we've seen that recorded statistically from the Winnipeg Police Service on their annual report.

We're seeing disrespect for officers and for guards and for people within the justice system and the public, and we're seeing this by not only words but the actions that people are taking in the community.

MacGregor was a prime example where there is a lack of resources being provided by this minister for rural crime. People are getting robbed on their—you know, their home is supposed to be their castle; that's where they're supposed to be safe, and we have people attending there, using firearms and causing serious harm and serious concerns within the community.

We have to look at Thompson, where an individual took a firearm out and shot at the hospital, and the attack last week of a nurse in the Brandon Regional Health Centre where she was choked and spat on and nearly stabbed.

So with these grave concerns and on behalf of Manitobans, I move that line item 4.1.(a) be amended so that the Minister of Justice's salary be reduced to \$1.

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) that line item 4.1.(a), be amended so that the Minister of Justice's salary be reduced to \$1.

The motion is in order.

Are there any question or comments on the motion?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I won't comment on the motion itself and the determination of my salary. I'll leave that to the will of the committee. And if they so decide that my salary should be reduced, then so be it.

But I do just want to take a quick opportunity to put on the record—the member opposite started with regards to talking about one of our Justice employees,

one of our corrections officers who was recently stabbed out in Brandon.

We had a chance to—the member opposite and I had a chance to chat a little bit about this incident. It's very, very concerning, and I understand that BPS is engaged, is doing an investigation in this case. And, of course, within the department we're doing the work necessarily—necessary to comply with the investigation and further the investigation, but also steps that we can take to make sure that our inmates and, of course, our employees, our Justice staff, our corrections workers and the public who are in the building are all safe as well.

I also just want to put on the record that I had a chance to talk to the officer today too, and sounds like he's on the mend, which is—I think everyone is very, very relieved to hear. But it's a very scary situation and it's very concerning that this took place in the first place. And, you know, so all of our thoughts are with his family.

I also just want to mention, you know, the member opposite talked a little bit about the safety of officers more generally. And, I mean, part of this starts right at the very top, and I was so very, very proud to be with the Premier (Mr. Kinew) at the announcement that was held by the Winnipeg Police Service with regards to the search for the remains at Prairie Green landfill that ultimately ended up being successful and that ultimately led us to, then, find out about Buffalo Woman and her identity.

And the words that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) spoke, I'm not sure if the member opposite has had a chance to see those remarks, but it might be worth digging up out of the archives, because it's really touching. The Premier talked very specifically at that press conference about his steadfast support for law enforcement, his belief that law enforcement is an integral part of the public safety solution, and then talked about rebuilding the relationship between all people of Manitoba and law enforcement, but specifically the Indigenous community, some who in the Indigenous community have felt that that relationship hasn't been strong.

And the Premier spoke, and then the new chief of police from the Winnipeg Police Service also spoke and he echoed that same sentiment. He committed himself to rebuilding that trust and rebuilding that understanding of the importance of true reconciliation for everyone in this province.

I thought it was really, not only touching and poignant, but also the kind of message that is so im-

portant today in our province. It's a message of unity. It's about—message about respecting the role of law enforcement, respecting them in a way that, you know, is fundamentally—the job that we do here comes down to funding, comes down to action, and we've shown that as a government. But also helping to understand for Manitobans—helping them to understand how they can be a part of the solution as well, empowering them to take back the streets, take control of their communities and to make a difference when it comes to making their communities safer.

And I believe that's where Manitobans are at. They want to see us come together. They want to see unity. And I believe that if we take that as our guiding light, we're always going to disagree about the details and about how we implement some of these things, and, you know, we've got a big binder here of lots of very specific policies that I hope we'll dig into, not just in this process but, you know, every day in this Legislature.

We can disagree about the details, but I hope that we can come together, we can drop some of the rhetoric—comes out of the US, comes out of maybe, you know, certain parts of society—I just, I think that if we drop that stuff and if we get back to the basics, the people of Manitoba, ultimately, like I said, maybe in, you know, the year 2100 they'll decide it's not an NDP government anymore, but we'll leave that to them. In the meantime, we should work together where we can and we should make the province safer. And so that's the work I'm committed to.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further speakers, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* (17:00)

Motion accordingly defeated.

* * *

The Chairperson: Moving on to resolution 4.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding sixty-six thousand—\$66,921,000 for Justice, Corporate and Strategic Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Justice.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section is for the department of—it's 5 o'clock.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. next Monday.

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Thursday, May 8, 2025

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Balcaen	1889
Wiebe	1889

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