



Third 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                   |
| ROBBINS, Colleen        | Spruce Woods        | PC                    |
| 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                    |

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

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

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

## Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** Just prior to routine proceedings, I just have a very short statement.

Generally, when introducing a bill for first reading, the accepted practice is for the introducer to speak for approximately 30 seconds. Of late, they've been going a minute or more in some cases.

Certainly, if someone would like to propose some kind of leave request to change the practice to a minute, I would certainly not be opposed to that. But failing that, let's try and keep them to about 30 seconds.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 220—The School Bus Seat Belt Safety Act

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Thank you for that advice on bill introductions.

I move, seconded by the MLA for Roblin, that Bill 220, The School Bus Seat Belt Safety Act; Loi sur les ceintures de sécurité dans les autobus scolaires, now be read for the first time.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Ewasko:** I rise today to introduce Bill 220, The School Bus Seat Belt Safety Act. Bill 220 will require seat belts on all new school buses. This is something that has been happening in many jurisdictions, and manufacturers have moved towards making seat belts available.

The bill outlines that buses manufactured and purchased after 2025 by school divisions will have to have three-point passenger seat belts that meet the requirements set out in the Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations and the Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

The bill further authorizes the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council to make regulations related to exemptions for certain buses, prescribing standards for seat belts and establish definitions and regulations in respect of any matter necessary to carry out the purpose of the act.

I know, Honourable Speaker, that this bill—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I've just asked the members to try and keep their comments to 30 seconds. The member's now gone for a minute.

Does the honourable member have leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

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

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

The motion is accordingly carried.

#### Bill 221—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Increased Penalties for Passing School Buses)

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** That was a little disappointing, but let's try another bill.

I move, seconded by the MLA for—

**An Honourable Member:** Point of order.

#### Point of Order

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

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Yes, no, the member just reflected on you, the Chair. As we all know, it's an important rule in this House to respect the supremacy of the Chair in these proceedings.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan), on the same point of order.

The honourable Opposition House Leader, sorry.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Yes, the member was not reflecting anything. He was just disappointed that he couldn't get his fulsome explanation of the bill out. He was not reflecting at all upon the Speaker. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

It was reflecting on the Chair, because I just admonished members to try and keep their comments to 30 seconds. So I would appreciate if members followed the direction from the Chair in the future.

He does have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Ewasko:** Oh, well. Okay. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

I move, seconded by the MLA for Lakeside, that Bill 221, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Increased Penalties for Passing School Buses); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (peines accrues en cas de dépassement d'autobus scolaire), be now read a first time.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Ewasko:** I rise today to introduce Bill 221, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Increased Penalties for Passing School Buses), which will create higher fines when a person is convicted multiple times of passing a school bus that is stopped so that students can enter or exit a bus. This will allow officers to levy higher fines for each successive offence. This bill will raise the fine to \$2,500 for a first offence, \$5,000 for a second offence and \$7,500 for a third offence.

I look forward to unanimous support of this bill after second reading, going to committee and then passing and receiving royal assent.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 227—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act  
(Impaired Driving Measures)**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that Bill 227, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving Measures), be now read a first time.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Balcaen:** I rise today to speak to Bill 227. Those—these amendments bring forward strong legislation that will detour and denounce the tragedies that impaired driving causes in our communities. These amendments are not a partisan issue; they came directly from individuals who have had the unfortunate experience of losing family members to this atrocious crime.

With impaired driving—both by alcohol and drugs—on the rise, I encourage all-party support of this bill to help protect Manitoba citizens.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

The motion is accordingly carried.

Committee reports?

**TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I'm pleased to table The Public Service Group Insurance Fund: benefits summary and audited financial statements for the year ended April 30, 2025.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Diabetes Awareness Month**

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** November was Diabetes Awareness Month, meaning it's a reminder to all of us to think about the impact of diabetes, the impact on families across Manitoba and our friends and to reflect on what we can do to improve prevention and treatment across Manitoba.

Over the past two years, our government has worked very hard with our partners to enhance diabetic care, and we took an important step with the federal government to include diabetes medications in our Manitoba Enhanced Pharmacare Program.

We've worked hard with experts in this province like Dr. Roussin, who is—folks know—is the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, to take meaningful steps to strengthen diabetes care in this province. And we continue to meet with experts, including public health nurses, to make advancements in diabetes care across our province together.

We've also taken the step of establishing a half-a-million-dollar fund. This fund supports our Diabetes Action Plan. Now, this plan, a move that Diabetes Canada called, and I quote, a positive step forwards in improving diabetes care and prevention in Manitoba, end quote, is something that we're already seeing have big positive impacts in communities across our province.

When we talk about diabetes, it's important to acknowledge the realities that many families face and to know the importance of ensuring that children living with diabetes in Manitoba's K-to-12 schools receive the care and support they need to thrive academically and socially.

Today the Minister of Education, the MLAs for Seine River, Radisson and myself were pleased to sit down with Christy, Ashley, Stephanie, Trina and Micaela. And we'd like to take a moment—I'd like to take a moment—to welcome them all here today. I believe they're in the gallery.

\* (13:40)

Honourable Speaker, it is so important that we sit down with families and with you who are living with the realities of diabetes and do what we can to hear their voices and to reflect what they need to see in our health-care system, in our schools and in our communities. These parents and youth were very generous with us today. They shared their experiences, their concerns and their ideas as parents of school-age children living with diabetes.

Every parent wants to see their child thrive in school: having fun with friends and learning everything from algebra to phys. ed, social studies, zoology—you name it, Honourable Speaker. We don't want a chronic condition like diabetes to hold any child back.

Diabetes Canada's overall guidelines were completed earlier this year, and school-specific guidelines were released just this past October.

I'm happy to share that our government has already begun exploring options with these organizations and with our partners right here in the province. We shared that with these parents this morning. We're going to keep sharing this information with our partners across education and make sure that they know that the work is happening.

Moving forward, these guidelines will be brought together to find the best approach to supporting kids living with diabetes as they go to school.

We're going to continue to work closely with the experts, health professionals, parents, educators and school divisions to strengthen supports, expand training and ensure that Manitoba remains a leader in inclusive education and health care.

Together, we are building one Manitoba where children living with diabetes can succeed, supported by a government and society that understands their needs and values their contributions.

Honourable Speaker, I'd ask that we all take a moment to acknowledge our guests in the gallery and to thank them for their advocacy.

We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Today I rise to recognize November, which was last month, as Diabetes Awareness Month, a month dedicated to shining a light on one of the most significant public health challenges facing Manitobans, Canadians and millions of people around the world.

Diabetes is a complex and lifelong condition. It is the leading cause of kidney failure and dialysis in Canada, and its impacts reach far beyond physical health, touching mental well-being, workplace and school participation and quality of life.

Here in Manitoba, the numbers remind us of the urgency: 30 per cent of Manitobans live with diabetes or pre-diabetes; 11 per cent live with undiagnosed diabetes, a figure that rises to 15 per cent when undiagnosed type 2 is included; and each year, 65 to 75 children are newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

These statistics are not just numbers; they represent lives, families and communities navigating the daily reality of diabetes management. For too many, that reality also includes stigma, discrimination and misunderstanding.

Here in Manitoba, the reality also includes parents who need more support to manage their children's diabetes in school. Right now, if a child is too young to adjust their insulin pump at lunchtime, school staff cannot assist, forcing parents to leave work to do it. Children whose parents can't do this may be restricted to older insulin injection regimes and miss out on using an insulin pump with all of its benefits entirely.

But this isn't the case everywhere in Canada. Provinces such as British Columbia and Nova Scotia require school staff to be trained to support insulin administration. These trained staff are typically not teachers; they are EAs or support staff that are trained by a nurse. They work with parents to help young children who can't adjust insulin pumps on their own. Parents provide the relevant information, such as the carbohydrate count in their child's lunch, and staff person makes the adjustment to the pump. It's as easy as touching a button.

The reason this is so important is because many families are not in a position to take time off work every single day to give their kids insulin at school, and this has unfortunately forced some families to choose between their job, their livelihood and their child's health.

So despite what the minister is saying today, I would make the argument that there's no need to explore anything. The solutions are clear. They're being implemented in other provinces.

The minister need only listen to the parents who have joined us in the gallery today. They know what the solutions are. The time to implement them is now.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Musica Singers of Manitoba

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Mabuhay. *[Live.]*

Today I am proud to recognize Musica Singers of Manitoba, a vibrant, community-based vocal ensemble that has quickly become a cornerstone of cultural celebration in our province. community. Their

Established in July 2023, this non-profit is composed of dedicated Filipino-Canadian volunteers who share a passion for music and community. Their mission is clear: to deliver outstanding performances that showcase the richness of Philippine arts and culture, while inspiring audiences across Manitoba and beyond. Through collaboration with talented artists and a commitment to excellence, Musica Singers has created a musical journey that brings people together and strengthens cultural pride.

In just two years, they have completed two successful seasons and are now preparing for their third—Tatsulok 1: Hope, Peace, Joy—an evening of reflection and celebration, featuring inspirational songs and festive melodies under the direction of conductors Oscar Pantaleon Jr. and Lorenz Edward Sarrondo. I encourage all to experience this special season on December 6 at St. Andrew's River Heights United Church.

Musica Singers is a proud member of Folklorama, the Manitoba Choral Association and Choral Canada. Their work enriches lives, promotes multicultural integration and preserves the vibrant tapestry of Philippine heritage through the power of song.

I offer my special thanks to the Musica Singers team for performing in the Rotunda earlier today.

Maraming salamat sa lahat ng ginagawa ninyo. *[Thank you very much for everything you do.]*

I invite my colleagues to join me in welcoming Musica Singers present in the gallery today.

Salamat po. *[Thank you.]*

### Turtle Mountain Constituency

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** Honourable Speaker, I'm deeply honoured to stand in this Chamber today, having had a privilege of representing the constituency of Turtle Mountain for the past six years, and before that, for five and a half years, for the former constituency of Arthur-Virden.

The 2018 boundary commission brought together parts of Arthur-Virden, Spruce Woods and Midland along the US-Canada border to form Turtle Mountain. From Pierson to Darlingford and Notre Dame to Tilston, the constituency spans more than 300 kilometres across the Westman and south central regions.

The Turtle Mountain is one of the most scenic constituencies in Manitoba, with rolling Turtle Mountains, Cypress Hills and the Notre Dame escarpment. Agriculture, energy, manufacturing, food processing, wind power and tourism are key players in roles of our economy. At this heart lies the hidden jewels of the International Peace Garden, welcoming tens of thousands of visitors each year, along with many lakes that offer recreation enjoyment by Manitobans from near and far.

The greatest part of Turtle Mountains and for the former Arthur-Virden was always the people. Over 12 years representing this region, I have been grateful to meet so many genuine, hard-working and welcoming individuals who are what makes this place so special.

The people of Turtle Mountain and Arthur-Virden, thank you. Thank you for the trust, your support, your kindness over the past 12 years. It's truly an honour. I felt that it was time to pass on the baton to someone who will bring the same excitement and energy that I carried with me when I first became MLA 12 years ago.

We must always remember why we're here: It's our constituents sent us to this Chamber to represent them. What I miss most is the visiting with many communities that make up Turtle Mountain and taking part in the events that bring us together. What I'm not going to miss is the moments in this Chamber when debate becomes less constructive, risks overshadowing the importance of work we do—all do here for our constituents.

I remain hopeful that this Chamber will continue striving towards a respectful and collaborative spirit our constituents deserve.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

\* (13:50)

### Remembrance Day at Eastview Community Church

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the collaboration between Eastview Community Church and Royal Canadian Legion Branch 215.

Over a decade ago, when the Legion's building could no longer host the growing crowds for their Remembrance Day service, Eastview Community Church stepped up to open its sanctuary and gym to ensure that all could gather.

The Northwinds band, a community ensemble and local choir, provide the accompaniment for congregational hymns, and cadets read scripture and poetry.

Recently, Global News even recognized the robust community that's been created at the nearly 100-year-old Legion Branch 215, with it now being home to approximately 530 members.

Their first collaborative service, as mentioned, over a decade ago, welcomed more than 700 people, and since then, it's only grown bigger each year.

This Remembrance Day, myself and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt) again attended this year's service at the Eastview and Branch 215 service, showing up, paying respect and honouring those who have served to protect the democracy we now enjoy today.

Veterans and most neighbourhood leaders lay wreaths at the front of the sanctuary. This brings more of our community together to honour all those who have served with the Canadian Armed Forces.

But, Honourable Speaker, one person was missing: the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton). The MLA for the area where this amazing community collaboration occurs was not present.

Honourable Speaker, the member for Red River North had someone attend on his behalf for the past two years. And don't take my word for it. In his representative's remarks, he noted: I've attended the past two years on behalf of the member for Red River North.

I'm not your MLA, Red River North, but I'm the MLA for Kildonan-River East right next door, and showing up for veterans and respecting our democracy is a top priority to me and our entire NDP government.

#### **Foundation for Prader-Willi Research**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to bring much-needed awareness to Prader-Willi syndrome and to recognize the important work of the Foundation for Prader-Willi Research Canada, a parent-led organization dedicated to advancing research, improving supports and giving families hope.

I am honoured to welcome to the gallery the president and chair of the foundation, Mark Joseph, his wife Jennifer and their daughter Darwin, who lives with Prader-Willi syndrome.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Mark and Jennifer in my constituency office, and we had a wide ranging and really meaningful conversation about PWS but also about what truly inclusive education should look like, and I want to thank them again for their candour and their advocacy.

PWS presents lifelong challenges: low muscle tone; complex behavioural and developmental needs; and a chronic difficulty with appetite regulation that requires constant, vigilant support. These families do extraordinary work every day.

The foundation exists because parents refused to accept that rare must mean invisible. And today, thanks to their leadership, promising clinical research, improved care strategies and better public understanding are finally becoming possible.

I am also pleased to recognize Destiny and Marcello Munoz and their daughter Ava, who are with us today. Destiny and Ava recently partnered with the Manitoba Child Care Association on a public awareness piece highlighting the importance of inclusive early learning environments.

Awareness leads to action. And action, in the form of research investment, inclusive programming and co-ordinated supports, is exactly what families affected by Prader-Willi syndrome need.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing and thanking the Joseph and Munoz families for their courage, their advocacy and their unwavering commitment to the Prader-Willi syndrome community.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Health, Business and Education Update**

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** Honourable Speaker, our NDP government measures progress the way a lot of Manitoba families do, in steady steps that add up to make a real difference.

And over the last two years, those steps have really begun to form a story that you can see and feel here in everyday life.

It starts in ordinary places like coffee shops, school drop-offs, late-night shifts; the places where policy either meets people or it doesn't.

And at Victoria Hospital, construction on a brand new ER begins in January. People across Waverley, even new friends in Whyte Ridge or Linden Woods or St. Adolphe and La Salle, have all been telling me the same thing: it feels great to see an ER coming back to south Winnipeg.

Extended-hours primary care means parents don't miss out on work to see a doctor. And replacing the old paper health cards—the ones that crumbled if you blinked too hard—give Manitobans something made for the world we actually live in.

And the story grows with front-line experts like Drs. Ansari, Qamar, Bashir and Dubey: people in the community who told us what needed to change.

Honourable Speaker: 3,500 net-new health-care staff hired; minor injury and illness clinics opened; online appointment booking; free birth control; building a new mature women's clinic; support for the Anne Oake centre; and stable funding for police, firefighters and paramedics.

You can see progress in our small businesses too: cutting the gas tax, a broad middle-class tax cut and lowering the payroll tax so neighbourhood businesses can grow and hire new folks.

And you see it in the places built for kids: the South Winnipeg rec complex is coming with child care built right in; we're building hundreds of new child-care spaces across Waverley along with two new schools; and there are over 800 new educators across the province that have been hired; and a universal nutrition program to help kids thrive and learn.

The progress in Waverley is steady. It's real. It's things getting fixed. We've accomplished a ton together. There's still so much to do. And every step forward has come from listening to the people who live here.

Manitoba's moving forward. Families are feeling real change. And our team will keep doing this work every single day for everyone who calls this place home.

### House Business

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

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow an ASL interpreter to be on the floor of the Chamber or at the committee table beside any member who wishes to speak during all stages of the following bills, with a second interpreter available when the second reading motion is first moved, including question and answer period.

These bills are Bill 5, The Accessibility for Manitobans Amendment Act and The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Amendment Act (Access Awareness Week); Bill 6, The Sign Languages Recognition Act; and Bill 225, The Deaf Awareness Week and Day of Sign Languages Act, and that's Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to allow an ASL interpreter to be on the floor of the Chamber or at the committee table beside any member who wishes to speak during all stages of the following bills, with a second interpreter available when the second reading motion is first moved to include the question and answer period, and that's for Bill 5, Bill 6 and Bill 225?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

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

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Just prior to oral questions, there's some guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce.

I'd draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery—[interjection]

Order, please.

Where we have with us today guests from Musica Singers: Jesse Alcasabas, Sofia Alcasabas, Lance Cabance, Hieu Phan, Oscar Pantaleon, Ariel Fernando, Zabeth De Leon, Jun De Leon, Lorenzo [phonetic] Sarrondo, Jacqui Unlayao, Glen Unlayao, Kate Tomo, Dante Aviso. Other guests: Navnoor Kang, Manjot Kang and Kiratbir Kaur Sandhu, who are guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

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

\* (14:00)



Further, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Jodi Ruta, who is the guest of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko). And we welcome you here today.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Release of Violent Repeat Offenders Request for Government to Address

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Every time there is a problem in this province, the NDP want to do another study—a study to find out why grocery prices are higher, a study to find out why people are dying in the ER under this failed Health Minister and a study now to find out why kids are unsafe under this failing NDP government.

After a repeat violent sex offender entered an elementary school, attempted to grab a child, this NDP's answer is to commit \$650 per school to do a study.

I have an idea for the Premier and that is lock up repeat violent offenders and don't let them out on bail. Honourable Speaker, \$650 won't buy you a commercial camera or a door lock for a school.

When will the Premier take this matter seriously, and when will he lock up repeat violent offenders?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Nothing else matters unless our kids are safe.

That's why our Education Minister and I and everyone on our team was out there yesterday with a message of reassurance and encouragement for kids in the community, who went through a very, very difficult experience last week.

Of course, we also thanked that young child at the heart of this issue for showing remarkable courage and leadership.

We're stepping up with immediate action to ensure that every single school in Manitoba, that their emergency response plan is going to be fixed, and not by the end of the school year—by Christmas. We need to be able to respond, working together with educators, school leaders, law enforcement—everybody. The way that we make communities safer, the way that we make our schools safer, is by working together.

When it comes to the person responsible, well, there's something seriously wrong with them. Think everybody in the province knows how I feel about that. When I expressed myself on that, the only thing that the member opposite could do was criticize.

He's soft on crime; we're working together to make communities safer.

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

#### Darwin School Incident Perpetrator Not on Sex Offender Registry

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The question was simple. I asked the Premier, when will he commit to locking up repeat violent offenders, and he won't answer it.

Scott George is the name of the repeat violent offender and sex offender. He was convicted in 2023 for a crime against a six-year-old. In February, he was caught lurking in a bathroom. In March, he was caught at Dakota Collegiate. And now, he entered Darwin elementary school and grabbed a child.

All of these incidences, Scott George is still not listed on the sex offender registry under this NDP government, despite his convictions. I'm going to table that for their Justice Minister to see today.

Why is Scott George not listed on this registry for sex offenders in the province of Manitoba, or is the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) just that terrible at his job?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Nothing else matters in our society unless we can keep our children safe.

And that's why we've been working really, really hard to ensure that the school system has the necessary resources. That's why I've also personally gone out there and said that school resource officers have an important role to play in our province.

Now, when we're talking about the person who's alleged to have committed these crimes, this person has something seriously, seriously wrong with them. I have serious concerns about somebody who refuses offers for help, offers for treatment, and we're going to leave them with the justice system, where the justice system is going to take care of them.

Of course, when it comes to this issue, people in Manitoba know how I feel: People who target children—under the prison. I made these comments very clearly. Everybody knows how I feel. There's no room for misinterpretation.

I'll just point out that the member opposite—when I made these comments, he criticized me. That's because he's soft on crime. Maybe that's why he's attacking our excellent Justice Minister instead of taking it up—

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

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

**Release of Violent Repeat Offenders  
Request for Government to Address**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** We all agree nothing else matters than keeping our children safe.

So why won't the Premier lock up repeat violent offenders? Why won't he put this repeat sex offender on the sex offender registry list? Both things he can do to keep our children safe and he's not doing it.

Negligence and incompetence is the title of this NDP failing government and this Premier.

Families are worried about the safety of their children in school, and the Premier won't do anything but launch a study: \$650 per school to try to keep your kids safe.

The answer is simple. Will the Premier commit today to committing to locking up repeat violent offenders and firing his failed Justice Minister today?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** You know, the person who's alleged to have done this terrible thing at Darwin School is somebody who has something severely, severely wrong with them. And when it comes to bringing the hammer down on people who target children, of course, we will do everything that is required to keep kids in our communities safe.

The first thing, when we're talking about ensuring that kids who are going back to class at Darwin, that are going back to class at the Louis Riel School Division this week, is to ensure that every single school there is going to be enhancing their emergency plans.

They have existing plans, but it's clear that more resources, more support, more collaboration is there. The Education Minister has seen fit to bring a retired police officer in to help these divisions and schools with that expertise. I welcome that news.

And, of course, every single person in Manitoba knows how I feel when it comes to people who target children. This is an issue where we have absolute moral clarity as a government and we will continue to do everything it takes to keep kids safe, because that's the most important job in our society.

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

**Downtown Winnipeg Businesses  
Safety and Security Concerns**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's ironic that the Premier talks about school resource officers and yet his own colleague, the MLA for Fort Richmond, led the charge as a school trustee to defund the police and cut \$500,000 from school resource officers. Now, in Winnipeg, retailers and now a federal member of the Premier's own NDP party are saying it's not safe downtown.

And I quote: I live downtown. Things are getting worse. End quote. Michael Paille told media, quote: We should feel like we're protected and we should feel safe but businesses don't feel safe anymore. End quote.

Does the Premier agree with this federal NDP MP that things have gotten worse downtown under this NDP Premier?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Things got a lot worse under the PCs. Part of it is because they defunded the police. How many police officers did we lose under their watch? Was it 55 in the city of Winnipeg alone?

They cut RCMP so, again, you want to talk about defunding the police, that was page 1 through 100 of the PC Party platform during their seven and a half years in office.

When it comes to public safety, we're taking a different approach: 36 new police officers in the city alone since we came to office. We've also built a new safe sobering centre because we all know meth is having a terrible impact in our communities. We're working with schools to ensure that they're safer, and when it comes to searching the landfill, yesterday we began the search at Brady Road because we know that everyone in our society, Indigenous women included, deserve to feel safe.

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

**Mr. Khan:** The Premier's response to his federal NDP MP when she says things are getting worse downtown—she lives downtown—is to say, we're going to open a drug consumption site downtown and that's going to make everything better, according to this NDP Premier.

The Premier is so out of touch with reality. His rebate program barely covers the cost of one commercial camera. How about a retailer that has 60 cameras in their store?

The Premier and the failing Justice Minister are—no idea what these small businesses are going through. They say that the criminals don't actually care about getting caught on camera because they know this soft-on-crime NDP Premier and Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe)—they'll be back out within 24 hours.

So, when is the Premier going to get serious about the increasing crime levels in Manitoba and do something to support small businesses and keep repeat violent offenders in jail?

**Mr. Kinew:** You can always tell he's faking it, can't you?

I'm going to read a couple quotes here: recognizing the meth crisis does not mean reducing people's rights. It means admitting that our current system has gaps in caring for those who are temporarily incapacitated by severe stimulant intoxication.

\* (14:10)

Manitoba's facing a meth crisis that has changed how hospitals and emergency workers care for people in crisis. Unlike alcohol, meth intoxication lasts longer, is less predictable and leaves people unable to keep themselves safe. The new provincial sobering centre will include dedicated spaces for meth intoxication as well as alcohol-related care, with additional capacity being built to expand services.

I'll table the letter to the editor from the Free Press, written by the top physicians in addictions medicine in our province.

When it comes to keeping people safe, we're working with educators, we're working with doctors, we're working with law enforcement. The only people we won't work to—work with are PC politicians who talk down to you, the average Manitoban.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Khan:** Honourable Speaker, the only person I'll talk down to is the criminal across the way, the one who has a DUI, the one who has two assault charges and the one who fails to attend court.

The Premier has created an environment for crime to flourish under his NDP soft-on-crime policies. On top of all that, the Premier wants to open a drug consumption site downtown that will only make matters worse.

Just ask business owners downtown. Sal Infantanio [*phonetic*] says, and I quote: I'm allowed to open up

my VLTs at 9 in the morning, and I don't because they just rush the place, and they're just all over, and they're dropping bags everywhere. It's just like chaos. End quote.

On top of all that, Sal is trying to secure security for his business. And I quote from him: It's expensive. Who the hell can throw 50 grand there? End quote.

So when will the Premier wake up and listen to small businesses in the downtown core and make—

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Well, when it comes to small businesses downtown, in the suburbs, in rural Manitoba, we're working hard for you each and every day. That's why we cut the provincial gas tax. That's why we brought in a security rebate program. That's why we cut and expanded the payroll tax exemption for small businesses. And the list goes on and on and on.

And while the members opposite are sitting around cashing a six-figure cheque, reading the newspaper, we're out on the streets, bringing the hammer down on drug traffickers. We're in the community, working with educators to be able to ensure that your kids are safe when they go to school. And, importantly, we are there responding to the needs that the health-care experts are telling us are required to get people who've gone down a negative path back on a positive one.

All that they can do is misrepresent things and try to fake their positions because, in fact, at the end of the day, they're soft on crime.

On this side of the House, we keep it real. You know where we stand. Let's keep working together.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would just remind all members that when we're referring to other members in here, we either use their constituency name or their ministerial portfolio, no other names.

#### **Assault of Brandon Student Student Safety Review**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** In June, a racially motivated attempt murder with a weapon left a Brandon student battling for his life. We all echo the words of police chief Tyler Bates: This is disturbing, and no one should ever fear for their safety because of the colour of their skin, and no child should be made to feel unsafe in a place of learning. End quote.

What is equally disturbing is that this was not a wake-up call for this government.

How had this minister not seriously reviewed student safety after such a serious breakdown of the system since June?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I think it's important to speak to Manitobans and remind students and remind their families and remind educators that schools are safe places. Schools are safe in Brandon; schools are safe in Winnipeg; and schools are safe right across our province.

It was a pleasure to recently be at école Neelin secondary high school with some of my colleagues, including the Premier (Mr. Kinew), the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard), the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko).

We stood with those students and with that school community, and the amazing resilience that we saw that day still sticks with me today and inspires me to do the great work that we are doing, including the announcement that we made yesterday, standing beside the Manitoba School Boards Association—

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

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

#### **School Resource Officers Funding for Program**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I think what the minister meant to say is schools are safer with SROs, or school resource officers embedded in them.

While the member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen) and the NDP base continue to be anti-police and especially anti-police in schools, I've worked directly with SROs and had seen the amazing impact that they have. It was the relationship formed by Brandon Police Service constable Moshe Linov that made the students feel safe and gave the officers notice that they needed to act quickly in that June assault.

Instead of supporting these officers that made a difference, the minister refuses to take a stance and alienate her anti-police supporters.

Why does this government refuse to fund SROs province-wide and actively support defunding SROs?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Honourable Speaker, the truth of the matter is, on this side of the House, we value and we thank school resource officers, and in fact, our Premier, alongside our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), was so honoured to be able to present

the school resource officer in Brandon that dealt with this awful situation with the Order of the Buffalo Hunt.

The Premier—both the Premier and myself stood in front of the media yesterday and explained openly that school resource officers have a role. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter is under the watch of the previous government, the community of Brandon had not only fewer police officers, but fewer school resource officers.

Thank goodness at Neelin High School they were able to retain this amazing SRO that was able to save the day—

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

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** Actually, Honourable Speaker, the school resource officer program grew from one to two school resource officers during the time of the Brandon Police Service. That's the performance of this NDP government at play when there's high profile incidents and they want to pretend like they care and support the front lines.

Yet, when they have a chance to do something meaningful, something positive, they cut funding to cancel programs that are proven to work. They do everything in their power to undermine officers in the performance of their duties, and this anti-police minister refuses to fund SROs.

Why is the minister more interested in performance than safety?

**MLA Schmidt:** We stand with students, we stand with families and we stand with our education partners, like the Manitoba School Boards Association who stood right beside myself and the Premier and the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) and the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) yesterday when we made this exciting announcement.

And what did they say, Honourable Speaker? They said: we appreciate the opportunity to partner with the Manitoba government on comprehensive enhancements to school safety. The matter of the fact is the member opposite needs to get on board, but we know why he is not on board, because the truth of the matter is, in 2019, it is his government that cut Safe Schools Manitoba that was doing this very work.

Thank goodness for the NDP. We will not only revive this important program but we're going to enhance it to make sure that every school in Manitoba—

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

### **Children with Type 1 Diabetes Insulin Support in Schools and Daycares**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** We are joined in the gallery today by several children who live with type 1 diabetes, and their parents. These parents are passionate advocates for their children and for families of kids with diabetes right across our province.

Too many parents of type 1 diabetic children are having to choose between their jobs and their children's health because schools and daycares in Manitoba do not provide support for insulin administration at school, meaning parents have to leave work in the middle of the day to give their kids insulin, even when that just means pushing a couple of buttons.

Will the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education commit today to providing insulin support in schools and daycares for children with type 1 diabetes?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** And I welcome the question from the member opposite on a really, really important subject. And, again, I want to thank the parents and the kids who joined us for a meeting earlier today to share their personal experiences with managing their diabetes or type 1 diabetes, what their journey has been like and what they would like to see in schools.

You know, as I stated earlier in my ministerial statement, there have been some recent recommendations and guidelines that have come out from Diabetes Canada, one specific to clinical guidelines and the other specific to schools, that came out in October.

\* (14:20)

We've been working with our partners to make sure that we understand these guidelines and what needs to happen so that we have a Manitoba-specific plan. And, of course, we're going to work with the Department of Education to continue to advance that really, really important work.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Right now in Manitoba, if a child with type 1 diabetes is too young to adjust their own insulin pump at lunchtime, school staff cannot assist, forcing parents to leave work to do it.

This isn't the case everywhere in Canada. Provinces such as British Columbia and Nova Scotia require school staff to be trained to support insulin

administration. These trained staff work with the parents to help young children who can't adjust their pumps on their own.

There's no need to reinvent the wheel; this is already happening in other provinces.

When can Manitoba type 1 families expect—the same support here in Manitoba?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, this is a really important issue and we recognize that Manitoba families have been waiting for steps to be taken in this area of education and health care.

And it's really important to note that for seven and a half years under the previous government, they could have been doing this work. They could have looked at BC. They could have looked to Nova Scotia. And they could have learned from their best practices to see what can happen in Manitoba.

But instead of doing any of that work, what they were actually doing—if you can believe it, Honourable Speaker—was cutting diabetes care in this province, which is really shameful.

So we've been doing the work of restoring those services for diabetes care. We're doing the work of learning from the best practices of other jurisdictions and we're working with Diabetes Canada to make sure we're actually advancing what needs to happen for families and their kids in schools.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** The minister is wrong and they know it.

In 2021, the previous PC government invested \$6 million to pay for advanced glucose monitors and insulin pumps for individuals aged 25 and younger. In 2023, they expanded that, extending coverage to all eligible adults. In 2023, the previous PC government launched a five-year provincial diabetes action plan that was lauded by Diabetes Canada—an action plan that the minister tried to take credit for in their ministerial statement just a few minutes ago.

Honourable Speaker, there are parents in the gallery.

When can they—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:**—expect real action and more than just empty promises from this minister?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, the reason why the member for Roblin is getting upset is because

she knows that it was, in fact, the previous PC government who cut diabetes care.

In fact, in February of 2018, Diabetes Canada was critical of the Manitoba PCs for canceling special drug plan coverage—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —that exempted people from paying the deductible under the provincial drug care program. That's shameful, Honourable Speaker. They also cut diabetes supplies that Manitoban families counted on.

Their record on health care is clear. They cut; over here, we build capacity to health care.

The honourable—the member opposite doesn't understand what it takes to build capacity in health care because all she did when she was advising Heather Stefanson was cut it.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could get the clock stopped for a minute.

#### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We have some guests in the gallery that I'm not sure how much longer they'll be with us, so I want to make sure I get a chance to introduce them.

We have seated in the public gallery, from École secondaire Neelin High school, 60 grade 9 students under the direction of Kerri Malazdrewicz. And this group is located in the constituency—the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard).

We welcome you here today.

#### Timber Dues for Logging Industry Loss of Business to Ontario

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** We're seeing businesses leaving this province in every sector of the economy because of the inaction of this government and its ministers.

I've pointed out agriculture businesses leaving, and today, we're looking at natural resources. Timber dues are significantly higher in Manitoba than they are in Ontario, and that's because Ontario understand it and they've slashed their dues.

I warned the minister months ago that without competitive timber pricing—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:** —we could see operators in eastern Manitoba collapse.

Why did the minister ignore warning signs that pricing could destroy eastern logging industry and cost Manitobans millions of dollars?

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures):** Honourable Speaker, the members are so far out of their depth when it comes to the forestry sector. They did nothing but devastate it. The only thing that chased the forestry sector from the edge of extinction is members opposite.

Day in, day out, they did nothing but fight, fight, fight with lumber companies, with people on the front lines out in the bush, with resource management. They did nothing; absolutely zero when it comes to them.

Here he is talking about Ontario, talking about Saskatchewan, talking about other jurisdictions, but they do nothing for the people of Manitoba. They did nothing for loggers here in Manitoba, they did nothing with the forestry sector.

We are committing to that. We are working with all sectors, creating partnerships across all 'axpects' of forestry here in Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, unfortunately, that's wrong. Ontario understands it, to clarify the ministers on the other side of the House.

Six months ago, I warned this minister that if he didn't come to the table with Ontario and get competitive, businesses would be leaving.

Now Deadwood logging in eastern Manitoba has been forced to lay off all of their employees in Manitoba—every single one—pack up, move to Ontario where they're thriving. That's Deadwood logging, if the minister wants to look it up. They're thriving in Ontario, investing millions of dollars and giving Ontario residents jobs.

Why is this minister ignoring the concerned business people across our province?

**Mr. Bushie:** Honourable Speaker, if we do the word count, he mentioned another province time and time and time again. He never mentions Manitoba. He never mentions the support for Manitoba. He never mentions the logging industry here in Manitoba because, we know. He knows as well, too.

When he goes and he looks around his caucus and he looks at all the feet—the seat fillers—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:**—that are there who are shuffling musical chairs, trying to make it look like they're all here—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

I don't need everybody going shush. If somebody needs to call order, that is the Speaker's job, not everybody else.

**Mr. Bushie:** So, Honourable Speaker, all they do is they thank people like Donald Trump. They thank Donald Trump, who are decimating the forestry sector here in Canada, here in Manitoba, and they do nothing but thank him for all the great work that he supposedly does for them and their friends.

For us, we'll stand up to forestry sector, we'll stand up to loggers, we'll stand up for the people that are on the bush, in the—out there making good jobs for the people of Manitoba.

**An Honourable Member:** Faster.

**Mr. Bushie:** Yes, we'll go faster—

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

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

**Mr. Narth:** Oh, Honourable Speaker, I would say it's time for a Cabinet shuffle, but with a deck full of jokers, I don't know what this Premier has to choose from.

Honourable Speaker, Ontario answered—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:**—the concerns of tariff threats by slashing their Crown timber dues. I don't know what the minister doesn't understand.

So now with all of the mills in Ontario for eastern Manitoba, what we have is our logging industry being forced to be competitive with Ontario, in Ontario. So that means like Deadwood logging, who the minister I encourage to contact, is moving from Manitoba, millions of dollars of investment and investing it into Ontario.

So I ask the minister responsible for business: What is he doing to correct this failed Minister of Natural Resources?

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

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, we take a very different approach from the members opposite. The first thing that you need to know about

our team is that people on this side of the House have actually used a chainsaw before in—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—their lives. On that side of the House, their gloves are clean and brand new. They've never seen a drop of chain oil in their lives. They've never seen the filings from a sharpening. We know that the members opposite put on their—don't even know what to do with a pair of lumberjack chaps, were the situation to ever present themselves.

So now, when we talk about Louisiana-Pacific—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:**—we're talking about hundreds of jobs in the Swan Valley region that were protected by this government. This is something that the members opposite were never able to do during two terms in government.

So you look at that as an early success, protecting the lumber industry. We expect to be able to do many more deals to create jobs in the east, west, south and north of Manitoba. And you know what, members opposite? That ain't no joke.

\* (14:30)

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order.

Everybody needs to calm down. We were doing pretty good for a while. Let's get back on track.

### Night Hunting Permits Issued

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** This is rich, Honourable Speaker, coming from a Premier who was born with a silver spoon out his mouth, including sideways, actually. And he stands up to defend his failed minister. The constituents of the Lac du Bonnet and Keewatinook—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:**—constituencies have been contacting me about the issues of night hunting. We all know night hunting without a permit is illegal in southern Manitoba.

I'd like to ask this minister, the MLA for Keewatinook: How many permits has the minister granted?

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures):** As much as the members opposite are doing their critic shuffle auditions or whatever they're trying to do over there, the fact of the matter is, time and time again, they tried to create hunting as a divisive aspect here in Manitoba.

We are in all this together. All Manitobans from all aspects, from all constituencies, are part of the conversation, part of the conversation on responsible hunting, night hunting, day hunting, across all aspects of Manitoba. And we'll have those conversations, something members opposite never did in all their failed years.

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

#### **Conservation Officers Enforcement of Wildlife Laws**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Matter of fact, I'm not auditioning for anything, Honourable Speaker. I'm simply asking questions—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —on behalf of my constituents and his constituents, Honourable Speaker, because he's not answering any emails.

Honourable Speaker, night hunting is happening regularly in our constituencies and across the province, and it's unacceptable.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, the MLA for Keewatinook: When did he send the directive to conservation officers to not enforce the law?

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures):** Honourable Speaker, that member's not auditioning for anything, because he quit months ago. He quit advocating for the people of Manitoba. He quit advocating for the people in Lac du Bonnet.

So as we go forward on the night—on the topic of night hunting, we want to be able to do that in a sustainable way, with resources at the table. So here we are, we're having the conversation—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —there's night hunting enforcement—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —and the members opposite don't want to hear the answer because they didn't ask the question whatsoever. So here we are doing this in a responsible way, and the member opposite stands up and tries to criticize the great work of our conservation officers day in and day out.

They are the front lines of our natural resources that we're proud to have them and proud to stand with them.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Honourable Speaker, it's obvious that this minister once again is totally off base and doesn't know what he's talking about.

I'm not criticizing conservation officers at all; I'm criticizing him. He should be looking in the mirror for what he's delivering to conservation officers as far as directives.

So the minister, as well, Honourable Speaker, is a hunter himself. He knows about safe hunting and gun safety.

So why—and I'll ask him again—when did he make that directive to conservation officers to not enforce the law, or did his boss tell him to do it to send it on to conservation officers, the Premier of Manitoba?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, night hunting is wrong, and we all need to teach our kids how to hunt safely. Now, there has never been any sort of—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —record of what the member is asserting.

I want to deny that without reservation and just assert that on the other side of the House, we just want to celebrate the six monthiversary of the member for Lac du Bonnet dropping these pearls of wisdom on us, and I quote: The Manitoba NDP have got some strong, mean people, and they're very good at that, being mean, but boy, do they attack you like you're fresh hamburger meat and they're dogs. They just go for the jugular, end quote.

And I just want to give it up to our Natural Resources Minister, our Education Minister, our Health Minister, who are all the strongest, meanest ministers in all the land. And yes, if you're wondering, they got that dog in them. I'll table this motivational poster for the PCs to look at. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.



### **Paramedics and Paramedic Students Request for Retention Initiatives**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, the government recently announced a \$5,000 bursary for paramedic students who complete the training if they commit to stay in our province for, at minimum, one year.

However, it has been brought to my attention by front-line emergency workers that retention is the issue. Paramedics have been leaving the province or the field entirely for several reasons, in part because their contract has been neglected and because they feel very undervalued.

Does the government intend to introduce better supports for paramedics currently on the job and those who will be graduating from the new program?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Welcome that question from the member for Tyndall Park. I think it's a really, really important one.

Recently, the Premier (Mr. Kinew), myself, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) all had the opportunity to be at Red River College to celebrate with a full class, the first full class of paramedic students in many, many years, that this is a milestone achieved by listening to paramedics.

And what I heard loud and clear from those paramedics is that they want us to continue doing the work of making sure that there are jobs readily available for them across this province, that they get those letters of offer for employment from the Premier, myself, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training, and that we make sure that there's opportunities for them to get their skills in advance.

So we're doing that work with regional health authorities and with Shared Health to make sure all of those—

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

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

### **Paramedic Vacancy Rate Training and Retention**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, this government promised Manitobans 200 new paramedics, but halfway through their mandate they've only delivered 18.

MAHCP's response to the Throne Speech indicates that there is no plan to retain, recruit or train any more paramedics. The impacts are harming hospitals and Manitobans with an average of 28 per cent vacancy rate. And rural communities are feeling it the worst with response times increasing alongside call volume and vacancies.

Too often, experienced EMTs are leaving. Meanwhile, empty ambulances remain parked while Manitobans remain on hold with 911.

Can the Minister of Health explain what efforts are being made to retain existing paramedics?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, the previous government froze the wages of paramedics for almost six years. And while they were freezing their wages, including during a global pandemic, they were also denying them the opportunity to work jobs across rural Manitoba. In fact, they wouldn't even allow folks to be trained as advanced-care paramedics in this province to serve rural communities.

There are very real consequences as a result of those bad actions by the PCs, including a net loss of almost 100 paramedics across rural communities.

So the hole that was dug by the PCs—the members on that side of the House—is very, very deep. And we're working very, very hard to climb out of it by listening to paramedics and working with their leaders—

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

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

### **Paramedic Burnout and Time-Off Rates Request to Address in Contract Negotiations**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, 93 per cent of EMTs experience violence on the job; 78 per cent feel burned out; and 63 per cent feel little to no support.

In 2024, over 100,000 hours of overtime were filed by the Winnipeg fire paramedics, costing Manitobans more than \$7 million in overtime. I table this information for the House. Paramedics are taking time off for psychological injuries at rates 10 times higher than their firefighter partners.

Will this minister commit to the paramedics watching today that their concerns are being listened to and will be considered during contract discussions in a timely fashion before more paramedics leave our province?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, we have been listening to paramedics from day one and we're going to continue to listen to them and work with them every single day.

I had a really good conversation with Jason from the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals about paramedics just about a week or so ago. We continue to work with the Paramedics Association lead Rebecca Clifton, who stood with us at our press conference to talk about the work that we're doing in partnership.

And we're going to make sure that we do what is necessary to retain the paramedics that we have on the front lines, and that means hiring net-new paramedics, which we're doing. And that means training record numbers of paramedicine learners, which we're doing. And that means keeping those lines of communication open, something that didn't happen for seven and a half years under the previous government.

\* (14:40)

All they did was mistreat and abuse them and treat them like they didn't matter. We're taking—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

#### **Ashlee Shingoose Search for Remains**

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** Honourable Speaker, when somebody goes missing, we go looking. We are one Manitoba. Our government has begun the next critical step in the search for the remains of Ashlee Shingoose. Right now, teams are on-site at the Brady Landfill.

Can the Premier please tell the House more about this next step in the work to bring Ashlee Shingoose home?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Honourable Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague from Seine River for this really important question. It was at the Brady Road Landfill, which is probably in her constituency, actually, that we were gathered yesterday morning.

It was a beautiful, cold morning when we gathered with Albert and Theresa of St. Theresa Point First Nation, the mother and father of Ashlee. Albert, as the search began around 8:45 a.m. shared about the relief that he felt. Theresa, she dabbed tears from her eyes and simply spoke of how difficult it has been for the family.

To all Manitobans out there who have followed the ups and downs of this landfill saga, I will say: I hope you understand that this is who we are as Manitobans. When somebody goes missing, yes, we go looking. But also that you would understand we would do this for anyone's daughter, regardless of which community they comes from, regardless of where you come home, regardless of how you identify. We are here for everyone in this province in the name of safety, in the name of dignity and in the name of one shared destiny.

**The Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

#### **PETITIONS**

##### **Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Kellie Verwey, a beloved young woman from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, was tragically killed in a car crash caused by a repeat violent offender with a long criminal history.

(2) Despite repeated violations of his bail conditions, the offender was free to roam the streets and to ultimately claim Kellie's life. This tragedy was entirely preventable.

(3) While the Criminal Code falls under federal jurisdiction, provinces have been given the responsibility for the administration of justice, allowing for meaningful provincial action on bail reform to ensure public safety.

Number three—or, (4) Other provinces have taken proactive steps to strengthen bail enforcement, but Manitoba has not used all the available tools to address this issue effectively.

(5) The province has the ability—sorry—(5) The province—the provincial government has the ability and the responsibility to advocate for and implement measures that protect its citizens by ensuring that repeat violent offenders are not released into our communities without proper safeguards.

(6) Immediate action is required to close gaps in the justice system that allows dangerous criminals to remain free, which puts innocent Manitobans at risk.

*Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate and decisive action on bail reform to address serious deficits in enforcement by utilizing all available provincial mechanisms to strengthen warrant enforcement, increasing bail supervision and opposing release of offenders, thus ensuring that repeat violent offenders are held accountable and that public safety is prioritized over leniency; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to immediately repeal provisions of the Criminal Code that allows for continued victimization of law-abiding Manitobans while granting repeat offenders additional rights.

Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by many Manitobans, some of them include Robin Bailey, Cassidy Killam, Brett Forzley and many, many other Manitobans.

#### **MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain

First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

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

\* (14:50)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Deanna Talbot, Alyssa [phonetic] Gates, Dean Rennie and many, many other Manitobans.

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

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

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

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

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

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Ron Weir, Krista Austin, Ariel Komarniski and many, many Manitobans.

### **Teaching Certification**

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** Honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a 'rebut' background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the teacher certificates and qualifications regulations under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) The amendments eliminated all subject areas required for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: first point, senior years credit requirements in approved teachable major and minor; (2) the early/middle years credit requirements in approved teachable major and minors; and early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or, no-physical or biological science; English or French; and history or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the facilities of education and the business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) Removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without significant training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and for-reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have a strong knowledge in the core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This has been signed by Craig McRae, Kelvin Au and Charles Lee and many, many Manitobans.

### **Provincial Road 210**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 210, PR 210, is a 117.3 kilometre–72.8 mile–highway in the Eastman region of Manitoba that connects the towns and communities of Woodridge, Marchand, La Broquerie, Ste. Anne, Landmark, Linden, Île des Chênes and St. Adolphe.

(2) A significant portion of PR 210 also runs through the constituency of La Vérendrye.

(3) PR 210 is a significant commuting route for Eastman families and is also notably used by those in the agriculture, tourism, trade and commerce industries.

\* (15:00)

(4) The condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(5) The planned pavement upgrade was promised more than 20 years ago when it was constructed with a flat surface suitable for pavement but has yet to be completed.

(6) The construction–condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in such bad shape that firefighters, police and paramedic services are severely delayed when responding to emergencies.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the Premier have a duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Road 210; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Road 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Ellen Fraser, Kathy Heinrichs, Claire Grenier and many, many other Manitobans.

### **Rural Community Policing Services**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I wish to prevent–present–let's try that again–I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) All Manitobans deserve to feel safe in their homes and communities.

(2) Throughout Manitoba, rural communities are seeing dramatic increases in criminal activities targeting

individuals and property, which has eroded their sense of safety.

(3) Though communities pay taxes for RCMP coverage, many have lost local policing as RCMP detachments consolidate. This situation is unacceptable to communities who expect a level of service and police protection.

(4) The lack of community policing has led to many Manitobans losing faith in the rule of law and the availability of emergency services when they are needed.

(5) The provincial government has a responsibility to act and ensure that communities receive adequate service and coverage from police resources.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately work with the RCMP to restore rural community policing and provide adequate resources to protect Manitoba communities.

This petition has been signed by Fran Porosky, Darrin Bulas and Allen Kirkland.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

### **Child-Welfare System–Call for Inquiry**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Trevor Barnes, Rhonda Cameron, Garry Eyford and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

#### **MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility**

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

\* (15:10)

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on

stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce the wait times for MRI scans across the province.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Joan McCallister, Terry [phonetic] Collera and Guy Gauthier, plus many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

#### **Location of Safe Injection Sites**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

The Province of Manitoba has filed paperwork with the federal government proposing the establishment of a drug injection site for illegal drugs at 200 Disraeli Fwy. without sufficient public consultation.

(2) The decision to locate the facility at 200 Disraeli was made despite that this location is in the immediate vicinity of a daycare centre, a high school, multiple community gathering sites, including churches and cultural institutions.

(3) Residents, business owners and community organizations have raised concerns that the location is incompatible with nearly—with nearby institutions serving thousands of youth and families, and believe it will erode public safety and confidence in the area.

(4) Existing community consultations specifically ignored concerns about public safety and were criticized by community members for being artificial and scripted.

(5) The provincial government has failed to introduce legislation and regulations to control where drug injection sites can be located.

(6) Other provinces are closing drug injection sites and adopting a recovery model, following the expertise of groups such as the Canadian Centre of Recovery Excellence.

(7) This decision to ignore the experts will leave people suspended in addiction and will not give Manitobans their lives or their loved ones back.

(8) The provincial government has failed to fund and operate any treatment or additional Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine clinics to break this cycle.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to cancel all drug injection sites in Point Douglas community, including the proposed location at 200 Disraeli Fwy.

(2) To urge the provincial government to legislate that no further sites will be proposed without community consultation.

This petition was signed by Antonio Lucanio [*phonetic*] Mota and Gorguez Aloquis [*phonetic*] and Jorgina [*phonetic*] Rodrigues and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

#### **Funding Crime Cost Mitigation for Small Business**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Small businesses are vital in supporting their local economy and the provincial government has a responsibility to act and support them.

(2) The recent increase in vigilantism shows that Manitobans do not trust this provincial government to fulfill its responsibility.

(3) More than half—54 per cent—of small businesses in Manitoba are impacted by crime. Property damage, theft, littering and public intoxication are some of the crimes that affect most businesses, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. There has been a 44 per cent increase in shoplifting incidents over the last year.

(4) In order to combat this rise of crime, small businesses try, unaided, to implement various out-of-pocket security measures and safety training for their staff and they face increasing costs when they incur property damage or theft.

(5) Vandalism, break-ins and other senseless acts cannot be accepted as cost of doing business for businesses throughout Manitoba, and the provincial government must do more to ease the burdens small businesses are carrying with its catch-and-release justice system.

(6) Failing to support small businesses is failing the Manitoba economy, failing Manitoba families and failing Manitobans' dreams.

(7) The security rate program in place for homeowners and small businesses does not cover the real costs impacting businesses, such as vandalism, property damage and repairs.

We urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support Manitoba small businesses through specific funding to reimburse the expenses and insurance deductibles that they incur as a result of crime.

This petition has been signed by Gerald Swartsky [*phonetic*], Rick Rivers, Luke Lovenjak and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Road 247—Request for Pave Upgrade**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

\* (15:20)

(1) La Salle is the largest urban centre in the RM of Macdonald. With a population of over 2,600, the community members are active in establishing facilities and infrastructure that will meet the needs of a rapidly growing urban centre.

(2) La Salle is one of Manitoba's fastest growing communities, having grown over 60 per cent since 2016,

and is an attractive place for commuters who work within the Winnipeg city limits.

(3) Provincial Road 247 is frequently used by buses, parents and new drivers, at—as it is the fastest and most direct route for Sanford Collegiate students from La Salle to get to and from school.

(4) La Salle and PR 247 can be dangerous to travel, as it is located in a well-developed agricultural area, leading semi-trucks, large farm equipment and machinery to use the narrow roadway.

(5) Most recently, in 2020, 17-year-old Chloe Boyle lost her life travelling down the road to school, tragically losing control on the loose gravel. Previously, there were several collisions that occurred on PR 247, causing damages and non-fatal injuries.

(6) Due to the active nature of this roadway, it is needing more maintenance to deal with loose gravel and large potholes caused by the daily wear and tear by drivers and equipment, leading to dangerous driving conditions, especially in wintertime.

(7) There are local online groups with over 2,000 members dedicated to inquiring about the roadway conditions of PR 247 and 330, posting consistently and asking for updates or sharing issues that are happening that may affect families and their young drivers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to assist in paving Provincial Road 247 to La Salle from Manitoba Highway 3;

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure the safety of local residents and young drivers who use Provincial Road 247 from La Salle so that they have a safe way to access education year-round.

This is signed by Tim Muys, Rejeanne Caron, Rick Ficker and many, many more Manitobans.

### **Phoenix School**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Phoenix School, a kindergarten to grade 5 school located in Headingley, has experienced consistent enrolment growth over the last several years. Enrolment is expected to reach 275 students in the next two years.

(2) Because the school is now over capacity, the school division has had to install portable classrooms on site as of fall 2024.

(3) For several consecutive years, the top capital priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division has been the renovation and expansion of Phoenix School.

(4) In 2022, the Phoenix School expansion and renovation project was approved to proceed to the design phase. The project included, among other amenities, a new gymnasium, two new classrooms, a multi-purpose room and room for 74 child-care spaces.

(5) In June 2024, the school division received notice from the provincial government that the project has been deferred. There is no guarantee if, or when, the project will move forward.

There are currently hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. The daycare operator in Phoenix School has been told that they will continue to have space within the school for the 2024-2025 school year only, that further expansion of child-care space within the school is not possible and that space may be reduced moving forward due to the shortage of classrooms. If new space is not constructed as planned, many families may be left without child care.

(7) It is critical that the expansion and renovation of Phoenix School proceed as planned in order to support the needs of students, teachers and families in the growing community of Headingley.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to proceed with the planned renovation and expansion of Phoenix School without further delay.

And this petition is signed by Tim Durnin-Richards, Debora Durnin-Richards, David Benson and many, many other Manitobans.

### **Provincial Trunk Highway 45**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I wish to present the following—sorry about that—following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Upgrading Provincial Trunk Highway 45 will accelerate economic development as it will enhance connectivity, facilitate efficient transportation and promote economic growth in the region.



(2) Economic development will be further enhanced as improved road infrastructure attracts businesses, encourages investment and creates job opportunities.

(3) Roads meeting the Roads and Transportation Association of Canada, RTAC, standards improve both safety and efficiency, as they can handle heavier loads, reducing the number of trips required for goods transportation.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

(4) Safer roads further benefit both commuters and commercial vehicles, minimizing accidents and damage.

(5) Upgrading to RTAC standards ensures resilience to challenges caused by climate change, such as thawing and flooding, which negatively impact road conditions.

(6) Efficient transportation networks contribute to Manitoba's economic competitiveness, as upgraded roads support interprovincial and international goods movement, benefiting both trade and commerce.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to take the necessary steps to upgrade Provincial Trunk Highway 45 from Russell to Provincial Trunk Highway 10 to meet RTAC standards.

This petition has been signed by Dylan Snitynsky, Shane Johnston, Scott Johnston and many, many other Manitobans.

#### **MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility**

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

\* (15:30)

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and a computer-generated radio waves to create detailed

images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

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

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Ardythe McMaster, Betty Johnson, Clark Guinn and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the

Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, this petition has been signed by Landeyn Ayorout, Debbie Cebry, Danika Overton-McCutcheon and many, many fine Manitobans.

### **Provincial Trunk Highway 34**

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 34, PTH 34, is a two-lane provincial primary highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

(2) PTH 34 runs north-south in the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for the semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The 'deterioration' of PTH 34 has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) Construction of a new bridge in accordance with-in accordance current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

\* (15:40)

This petition has been signed by John Neumann, Travis Saban and Kendall Maxwell, and many, many more great Manitobans.

### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Regan Ingeberg, Paige Stelmack, John Smith and many, many more fine Manitobans.

### Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

**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:

Kellie Verwey, a beloved young woman from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, was tragically killed in a car crash caused by a repeat violent offender with a long criminal history.

(2) Despite repeated violations of his bail conditions, the offender was free to roam the streets and to ultimately claim Kellie's life. This tragedy was entirely preventable.

(3) While the Criminal Code falls under federal jurisdiction, provinces have been given the responsibility for the administration of justice, allowing for meaningful provincial action on bail reform to ensure public safety.

(4) Other provinces have taken proactive steps to strengthen bail enforcement, but Manitoba has not used all of the available tools to address this issue effectively.

(5) The provincial government has the ability and the responsibility to advocate for and implement measures that protect its citizens by ensuring that repeat violent offenders are not released into our communities without proper safeguards.

(6) Immediate action is required to close gaps in the justice system that allow dangerous criminals to remain free, which puts innocent Manitobans at risk.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate and decisive action on bail reform to address serious deficits in enforcement by utilizing all available provincial mechanisms to strengthen warrant enforcement, increasing bail supervision and opposing release of offenders, thus ensuring that repeat violent offenders are held accountable and that public safety is prioritized over leniency; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to immediately repeal provisions of the Criminal Code that allow for the continued victimization of law-abiding Manitobans while granting repeat offenders additional rights.

And Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** Further petitions?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Brandon West.

**Mr. Balcaen:** On a matter of urgent importance.

### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Brandon West, on a matter of urgent public importance.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that in accordance with subrule 39(1), the regular business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, specifically the dramatic increase in crime and violence in the province of Manitoba.

#### *Motion presented.*

**The Speaker:** Now, before recognizing the honourable member for Brandon West, I should remind all members that under rule 39(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed no more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beauchesne's citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not the subject matter of the motion. In the remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate, whether or not ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I rise today to address an issue that weighs heavily on the minds of families, seniors, parents, business owners, law enforcement officers and community leaders across Manitoba. I rise because the people of this province deserve safety. They deserve protection. They deserve leadership and they deserve a government that prioritizes their well-being ahead of political posturing, ideological experiments or excuses.

Unfortunately, Honourable Speaker, that is not what Manitobans are receiving from this NDP government.

\* (15:50)

Today I intend to speak clearly and directly about the findings of the government when it comes to crime, violence and public safety, and these failings are not abstract. They are not theoretical. They are

real. They are measurable and they have been felt in the lives of numerous Manitobans every single day.

We are witnessing rising violence, emboldened offenders, families afraid to walk in their own neighbourhoods, victims who feel abandoned and communities left without the tools, the support or the leadership they need to stay safe.

And at the centre of this crisis is a government that has consistently refused to acknowledge the depth of the problem, let alone take meaningful steps to fix it. Manitobans deserve better.

Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we have asked hundreds of questions on the importance of crime and this government refuses to answer. Laws proposed by our side of this House and amendments to their laws have been voted down. Requests from the public at committee have been ignored and community members are just placated to.

I've stood on grievances and there is no other option than a matter of urgent public importance left for us to bring forward the rising crime and the concerns that Manitobans have within this province.

The first failing of this NDP government is simple: they refuse to acknowledge the scale of Manitoba's crime and violence crisis. Communities across the province are witnessing unprecedented levels of property crimes, break-ins, assaults, gang activity, addiction-driven offences, violent attacks on transit and brazen acts of aggression in broad daylight.

These are not isolated incidents. These are not the usual fluxations that government members like to pretend they are. These are patterns—deep and serious patterns that demand action.

Honourable Speaker, I'd like to table a number of incidents from the last month, and I'll just run down the list: window smashed, money stolen from West End church; woman threatened with shotgun in south Winnipeg apartment complex; McPhillips Street hotel clerk threatened and robbed at gunpoint; woman attacked, robbed in McGillivray Boulevard store parking lot; woman arrested in retail robberies; man nabbed with drugs and guns, Winnipeg police report; man accused of nurse sex assault released from jail days earlier; man stabbed after selling phone; man charged in arson spree worked at two of the businesses targeted; man charged in Tyndall Park chaos; home invader stabbed himself, police; seven youths arrested in Garden City area robbery spree.

Honourable Speaker, those are just from the last five weeks here in Manitoba—here in Winnipeg, in fact. This government is failing to understand that acknowledging a problem is the first step to solving it. Instead, they are more concerned with managing public perception than confronting public danger.

Honourable Speaker, another central failing of this government is their treatment of law enforcement. Police officers across Manitoba work extraordinarily hard to keep communities safe. They face dangerous situations, unpredictable environments and increasingly violent offenders. They deserve consistent support, modern tools and a government that stands behind them.

But what have they received instead? They've received a government that devalues their work, a government that thinks flashy announcements can replace real structural investment in public safety. The NDP has consistently failed to deliver stable policing support. They have missed opportunities to partner with—in good faith with municipal forces. They have delayed or scaled back major initiatives that would have strengthened enforcement capacity. They have allowed ideological views to overshadow practical solutions.

The message this sends to criminals, Honourable Speaker, is unmistakable. The consequences will be serious and the system will not be strong enough to respond effectively. The message it sends to officers is equally troubling: you are on your own; we do not have your back.

Manitobans do not want a government that undermines those who protect them. They want a government that supports police, share of services, corrections officers and all front-line responders, not through slogans, not through flashy announcements but through genuine commitment.

Honourable Speaker, one of the most pressing failures of this government is the crisis of repeat offenders, and we've spoken to that at length in this House. The people of Manitoba are tired of reading stories about individuals with dozens of convictions who continue to cycle through the system unchecked. They are tired of seeing violent offenders released with little supervision. They are tired of preventable 'tragedy'—tragedies caused by predictable patterns of behaviour. Yet this government has shown no urgency in addressing this problem, and that's why we bring this matter of urgent public importance forward today.

The Province has failed to work proactively with federal counterparts on bail reform, and they have not put forward a clear plan to break the cycle. This results in the community—the results is that communities are suffering. Law enforcement is stretched thin. Victims are being revictimized.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just remind the member to make sure that he's addressing his comments to the immediacy of the need to debate, not to the actual issue itself.

So if the member could get his comments kind of to talk about why we need to debate it right now.

**Mr. Balcaen:** A government that takes public safety seriously would treat this as an emergency. This NDP government has not. I'll remind the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) that justice delayed is justice denied. And I do see that he's taking notes, so I'm hoping that this sparks his interest in justice issues within this province.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans deserve to feel safe on their streets, in their parks, on the buses, in their downtown and in every corner of this province. But today, too many do not.

Transit systems across Manitoba, especially in Winnipeg, have become sites of frequent violence. Riders have been stabbed, assaulted and threatened. Drivers have faced aggression from passengers and even been shot. Buses have become places where too many people fear instead of feeling safe. The same is true regarding public spaces throughout our communities. We have seen an increase in random attacks, people assaulted while wearing—while walking their dog, seniors threatened while getting groceries and youth targeted for simply living their lives.

A safe Manitoba requires a real plan for policing and enforcement and a real plan to confront addictions, a real plan to reduce repeat offences, a real plan to respond to gang activity, a real plan to support victims, a real plan to restore trust in the justice system and a real plan to ensure rural and urban communities alike receive safety they deserve.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are looking for a government that hears them, a government that takes their fears seriously, a government that chooses action over ideology, reality over rhetoric and safety over political convenience. The NDP have failed to provide that leadership. They have failed to understand the urgency of Manitobans' crime crisis, and they've failed to support law enforcement.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Prior to recognizing any other speaker on this, I just want to remind speakers to keep their comments relevant to the immediacy, not necessarily all encompassing of the issue itself. I've given some latitude, and I'm prepared to do that, but please try and keep your comments to the immediacy.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** You know, it's really unfortunate that the member opposite comes here, presents himself in a completely unserious way every single day, discredits himself, discredits his party, discredits his previous occupation, acts like a buffoon, I'd suggest, Honourable Speaker, and expects to have the support of the House to talk about these important issues.

\* (16:00)

You know, we talk about these important issues every single day when it comes to public safety, when it comes to crime, when it comes to protecting our kids, when it comes to protecting our parents, when it comes to protecting communities.

From Winnipeg, to Brandon, to Selkirk, to Steinbach, to Thompson, to Flin Flon, to The Pas, to Swan River, to every single community across this province, that's what we do, Honourable Speaker. That is the No. 1 priority of this government. That's what we are fighting for every single day.

But again—but again, the member opposite doesn't come to this conversation in a serious way. He comes to it in a completely ridiculous fashion, because he starts off by misrepresenting the facts on the stats. The statistics that he cites are completely wrong and completely out of date.

Now, you know, he may not like this fact, he may not want to go out and talk to the previous—the members of the previous government who still sit in his caucus who are responsible for this, but the reality is that crime skyrocketed under the previous government and they were silent, quiet, not a word, didn't say anything, didn't act. In fact, helped to further break the system.

But you now what's even more curious, Honourable Speaker, is that the member opposite—well, what was his previous occupation? He was a police officer. He was the chief of police. What happened in the place where he was the chief of police? Over his time as police chief, there was an 80 per cent increase in weapons crimes. There was a 29 per cent increase in violent crime.

Under his watch, provincial funding was flat, was cut. They cut programs and he was silent—not a voice. He didn't have a voice then; he certainly doesn't have one now. Because at this point, Honourable Speaker, we start to see that the work that we're doing, the investments that we're making, the partnerships that we are creating are starting to show progress.

What does that look like here in the city of Winnipeg? The crime severity index dropped 5 per cent. That's the first meaningful decrease in that crime severity index in a decade. Violent crime is down 5 per cent and non-violent crime is also down.

In the central district, crime is down 9.5 per cent. Youth crime in Manitoba—this is last year, Honourable Speaker—this is the year—the first year that this government has a full year that we've been in office, police reported crime in Manitoba fell 4.5 per cent. This is reversing year over year over year of previous upward trends.

The youth crime—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just remind the member that we need to keep the comments relevant to the immediacy. He's debating the actual issue itself. So if the member could keep his comments.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Good caution, Honourable Speaker, and that's exactly the point that I am trying to make.

If the member opposite is presenting this as an urgent matter of public importance for debate today, why did he have no voice when he was the chief of police in Brandon? Why did he have no voice when he was a card-carrying member of the PC Party? Why did he have no voice when he sat with his—he was a disciple of Heather Stefanson?

He said yes; I want to run under your banner. And she said what are the issues you care about. Silence. Nothing. The member opposite said nothing, and now he comes to this place at a time when we're starting to see the crime rate is coming down because of the work of this government.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** This is the reality that we have presented because it includes respect for law enforcement in a way that was never done. It was all lip service by the previous government. Heather Stefanson said out of one side of her mouth—talked about the importance of law enforcement; out of the other side of her mouth

she cut funding for law enforcement. That meant an actual decline of 55 officers in the city of Winnipeg—55 lost officers during their time in office.

Member opposite was silent then. Was that a matter of public importance when there was 55? He says absolutely. Honourable Speaker, he says absolutely it was an issue then. Why didn't he raise it? He was the chief of police. He said nothing. He said nothing, not one word. When funding was frozen for seven years under the previous government, he said nothing.

When we increased it by 30 per cent—30 per cent in two years. We've increased funding for law enforcement by 30 per cent. Was it a matter of public importance then? No answer, Honourable Speaker. He's got no courage of his convictions because he presents—he's got—he presents issues in this House that he has zero—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —credibility on.

When we brought an increase in funding, \$2 million to the Brandon Police Service—\$2 million, Honourable Speaker—the biggest increase in two decades to the city of Brandon. What did the member opposite do? He voted against it. Voted against the increase.

Was that a matter of public importance? Should he have maybe raised it at that point? Should he have said, maybe: Leader, maybe this isn't a good thing to vote against, leader. [*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Of course the member opposite didn't do it.

And, shamefully, Honourable Speaker—and I just present this to you, you know, and you're going to make your ruling on this particular matter of public importance. You know that public safety was raised during question period. You know that there was opportunities for us to raise this as a member's statement, or, I mean, in multiple different ways. Of course the member opposite didn't do that. He failed in that job.

But what this reminds me of, Honourable Speaker, we see a pattern now again. This is—these are games. This is a joke to the opposition.

**An Honourable Member:** This is wasting time.

**Mr. Wiebe:** It's wasting time; procedural games that they're playing. And maybe that's—you know, maybe

that's important for them to do. Maybe it's important for them to get themselves, you know, excited in their caucus room. We're going to waste another 20 minutes of Manitobans' time.

What's at stake, Honourable Speaker? What are the members opposite holding up right now? They're holding up Bill 2, you know? [*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** They joke, they laugh, big smiles on their faces. Bill 2: it's about protecting kids.

And you know what? Members of the caucus—and I'm just going to say this, Honourable Speaker—members of the opposition caucus have come to this debate in a very serious, very respectable way. They have joined with us in support for this bill. And then they let their member stand up and waste Manitobans' time to put kids at jeopardy for a game, for a—like a—maybe the member for McPhillips, the former member for McPhillips, Shannon Martin's back there; he's giggling, he thinks this is great.

Manitobans don't think this is great. They want to protect kids. They want serious legislators. They don't want buffoons; they want serious legislators. And I suggest that we can get to that work today.

And, you know, why is this important, again? Again, members opposite, there's—you know, some members on their side that will take this seriously. But who's in charge? Who's in charge over there when they hold up important legislation around intoxicated persons? Who is it?

Member for Portage la Prairie's (MLA Bereza) in the paper today saying that we don't think that we should look after those folks who are dealing with meth psychosis. What? What? How out of touch and offside with—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —Manitobans can you possibly be? And he played the games—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** And they played games with that bill, and it took the full force of this government to say, Manitobans are asking for this; you guys need to get out of the way and you guys need to get serious.

And here we are again. Here we are again, Honourable Speaker. These guys are completely unserious about important issues.

Let's get serious. If we want to work on public safety, you come work with us, because we're getting it done. Where they abdicated responsibility, we'll work with you; we'll get it done. When it comes to protecting kids, follow the lead of some of your members who sit in the front row, deservedly so, because they're willing to take these issues seriously.

This member's a joke. He's completely unserious and he's completely abdicating his responsibility to his constituents and he makes a mockery of his former profession. I just want to say, if this is how he conducted himself when he was the chief of police—[*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —then he's got a lot to answer to. Not just in this House, not just to us, but to all people of Manitoba and certainly to the people of Brandon.

They think it's a joke. [*interjection*]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** We're going to protect kids, we're going to make our province safer.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

\* (16:10)

I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) for a matter of urgent public importance. The 90-minute notice required prior to the start of routine proceedings by subrule 39(1) was provided, and I thank the member for that.

Under our rules and practices, the subject matter referenced in the member's motion must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention. Crucially, there must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter. I've listened very carefully to the arguments put forward.

Although the issue of increased crime and violence in our province is, indeed, very serious and worthy of consideration and discussion, my duty in this moment is to determine if there are other opportunities for debate on such matters.

With that in mind, I must note that members do have the opportunity to speak in this topic during members' statements or when raising a grievance. Members can also ask questions on this topic during oral questions. Further, those opportunities and others will continue to be available every sitting day in this House.

Accordingly, I do not believe the motion meets the criteria as a matter of urgent public importance as there are other opportunities to debate the matter. With the greatest of respect, then, I must rule this motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, can you please resume second reading debate on Bill 2.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 2—The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act

**The Speaker:** Been announced that we will now resume second reading debate on Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** So it allows me to, today, to stand up and put some more words on the record in regards to Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act.

I'm pretty sure the next speaker, after I sit down after my 23 and odd additional seconds here, 23 minutes, the next speaker will be an NDP MLA. Now I'm assuming it's going to be a front-bench MLA Cabinet minister because, Honourable Speaker, on Bill 2, on private members' bills, on private members' resolutions, this government can't help themselves.

You know, as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) said today, that MLAs—and I'm assuming he was talking about the ones in his own Cabinet and caucus—are sitting back there looking at the newspaper, reading the newspapers, cutting coupons and looking to see how they're going to purchase various things for upcoming Christmas and holidays for their loved ones.

So when it comes to Bill 2, Honourable Speaker, or any type of legislation that is happening here in the Manitoba Legislature, we take a look, and the Premier's comments about his backbench cutting out coupons, reading the paper, taking the time—

**An Honourable Member:** Relevance.



**Mr. Ewasko:** —is proof, and I'll tell you why it is proof. I know that the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) is asking relevance and for proof as to what am I saying about this, and I don't think he's one of them, but he might be one of them, Honourable Speaker.

The fact is that when you stand here for private members' time, for bills and resolutions, and even with Bill 2 today that we're discussing, which, again, I'm speaking in support of Bill 2 because it's complementing legislation that we brought forward when we were in government, Honourable Speaker.

So I'll get back to the topic about why the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) comments about his backbench reading the newspaper and cutting out coupons and that is relevant, as the member for St. Boniface wants to know. And don't worry, Honourable Speaker. I'll get to the point about the Justice Minister talking about past professions and whether they actually were upstanding citizens in their former professions. So I do have a few minutes to put some words on the record this afternoon, so I will get to that.

But the fact is is that their Cabinet and the Premier don't trust their backbenches—backbenchers. Why? Because they don't allow them to get up to speak. The member for St. Boniface can stand there, sit there—maybe he's doing a Sudoku, I don't know—but talk about relevance all he wants.

But the fact is, Honourable Speaker, we are doing bill debate. This topic is Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act, brought forward by the failed Justice Minister.

Their backbench, they don't trust any of their backbenchers. The Premier doesn't trust them and the front bench so-called Cabinet ministers don't trust them either. And I'll tell you why: They don't allow them to stand up and speak to any legislation or resolutions. The members who—*[interjection]*—matter of fact, it's ministers—that are busy heckling me, Honourable Speaker, because they know it's true. They just feel guilty that they're cashing their sick—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would ask the honourable member to keep his comments relevant to the bill we're discussing.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Honourable Speaker, so again, the relevance to the bill, as I started yesterday speaking to Bill 2, and about all the positives that our government had brought forward, and the fact that the inaction, the inability for any member on the NDP side to stand up and just put a few words on the record to support Bill 2.

We've already put a few speakers forward to talk in—positively to Bill 2. They have not put up anyone except for their failed Justice Minister, who—now might be the time, Honourable Speaker. Our Justice critic, highly regarded former police chief of the Brandon city police, I'd like to give him a big round of applause. He's coming with real-life experience to this position as an elected official, as an MLA, and he's representing the people of Brandon West, and, matter of fact, for all of Brandon, very, very well. And I would stand behind this member's record as opposed to the failed Justice Minister's any day.

The failed Justice Minister was handed his former profession, Honourable Speaker, so you want to talk about résumés coming in to talk about Bill 2. His former profession was, I believe, the secretary to Gary Doer. And then when Premier Doer at the time decided to pack it in, they handed the reins over to this guy.

And I think any time now, and I know the Premier, you know, doesn't want to admit when he's wrong, because we know what kind of showman he is, as he stood up today again. He's not going to want to admit within the next couple days, on—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The second time I've stood up and asked the member to keep his comments relevant to the bill we're discussing, so would you please keep your comments relevant to Bill 2.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Matter of fact, Bill 2 is exactly what I'm speaking about, and the failed Justice Minister is the one who brought this forward. So we're giving a little bit of background to the fact that the Justice Minister comes in with no background. He talks about various other people's professions, which seems to be okay. But it's not okay for me to discuss his record as far as coming into this Chamber.

And he's going to stand there—he stood there, the only one on the NDP bench to put words in support of Bill 2. We on this side of the House have stood up and put various different topics on the record in regards to Bill 2.

Honourable Speaker, I'm waiting for the seconder of Bill 2 to get up and put a few words on the record, the Education Minister—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Honourable Speaker, I'm waiting for the Sport, Culture and Heritage Minister to maybe stand up and put a few words on the record, because as usual, the members on the NDP side have lots to say when the cameras are off and the microphones are off; they got lots to say. We've said this multiple times.

So I encourage her to stand up, put a few words in—of support to Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act, brought forward by the failed Justice Minister.

Now, just because it's brought forward by a failed Justice Minister doesn't mean that we're not going to support it or it's not a good idea. He stood in his place, read from his speaking notes that he had 90 minutes of a heads-up to talk about the MUPI that the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) brought, and he was talking about Bill 2 within the MUPI, and yet that was allowed. But I'm going to continue on the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.

In Canada, it is illegal for a person to distribute an intimate image of another person without their—the person's consent. An intimate image is a picture or a recording in which a person is nude, partially nude or engaged in explicit sexual activity that was made in circumstances where there would be an expectation of privacy in the picture or recording. Distribution can also include selling the image, advertising it or making it available through other means, such as posting a link to the image.

The Intimate Images Protection Act, IIPA, provides additional support and resources for people—for persons in Manitoba who have had their intimate images shared without their consent or believe that their intimate images may be shared without their consent.

Now yesterday, when I had the honour to stand up and put a few words on this—on the record on—in regards to Bill 2, I was speaking about some of the preventative things that the Progressive Conservative government had done in regards to this—on this topic—and trying to educate not only students but—Honourable Speaker, it's interesting that whilst I'm speaking to Bill 2, that other members can go around the Chamber and take documents off other people's desks. It's

interesting that that's allowed. I guess that'll be for another topic since—

**An Honourable Member:** Worry about your side, Wayne.

**Mr. Ewasko:** The minister for the environment and—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —parks are the one—is the one who feels that I should worry about myself.

But it is a workplace, Honourable Speaker, this Chamber, and it's unfortunate that the member for the environment and for the parks—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When the Speaker is standing, other people are supposed to sit down.

So I've cautioned the member a couple of times now about keeping his comments relevant to Bill 2. This is the third caution I'm giving the member to keep his comments relevant to Bill 2. And I would also appreciate if he doesn't reflect on the Chair anymore.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Speaker. So a person may ask what can they do to stop an image from being shared without their consent. So if a person has shared an intimate or sexual picture or video with a person or if you know that someone has such a picture or video of you and that picture or video may be shared online, there are steps you can take to gain control over the situation.

Number one: If the image is already online, you can take action to have it removed. Determine what service the picture or video is displayed on and contact that service to request that they remove the picture or video. Tell the provider that you are a Canadian citizen who did not post the picture or video to their site; you did not give the permission for the content to be posted and you want it removed.

There are additional tips on what to do if you find yourself, Manitobans, in a situation like this. And I will be going over them.

Again, things like proactive topics, proactive mandates to the education system on Commit to Kids, Respect in School, making sure that there are those red flags that we can bring up and so that there's the 'bystanderds' that are—standers—that are watching these various different things with those bad actors out there.

I'm not talking about the total bad actors that are on the NDP bench; I'm talking those people that are going to go and do harm to youth, Honourable Speaker.

The second tip on Bill 2 that we can talk about intimate images is if you do not know whether your image is online or otherwise being shared, but are worried that it might happen, or if you know it is being shared and you want it to stop, you can send a message in writing to the person who has your picture or video. This message should read like the following, and I quote, I do not consent to you having the picture or video of me, and then you add a description such as what I sent you on, and a particular date. I want you to delete it and do not—and I do not give you permission to share it with anyone else. End quote.

Number three: Whether you sent the person who has your image a message telling them not to share your image or not, if you are scared that someone will share your intimate image, the law allows you to apply to the court for something called a peace bond. This can set conditions on the person who has your image, such as not sharing the image with anyone else. And if the person breaks any of the conditions, they could be charged with a crime.

For more information about peace bonds, visit the peace bonds page or call 1-866-4-VICTIM. That's 1-866-484-2846.

Now, Bill 2 does address this very important issue that can affect any Manitoban, but in—particularly has a very negative impact on many youth who have been the subject of coercion through threats and abusive or manipulative relationships.

And that's another point that I was trying to make earlier, that the NDP—not one besides the failed Justice Minister would stand up and put work—words on the record to support Bill 2.

And, again, like I stated yesterday, I'm assuming what's going to happen is some of them—maybe even the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) going to allow some of the backbenchers to stand up and put some words on the record about Bill 2.

Maybe the Education Minister will stand up and talk about what she's possibly doing to try to prevent some of this stuff—

**An Honourable Member:** Broken record.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —because education is the key.

The member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle) continues to talk about some kind of broken records or something. He's not wrong.

I look across to the NDP side and all I hear is a whole bunch of broken records, and they continuously,

you know, stand up in their place, don't say anything about any legislation here. They've got lots of chirping from the cheap seats, Honourable Speaker.

It's unfortunate that the Premier is applauding—including the Justice Minister now—to sit back and read the papers and cut out their coupons for their Christmas shopping.

**An Honourable Member:** Protect kids. Do something.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Protect kids. Do something. That's what the message should be to the NDP bench, Honourable Speaker.

Stand up, put some work—put some words on the record. Don't just sit back and, you know, count your pennies about the six-figure salary and those types of things and throw daggers across when the cameras are off and the mics are off.

\* (16:30)

Get up and put some words on the record, as opposed to standing—sitting there in your spots and going out to the general public and going on defund-the-police escapades, as both—as two members of the NDP side have.

So, back to Bill 2—

**An Honourable Member:** Please.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I look forward to the member for St. Boniface actually getting up and putting some words on the record because he's got lots to say, Honourable Speaker, sitting back there in the cheap seats, off the mics and off—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** —camera.

So who can help when they've had an intimate image shared or believe it may be shared? The IIPA designates the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, C3P, as a designated agency to receive requests for assistance. It provides supports to those concerned with the distribution of their intimate images in Manitoba.

Through the Cybertip.ca program, C3P can help you take steps to remove the images, contact the individual who has, or has shared, your image, provide information on how to handle situations involving non-consensual distribution of intimate images and help forward cases to the police when necessary. For more information, visit Cybertip.ca or phone, toll free, 1-866-658-9022.

Now, over the years, Speaker—

**An Honourable Member:** What's that number again?

**Mr. Ewasko:** So the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), of course—you know, not called out, but that's okay—has requested for me to repeat that number again. So the number is 1-866-658-9022. Would you like me to slow that down for you a bit? *[interjection]* Okay.

So, Honourable Speaker, I've been asked to slow it down. So, for more information, to visit the Cybertip.ca or phone toll free, 1-866-658-9022. I hope that that helps the member for St. Boniface, because obviously he didn't know how to google or to find that number out. But that's okay; I gave it to him three times.

So what happens if the individual has more questions about non-consensual distribution of intimate images, and what action can they take, and who can they contact? For more information about actions you can take, contact the Cybertip program through their online reporting form at, once again, Cybertip.ca, or phone toll-free—again, hopefully the member for St. Boniface is listening—1-866-658-9022. If you are between the ages of 13 and 17, you can also visit needhelpnow.ca for resources and supports.

Now, Speaker, I don't believe that any of that was shared by the failed Justice Minister. No surprise. We are in the middle of Bill 2, second reading debate. It is going to be interesting as we move forward knowing that members on the Progressive Conservative side of the House are in support of Bill 2, and we've got lots of information that we'd like to put on the record.

I would like to give a big shout-out to the Canadian Centre for Child Protection for all of their work of bringing forward these ideas to strengthen the legislation that we have here in Manitoba. I want to also thank them for the work that they did alongside our Progressive Conservative team, myself specifically, when I was Education and Early Childhood Learning minister, when we brought forward very important resources to our school communities. I do see that that good work by that organization has continued.

We know that AI is going to play a huge role in deepfakes and various different things, especially when we're talking about intimate images.

This new bill, Bill 2, expands the definitions and builds on the original act brought forward by the PC government back in 2022 by our PC Justice minister

and, at the time, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). It was bill 27, which then amended The Intimate Image Protection Act.

I want to thank all those partners and people out there working on the front lines, working not only with our youth, but with everyone that is involved. Again, Honourable Speaker, I look forward to someone from the NDP side standing up and put a few words of support to Bill 2, but I want to thank you for giving me the great opportunity to put words on the record for Bill 2.

Thank you.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** So I do as well rise to address Bill 2, since there's no members opposite that will take the time to address anything for Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act. Rather, they choose to heckle and yell things across the aisle when this very, very serious topic is on the floor.

And this is a bill that speaks to one of the most pressing and heartbreaking challenges that is facing Manitobans, and it's predominately focused on youth and our vulnerable populations and those who find themselves victimized by predators, abusers, manipulators and just bad actors operating both on the real world and online.

This legislation touches on the very real and rapidly evolving harms that come with technology, social media, artificial intelligence and the growing use of deepfake tools. It also speaks to coercive control, manipulation and exploitation that occurs through abusive relationships, online grooming, threats and blackmail.

But more than anything, Honourable Speaker, Bill 2 speaks directly to the need for governments—both provincial and federal—to keep up with the digital world that is changing faster than most people can fully even comprehend. And while this bill includes several practical steps forward, the work before us as Legislatures is far from complete. I will speak more about that, little bit later.

But at the outset, I want to affirm clearly and firmly that our PC caucus stands with victims, stands with families and stands with young Manitobans who deserve strong protections and real consequences for those who would exploit or harm them.

So why does this legislation matter? Well, Honourable Speaker, the distribution of intimate images without consent is not simply a matter of privacy; it is

not a mistake or misunderstanding; it's not a youthful error or a minor lapse in judgment. It is, in many cases, deliberate exploitation, abusive behaviour done with the intention to control, intimidate, humiliate, manipulate or destroy the mental and emotional well-being of another person.

And what is more—almost worse than the act itself is the permanence in the digital world. Images that are shared even just for a moment can live on indefinitely. They can be recirculated, reposted, captured, screen-shotted, indexed, duplicated, deepfaked and manipulated. They can follow someone for the rest of their life.

\* (16:40)

Many Manitobans have no idea how widespread this problem has become. For youth, this is not a rare scenario; this is increasingly common.

We hear from educators; we hear from parents; we hear from law enforcement; and we hear directly from victims themselves that coercion using intimate images is one of the most traumatic and life-altering forms of manipulation that is occurring today.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which has done some exceptional work in this area, has been a strong advocate for strengthen these laws and repeatedly warned intimate image exploitation is now mainstream, widespread and a deeply harmful phenomenon. They've advised governments across the country to modernize legislation, strengthen civil tools and hold online intermediaries accountable. *[interjection]*

And, again, while we're discussing such a important topic today, members opposite continue to heckle across the way.

So those groups that I was just talking about, I want to thank them for their work, their advocacy and their collaboration. Their input is clearly reflected in this bill and in previous legislation passed unanimously by this House.

The changing nature of 'online' harm: this is something that has been continually evolving for years, and much of the online harm we see today simply did not exist 10, or especially 15, years ago. Artificial intelligence, deepfake tools, image alteration software and voice-cloning technologies allow anyone with no technical background to create sexually explicit content using someone else's face, body or image.

Victims wake up one day and discover that images of them, images they never took, never approved,

never even imagined, are circulating online. We have seen cases in Manitoba schools where young girls were targeted with deepfake, pornographic images created by their peers. We have seen abusive partners use intimate images as a means of coercive control. We have seen foreign actors, anonymous online predators and exploitation criminals engage in sextortion schemes targeting boys and girls as young as 12, 13, 14 and even younger.

This is not hypothetical; this is a reality. And for some families, it has been a devastating reality.

In multiple provinces, and even here in Manitoba, we have witnessed cases where youth have taken their own lives after being threatened with the release of intimate images. When a young person believes that their entire world, their school, their friends, their family, will see them exposed, humiliated or sexualized against their will, the panic becomes overwhelming. The mental health consequences are enormous: depression, anxiety, self-harm in some cases, tragic suicide. These are not exaggerations; these are real outcomes that we must work to prevent.

So how did we get here today on Bill 2? There's been a little bit of a journey through the Legislative Assembly that we're standing in today, and Manitoba is not starting from zero. In fact, under the previous PC government, Manitoba was a national leader.

In 2022, the PC government introduced and passed bill 27, and that was amendments to the Intimate Image Protection Act. It strengthened victims' rights by shifting the burden of proof. And under that legislation, if someone distributed an intimate image, it was presumed to be without consent. The person who circulated that image had to prove they reasonably believed they had consent.

That was critical. It protected victims, it streamlined court processes and it made it easier to take action quickly.

In 2023 and 2024, the previous—or the MLA for Midland worked extensively with Leg. counsel to draft legislation that would address altered images, including AI-generated intimate images. That work laid the foundation for Bill 24 brought forward in 2024.

In other words, the legislative evolution in this area is non-partisan at its core. Multiple governments, multiple MLAs and multiple stakeholders have recognized the urgency of confronting this problem.

Bill 2 continues that evolution, and we support the direction because it is a matter that transcends political lines. It's a matter of protecting Manitobans, especially vulnerable Manitobans.

So what does Bill 2 do? It introduces several new measures; it clarifies existing ones and I want to walk through each major point because Manitobans deserve to understand what is changing and why.

So firstly there's the expansion of the definition of intimate image. The act will now include images where a person is nearly nude and images where the person is not clearly identifiable. This is critically important as in some cultures images that are not fully nude can still cause immense shame, harm and even emotional trauma. We must respect cultural diversity, ensure that vulnerable people from all backgrounds are protected. *[interjection]* It's really disheartening that members opposite are being disruptive as we're trying to talk about something as serious as Bill 2.

This also is a creation of a new tort, so it's threatening to distribute an intimate image. *[interjection]* Members opposite are commenting about the jacket that I wore today, rather than listening to the words that we're speaking in here, how important Bill 2—we're talking about kiddy porn and they're talking about my jacket.

Honourable Speaker, threats are often more powerful and more damaging than the act itself. Many predators and abusive partners have never actually released an image; they simply threaten to. That threat alone can extract compliance, silence victims or trap someone in an abusive relationship. A specific tort for threatening to distribute images creates consequences where they have previously been loopholes.

(3) Courts must consider the victim views when making decisions about publication bans. This ensures victims are not retraumatized by the legal process. It recognizes their dignity, their voice and their right to be heard.

\* (16:50)

Number four: Courts gain expanded power or—to order Internet service providers to remove intimate images. This is essential. Without enforceable takedown powers, victims are left helpless.

The bill clarifies that courts can issue orders against Internite *[phonetic]*—Internet intermediaries and sites and platforms, service providers, and that these entities must comply.

Clarification of when distributing—No.5: Clarification of when distribution may be considered in the

public interest. This includes police investigations, court proceedings or situations where distribution is required as evidence. The bill attempts to strike a balance between protecting victims and enabling justice.

Honourable Speaker, artificial intelligence is expanding faster than any government can regulate it. Deepfake tools are readily accessible to anyone with a smart-phone. Some apps require nothing more than three seconds of someone's voice or a single photograph to produce some very convincing fake content.

Federal MP Michelle Rempel Garner has been a national leader, calling for stronger AI regulation, particularly around deepfake exploitation, fake audio, political misinformation and the risks to children and youth. She helped form a bipartisan caucus on emerging technology because she understands the stakes.

In Manitoba, we have already seen significant harm caused by AI-generated intimate images, but deepfake exploitation is not limited to pornography. It also includes reputational damage, bullying, manipulation, harassment, extortion and coercive control. And as many experts point out, images do not even have to be sexual to cause devastating harm.

A young person could have their face superimposed onto an embarrassing scenario, a humiliating pose or a compromising context. The damage is immediate; it's widespread and often irreversible. Bill 2 moves us in the right direction, but honourable members must understand, AI will continue outpacing legislation. And this will happen for the foreseeable future. That means ongoing vigilance, ongoing law reform and ongoing public education.

So there's also a need for federal action. Honourable Speaker, the Criminal Code must evolve. Sextortion remains one of the fastest growing cybercrimes in Canada. Deepfake exploitation is virtually unregulated in criminal law. Existing provisions do not adequately reflect the speed, the scale and the performance of online harm. We need stronger criminal penalties, clearer definitions, mandatory co-operation requirements for large tech companies and federal support for takedown systems and survivor resources.

While provinces can strengthen civil law, as Manitoba is doing, we can—we cannot prosecute criminal behaviour without federal reform. Our caucus strongly encourages the federal government to step up and modernize the Criminal Code and give law enforcement the tools that they need.

There's a huge impact on the youth and vulnerable populations, Honourable Speaker. Let me speak directly to the impact on youth, because this is where the emotional toll is obviously at its highest as we think of our kids and grandkids.

When a young person becomes a target of image-based exploitation, the fear is overwhelming. Their worlds become smaller, their trust evaporates, their sense of safety disappears, and many victims suffer PTSD, depression, suicidal thoughts, academic decline, panic attacks, social isolation, family breakdowns and, obviously, intense shame.

The reality is kids are not all right. They are growing up in a world where private communication is not private, friendship can be weaponized, predators can access them 24-7 and digital footprints, as we know, are permanent.

We must do better, and Bill 2 is a step towards doing that.

So where do we go from here? We've got to talk a little bit about the courts and Crown attorneys and, obviously, enforcement if we expect any change.

So I want to highlight, Honourable Speaker, that many of the measures in this bill come directly from the experiences of police, Crown attorneys, victim service workers and, of course, the courts. They have witnessed first-hand where gaps exist. It challenges enforcing publication bans. There is ambiguity around public interest exceptions. There's difficulty compelling online platforms to remove the images. Can you imagine that? Refusing to move the images. Lack of consequences for threatening to release images.

Obviously, there's complexities involving youth victims, situations where victims were not identifiable

in an image that doesn't include their face, circumstances where cultural interpretation of nudity differs.

This bill responds to many of these real-world issues. And, of course, we've had stakeholder input and best practices. So aside from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the Manitoba Justice department claims to have consulted with legal experts, victim advocates, law enforcement partners, Internet safety organizations and community stakeholder groups. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

And I appreciate that. This is a very, very important topic.

Other provinces—BC, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and PEI—have also implemented changes around deepfakes. Manitoba's approach is consistent with best practices across the country. Internationally, governments such as the United States have begun developing watermarking rules for deepfake content. Federal government has introduced Bill C-27, the artificial intelligence and data act. But, again, regulation remains in its infancy.

Honourable Speaker, I look forward to continuing tomorrow. There's so many more important words to put on the record, and I hope members aren't standing at the door ready to run out like they are today—NDP members.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have six minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

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