



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

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

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

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

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

Please be seated.

**Speaker's Statement**

**The Speaker:** Just before we begin proceedings today, today as part of the Assembly's ongoing goal to find ways to make the Assembly more accessible and inclusive, and with special thanks to the—our Digital Media Branch and to the clerks, we are able to provide live ASL interpretation as part of our broadcast of the House.

Accordingly, ASL interpretation will be featured in a corner of the screen alongside the regular broadcast for part of today's proceedings as well as in the gallery. We received a request from the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) to provide ASL interpretation today for part of the proceedings, and we're using this request as a test for this service and we will build on this accomplishment and work towards providing ASL interpretation as a regular feature of our broadcast starting in 2026.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 6—The Sign Languages Recognition Act**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** I move, seconded by the minister for sport, culture, heritage and 'tourism,' that Bill 6, The Sign Languages Recognition Act, be now read a first time.

***Motion presented.***

**MLA Fontaine:** Bill 6 formally recognizes American Sign Language, Quebec Sign Language and Indigenous sign languages as distinct languages in Manitoba.

Bill 6 recognizes the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of sign languages and affirms the vital role these languages play in the identity, community and culture of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind Manitobans.

The bill reflects more than a year of careful work and meaningful collaboration with deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind Manitobans, their families and community leaders, who have worked tirelessly to ensure sign languages are respected and recognized.

Bill 6 reflects the advocacy, experience and lived experience of deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind Manitobans who have worked tirelessly to ensure sign languages are respected and recognized.

I'm honoured to present Bill 6 to the House for its consideration.

Miigwech.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 228—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Distribution of Surplus Funds)**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I move, seconded by the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth), that Bill 228, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (Distribution of Surplus Funds), be now read a first time.

***Motion presented.***

**Mrs. Cook:** Bill 228 will require the Workers Compensation Board to distribute surplus amounts to employers when the board is in an overfunded position. While WCB currently has a policy to issue refunds to employers, legislating this policy will create fairness and predictability for Manitoba businesses that pay into the fund.

I'd also like to acknowledge Tyler Slobogian for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who joins us in the gallery today. CFIB has been advocating for this legislation on behalf of its members, who are small businesses in Manitoba.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Seeing no other introduction of bills.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Chairperson):** I wish to present the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its First Report.*

### Meetings

*Your Committee met on December 2, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.*

### Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report – Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning: Leadership of the K-12 Pandemic Response dated March 2022*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2025*
- *Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning: Leadership of the K-12 Pandemic Response*

### Committee Membership

- *Mr. BRAR*
- *MLA CHEN*
- *MLA COMPTON*
- *MLA DELA CRUZ*
- *MLA DEVGAN*
- *Mr. EWASKO*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN (Chairperson)*
- *MLA LAMOUREUX*
- *MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. OXENHAM*
- *Mrs. STONE*

*Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:*

- *Ms. BYRAM for Mrs. STONE*

### Officials Speaking on Record

- *Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General*
- *Mona Pandey, Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning*

### Reports Considered and Passed

*Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:*

- *Auditor General's Report – Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning: Leadership of the K-12 Pandemic Response dated March 2022*

*Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapter as presented:*

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2025*
- *Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning: Leadership of the K-12 Pandemic Response*

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** It is my privilege to table the Annual Report on Nutrition Programs for the year '24-25.

**The Speaker:** No further tabling of reports?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### International Day of Persons With Disabilities

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** December 3, 2025, marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, a day we join people across Canada and the world in promoting the rights of people with disabilities and recognizing and celebrating their accomplishments.

This year, the United Nations' theme for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is: Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress. This theme reminds us inclusion is not just a goal, it is the foundation for real progress towards achieving full social, political, economic and cultural inclusivity.

\* (13:40)

Our work is about building a society where inclusion is not an afterthought, but a shared commitment. Manitoba's accessibility compliance framework focuses on supporting organizations with free tools and resources. But when collaboration alone does not lead to compliance, our government has introduced penalties for businesses who refuse to adhere to The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, something Manitoba's disability communities have been calling on for years.

In partnership with persons living with disabilities and their allies, we've drafted a penalties regulation and invite Manitobans to review the proposed regulation and share their feedback as we work together toward a more accessible province.

And mere moments ago, I introduced Bill 6. Bill 6 formally recognizes American Sign Language, Quebec sign language, and Indigenous sign languages as distinct languages, and acknowledges the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of sign languages as the primary languages of many deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind Manitobans. Bill 6 affirms the vital role these languages play in identity, community and communication.

By recognizing sign languages in legislation, Manitoba aligns itself with international human rights frameworks—including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, both of which affirm the right to use sign languages and recognize them as integral to cultural heritage and human dignity.

Bill 6 is the result of more than a year of working alongside deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind

Manitobans who generously shared their expertise, experiences and hopes. It was important that we took the time to do this work properly and respectfully.

I am pleased to be joined in the gallery today by members of Manitoba's deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind communities who are here for the introduction of this historic legislation.

And I am excited for the first time in Manitoba's history, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly has live ASL English interpretation with picture-in-picture technology, a change my team and I worked hard to deliver in partnership with the Clerk and the Speaker's offices. And to them I say *miigwech* for allowing this to happen.

These initiatives reflect our government's ongoing commitment to building a barrier-free society, where accessibility and inclusion are foundational to who we are as a province. Building an inclusive society is a collective responsibility. It is not the job of just one department or one organization or one community. It is something that we all share: governments, businesses, schools, families and individuals. Together, we have the power to create a Manitoba where everyone belongs.

I look forward to walking this path together as we move closer for full inclusion of all. And I ask my colleagues in the Chamber to welcome and celebrate our guests who are in the gallery with us today.

*Miigwech.*

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I'd like to welcome our guests to the gallery, those from the deaf community and hard of hearing community. Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature here today.

I rise today to recognize persons living with disabilities and acknowledge our shared responsibility as legislators to advance a more accessible province.

It goes without saying that people living with disabilities often face barriers imposed and/or perpetuated physically, socially and systemically. Barriers can come in everyday things that we take for granted, like parenthood, education, recreation, shopping, navigating the job market and workplace and many others. Even accessing essential services can come with additional hurdles and costs, such as transportation, shelter, health care and even emergency services.

This is why Manitobans deserve a strong advocate at the provincial level who can stand up for Manitobans living with disabilities and respond to

those challenges. And that is why this Accessibility Minister is not that person.

Manitobans have been left deeply hurt by the Accessibility Minister's remarks earlier this year disparaging an ASL interpreter. Twice this week, this same minister denied two leave requests for our MLA to have an ASL interpreter present in the Chamber for our deaf awareness week bill.

This same minister cut funding for Manitobans in Arborg living with intellectual disabilities this past January. This same minister sat silent when the Health Minister refused to pay for Jeremy Bray's life-saving treatment. This same minister sat silent as nearly 100 educational assistants were fired in southern Manitoba. This same minister is part of the Kinev government that slashed PC grant programs that supported accessibility upgrades for municipalities, parks and local organizations.

About 30 per cent of Manitobans aged 15 and older have at least one disability. They need a real advocate who understands their unique needs and pushes for greater accessibility.

Progressive Conservatives will always be committed to eliminating barriers for Manitobans with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in all aspects of life: politically, socially, economically and culturally.

I ask my colleagues to stand up today to recognize persons of all abilities as being valuable members of our great province of Manitoba.

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

**The Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Tyndall Park have leave to respond to the minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

**MLA Lamoureux:** Honourable Speaker, the theme for the 2025 International Day of Persons with Disabilities is: Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress. This theme builds on the commitment made at the Second World Summit for Social Development in November 2025 to create a more just and equitable world for all.

According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, a person with a disability is defined as someone who has a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The act specifies 21 disabilities including,

but not limited to, blindness, hearing impairment, mental illness, autism spectrum disorder, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease. Again, this is just to list a few.

Not all disabilities are visible or easily identifiable for others. Fortunately there are many advocacy groups, both in Manitoba and globally, that work very hard to raise awareness. They encourage everyone to volunteer or actively participate in their initiatives and campaigns.

Promoting accessibility is something that everyone can do as we become aware of the need for increased accessibility in public spaces, buildings, transportation and digital platforms. Many of us have seen this in action here in these Chambers through infrastructure changes.

Supporting inclusive education is a must and, Honourable Speaker, there are several common misconceptions and stereotypes about persons with disabilities that can lead to misunderstandings, discrimination and exclusion. We should never assume that individuals with disabilities are helpless or lack abilities and cannot contribute to a home or society. I've met, as I am sure my colleagues have, many people with disabilities who are extremely capable and fierce fighters for their communities.

In closing, I encourage all honourable members to join in working to foster a disability-inclusive society here in Manitoba and support calls for advancing social progress here in our province.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

There were several guests in the gallery that, unfortunately, have left already, but I think it's worthwhile noting who all was here.

\* (13:50)

I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members, where we had with us today Krista Breckman from Manitoba Possible; Jocelyn Johnson from ASPIRE, co-chair; Erika Duguay, resource centre for Manitobans for deaf-blind; Natasha Tuck, Manitoba Possible; Doug Momotiuk, Manitoba Deaf Association board and Deaf Centre Manitoba Inc.; Cheryl Broszneck *[phonetic]*, RRC Polytechnic, continuing education department; Shawna Joynt, president of Manitoba Deaf Association; Vanecia Austria, Deaf Centre Manitoba Inc.; Tylo Broszneck *[phonetic]*, Manitoba Deaf Sports Association; Richard Zimmer, RRC polytechnique sign language program, retired; and

Kyra Zimmer, RRC polytechnique continuing education department.

These folks were all guests of the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), and I would also note that we had ASL interpreters in the gallery for those guests.

And while I have the floor, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my right, where we have with us today Peter Bjornson, former MLA for Gimli.

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

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### **Springs Christian Academy Annual Youth Parliament**

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** Democracy only works when the people living in it help shape it, and one of the strongest ways to protect it is by inviting young people to lead early, not someday; now.

This week, Springs Christian Academy hosts its 31st annual high school youth parliament in St. Boniface, a tradition that does exactly that.

For months, students in grades 9 to 12 have been preparing to mirror the work we do here every day: forming ministries, drafting bills, debating real issues and delivering speeches that matter. They're not just learning about decision making, Honourable Speaker; they're doing it.

And it runs deeper than procedure. As someone who spent nearly a decade in a faith-based school, I know how my values have shaped my politics. When these students bring their values into parliament, I'm confident they'll speak their politics with courage, integrity and care for their neighbours, the foundations of strong public servants.

Civic engagement starts long before anyone sits in this Chamber. It starts when young people ask tough questions, choose their issues and imagine a Manitoba that they want to build.

This year's participants, both online and in the gallery today, embody that spirit. Ayo Olubowale, the—a Radisson constituent, will serve as premier this year, Honourable Speaker, with Sanyu Kiwanuka as deputy premier. Along them are outstanding—or among them are outstanding young Manitobans, including constituents Debbie Alao and Udo Okolue and Katrina Irwin, daughter of Sheri Irwin, one of our dedicated RETSD trustees.

Their work is a reminder our time in this Chamber is sacred and finite. We've got a fire under our seats and work to do because the next generation is already on track to one day take our place.

And so I invite colleagues to congratulate Springs Christian Academy on 31 years of youth parliament and to wish these students every success as they take their seats tomorrow—not quite in this Chamber yet, but one day, in the one preparing for—in the one preparing them for it, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Gayle Wharton**

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North):** Honourable Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and honour Gayle Wharton, a.k.a. my mum. Mum was married to our dad for over 57 years prior to his passing in 2019. Over the last eight and a half decades, Gayle—or mum—is mother of three kids, grandmother of five and great-grandmother of nine.

On top of mum's passion for her family, she shares one other: the love of singing. In 1962, 63 years ago, mum was one of the co-founders of the Assiniboine Chorus Sweet Adelines International. The chorus worldwide shows—the chorus did worldwide shows across Winnipeg throughout the years, performing in seniors' homes, churches and many other venues around the province.

In the late '90s, mum was joined by my wife Mickey and our two daughters Melany and Jennifer, where they sang side by side with mum in the chorus.

Seven years ago, the men's Barbershop Harmony Society opened their doors to women. Mum, along with a number of ladies, joined the men, and the newly formed chorus of approximately 40 members, named River City Sound, has never looked back.

Mum continues to take on a leadership role in her chorus, serving as marketing VP and outreach, along with taking the lead in all chorus choreography in preparation of upcoming performances.

The chorus is a non-profit group and has to continuously—has continuously raised funds to help with yearly expenses and annual trips to the United States to compete in international competition.

Along with the new chorus, mum is a member of the mixed quartet, Jeepers Creepers. The quartet was recently featured on CJOB's The Start, where they shared upcoming events and performances.

Honourable Speaker, joining mum today in the gallery are Jeepers Creepers members: Bruce Wilton,

Charlie Siegel, Carolin Schroeder and, of course, mum. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Gayle on a lifelong commitment to not only her family but her singing career.

Thank you, Mum.

### **George Compton**

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** Honourable Speaker, today I rise with pride to reflect on a legacy that runs deep in my family history.

Long before I had the privilege of serving as the MLA for Tuxedo, my great-great-uncle, George Compton, served Manitobans as the MLA for Manitou. He ran for the United Farmers of Manitoba and was part of the Progressive Party of Manitoba government from 1922 to 1927.

It is humbling to stand in this Chamber 100 years later, knowing that I am not the first in my family to do so, and that my work continues a commitment to public service that began generations ago.

George Compton married Nellie Hunt in 1895, and together they raised seven children. George himself came from a large family, with my great-grandpa Tom being one of his seven siblings. George understood that community—that community as something woven through family, neighbours and shared responsibility.

He served as the first elected reeve for the Municipality of Pembina in 1906, later becoming a councillor, and went on to serve many years as reeve of the Municipality of Thompson from 1929 to 1945. For decades, he played a steady role in shaping local government in those regions.

And I also want to acknowledge my nephew, Shea, Shea Compton, who first brought this piece of our family history to me through a school project. His curiosity in uncovering these stories gave me a deeper appreciation for the legacy that I am privileged to carry forward.

Honourable Speaker, it is with the greatest honour of my life to continue that legacy. Each time I rise in this House, I think of the generations before me who stood up for their family and neighbours, and I am proud to carry that work forward today for Tuxedo and all Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **Eddy Cobiness**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Today I rise to pay tribute to a world-renowned artist of La Vérendrye: Eddy Cobiness of Buffalo Point First Nation.

Eddy Cobiness was a trailblazer: a painter, print-maker and founding member of the Woodland School of Art. Alongside Norval Morrisseau, Jackson Beardy and Daphne Odjig, he helped form the Indian Group of Seven, artists who forever changed how Canada views Indigenous art. His work, rich with spirit, motion and a connection to the land, continues to inspire people across our province and around the world.

On January 1, it will be 30 years since Eddy Cobiness passed away, yet his legacy remains vibrant. It lives on through his family, especially through his son, Ernest, who carries forward the same creative spark and passion.

\* (14:00)

Honourable Speaker, this tribute is also a personal one for me. Both Eddy and Ernest have done business with my family's company for more than 30 years. I've been fortunate to see their art throughout my life—in homes, in workplaces and throughout our community—and I've—I was always admired—by the beauty and meaning of their work.

That legacy is also being recognized close to home. The newest exhibit at the Sprague museum is a celebration of Indigenous contributions to our region, and it features a significant presence of Eddy's art. It's a fitting reminder that his story and the stories he painted are part of who we are in southeast Manitoba.

Although Ernest was last-minute unable to make the trip in to join us today, I'm honoured that he's watching live from home. His presence is a living continuation of his father's vision.

I'd like everyone to help me—join me in congratulating Ernest on his accomplishments.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### **MLAs Share Good News at the End of Fall Session**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** As we near the end of session, I think it's safe to say that all MLAs are probably feeling pretty relieved that we only have two more days left in these Chambers. In many respects, it has been a difficult year. But for today's statement, I want to focus on the good.



This year I canvassed some of my MLA colleagues and asked them to share something positive in their lives.

And this is what I heard: the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) is expecting a new addition to his family any day now; the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) is going to be getting married in the spring; the member for Interlake has two new granddaughters; the daughter-in-law of the member for Spruce Woods (Mrs. Robbins) became a Canadian citizen; the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is going to Italy; the member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram) celebrated her parents Ray and Lyle's 60th wedding anniversary; the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) has some festive activities planned, from skating to singing in choirs, over the holidays.

And puppies, Honourable Speaker. Two members, the member from Seine River got a new puppy named Dash; and the member from St. Johns got a new puppy named Winnie Bear.

And, Honourable Speaker, we have some very proud parents in these Chambers. The member for Fort Richmond's (MLA Chen) daughter is learning traditional Chinese dance in preparation for the Chinese New Year show; the member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert) is so proud of her children who are opening up and expanding businesses and graduating with a degree in social work; and the member for La Vérendrye's (Mr. Narth) son finished first overall in Manitoba in dirt bike racing.

Honourable Speaker, there is a lot to be grateful for right now. I know I'm very excited to be having another baby.

Now, as I wrap up, my hope is that some of this good news can tie us over for a while, hopefully at least through question period today, and I want to wish all of my colleagues a safe and enjoyable Christmas and holiday season.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** And just prior to oral questions, one more quick note for members in the Chamber that we need to make sure we're not engaging people in the gallery in anything that takes place on the floor.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Manitoba's Homicide Rate Government Record on Crime

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The Premier is consistently and arrogantly wrong at

every turn. He celebrates his failed Health Minister who Manitoba Nurses Union gave a D-, a failing Health Minister who oversees a system where a grandmother was left in a hallway on a stretcher for 30 hours and later died. He celebrates his failing Justice Minister who releases repeat violent offenders but forgot to put their name on the registry list.

Now new stats are out on the murder rates in Canada, so let's take a look at them. The murder rates nationally have declined.

Can the Premier tell everyone in the House, and all Manitobans, how much did Manitoba exceed the national average?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Yes. I'll get to the question at hand in a second, but I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge Manitoba's deaf community.

It is a great honour to be the first Premier in our province's history to speak to you through the wonderful work of interpreters that we have today in your language, in American Sign Language, for those of you who use that. And this represents a continued evolution of our democracy and a continued sign that every single person in Manitoba deserves respect, dignity and to have access to your government.

So I thank my colleague, the Minister responsible for Accessibility (MLA Fontaine), as well as the Speaker and the clerks, for making this happen today, and I look forward to working together with the deaf community in Manitoba to make a province that we are all proud of.

Now, when we're talking about public safety, there are specific considerations for the deaf community to be safe, and we are very, very proud to be engaged in those discussions to ensure that, like every—

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

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

**Mr. Khan:** I asked the Premier a question about murder rates in Manitoba, and he refuses to even touch the question. It was a simple question, and I'll table that for the Premier today.

In Canada, murder rates per 100,000 went down 4 per cent in '23 to '24, but in Manitoba, under this NDP Premier and his failing Justice Minister, Manitoba increased by 22 per cent. The rest of Canada went down 4 per cent; Manitoba went up 22 per cent. His failing ministers are a laughingstock for the rest of Canada and Manitoba to laugh at.

This failing Justice Minister is releasing sexual predators. Where does the Premier draw the line? How many more murders have to happen in Manitoba before this Premier removes this failing Justice Minister to keep Manitobans safe?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, to the people of Manitoba, I'm like you. I like solutions.

And so, what are the solutions when we talk about public safety? Well, we know that you need to have law enforcement. You also need to have the correctional facilities to care for people while they're getting straightened out. You got to have strong connections with community, and you also got to focus on prevention by doing things like feeding kids at school.

We're focused on all four of these things. Guess what the member opposite did while he was a Cabinet minister? He cut all four. He cut policing in Manitoba: 55 fewer cops in Winnipeg. They closed not only the Dauphin jail, but also the Agassiz Youth Centre. They alienated every other level of government, and I'll table documents for you that shows that not only did they cut the policing program for schools in Manitoba but they also cut the—

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

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

**Mr. Khan:** The Premier just shows you how much of a joke he is. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** The murder rate is up 22 per cent in Manitoba and down 4 per cent for the rest of Canada. But hold on. The Premier said he's going to use his ultimate tool to bring criminals to justice. And what is that tool? He's going to send a strongly worded letter to keep Manitobans safe. What an absolute joke. He wrote a strongly worded letter to committee, and he said he's not afraid to do it again.

Instead of turning to his left and firing his failed Justice Minister, the Premier found some people on a committee Manitobans have never heard of and threw them under the bus. The minister has failed to lead his department, failed to keep Manitobans safe and failed to keep repeat violent offenders in jail.

Who is the Premier going to blame next when the murder rate in Manitoba continues to go up and Canada continues to go down?

**Mr. Kinew:** The Leader of the PCs is soft on crime, and everyone can see right through the whole schtick every time—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —he gets up with those tired talking points.

Think back recently. I think everyone knows how I feel when it comes to people who target children. Everybody heard my comments. Again, under the prison, what did he have to say about that? Take it easy. Starts criticizing me. What? Why would you criticize that? What side of the issue are you on here?

\* (14:10)

The PCs are soft on crime. We're tough on crime. We're tough on the causes of crime. They cut police; we hire police. They close jails; we build new justice facilities. They cut the milk program, good news kids: there's a cart of fresh milk rolling down the hallway right now. Stay in school. Stay on the right path. Let's build a better society together.

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

### **Drug Trafficking Raids Suspects Released on Bail**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Talk is cheap, just like this Premier. Let's look at the facts: murder rates are up 22 per cent in Manitoba. In Canada, the average is down 4 per cent.

The Premier, once again, talks a big game, wants to make jokes, but his actions are empty. He pretends he's tough on drug dealers. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe)—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —wants to shout at me right now when murder rates are the highest they've ever been. Maybe the Minister of Justice should close his mouth, open his ears and listen to Manitobans.

Last Wednesday, a man and woman were arrested—\$32,000—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —of cocaine and fentanyl and over \$70,000 in cash.

And what did this Minister of Justice do? He released them on bail, Honourable Speaker.

What is the Premier's tough approach when he's releasing drug dealers that—cocaine and fentanyl and

have \$70,000 of cash? Will the Premier, for once, be open and honest with Manitobans and fire—

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

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Everyone can see right through it; it's so phony. Like, the same thing they did in the campaign there, where they're, like, talking about defund the police.

News flash: the only ones to ever defund the police in Manitoba, it's the PCs. I table the documents this question period that shows not only did we lose 55 police officers across the city here, across Manitoba we lost school resource officers. They're the ones who made the cuts.

What happened? Everybody who'd want to talk about bill reform—bail reform—where are you going to put them? They closed the Dauphin jail. They closed the Agassiz Youth Centre.

We're in a position where we're hiring law enforcement, we're building new justice facilities, but we're also focusing on the causes, keeping kids in school, a universal school nutrition program.

Where all they have are the tired old negative talking points—and a really, really poor delivery of recycling those talking points, I'll add—on this side, we're working with you. Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime, brighter days ahead for all Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Khan:** When it comes to defunding the police, the only members in this House that have called for that are the Premier, the failed Minister of Health, actually everyone on that side and the MLA for Fort Richmond, and she was a school trustee—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The government bench needs to come to order.

**Mr. Khan:** The MLA for Fort Richmond was a school trustee and she led the charge to defund the police, therefore making your kids less safe at school.

Earlier this month, a couple were released with over \$117,000 of meth and cocaine, packing material at \$15,000 in cash. I'll table that for the failed Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) because he probably hasn't even read it.

In October, more arrests, and I quote: identified a co-ordinated drug trafficking network within St. Boniface.

End quote. And you guessed it—they were also released under this failed Justice Minister.

What is it going to take for the Premier to keep criminals in jail? Is dealing drugs, guns, not enough? Where will the Premier—

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

**Mr. Kinew:** I think every day, the PCs show why they can't be trusted in government. They keeping moving backward. They don't have a steady hand. There's no steady hand there. You can see it. So nervous; so nervous just for question period. Never mind after having to go up against some real bad people in this society.

I've got full confidence in our Justice Minister. More police, more justice facilities coming online, more co-operation with police.

But since they want to keep talking about defunding the police, let's go to it. Again, the Brandon police chief presentation. So the Brandon police chief, when this article was written, showed that government funding under the PCs is falling. I'll table the document here from the Brandon Sun about this defunding of the police.

And perhaps the member opposite wants to tell me who actually the Brandon police chief was decrying this cutting of Brandon police funding, because I'm pretty sure he's got the exact same name and date of birth as the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen).  
*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

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

**Mr. Khan:** The only phony thing in this House is this arrogant, pompous, smug smile by this Premier, Honourable Speaker. Maybe these drug dealers are too small for the Premier to notice. How about a drug dealer caught with 400 kilograms of meth at the borders by CBSA agents in January of '24? The largest seizure in prairie region ever.

And what happened under this NDP government? They were granted bail; 400 kilograms, \$51 million in 10 bags of cocaine and meth. Only after severe backlash was that decision reversed. Why would it need to be reversed? Honourable Speaker, \$51 million of meth caught, and this NDP government let him out.

How can someone be released on bail, unless the Premier is sticking up for criminals just like himself,

Honourable Speaker? When will the Premier get tough on time and hold criminals to account for—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —breaking the law?

**Mr. Kinew:** We know that meth is causing so much damage in our communities. That's why we're bringing the hammer down on people who traffic meth. The latest step that we've taken is to bring in a task force on meth, bring them—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —together with law enforcement so that we can hold people accountable.

When it comes to people on the streets who are wilding out on meth, we are connecting them with the care that they need. Again, these members opposite want to criticize. They want the person high—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —on meth to be standing beside you at the bus stop, in the Tim Hortons bathroom, out on the street having an argument with themselves. There's no ideas for public safety on that side.

I'll table a respected voice in the community, from the Lifestyles 55, a publication that I understand the members opposite are quite familiar with. Again, Manitoba's facing a meth crisis. The new provincial sobering centre will include dedicated spaces and will make things better.

Their own party agrees with what we're doing. What are they talking about? They've got nothing. Let's keep working—

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

#### **Driver's Education Program in Rural Manitoba Wait Times and Lack of Training Spaces**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Honourable Speaker—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** —parents across Manitoba are finding out the hard way that getting their teen into Driver Z is no longer a matter of safety and planning; it's become a lottery. Classes are filling up instantly. Wait-lists are months long, and in many communities, there are simply no spots at all.

Can the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) explain why his government has allowed Driver Z's capacity to fail so far behind demand?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation):** You know, Honourable Speaker, I know the member opposite wasn't sitting in the caucus at the time when Driver Z was decimated by his party. But he certainly signed up to run for a party that ignored the program, that refused to hire during the pandemic, that refused to see that there would be a demand, and then, on top of all of that, forced a strike at MPI at a time when we were still recovering from the pandemic.

The member opposite needs to answer for the other members in his caucus because ultimately, it was their negligence that hampered this important program for Manitobans.

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

**Mr. King:** Honourable Speaker, in rural Manitoba, learning to drive is not a convenience; it's a necessity. Teens need a licence to get to school, to work, medical appointments—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. King:** —and need to help on family farms and businesses. Yet many rural families are forced to drive hours, await indefinitely for Driver Z, if they can access it at all.

Why has the minister failed to provide equitable driver's ed training for rural teens?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Honourable Speaker, this is exactly where we have staffed up the program, because we know that, under members opposite, especially in rural areas, the number of driver training opportunities and spots were diminished and needed to be restaffed.

\* (14:20)

We have added an additional 588 spots when it comes to Driver Z. And Manitobans are starting to see the results because, unlike under members opposite, there's no more lines, lining up, waiting to get into the Driver Z program. We're going to work with parents; we're going to work with community and we're going to ensure that Driver Z is there for the future.

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

#### **Closure of MPI Service Centre in Swan River**

**Mr. King:** Honourable Speaker, while families are struggling to find space for their children to learn to drive, in some rural communities the NDP are manufacturing service issues to justify closures.

In Swan River the MPI service centre has been under-resourced since its government took office and instead of addressing that, they are closing the office, depriving the whole area of service.

Will the minister commit to keeping this service centre open, or is he admitting he doesn't care about rural service delivery?

**Mr. Wiebe:** This demonstrates how out of touch the members opposite actually are. Of course I met with the mayor, I met with the council, I ensured—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —that we would assure them that service would be available in the community of Swan River.

Why was he concerned that service might be cut there? Because, in fact, service was cut under the previous government. Services in Swan River had been closed since the pandemic because members opposite had no voice, wouldn't speak up for the community.

We're ensuring that service is there. We're working with the community. We're going to make sure that the mayor and our department go hand in hand into the future.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Stop the clock.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We have, seated in the public gallery, from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, 25 grade 9 students under the direction of Jeremy Siemens. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (MLA Naylor).

We welcome you all here today.

### Manitoba Public Insurance Ratepayer Service

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Honourable Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister in charge of MPI: What is he doing to improve the ratepayer service at MPI, as Manitobans have noticed that it's gotten significantly worse in the last 24 months?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation):** Members opposite know all about making things worse at MPI. What did they do under their watch? Of course, the biggest boondoggle in Manitoba history: Project Nova, you know, shepherded through by the members opposite.

They had no hot clue how to manage a program like that and no accountability to Manitobans. What did they do on top of that? They forced a strike at MPI that set the corporation behind. The revolving door of CEOs, the fired board. It was a disaster under members opposite.

We've stabilized MPI: rates are low, service is improving. We're working for Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Speaker, that's not what Manitobans and my constituents are telling myself and my colleagues on this side and, I dare to say, probably a lot of the members on that side, except they're too scared to stand up to this minister. Matter of fact, many of them have joined us today in the gallery who have experienced life-altering experiences dealing with the Manitoba Public Insurance ratepayer service.

So I'd like to ask the minister: Why has the ratepayer service gotten worse in the last 25, 26 months, Honourable Speaker?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Honourable Speaker, I want to offer—members in the gallery are looking for specific case-work, a meeting. I'm happy to meet with them, happy to ensure that we listen to their voices.

As I said, there are two important things that MPI and public insurance, more generally, can accomplish for Manitobans. One, of course, is affordability and ensuring that our rates are affordable. But the other piece—and an important piece—is ensuring that Manitobans feel agency, that they have a connection to their insurance corporation.

I'm happy to serve in that role, to listen to members of the public and to ensure that they feel that they are being heard.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans have taken time out of their busy lives, and they're tired and frustrated with dealing with this lack of service from the Manitoba Public Insurance on the ratepayers front-line service.

So I am meeting with them after QP, and I am inviting the minister for MPI to join me in the garden floor and meet with concerned Manitobans.

Will he do it, yes or no?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Yes. Yes.

### **Manitoba Public Insurance Service Standards**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I've heard from many constituents who have issues with MPI that just cannot seem to be addressed. Many are not hearing back regarding injury claims that are being denied or simply not responded to. This is unacceptable.

Our public insurer has a responsibility to serve Manitobans, and this minister is responsible for ensuring that.

Why has this minister allowed service standards to slip under his watch?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation):** Again, Honourable Speaker, we're going to take no lessons from the members opposite when it comes to management of any of our Crown corporations, but especially MPI.

MPI is one of the crown jewels of Manitoba. It is one of our advantages that Manitobans can rely on. Under members opposite, rates were going up but, more importantly, the mismanagement that was perpetrated by them was causing chaos for not only the—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —people working at MPI across the province, but also for our ratepayers.

It's important that ratepayers understand that a government needs to defend public corporations and especially an important one like MPI; we're going to do that. This side of the House is steadfast in that commitment.

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

### **Individual's Purchase of Stolen Property Concern for Gaps in MPI Services**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** In January of this year, Andy Bergen bought a utility trailer, and in late June, Winnipeg police informed him that it was actually 'stolen' property and confiscated it.

This is unfortunately far too common in scenarios under this Justice Minister.

What is worse, Andy did everything right; he had an insurance broker run the VIN and documentation before he purchased it.

How did the system let someone like Andy down so completely? What else was he supposed to do?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation):** Again, I want to commit to Manitobans that we are working with them to ensure that they get the best service possible from MPI at the same time as having affordable rates.

The frustration is, Honourable Speaker, that under the PCs, under the former government, we had a revolving door of CEOs. We had disruption at the board level. Their—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —hand-picked board failed Manitobans day after day after day and caused a strike, Honourable Speaker, that has impacted the corporation to this day.

Now we are getting it back on track. We solved the strike as one of the first commitments that we accomplished as a government, but we're not stopping there. And that's why we have stability and we have the ability to work with Manitobans to ensure that—

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

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

**Ms. Byram:** Honourable Speaker, this is under this NDP's watch. Quit playing the blame game.

The system didn't catch that the VIN was swapped on this trailer, covering up the fact that it was stolen. A Manitoban who used every resource available to him is left holding the bag and out \$4,000 because criminals outsmarted this minister.

How is it that Andy is responsible for gaps in the MPI system?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, Honourable Speaker, I'm very, very clear that I want to work with Manitobans. And that includes anyone that's come, would like a meeting to talk about specifics when it comes to case work that's before the member or before our office. We're happy to offer that.

The frustration, again, Honourable Speaker—members opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, he heckles from his seat. He was at the Cabinet table. He was there when members opposite decided that Project Nova—off track, costing millions, tens of millions of dollars to Manitobans, hundreds of millions of dollars to

Manitobans; he just kept checking it off. Sounds fine to me; I don't care.

We do care, Honourable Speaker. We're going to show accountability, but we're certainly going to offer better services and affordable rates to Manitobans.

### **Night Hunting Without a Permit Community Safety Concerns**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Yesterday, the Minister of Natural Resources had the audacity to stand in his place and say, quote: On the topic of night lighting, we want to be able to do that in a sustainable way, with resources at the table, end of quote.

\* (14:30)

No, that's wrong, Honourable Speaker. Night hunting without a permit is illegal. It is dangerous and not sustainable. I table photos of why we put the ban in place. The minister won't even release how many permits he issued.

Why is this minister trying to justify poaching?

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures):** The member references questions raised yesterday. I'll make a note also: he did not raise this question. Because we know this is not a priority for him, it is not a priority for them in opposition.

That member is fumbling through his desk, thinking, hey, is there a natural resource question, because I don't have one. Because the fact of the matter, they've ignored it. They've ignored hunters all across Manitoba. They ignored—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —COs. They ignored—they devastated the wildfire service; they devastated the CO service, so when they talk about being able to have those positive impacts on—be able to talk about enforcement, that is something they decimated. That is their track record. Their track record is kind of defund, criticize and privatize.

We know that's what they want to do. They want to do that each and every day, and shame on them.

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

**Mr. Wowchuk:** The Premier (Mr. Kinew) thinks everything is a joke, this minister thinks everything is a joke, but this is serious—life-and-death serious.

Manitobans working in the bush and in the rural—or, in the rural homes at—are at risk every night when the minister encourages this reckless behaviour. To quote my constituents: getting pretty sick of watching this stuff happen and people getting away with it, end of quote.

I table that message I received. The minister is out of touch. He refused to even acknowledge that night hunting is wrong.

Why does the minister think there is a sustainable way to hunt illegally?

**Mr. Bushie:** I really think that constituent was looking through his office window and seeing nothing going on in that office. Because we know, each and every day, they did nothing on wild—on wildfire service, on hunting service, on poaching as well, too. They did nothing to do that but try and create a divisive race war.

And, again, here he is, pedalling out those Brian Pallister comments, those Brian—[interjection]

And I'm being heckled by the Leader of the Opposition, who is no hunter. Never hunted a day in his life, yet he wants to get up here, and all of a sudden be professional—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —and think he's the expert, when they—day in and day out did nothing but shame and try to create division in hunting here in Manitoba. Shame on them.

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

**Mr. Wowchuk:** The minister had the opportunity yesterday to condemn this dangerous and illegal practice. He failed, and his Premier had to jump in and save hindquarters.

Yesterday my colleague gave the minister the benefit of the doubt. We thought he was a hunter. Based on all on his answers, I guess he's a poacher. There is no safe way to night hunt, especially in a populated area. In my area, three of four elk that were illegally hunted were left to rot.

This minister wants to talk about sustainability? I want to know why—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** —he still won't call conservation officers off the border, where there is, quote, no activity, and put them in our communities that are being terrorized by night hunters.

**Mr. Bushie:** The only predator I know is that member opposite. Shame on him for being able to stand here and do that.

And there he is. He talks about standing up for conservation officers, and there he is at the end of his set that's—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Bushie:** —shaming conservation officers for each and every day the hard work they do protecting our sovereignty at the border, doing what they do best: being able to stand up for Manitobans.

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

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

Both benches need to calm down. We can't just sit and holler back and forth.

**Mr. Bushie:** I know the member only works during hunting season, so he should be shamed of that alone.

What he stands up here, and he continuously has artificial intelligence read his questions. He needs to know, he still has to have real intelligence to actually complement that.

#### **Provincial Deficit Timeline to Eliminate**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** During the last election, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) promised to eliminate the provincial deficit within a single mandate.

We are halfway through the government's mandate and, according to a CBC article that I table now, the Kinew government does not appear to be making any actual headway toward eliminating future deficits. Manitobans have experienced another year of debt, another year of higher cost of living and another year of many people, especially seniors, being forced to choose between paying for food or rent and prescribed medications.

Does the Premier still plan to eliminate Manitoba's deficit before the election is called?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Yes. Really appreciate the opportunity to speak to the important work that we're doing in returning fiscal responsibility to Manitoba after seven and a half years of mismanagement under the PCs.

One thing that we're really proud of: PCs left Manitobans with a \$2-billion deficit hole. What did we do in one year, and what do we see reflected in recent public accounts? *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan) needs to come to order.

**MLA Sala:** I'm very proud that we took the \$2-billion deficit that the PCs left Manitobans and we cut it by 42 per cent in one year.

We know that good fiscal management is essential to ensure we can continue to do the important work of fixing health care that they sent—they put into a terrible place, to continue to make Manitoba more affordable, continue fixing our schools—

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

**MLA Lamoureux:** Honourable Speaker, the deficit has only gone up. In fact, according to Stats Canada, in 2024, when considering population differences and GDP growth, Manitoba had the highest deficit per capita on record across our country.

Because of this government's inability to balance the books, 20 per cent of every dollar spent goes towards debt interest. This is awful, considering this money could go towards health care or housing, just as examples.

Will this Finance Minister explain to Manitobans how the Premier's promise to eliminate the deficit in this government's first mandate can possibly still be achieved at this point?

**MLA Sala:** Honourable Speaker, I do appreciate the important question about fiscal responsibility, again, something we didn't see for many years under the former government. In one year we took the \$2-billion deficit that they left us and we reduced that by 42 per cent. That's real progress.

And we're going to continue to do that important work of ensuring that we deliver on our commitment to Manitobans to deliver a balanced budget in the final year of our mandate, and we're doing that through good fiscal planning.

And while we do it, Honourable Speaker, we're maintaining great relationships with credit rating agencies and investors. And I'm very proud that Moody's, DBRS and S&P all reaffirmed our credit rating and gave us a stable outlook. That's an independent verification that we are doing the good work of bringing Manitoba back to stable fiscal footing.

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



**MLA Lamoureux:** Honourable Speaker, Manitoba's debt has only been growing under this NDP government.

According to the same CBC article I tabled earlier, Manitoba is underperforming. The province is not creating jobs very quickly and the growth of full-time employment in Manitoba has been sluggish since the NDP was elected, despite what they say. This government is shouldering a burden of deficit that neither it nor Manitobans can carry.

What is this government actively doing to ensure Manitoba's debt payments do not become our most expensive budget line item?

**MLA Sala:** Again, not only are we working on the fiscal mess that the members opposite left Manitobans, again, making great progress in reducing the deficit. We're also building Manitoba: 25,000 jobs created in two years of government.

So how are we doing the work? Again, we're bringing good fiscal management transparency and accountability and finally some fiscal planning, which Manitobans hadn't seen for years.

But, also, of course, we're growing Manitoba. And in our last budget we were really proud to bring in a budget that saw that we are going to build, build, build a stronger Manitoba with a \$3.7-billion capital plan, building PCHs schools, the energy infrastructure, that for years the members opposite failed to deliver on.

They took Manitoba backwards; we're going to keep moving Manitoba ahead.

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

#### **Laboratory and X-ray Technologists Expansion of Training Seats**

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** As the PCs dismantled health care, we lost valuable technologists from the system, and wait times for diagnostics like MRIs and cancer screenings grew longer and longer and longer.

\* (14:40)

But today our NDP government is ensuring that there are pathways for new lab techs to find jobs here in Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Advanced Education please tell us about the new training opportunities for Manitobans looking to join the health-care workforce in our province?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Honourable Speaker, it is my honour

to stand to talk about investments in post-secondary and to show Manitobans that we've turned a corner here. We have doubled the number of seats available for people to train in lab tech in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Cable:** And, in addition, the members opposite are hollering because they don't want to hear the good news. They don't want to know that we're turning the corner on the crap that they left behind, and we have a new day in Manitoba: more people working in health care, more people training than ever in health care, from Churchill to Altona, we have people everywhere.

#### **Equipment Used to Detect Cervical Cancer Delay in Approval by Manitoba Health**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, in January of 2025, the Boundary Trails Health Centre, a crucial hospital in my constituency, purchased a colposcopy equipment to support women's health services, including the detection of early cervical cancer. Nearly 12 months later, it remains in storage awaiting approval by Manitoba Health.

When will this minister apologize and take accountability for delaying the approval of life-saving equipment for women in my constituency?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for this question, and I actually want to thank her for what is usually her approach. She will reach out to me and bring questions and concerns to my office that she knows needs to be addressed, and I welcome that; it's really important that we work across the aisle to ensure that if there are concerns in our health-care system, that we have the opportunity to address those concerns.

I can say, Honourable Speaker, that we work very closely with the Southern Health region. They have a phenomenal team out that way. I want to thank the interim CEO, Dana, for the great work that she's work that she's doing, and her team. And we're going to continue to work with them. We've already taken steps to enhance capacity in that region, and we're going to keep doing more.

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, last week, Boundary Trails Health Centre Foundation questioned the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Health Minister during the AMM bear pit in regards to this delay, and they were told that approval would be actioned by the end

of the day. It has been over a week, yet nothing has changed.

My question is this: Does this minister and Premier (Mr. Kinew) not care enough about women to approve life-saving equipment in my constituency?

**MLA Asagwara:** Now, Honourable Speaker, the member opposite, although she wasn't around the Cabinet table or even in their caucus, she should be well aware by now that she sits on a side of the House that spent seven and a half years destroying women's health care in this province. She sits on a side of the House where they systemically cut the services that women across rural Manitoba count on. She sits on the side of the House that actively worked to force—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:**—experts in this care out of Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we've invested in strengthening women's health care innovation and research, innovation and services, retaining and recruiting folks to this province because of our approach.

We'll take no lessons from that side of the House. I'd encourage her to get an apology from her colleagues for what they did.

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, early detection can save lives. The longer this 'colospony'—'colosopy' sits unused, waiting for approval, the longer women are without access to services that could prevent life-threatening illness.

Manitoba should be supporting women's health care; not stalling it. This government needs to take women's health care seriously. My constituents are begging.

I'm asking: Will this minister pick up the phone today and approve the desperately needed equipment that will save lives in my constituency?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, the piece of equipment the member is inquiring about is a piece of what we call minor capital. It falls into a threshold that is the responsibility of the regional health authority to approve as part of their capital operating plans. If they had challenges, they of course should bring it to our department.

We've made very clear as a government that we are going to ensure that women's health care is invested in and strengthened as a government. I made

that commitment at AMM. We have followed through to make sure that that is brought forward in a timely manner.

If that hasn't been communicated to the foundation by the regional health authority, I'll see to it today.

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

### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** And I have another quick statement for the House.

Of late—the last couple of days, in particular—there's been some words that have got into our language in this House that we probably shouldn't be using, and I will be keeping closer track on that and cautioning members if that language persists.

## PETITIONS

### Education Property Taxes

**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) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax hikes.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the 'renovocation' of rebates were done with no consultation, pushing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes

and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, this petition has been signed by Dean Klein, Pat Cutz and Wayne Tait, along with many, many other Manitobans.

**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:

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

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

\* (14:50)

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by trying—by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has signed by Joan Beckett, Earl Osipov, Debbie Osipov and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Seeing no—the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

### Location of Safe Injection Sites

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government—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 the site is located in the immediate vicinity of a daycare centre, a high school and 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 nearby institutions serving thousands of youths 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 for recovery and—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 medication clinics to break this cycle.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition was signed by Josie Manuel Rod [*phonetic*], Daniel Rocha and Yokanasi Rod [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

### Education Property Taxes

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the education property tax and the property tax credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and

encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive tax increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

And honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Remi Vano, Morgan Boyko, Sharon Gunn and many, many other fine Manitobans.

### MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

**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) Thanks to the investments made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction of a new Portage regional health facility is well under way—I believe it's done now, right? The facility and surrounding community will greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition to an MRI machine.

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

\* (15:00)

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

(4) The MRI machine located in Portage la Prairie regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher services 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 'disproportionally' face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in Portage la Prairie regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

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

(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 la Prairie 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 replacement of a—or placement of a MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This has been signed by Martha Werry, Pat Yuill, Linda Picard and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

#### **Education Property Taxes**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive a \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Allison Bloomer, Graham Bloomer, Ron Zellis and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

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

And 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 monitor.

(3) Portage la Prairie is currently 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 service 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 'aerodome' 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 Rhonda Cameron, Doug Battrel [*phonetic*], David Allen Robertson, and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

#### **Education Property Taxes**

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

The provincial government's decision to cancel Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive tax—massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

\* (15:10)

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for the trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to renew—remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This is signed by Doug Buss, Tim Wiebe, Sean McDermid and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**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:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible

to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxes to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition was signed by Darren Taylor, Eugenia Scaranzzi *[phonetic]*, Harry Janzen and many, many other fine Manitobans.

**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) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, pushing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by trying—by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Kris Pritchard, Larry Officer, Ronald Dueck and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**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) The provincial government's decision to cancel Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

\* (15:20)

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This is signed by C. McGetrick, M. McGetrick, Colleen Born and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

And this petition is signed by Dean Scaletta, Rachel Scaletta, Lynn Webster and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the education property tax and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second

property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced education property tax on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

\* (15:30)

This petition is signed by Jennifer Sims, Rosemarie Bushuk, Lori Edwards and many, many other Manitobans.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive charges—or, pardon me—punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate. Excuse me.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, secondary property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.



Honourable Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Yvonne Skurbivius [*phonetic*], William Skurbivus [*phonetic*] and Bob Wilson, along with many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**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) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, this petition has been signed by Carolyn Cameron, Dan Robinson, Nancy Schneider and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

\* (15:40)

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the education property tax and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax hikes—increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, second property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Victor Moge, Junior [*phonetic*] Jonsson and S. Hauser, and many, many more Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** No further petitions?

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Agassiz, for grievances.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** On a matter of urgent public importance.

### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

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

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Portage la Prairie, 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 repeated and abject failures to protect children in care and report on incidents in a timely manner.

#### *Motion presented.*

**The Speaker:** Now, before recognizing the honourable member for Agassiz, 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 not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

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

**Ms. Byram:** I stand here today on this matter of urgent public importance that our child-care system here in Manitoba is facing.

We often declare that children are our greatest joy, and for all of us here who are parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, we can all say that, I'm sure. They bring lots of joy and happiness to our life. And we often make incredible sacrifices to ensure that all our children have a safe, healthy, nurturing environment and, you know, all hope that we can see them in to a bright future as they grow.

In Manitoba, there are approximately 12,000 children in child and family care services; 90 per cent of these children identify as Indigenous. The number of youth in care has increased under this NDP minister, from approximately 8,900 in 2023-24 to over 9,000 in 2024-2025, so that's just this year.

It's also important to note that this is the first increase to the number of children in care in a number of years. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs notes that,

under this failed Families Minister, there are now more Indigenous children in care than at the height of the residential school system.

Of course, Honourable Speaker, we need to review why and—again, I will get into that here—why this should be elevated to a matter of urgent public importance.

We've all read in the media—and I will be tabling some of those documents here shortly—some of the tragic things that we have heard, that we have listened to. I know for myself, I have spoken to families, care providers and organizations who are delivering child-care services right on the front line.

Most recently, last night, I had a conversation with an individual who brought forward a situation—very devastating situation of an eight-month-old child who was—has sustained some harms and levels of abuse, which is greatly concerning, as it should be, for all of us as parents. We don't want to see any child endure such pain and suffering and abuse as what we have been reading about in our media and hearing about.

I've also heard from those that are delivering—I've heard from care providers that have also recognized gaps in the system where there needs to be some follow-up and accountability on those individuals, on those families that are providing the care. There needs to be some consistency in terms of check-ins, and see that the children are doing well and thriving in these environments.

So there are gaps in the system, leaving our children vulnerable to the abuse that we've been reading about, and I'm going to table some documents here today that—and this is going to highlight some of the things that we have seen here.

\* (15:50)

Most recently, we have read about the girl that may be paralyzed for life following injuries that she has sustained, and this—I think there should be public inquiry to this level of abuse so that we can all be made aware of what happened, show some transparency and accountability to those that should be held accountable to such abuse.

I'm going to table those article—table that article here today for members.

And, again, I'm going to get back to why this is a matter of urgent public importance, because this is affecting all of our children across the province who are in care, or who are potentially going into the child foster care system.

We can see—I'm going to table another document here—this is highlighting, and I'm just going to get to that. This article is describing charges against owners of a foster care agency that gave cannabis to children that were in care. This is horrific. These children are in the care of individuals where we hope that proper care, a safe environment and where we hope that there is no abuse occurring in these; and yet we have agencies that are supporting and handing out cannabis.

We want children to be exposed to healthy coping mechanisms, and cannabis isn't always that option—prescribed cannabis. This was not prescribed cannabis, sorry, and that is scary when you're having children in agencies that are handing out unprescribed cannabis. I'm going to table that document.

Just mindful of our time here, Honourable Speaker.

I'm going to also table another document where it talks about the—where deaths underscore problems in the child welfare system, and this is coming from foster parents' group. And this is dated just November, 2024.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I cautioned the members earlier about making sure their comments are relevant to the urgency of why we need to debate it today, so I'd just ask the member to try and focus on why we need to debate it today.

**Ms. Byram:** The reason we need to talk about this today is because we are seeing recently, and I have tabled some documents from the past, but the urgency is the calls that I am having, yesterday, last night more specifically, when I'm hearing stories about an eight-month-old that is suffering abuse. We just read—I just tabled the document about the six-year-old who has endured significant abuse. There is a sense of urgency to the child and welfare of our children—and welfare of the system here.

I'm also going to table two other documents indicating the abuse that has happened in the last period of time here. And I will just close with a statement here.

While the minister may publicly claim that child safety is a high priority, the alarming rise in cases of children subjected to abuse tells a different story. Actions speak louder than words, and her focus on social media fame instead of the welfare of our most vulnerable citizens is a stark revelation.

Manitobans deserve leaders who prioritize the safety and well-being of our children over personal

publicity. It's time to hold this Families Minister accountable and demand genuine commitment to protecting our children.

When someone shows you who they are, believe them, and Manitobans conceive—see that child safety is not the highest priority for this Minister of Families, and Manitobans believe that.

Thank you.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** The member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram) routinely gets up in the Chamber and simply shows Manitobans that she has not a hot clue what she's talking about for her critic role or for really anything that has to do for child welfare here in Manitoba.

I want to just share—and I'll give a prime example: the member got up and tried to—is trying to formulate some type of argument, I suppose, that this is a matter of urgent public importance. She had all question period today and yesterday and the day before and months before and weeks before to raise these issues. But when she does, she doesn't know how to raise the issues because she—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Fontaine:** —doesn't understand the issue at all. A good example of that is that when she just rose right now she said there's 12,000 children in care. Then she said there's 9,000. There's not 12,000 children in CFS care.

So I think it's important for the public to realize that members opposite, including the member for Agassiz, don't really care about children in child welfare. They don't care about the children that are in CFS. They never have; they never will. They use our children as political pawns to espouse some type of ideology, and what she's doing every single time she gets up in the Chamber, the only thing that she does, the only thing that she contributes to the discussion about child welfare, is leaning into racist tropes that children, Indigenous children—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Fontaine:** —are more at risk now because we're moving on the path—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The opposition bench needs to come to order. I need to hear what's being said—*[interjection]*—pardon me?

**MLA Fontaine:** The member for Agassiz and every single member opposite routinely get up in the Chamber and try to assert and try to lean into these racist tropes that Indigenous children are more at risk now that we're decolonizing the system, now that we're on the path to jurisdiction, now that we've proclaimed kinship and customary care, now all of a sudden Indigenous children are more at risk because they're going to be with Indigenous families in our communities, in our nations.

That's shameful and the member should get up in the Chamber and apologize for every single time she's gotten up and said her racist tropes. All that does is ensure that the public doesn't understand what's going on in child welfare and act to discourage jurisdiction and kinship and customary care.

Let me just say this: no one in the Indigenous community, no one that's been fighting to decolonize child welfare, nobody in the community, no mothers, no fathers, no kokums, nobody knows who she is. They wouldn't recognize her or her name or her advocacy or her experience—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Opposition bench needs to come to order and the minister needs to keep her comments relevant to the urgency of the—or the lack of urgency for the debate.

**MLA Fontaine:** So, again, I want to just, for the record here, here's the record of members opposite when they were in their failed, callous, incapable government, cold government, a cold government that didn't care about anybody—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Fontaine:** —not unsheltered relatives, not children in care—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The opposition bench is not the Speaker, so they can quit hollering relevance every two seconds. They can listen to what's being said.

The honourable Minister of Families, keep your comments on the expediency or the urgency of debate.

**MLA Fontaine:** That is their record. Not only—here's the most grotesque part of their record that now they're saying there's an urgent—a matter of urgent public importance.

\* (16:00)

They legislated the rights of children in child welfare away from the very dollars that they were entitled to.

This government legislated, in 2020, the rights of Indigenous children away.

And now, they're going to get up in the Chamber and act like they care about children in CFS care; they don't.

But let's just go back a little bit. Who settled that CSA claim that was rightfully brought towards the Pallister and Heather Stefanson government? [interjection] We did. We settled that CSA settlement.

And right now as we speak, children are applying for the dollars that are rightfully owed to them. We did that. That's our dedication to children in care, righting a wrong that they did—that they didn't care that people were protesting on the front lawns. People were fast-ing on the front lawns. They didn't care.

Not one single member of their caucus went out to say, hey, I'm so sorry. I'm sorry I'm part of a really horrible government that is legislating the rights of children away. And not one single member of them has gotten up to apologize for that.

So, you know, these are the same members, led by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), who is the poster child for attacking trans children. You're going to get up in the House and pretend you care about children? Where's the apology for trans children? Where's the training on trans children? Where's meeting with the parents—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Fontaine:** —of trans children that were crying when we were campaigning going door to door. Where's the apology on that?

So for the member to get up—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I just would ask the member to bring her comments back to the urgency—or the lack of urgency for the debate.

**MLA Fontaine:** The issue of their attack on trans children is relevant to this fictitious MUPI. There are trans children that are in care.

So the same member that's getting up and feigning some type of concern and, you know, wanting us to debate a matter of urgent public importance, to get up on children in care. But also, it's about trans children, as well, that are in care.

They don't care. They still have not apologized. The Leader of the Opposition has not even requested to meet with families, has not even gotten up in the

Chamber to apologize for the most disgusting, vile vitriol attack on trans children.

So for us to sit here and waste time—that's what they do, day in and day out. They read their petitions so slowly. They get up on fictitious MUIs. They have their grievances. And all they do is waste time. They waste time in the Chamber while they collect their \$106,000 cheque every year to sit on their hands and pretend they care about children.

Nobody knows them. Nobody likes them. Nobody trusts them. Manitobans see them for who they are. They don't care about children. They don't care about Manitobans. All they care about is division—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just ask the minister to keep her comments relevant to the urgency, again.

**MLA Fontaine:** And this from the same member who gets up in standing committee, doesn't understand what jurisdiction is—like, oh, there's going to be no oversight. I don't understand what's going on.

Clearly, you don't understand what's going on in Manitoba or across the country that is historic, that is transformative, that's going to transform CFS in Manitoba and across the country.

Well, what's kinship care and customary care, and who's going to watch them? And what parents? They're more at risk. She doesn't know what she's talking about.

If I were her, I would get up right now; I would apologize; and I would also say, you know what, my leader, my leader: I resign from the critic of Families. I don't know what I'm talking about. I shouldn't get up in QP and ask questions because I don't know what I'm talking about. She shows it day in and day out alongside every single one of those members opposite who continue to waste time.

They all should get up. They should all resign. They should apologize to Manitobans and walk themselves out the door and say, we're not running; we're going to join Turtle Mountain and say, we're giving our resignation; we're not running again.

And again, why is the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk) resigning? Like, what's going on—

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

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

**MLA Fontaine:** I look forward to the member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram) apologizing and resigning from her critic role as the critic for Families. She clearly doesn't know what she's talking about. She clearly doesn't care about Indigenous children, and she certainly doesn't care about decolonizing a system that has caused so much harm, that she's fighting so hard to uphold. She's fighting so up—hard to uphold a colonial system.

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

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

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

So I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable member for Agassiz for the matter of urgent public importance. The 90-minute notice required prior to the start of routine proceedings by the 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 have listened carefully to the arguments put forward, and although protecting children in care and reporting incidents in a timely matter is indeed a 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 on this topic during members' statements, 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 is out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):**

Can you please call second reading of Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act; followed by the start of second reading of Bill 3, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

Miigwech.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will now resume debate on second readings of bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act; followed by second reading of Bill 3, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

**The Speaker:** So now we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 2, standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, who has six minutes remaining.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** So why does this legislation matter?

And I talked a little bit about this yesterday. The distribution of intimate images without consent is not simply a matter of privacy. It's not a mistake; it's not a misunderstanding; it is 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.

\* (16:10)

Let me say that again: it is the deliberate exploitation, abusive behaviour, done with the intention to control, intimidate, humiliate, manipulate or destroy the mental and emotional well-being of another person. Sorry, Hansard.

So aside from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the Manitoba Justice Department did consult with some people. They consulted with some legal experts, victim advocates, law enforcement partners, 'internait'—Internet safety organization and community stakeholder groups. And I'm hoping that they consulted with victims as well—not just advocates but some actual victims.

Other provinces like BC, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and PEI have also implemented some changes around deepfakes, and Manitoba's approach is consistent with best practices across the country. Obviously this legislation was first moved on by a PC government, and this builds on the great work of the previous PC government.

Internationally, governments such as United States have begun 'developing' watermarks, rules for deepfake content. The federal government kind of has introduced Bill C-27, the artificial intelligence and data act, but again, regulation remains in its infancy.

This beaker—this bill is going in the right direction, but it's not the end of all work. There are still areas where future legislation will be needed: stronger provisions for non-sexual image exploitation, enhanced resources for schools and educators, legal supports for youth victims, navigating civil actions and mandatory reporting requirements for social media platforms, digital literacy education.

Education is in—the key to helping them out. If we can educate our kids when they're young in the schools and make them aware of the dangers that can happen—I saw a very effective commercial. It was a boy texting a girl, asking her to send a picture of herself in her bra, and then you see him smiling on the phone, and there was her school picture inside her bra, and that was sent to him. So it was a picture of her in her bra, and that goes to show and strengthen that people can say no and be creative.

So again, education, commercials like that are very, very important to help. There's better tools to support rural and remote victims, and funding for mental health supports linked to online abuse is important. It's not just the bill, but it's to see what funding is behind this bill to help people that have been victimized.

So Bill 2 is a step in the right direction. It strengthens victims' rights, it modernizes the law, it responds to real harms happening across Manitoba and it reflects the advice and expertise of organizations like the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, who continually remind us about the safety for children, youth and vulnerable people. We must always keep that a top priority.

As legislatures, we have the responsibility to keep pace with technology, a responsibility to listen to victims and a responsibility to ensure that Manitobans are protected not just today but into the future as new technologies emerge.

Our PC caucus supports the protection of victims. We support strong penalties for those who exploit or manipulate others. We support empowering courts, Crown attorney and law enforcement, and we support this legislation as a continuation of the work begun under the PC government.

Honourable Speaker, we must remain vigilant. We must continue to improve the law, and we must continue pushing for federal action so that all Manitobans, no matter where they live or who they are, can live safely, securely and confidently in a digital world that is changing every single day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** First, you know, this is a display that we saw this before that I just have a few records on, that, this Chamber, 12 years ago, was a great place to debate. I remember when the NDP–Selinger government was in power, you know we could debate and actually walk out and actually talk. But in the last 12 years, all toxicity in this Chamber has really evolved and it's too bad.

I—you know, the commotion that we saw just this display here, I just had to put a few records on there, but I want to put some records on the record on Bill 2 when it comes—words on the record on the Bill 2, The Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Amendment Act.

It's—this is something that I wish we never have to talk about, but the fact is it happens. And unfortunate, vulnerable young people who are innocent that get caught up with social media and some of the images that are displayed is very, very concerning.

You know, we, growing up in the '80s, it was so much a better—different times; it was probably better times. Because these kids right now have to go through so much and I feel so—for them. Anything they do, any mistakes—because kids make mistakes—and the next thing you know, their images could be displayed by bullies, by people in their schools. And I've seen so many situations where there was lawsuits, where a girl or a guy commits suicide because of these images being circulated in the public.

And I had the privilege to know Signy Arnasson. Signy Arnason is the executive director of the Canadian centre of child protection. She's actually kind of a family member. Her sister is married to my brother and I got to—I knew Signy for many, many years.

The work that she's done when she started in this program to start with. When it came to the Canadian Centre of Child Protection, she put a lot of effort into making this and having—being able to move this topic forward and actually getting buy-in by Stephen Harper, who actually contributed a lot of money during the days of the Harper government on the Canadian child centre of child protection.

The important—the work that they do, the people they've caught over the years and making sure that kids are not vulnerable anymore, especially when the changing times of technology and social media, Internet, these are very important and that this bill, Bill 2, actually addresses to make sure that it goes further and it can probably go even further than that.

I know when we were in government, we actually did a lot of work to make sure that when it comes to children and youth and these images that are being displayed in—on social media are—the perpetrators are going to be caught. And it's kind of disturbing that the incident that happened at the school the other day when it came to a pedophile going into a bathroom and verily seriously confronting the child. That's very disturbing.

And the fact is, this day and age, you know, we see that children in schools in the United States have to worry about guns and violence like that and here we, in Manitoba, have to worry about pedophiles and people going into schools.

And, you know, I like the idea when you go into schools—I do like to deliver gift—grad certificates to graduation classes in my—throughout my constituency. And I like the idea now, and it's hard—it's too bad it has to happen—but you have to be buzzed in and to be buzzed in to actually talk to somebody at the office to deliver them—to deliver the certificates, it's assuring that these kids are being protected, because you never know who's going to be at the school next.

And it's important that we address those concerns and these—when it comes to children and these images that we see, that you think that, over time, we could—we were addressing it all the time, but there's always something that comes forward that does something that no one thinks about. And that's why it's so important to making sure that we amend these—this bill every so often to make sure that technology changes.

\* (16:20)

And my biggest concern now is AI. AI is now making graphics that—I think in this bill it also states here that with AI images, that—now that can also be

now chargeable for anybody who—distributions of AI visuals that are out there that could—you know, right now it seems like no matter what you see on social media, you think that a lot of the stuff is real, but it's all—lot of it's being generated by AI, and these AI images can really destroy young people out there if all of a sudden their heads are put onto some graphic AI videos, and it's very concerning. It's very concerning for anybody.

And I remember watching the—I think it was W5—that actually had a number of—individuals who—a number of guys who videotaped their partner, their spouse, and be—and then put it on social media so that people can watch it. And I think that's very disturbing. It's very disgraceful that a person can even think about doing stuff like that and the rights that people have and when it comes to these images.

And like I said, there's been many, many young individuals that had to—that committed suicide. And the fact is, over and over, we hear that all the time, and it's to a point where I think a lot of cases—and it's in schools now—they're starting to get—to take away cell-phones when they get in classrooms. I think that's a good thing. It's time for now kids to all of a sudden be able to communicate without social media, without devices and be able to actually enjoy being kids again.

And this is why I feel right now, with these bills that have to be brought forward, it's just showing how the innocence of our youth is disappearing and that the whole thing with the—with all that's out there right now.

You know, my kids, they went to school all their lives, all the—high school, junior high, elementary school, in the town of Virden, except for my son; he actually went to grade 12 here at the Dakota high school. And the fact is, a lot of times they talk about how kids, you know, some of their classmates, some of the innocent things that people think they're jokes, and then it gets distributed, of a picture, of an image, and the fact is, as much as that might be a joke to a lot of people, but these are serious. These consequences for these actions could actually be on a person's record—a young person's record—for many, many years of innocently sending pictures.

And now, in this day and age, it's—we're seeing, you know, when it comes to teachers—teachers and principals—and having to monitor all this that's happening in the schools with making sure that the education—making sure that how important is the respect for the students, for each other, to make sure that they—

you know—when it comes to social media, pictures, sharing the pictures, is very, very concerning.

And so when it comes to this bill it gives a person, depicted in intimate images, the right to have their views taken into account when publication bans are requested in a court case likely to ensure that a person is not revictimized by the republication and to give the courts some direction and rationale to issue a publication ban.

The bill also establishes a new tort—cause the action of threatening to distribute an intimate image. The bill expands the power of the court to make orders related to intimate images publication bans, including requiring Internet service providers to remove intimate images from their online platforms. It expands the definition of an intimate image and provides specific examples when distribution may be in the public's interest.

These changes are intended to strengthen the current act and expand on the protections of individuals who have been victimized. These are very common sense protections that will help protect Manitobans from harm involved in the distribution and the publication of intimate images on the Internet. The PC Party and the caucus would support these protections for all Manitobans.

This bill is also closely related to previous legislation brought forward by the—of bill 24 in 2024 when our government—and is related to the proposed legislation that MLA Stone drafted up prior to bill 24 in the first session of this Legislature.

Some of the things that we have to take from this bill: We support and stand by victims who have been—had their intimate images or deepfakes distributed or placed on the Internet. We have believed that the strong penalties and some consequences for those that would threaten publication, victimize others and provide a profit for a non-consensual publication and exploitation of 'intimate' images.

The courts need the tools to enforce publication bans that ensure Internet providers co-operate in removing images that can cause great emotional harm and mental health crisis to victims and their families.

By establish the tort of this threatening of distribute of intimate images, there will be a deterrence and the consequences for these harmful actions so that we have the less victims, and those that are victimized will have more legal tools to get justice and a remedy.



The—with the artificial intelligence, like—which I said before, deepfakes and the prevalence of conflicts of online the social media usage, it is time to bring more regulations and laws—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I'd just caution the member not to be using someone's actual name but to use their constituency or ministerial title.

**Mr. Piwniuk:** Okay. Sorry, actually, the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone). I apologize for that. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

We need to listen to and respect the views of those who—intimate images that have broadcast, distributed and published on the Internet. And those who have had their images misappropriated need to have—to be listened to by the courts and by the government.

And it's so important that the Canadian centre of child protection has consulted with the government on the legislation and has put forward many of these measures to—in this act to strengthen Manitoba laws and address the various circumstances.

And we give—commend the—like I said, the work that the Canadian centre of child protection does in this country and around the world. It's not just isolated to a province or to provinces or to the country or to North America; these images go around the world. And the fact is, it is so important that, you know, when it comes to all these images, you know, for the protection of anybody, we see that happening, that it's international. It's international where it can be distributed and it can ruin a young person's life or any individual that had made a mistake of putting images—sending to their partner and their partner distributing it later when they break up.

You know, that's—we see that with a lot of celebrities where there is a lot of issues where celebrities are now exposed of, you know, sex tapes and stuff like that. And it happened because of a quarrel or a breakup. We see it all the time and it actually really puts a strain on a celebrity. It puts a strain on anybody that has to deal with all this and to basically have remedy for what is happened, especially with the media, with the—when it comes to journalists, you know, this—especially in our roles of when we were more in the public eye.

\* (16:30)

You know, it's basically—you have to be careful out there what you say, what you do and even with this topic, it's some of the words that were put on the

record here. It's not always the most comfortable subject to talk about. And again, Bill 2 addresses very important issues that can affect many Manitobans, but in particular has had a negative impact on many of the youth who have been and subjected to through threats and abusive and manipulative relationships, which I just said.

A lot of times when there's breakups, it's amazing what gets out there and especially gets shared with people that the person broke up with. They share it with friends and family, and it's very—could be very disturbing for the individual.

This can also be a desired result in those individuals' mental health, and in some cases even results in suicide, which we—I talked about before is that we see always that you always hear stories. If it's on W5 or on Dateline, you see your stories of people who are—commit suicide, and because of the harassment and the images that are being shared and the bullying that is happening.

This is all comes part and parcel with this whole topic here of these images that are being distributed around the world here. And again, when it's in—on the Internet, it goes around the world.

We've also seen young women and young men victimized online. Predators and—people in the community that threats to release their images publicly, in a way to manipulate them from doing things they do not want to do or exploit their fears. And so many times we hear—we've seen that too, where there's blackmail when it comes to people, individuals, who have to, you know, actually have to pay a ransom or they have to do specific duties.

You know, this is also that needs to be addressed when it comes to—for this bill, when it comes to Bill 2. So anything we can do to stop these predators and bad actors is important to deter the continuation of abuse, and to stop the abuse and prevent future abuse and exploitation.

We need the federal government also to step up to take action through the Criminal Code and the stronger laws to protect vulnerable Manitobans and all Canadians from this blackmailing, manipulation of young people, and for that manners, any citizen.

So it's important, like I said—it doesn't just isolate to communities, it doesn't isolate to the province. It goes across Canada and internationally. So it's important that the federal government, because of the requirements, the responsibility of the Criminal Code acts, they are responsible, so making sure that it gets

passed and it's—that all provinces will be able to work with the federal government.

The government's also playing catch-up on regulations and laws that fast evolving with AI. We—I talked about that before. You know, like I said, AI is something new for all of us, and as a parent, I'm glad my kids are older now, but I can't imagine parents that have teenagers or elementary students, you know, in the school systems, with technology.

I—again, I see reels of—on Facebook and social media, and it's like, okay, is this real, or is this actually a real clip? We don't know that any more. And the fact is now with images that can be put on, there can be just exploited, this is—what is real and what is not real? And the fact is, by having somebody—a famous person had his head put on to somebody who was maybe naked or nude, and is basically very serious. It's—it can ruin reputations out there. But with AI, you can't tell what is real and what's fake out there.

And we know that sometimes relationships can be abusive, both physically and mentally, and one person may be use intimate images obtained by someone and later manipulate and 'coherets' the other person onto an unwanted relationship, or distort that person or family for gain.

And so we hear that often many times, that a person is being blackmailed or being—you know, when it comes to abusive relationships. And we see—you hear that all the time, and how a person gets out of an abusive relationship. But I can't imagine, like, when a person is in a physical—a mental abusive relationship.

And I had relatives, I had an aunt who was abused by her first husband. And I remember many times my dad would go, and my other family members would go and pick her up and—with the—with her kids, and take—and the abuse that the person would have is—the person had alcohol abuse, but also at the same time, now with these—with the Internet and stalking. This is where, you know, when it comes to women who want to leave a bad relationship—like my aunt—not only do they have to get away—physically get away from that person, but the thing now with the Internet, the stalking, the abilities of knowing where a person can be, cameras. It's just getting to a point where it's getting more and more complicated, concerning for abusive relationships, especially when it comes to images.

If that person, again, shares any images that they shared intimately together and now distributes it because that person wants to ruin the other person's life and

because they want to pay back of that person leaving them. And so we see that all the time.

And this new bill expands the definition and builds the original act brought forward by the PC government back in 2022, by the PC Justice minister at the time, was the honourable member for Steinbach at that time. And it was bill 27, which—and amended the intimate image and protection act.

It shifted the burden on—of proof in the action of the non-consensual distribution of the imminent—intimate images and the distribution of intimate images of a person to presume to have occurred without their consent. A person who has distributed the intimate image must establish that they had reasonable grounds to believe that they had consent from the person in the image to distribute that image.

This new Bill 2 is a continuization of the evolving legislation and is introducing some measures clearly supported and put forward by stakeholders who are working to protect children and young adults in Canada and from the kind of abuse that can result during the online activity, where young people are sharing information and pictures that put—not knowing who they are dealing with in other end of that communications.

So, again, they may not even know who has actually got—who got hold of those pictures. And the fact is, now, it's great that now with this bill, it actually goes back to where those images have actually went to. And if it's an Internet provider, they will be able—they will have to have the responsibility to remove those images.

This bill also addresses situations of cultural differences—may be different, and when the intimate image may be not be full nude but may still have a huge cultural and psychological impact. Yet if their culture—it is considered a private, intimate image.

So, again, there's a lot more conservative when it comes to cultures, where they—when it comes to what they can show and what they can't show in public. We see that with—in—especially in the Middle East, where women cannot be—there's rules in certain countries of what they can expose and what they can't. And the fact is, that also can be serious culturally.

The new definition covers those situations where the image may show somebody nearly nude or a person that is not identified in that image. Most importantly the bill seeks to allow the courts to hold Internet service providers and Internet intermediaries

accountable for removing intimate images from their sites, indexes and online.

The bill makes clear that the court has the authority to make an order against the Internet intermediary. The bill establishes a new tort to threatening to distribute an intimate image, which provides legal course of action to a victim that takes a defendant to court. This new tort will help deter bad actors when it—when there's abuse or threatens related to intimate images, the victim can use the courts for recourse.

The court can also award damages and punish the party that has wronged the victim through this new tort action. The bill also helps to protect the rights of victims by adding a requirement that courts must take into account and the views of the person depicted in the intimate image when the decision is made respectively and publication banned in a court case that involves the intimate image.

\* (16:40)

The bill provides some exceptions to the public interest, such as investigations and the court proceedings, but seeks to ensure that the plaintiff understands and is aware of and consents to the distribution as part of evidence in proceeding the—in the investigations.

Honourable Speaker, the legislation brought forward so far by both our former PC government, and now under the current Legislature and the minister that is in this department are good to start to addressing the victimization of young people, vulnerable people, both boys and girls, young women and young men, and provide tools and both prevents to bring justice to these victims.

And like I said earlier on, that we see so many of these cases where it wrecks lives. It puts—there's so much strain on young people already. And to have something like this over their heads for—you know—I know when my wife did a lot of interviews—she worked in the paramedic areas of Shared Health and she did a lot of interviews. And one of the things that somebody always—when they do some research on people, they look at sometimes social media and making sure that—what's out there, what people have done and what they've—what they—you know, what they're doing out there.

And so sometimes it's important that—for young people. And that's what my wife always told my kids: Do not put anything that you don't want anybody to know about, because that can be also anywhere that someone's actually doing an interview of an individual; they can do a search of their social media

posting and stuff like that that can really hurt a person's credibility, their reputation.

And it's so important that these images do not go onto anybody's social media or is just shared because the fact is—you know what? You can google someone's name, and it's amazing how much stuff comes out on that person. And you can search any of our names, and we have every social media, every post that we have; it does come up.

And the fact is for young people, that is so important for their reputation, their—and it's a tough world out there already. And I would say right now that this bill, Bill 2, really addresses their—these images that they may have to live with for the rest of their lives, or if they can take it down as soon as possible that it can't be shared more and more.

And so I think I've spent a whole half-hour talking about this topic, and I will love to have someone else have the opportunity to speak on this bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** Bill 2 addresses a very important issue that can affect any Manitoban, but in particular has had a very negative impact on many of our youth who have been the subject of 'coracion' through threats and abusive and manipulative relationships.

Bad actors will use someone's intimate images and threats to release those images to manipulate young people and sometimes children and teenagers.

This can have dire results on those individuals' mental health, and in cases, it has even resulted in suicide. I want to thank the Canadian Centre for Child Protection for all their work in bringing forward these ideas to strengthen the legislation we have here in Manitoba.

We know that technology and the world and culture that our children and young adults are living in changes very rapidly, and we need to give the public and the courts and our Crown attorneys the tools to address these terrible actions taken against our citizens and often young and vulnerable persons.

We have seen both young women and young men victimized by online predators or people in the community with threats to release their images publicly in a way to manipulate them into doing things they don't want to do and exploit their fears. So anything we can do to stop these predators and bad actors is important to deter the continuation of abuse, to stop that abuse and prevent future abuse and exploitation.

We need the federal government to also step up and take action through the Criminal Code, and stronger laws to protect vulnerable Manitobans and all Canadians from the—and to protect vulnerable Manitobans and all Canadians from blackmailing and manipulation of young people or, for that matter, any citizen.

Governments are playing catch-up on regulations and laws in the fast-evolving world of AI, deepfakes, online communities and the dark web, where we need to tailor new laws to govern the new situations and protect those that are vulnerable from the predators and criminals that want to exploit others.

I know that sometimes relationships can be abusive, both physically and mentally, and one person may use intimate images obtained from someone to then later manipulate and coerce the person into unwanted relationship or extort the person and their family for gain. This new bill expands the definition and builds on the original act brought forward by the PC government back in 2022 by our PC Justice 'minner' at the time, the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

It was bill 27 which amended the intimate protection act. It shifted the burden of proof in the action for the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. The distribution of intimate images of a person is presumed to have occurred without their consent. A person who distributed the intimate image must establish that they had reasonable grounds to believe that they had consent from the person in the image to distribute that image.

This new Bill 2 is a continuation of that evolving legislation and is introducing some measures clearly supported and put forward by stakeholders who, working—

**An Honourable Member:** Honourable Speaker, point of order.

#### Point of Order

**MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader):** I appreciate the significance and importance of making a point of order in this case, but I think it's important to say that we have heard the same talking points over and over and over again regarding this very, very important issue, which I know that everybody in this Chamber agrees that we should be passing this bill.

Before we leave here at the end of this week, I believe we should get this passed. And so I ask for leave that the Speaker put the question at 4:58 today to pass it through and to hold committee on Monday.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave—the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), speaking to the same point of order?

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Yes, Sir.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to get up, put a few words on the record in regards to this point of order.

It's unfortunate, Honourable Speaker, that this member stands up and tries to minimize and silence the democratic right for members in the opposition or actually anywhere. It is not our fault in opposition that nobody on the government side wants to stand up and put words on the record in regards to Bill 2.

We have many members that have various constituents—we represent constituents all across this great province of ours—and it is very important for our voices to be heard on this important legislation. There is a process. And if the member refuses to stand up, put a few words of support to his minister's bill, that's on him. That's on their side.

It's unfortunate, Honourable Speaker, but there is no point of order.

Thank you.

\* (16:50)

**The Speaker:** I thank the members for their comments on the point of order, and while there is not a point of order, a member can stand up and ask for leave.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** So I will ask the leave request that the member asked. Is there leave to call the question at 4:58?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

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

The honourable member for Spruce Woods has the floor.

**Mrs. Robbins:** This new Bill 2 is a continuation of that evolving legislation and is introducing some measures clearly supported and put forward by stakeholders who are working to protect children and young adults in Canada from their-kind of abuse that can result during online activity where young people are sharing information and pictures but may not

know who they're dealing with on the other end of the communication.

I have grandchildren, and I have a granddaughter that is of age where this is—been done amongst her friends. I have warned her over and over, don't trust who you're talking to on the—online. I just—I want to protect all of our grandchildren, all of our children.

I agree with Bill 2 that it also addresses situations where culture differences may be different or when an intimate image may not be fully nude but may still have a huge cultural and psychological impact if, in their culture, it's considered a private intimate image.

So Bill 2 is seeking to expand the definition of an intimate image to take into account those situations. The new definition covers those situations where an image may show someone nearly nude or that a person is not 'identifiable' in the image. Most importantly, the bill seeks to allow the courts to hold the Internet service providers an 'intermediaries' accountable for removing intimate images from their sites, indexes and online.

The bill makes clear the court has the authority to make an order against an Internet intermediary. The bill establishes a new tort of threatening to distribute an intimate image, which provides a legal course of action for a victim to take the defendant to court. This new tort will help to deter bad actors, and when there is abuse and threats related to intimate images, the victim can use the courts for recourse. A court can award damages and punish the party that was wronged, the victim, through the new tort action.

The bill also helps to protect the rights of the victims by adding a requirement that the courts must take into account the views of the person 'depicted' in the image, intimate image, when any decision is made respecting a publication ban in the court case that involves the intimate image.

And the bill provides some exceptions for a public interest, such as investigations and court proceedings, but seeks to ensure that the plaintiff understands, is aware and consents to the distribution as part of the evidence in proceeding in investigations.

Honourable Speaker, the legislation brought forward so far by both our former PC government and now under the current legislation and the minister and his department are a good start to addressing the victimization of young people, vulnerable people—both boys and girls, young women and young men—and provide tools to both prevent and bring justice for these victims.

But more needs to be done, Honourable Speaker, both at the provincial level and the federal level as culture and technology are evolving at a rapid pace, and sometimes the kids are not all right and are not being harmed by—and are being harmed by predators, abusers, online bullies and sometimes by the very people they have called friends or classmates, or those they thought were dating—they were dating in an honest and forthright way, only to later be threatened and extorted, abused and blackmailed.

So as legislators, we all now need to be on the lookout as to how we can strengthen the act and our laws to be better to protect Manitobans, better protect our children and better protect young adults that could be victimized in the way that ones have been.

We see too many children that are victimized, too many children that are committing suicide because they don't know—they're embarrassed, they don't know how to get out of it and they don't have the means and the—and to work with these predators, so they fall for different things.

But now with this AI, they don't even have to do that; they can take their school picture, they can take images off the Internet and place them on fake new bodies and throw threats at them until they are so scared of this imaging going out that they actually take their own lives.

This is unacceptable. Bill 2 can hopefully take these predators and warn them that this is not acceptable in Manitoba or in Canada.

I fear for all these children. Growing up, I didn't have this—online threats, I didn't have the bullying—you know, we just played as kids and whatever. But today, it is so, so scary for these—and I have, like I've said previously, I have young grandchildren growing up that this puts the fear of life in me.

I repeatedly tell them every time we hear about stuff online or in our schools, I repeat to them: Don't. Don't. If you feel scared, go to mum, go to nana, but you need to reach out. You don't fall for these. And you know what? Don't be embarrassed because it's—every child is being attacked.

So we need to reflect and make sure that we can put a stop to this, and we can actually help the children of the future and the children of the day.

So I would really, really recommend that all Manitobans talk to your children, grandchildren, your neighbour's children, anyone that will listen that this

does not happen and this stops in our homes. We need to have our children be safe, whether they're from rural Manitoba or from urban areas. Enough is enough.

And we need to take Bill 2 into consideration and keep strengthening these laws 'til they have—the predators have absolutely no choice but to shut down and go away because they will have consequences to—no matter what.

Schools need to educate. We need to bring this forward, to have education in our school systems—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 16 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

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