



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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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	Ind.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
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
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas-Kameesak	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

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.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Millennium Gardens

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the incredible and lasting legacy of Millennium Gardens as they celebrate their 25th anniversary, right here in Kildonan-River East.

I ask for leave to have the names of my guests entered into Hansard.

I was proud to attend this celebration alongside local elected officials from all levels of government. Moments like this remind us that when we show up for our communities, work together and put people first, we can accomplish great things for our shared constituents.

Founded in 2002, Millennium Gardens was created to provide a safe and welcoming space for seniors in our community to connect, garden and spend time outdoors. It continues to serve as a place where neighbours who may have downsized from homes with yards to apartments or condos can still enjoy access to green space and the benefits of gardening.

Today, the gardens are more vibrant than ever. The summer season now includes exercise classes, evening concerts and educational sessions that welcome both experienced gardeners and those simply looking to connect with others in their community.

At its heart, Millennium Gardens is also a model for environmental stewardship. Through the planting of native species and the use of ecological gardening practices, the volunteer team supports biodiversity, promotes healthy soil and contributes to climate action in a meaningful and practical way.

Millennium Gardens is a true reflection of what can be achieved when caring Manitobans come together. For 25 years, this space has strengthened both the Chief Peguis Greenway ecosystem and the surrounding neighbourhood through the dedication of its volunteers.

I ask all members in this Chamber to please rise to join me in thanking just some of the many volunteers that make this space incredible for Kildonan-River East.

Maurice Bernardin, Mel Saunders, Vera Stecy, Kiyoko Ulrich, Gordon Weber.

Nathan Froebe

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Nathan Froebe, a grade 12 student from Carman Collegiate.

Nathan is just one of 36 recipients across Canada who has won the prestigious Loran Scholarship, one of Canada's most competitive and sought-after awards for youth leadership. Nathan joins us today in the gallery with his parents Murray and Victoria and brother Quinn.

The Loran Scholarship seeks to identify young students with a guiding sense of purpose: those who demonstrate exceptional strength of character, deep commitment to community service and potential to

lead with integrity. The application is a rigorous and a multi-stage process. The scholarship is valued at over \$100,000 over four years and includes one-on-one mentorship with a business or community leader.

Nathan joins a list of accomplished alumni from the scholarship that includes CEOs, NASA engineers, folks in medicine, Rhodes Scholars and Supreme Court of Canada clerks, to name a few.

Nathan comes from a multi-generational farm in Homewood and plans to attend the University of Guelph, considering studies in agribusiness or crop science, with a long-term interest in sustainable agriculture. One of his goals is to leave the soil in a better place for the next generation. And, Nathan, knowing your family, and the team at Agassiz Seed, who have been farming sustainably since the 1920s, you are well prepared to take this into the future.

Nathan is regularly active in serving his community. He's the co-founder and leader of a local youth initiative dedicated to nurturing kindness and volunteerism. He serves on a community board to address poverty and promoting wellness. In addition to his schoolwork, community commitments and athletics, he's also built and operated a home service business.

Nathan, I wish you so much success in university and beyond. I look forward to hearing regular updates from your parents and cannot wait to see where your commitment to service takes you in the future. Congratulations.

Advanced Spine Surgery Technology

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Honourable Speaker, on March 13, as Elmwood MLA, along with my colleagues representing northeast Winnipeg, members for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott), Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz), Rossmere (MLA Schmidt) and Transcona (MLA Corbett), joined the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) at the announcement of a \$2.7-million initiative in advanced spine surgery technology at Concordia Hospital. This new technology will improve access to care, reduce wait times and speed up patient recovery.

Patients who once faced long waits and extended hospital stays can now receive minimally invasive procedures using advanced 3-D imaging and precision-guided technology. This surgery won't require big incisions. These innovations mean most patients can return home the same day, recovering faster and getting back to their daily lives sooner.

Honourable Speaker, this initiative is also positioning Manitoba as a leader in specialized care. Concordia Hospital is now recognized as a spine centre of excellence, attracting surgeons from across Canada and around the world to train here in Winnipeg. This not only strengthens our health-care system today but helps train the next generation of skilled professionals for tomorrow.

Most importantly, the impact on patients is profound. Everyone knows someone in their lives suffering chronic back pain. This important treatment option will help them gain their mobility, independence and quality of life, returning to everyday activities, work and even travel without discomfort.

Thank you and congratulations to Carrie Fruehm, president of Concordia Hospital, and orthopedic spine surgeon, Dr. Jay Toor, and his team.

* (13:40)

This is what rebuilding health care looks like: investing in innovation, expanding capacity and putting patients first.

Thank you.

School Bus Driver Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Today, we gather to recognize an important milestone in our province: School Bus Driver Day in Manitoba.

I had the pleasure of introducing the legislation. Bill 214 was a significant step towards honouring those who ensure Manitoba children's safety on their journeys to and from school.

As a former teacher who relied on school buses daily, we thank each and every one of you out there. On June 30, 2015, when I was in opposition, our Legislative Assembly unanimously approved this bill, setting aside the third Wednesday of April each year to celebrate our dedicated bus drivers. And they continue to this day, fostering a safe and nurturing environment.

School bus drivers play a vital role in our communities, providing safe and reliable transportation for all Manitoba students. They are often the first and last adults students see each school day. Fostering a sense of security and routine, with their friendly smiles and warm greetings, they create a welcoming atmosphere that helps students feel comfortable and valued.

I would like to put on the record, Honourable Speaker, a few bus drivers that have left lasting impressions on many of our lives throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Art Luszeck, who actually was my bus driver and who was the main person that I brought forward, this bill back in 2015. We had Mr. Gmitroski. We had Ms. Greschuk. We had Gail, Tiny Tim, Jackie, Jodi, Allan, Lorne, Ron, Kevin, Mr. Dagg, who recently had just passed. We had John McKee, Larry Lukaschuk and many, many other great bus-school bus drivers in this great province of ours, Honourable Speaker.

I would like and ask my colleagues to stand up today and recognize the over 100 school bus drivers that are watching online virtually today, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there are some guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce.

We have seated in the public gallery from Valley Gardens school 90 grade 6 students under the direction of Alanna Stromberg. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

We welcome you here today.

And I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today: Vera Stecy, Kiyoko Ulrich, Gordon Weber, Mel Saunders, Maurice Bernadin, who are guests of the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economic Development Concerns Major Projects for Manitoba

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier went to Ottawa and came back with nothing: no major projects, no investments, no economic opportunity. And worse, no commitment from Mark Carney on the Port of Churchill.

Let's be clear, economic growth is essential for the province of Manitoba. Economic growth is the Prime Minister's primary motivation. So the Premier was walking through an open door but Manitobans got nothing. Even the Premier's own half-a-million-dollar American trade rep is worried.

To quote Richard Manning, he says: If there continues to be a feasibility study or discussion but no action, that could be problematic. End quote.

Well, guess what? We are seeing no action under this NDP government. Manitoba has no major projects, no hope of one under this NDP government.

When will the Premier put economic growth at the forefront of his plans or does he simply not have a plan to grow Manitoba's economy?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank so many members of the federal government because, you know, sometimes when you reach out to people in politics, it always feels like you're fighting and negative and all that. But when we reach out to the federal government, it's like we have a partner, somebody who's going to help us. So I want to begin by thanking Minister Eleanor Olszewski, who is helping us with the response to Peguis and some of the other surrounding communities like Fisher River and their request to prepare for potential flooding this spring.

I got to say, not only are these challenging, important conversations, but they're made that much easier by having a federal partner who's very positive and solution oriented. And I go beyond that to say that that attitude goes right to the Prime Minister. And so, in our meeting yesterday, we aligned very much on the Port of Churchill. We signed a co-operation agreement, which means that people are going to get to work in this province, building up our economic future, and we're going to get out of the way by making sure that any time there's one—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Port of Churchill Development

Mr. Khan: There you have it, Manitoba. The Premier has no economic plans; that's just the facts.

The economy in Manitoba is ranked dead last under this NDP government. The Premier has done nothing to improve Manitoba's economic future, and when he had a chance to secure the deal with the Prime Minister and actually move money into this province to grow our economy, he came back with more pictures of him smiling, Honourable Speaker. No deals, no memorandums of understanding, absolutely nothing.

The Premier's own hand-picked trade reps—is worried about the economic future of this province. Months ago, this Premier promised big announcements about Churchill. Where are those announcements? Manitobans are rising up to the simple fact that

this Premier is full of big, fake announcements, just like he's trying to do here today.

So, to the Premier, when will Manitobans see a real announcement for economic prosperity on the Port of Churchill and for all—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Yesterday. We were there in the Prime Minister's office. We shook hands. We signed the co-operation agreement. We're moving forward to build up the Port of Churchill.

I'll contrast that to what the PCs did for seven long, boring years full of cuts in Manitoba. All they wanted to do was fight the federal government, and they weren't even good at that. Justin Trudeau came and went, but their government came and went even more quickly than him. And so, while I wish him well, as well as his new partner, Katy Perry, we're hard at work with the new federal government and the new Prime Minister, Mark Carney.

So while some folks are probably doomscrolling Coachella updates, we're working for you. We're building up northern Manitoba, we're building up the south, and we're building a bright future for all of our kids.

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

Private Industry Investment

Mr. Khan: The Premier says he signed a co-operation agreement; where is it? How many jobs? How much money is coming to the province? And when will this—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —really materialize? Manitoba is a resource economy.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: Whether agriculture or mines or manufacturing or resources, they all drive Manitoba's economy.

But industry is fleeing under this NDP government because they have destroyed economy and they've destroyed private-sector investment.

And now, the Premier is putting up another barrier for private industry to work in Manitoba: The Manitoba Crown Indigenous Corporation.

More red tape, more duplication of efforts, less investments, less—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —economic growth and nothing tabled by this NDP Premier. Absolutely nothing from this Premier on that.

Why is this government so bent on making it harder for private business to participate and grow Manitoba's economy?

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, everybody I talk to in Manitoba is so excited about the opportunity we have in Churchill. Well, everybody I hear from except for, you know, a couple people.

But we don't let the negative downer types hold us back. Future in this province is going to be built by young people, and it's going to be built by people with dreams and people with ambition. Of course, the PCs are looking at themselves—ah, great, where does that leave us?

* (13:50)

When it comes to the future of this province, we're going to work hard to make sure that Manitobans are trained, Manitobans have the capital and Manitobans have the opportunity, and when future historians look back at this period and they look at us building the Port of Churchill to reach Europe, to reach Asia, you know what they're going to say? When America and Donald Trump threatened our country, it was Canada that stood up and saved the day.

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

Provincial Fuel Tax Request to Eliminate

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): The federal government was able to take action yesterday when Prime Minister Mark Carney announced that he's cutting the federal portion of the fuel tax until Labour Day. The Prime Minister knows that gas taxes are out of control, that gas prices are out of control and is taking real steps to help Canadians today.

Manitoba's Premier? What is he doing? Nothing. He wants to wait another month. Maybe he'll order a new study. Maybe he'll do nothing or maybe he will continue to blame others for his failures.

The Premier can sign a paper today to eliminate the provincial gas tax for Manitobans permanently that are struggling to fill up their tanks.

Will he do it or will he let Mark Carney continue to do the hard work for him?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): This guy loves our 2023 election campaign. We cut the gas tax. We saved you money and then we cut the gas tax permanently to save you even more money. That's all they have: recycling our old announcements.

I congratulated the Prime Minister yesterday on his new majority government. I also said the first thing that our government did when we formed a majority was to cut the gas tax in Manitoba and it brought down inflation, and I congratulated him on cutting the federal gas tax, which will bring inflation down naturally.

So this is how you work together. You share great ideas and you share credit and you give credit where credit is due.

On the other side, they charged a gas tax on you and your family every single day they were in office. You can't believe anything that they say now that they want to get re-elected. You can trust our actions to help you save money.

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

Mr. Khan: The Premier is clearly living in the past. Gas prices right now are at historic highs under this NDP government. The Premier thinks that a gas tax holiday was the best thing a government in Manitoba has ever done. We all know that is laughable, but this Premier actually seems to believe it.

He went out of his way yesterday, in an awkward moment, to mention to Mark Carney how he put a gas tax pause on but refuses to do one today. The Premier can do it today. The Premier can permanently cut the gas tax here in the province of Manitoba to provide real relief and real affordability for Manitobans today.

Will the Premier stand up today and make that announcement, that he's going to remove the provincial gas tax today, permanently, for Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: So what? Like, when we cut the gas tax he said it was bad, but now he wants us to cut the gas tax again?

The members opposite—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —don't make any sense. We know what—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Stop the clock—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order. Order.

We can stop hollering back and forth across the way because when everybody's hollering I don't hear what's being said, so we need to stop it. Yesterday we had a pretty good day. Let's do that again today.

The honourable First Minister, I believe, had the floor.

Mr. Kinew: So, Honourable Speaker, I'll just point out the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) continues to heckle even after your interjection.

But when it comes to saving people money, you know what we followed up the gas tax cut with? We cut your property taxes. We made life more affordable by freezing hydro rates. And you know what we're doing on Canada Day of this year? We're taking the tax off of all food and drinks at the grocery store.

Actions speak louder than words. Our actions are to cut taxes and save you money. Their actions? Well, you can see them right now.

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

Mr. Khan: The Premier's answer right there tells you how out of touch he is with reality.

Food prices are higher than they've ever been. Food suppliers and grocery chains are now starting to add a fuel surcharge on their goods. This means that groceries soon and basic personal items will be even more expensive under this NDP government because they refuse to act. The tiny savings, the pennies, that this NDP government are saving you in their NDP budget will be swallowed up by fuel surcharges added on under this NDP government.

Manitobans will be left out without any help at the grocery store, and those so-called savings of pennies will be gone. The Premier can avoid this future for Manitobans today. He can permanently remove the provincial gas tax today and help you and your family to make your life more affordable.

Will he do it, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: Why are they clapping, though? Like, I mean, he was in Cabinet when gas was \$2 a litre here in Manitoba. That is the high point of gas prices in Manitoba, and he sat at the Cabinet table.

And you know what he did? Nothing; he didn't do nothing. They charged the gas tax every single day.

We came in. We cut the gas tax. It brought down inflation. And so when he raises his political issue, he's raising one of the positive things that Manitobans like that we've done. That's great. Let's keep talking about it.

On their side, he's hired a Liberal as a campaign manager. I'm not sure if the PC caucus knows about this. They're paying for it, for the record; Winnipeg Sun reported on that. But I'll table these documents that show that the Alberta Liberal Party, under the direction of Stephen Carter, is running ads against the United Conservative Party, Danielle Smith's party. So I don't know how that plays out in Borderland or in—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Borderland. *[interjection]* Order.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Fee Collection—Use of Funds Inquiry

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): The Manitoba jobs agreement is so bad that not only have the three largest construction associations in the province issued a warning to companies about the risks of bidding on public projects, but they've also asked the Auditor General to investigate the deal. The MJA gives the government the authority to collect 85 cents or more for every labour hour, which comes to \$1 million on the four schools that are supposed to be built.

The problem is that when asked, the building trades, who will collect this money, say it's for administration while this minister, after repeated questions from media, could only say, safety training.

This is what corruption looks like. So I'll give the minister yet another chance to clear the air.

Can he tell us: Where is this money going?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, last week I was on Golden West radio. We were talking about the minimum wage that's going up in Manitoba, and the radio host—I guess a former colleague of this member—asked, well, what about the people who make more than minimum wage, and what are you going to do to make sure that their wages go up and keep pace with the increases to minimum wage.

And I really wish I had delivered this live on the radio, but I'll say it now: that's a union. What you're talking about there is a union. If you want people's wages to go up over time in the building trades, for the

electricians, for the carpenters, have a union. It raises wages for everybody in the community, including non-union members.

So for young people who are thinking about, how do I get involved—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in the Port of Churchill? How do I build up Manitoba's future? Well, one of the ways that you can get started is calling your local union hall, asking if you can apprentice and ask to earn a Red Seal to get your ticket.

This is how we're going to build Manitoba together, not by trying to tear each apart like the PCs.

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

Mr. Guenter: You know, this isn't about union or non-union; this is about worker choice, and the Premier should respect worker choice.

* (14:00)

Manitoba's construction associations are alarmed that this NDP government is giving itself the power to divert potentially millions of dollars from public investment with no transparency, all in an effort to enrich their political friends who are running ads for the NDP. In fact, Ron Hambley, president of the WCA, said that many of Manitoba's own homegrown construction companies are, quote, suspicious of the MJA and will, quote, simply stay away.

Will the minister apologize for trying to drive Manitoba companies into the ground and will he come clean about the political fees he is collecting from Manitoba workers?

Mr. Kinew: I love worker choice. I also love a woman's choice to choose what they want to do with their own bodies. And when we're talking about worker choice, every worker that I know chooses to make more money, and that's why we're fighting for you to get better wages.

They want the money to go to the rich; we want the money to go to you. Yesterday, I was speaking to the Defence Minister, Minister David McGuinty. We're talking about all the amazing investments that are coming to CFB Shilo, that are coming to 17 Wing, that are be—going to be coming to future facilities in Manitoba.

And I asked him, so, are these union jobs? Are they going to be paying the prevailing union wage? And he says, absolutely, 100 per cent.

So we're on board with the Manitoba jobs agreement. The federal government is using the same approach. Pierre Poilievre proposes to use the same approach. The only people who are in the pocket of the rich and powerful are the member for Borderland and the soon-to-be-retired PC leader.

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

Impact on Project Costs and Workers

Mr. Guenter: You know, the reality is—it's very important that this NDP government, this Premier hear this, because the reality is that nobody except this NDP government and their political friends in the building trades support the Manitoba jobs agreement. Everyone who actually builds schools, hospitals, roads and bridges says this deal will drive up costs, chase bidders away and hurt non-union Manitoba workers who make up 88 per cent of this sector.

At a time when Manitoba needs to see economic growth, why is this government actively working against Manitoba's construction industry, in which 53,000 non-union Manitobans earn their paycheques?

Mr. Kinew: Well, this team right 'heah' is going to get those 53,000 Manitobans better wages, better pensions and more protection on the job site because of the Manitoba jobs agreement. Sounds pretty good to me. Sounds pretty good to anyone who's ever had to earn their own way in life.

However, Stephen Carter—that member's new campaign manager in the next election—said about Pierre Poilievre, and I quote: They, the Conservative Party of Canada, were going to win the next election. Then, unfortunately, everything changed for them; fortunately for the rest of us. End quote.

So, again, this is the one who's going to be designing the new signs to put up in Borderland, somebody who opposes Pierre Poilievre.

How is that going to look on the back of the member's next election leaflet?

Post-Graduate Work Permit Holders Request for Government Action to Retain

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, there are postgraduate work permit holders the minister committed to fighting for, yet the minister has remained silent on what specific actions

are being taken. These individuals are already here and working, so why isn't the government acting?

What concrete steps has the minister taken to secure options and solutions for these workers, and when will they see results?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'm very honoured to be able to rise today, to be able to speak on this issue; this very, very important issue.

These past few days, I was in Ottawa along with the head of the Business Council of Manitoba, along with the head of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and with one voice, we were able to tell our counterparts at the Prime Minister's Office, as well as with the federal immigration minister, that here in Manitoba, we value our Manitoba workers, their immigration needs. We value the immigration needs of Manitoba employers, and also the immigration needs of our communities and municipalities outside of Winnipeg in rural areas and in the North.

With one voice, we were able to say that we welcome—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Request for Meeting With Minister

Mrs. Hiebert: Honourable Speaker, rather than providing clear and timely information, many feel they've been left with uncertainty. Instead of meeting with those affected, the minister communicated through media.

Will the minister commit to meeting with them and clearly outlining what options are available to them today?

MLA Marcelino: The member is putting incorrect information on the record. Our ministers have been meeting with folks on—past on February 20. And members of my staff—because I wasn't here in Manitoba—were able to meet with folks again over the last few days.

So—but at this point, I just need to remind the House that work permits is in the jurisdiction of the federal government. So Manitoba's role is to advocate for these workers, to advocate to extend the work permits, and we've been doing that in 2024. We did that in 2025. And we're doing it in 2026, to advocate for the extension of these work permits.

This is a decision—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Post-Graduate Work Permit Extension Request for Framework and Data

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I have spoken to local Manitoba MPs who have told me that they've reached out to the minister's office with no reply.

Will the minister release the full decision-making framework and data behind these extensions so all the Manitobans can be confident the process is fair and not subject to selective or preferential treatment?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): The Premier (Mr. Kinew) and I were actually present with most of the Manitoba MPs yesterday in Ottawa together, alongside the Manitoba business community, all with one voice, all saying the same thing: that Manitoba welcomes newcomers. We welcome their contribution here in our province. We value them, and we are doing our very best to provide a path to permanent residency for those who contribute to Manitoba and for those who want to make Manitoba their forever home.

Again, this is the jurisdiction of the federal government, whether or not they're going to agree to extend these work permits.

The Conservatives on this side of the House have no leg to stand on. They have failed to process 2,178—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Teacher Professional Conduct Commissioner Nature and Characterization of Departure

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, April 8, the Minister of Education said that Mrs. Taillefer had resigned.

The Premier said on April 10 that the Minister of Education was misleading Manitobans and Mrs. Taillefer was actually fired. Yesterday, Mrs. Taillefer had sent out the facts that what the Premier had said was factually incorrect.

Will the Minister of Education stand up today and apologize to the Manitobans for either Mrs. Taillefer, herself, or the Premier misleading Manitobans?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Again, the safety of

students here in Manitoba is of utmost importance and it's certainly our top priority. That's why it's our government that took the leadership to bring in the registry, and that's why it's our government—myself, the Premier, our whole team—that took the leadership as a team in lockstep to move in a different direction. That's what real leadership looks like, Honourable Speaker.

The MLA, the member for Lac du Bonnet, was not a real leader when he was in government. He is not a real leader now. When he was the Education Minister, he didn't stand up for teachers. He cut their funding. He lied about it during the election, and they laughed at him during the election.

What else has he done, Honourable Speaker? He made an offensive joke about Indigenous Manitobans and refused to apologize. He continues that racist behaviour in the Chamber today.

Will the member for Lac du Bonnet stand up—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Order, please.

Get the clock stopped. I would ask the honourable minister to withdraw the part about he lied.

MLA Schmidt: Withdrawn.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, unbecoming of a minister of the Crown, Honourable Speaker.

So the Minister of Education said—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —and I quote: Whether it's resign—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: — terminate, fire, part ways—call it what you will—it's semantics. It's a messy HR issue. End quote.

Honourable Speaker, a press secretary suing this Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) for racial discrimination is a messy HR issue. *[interjection]*

* (14:10)

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: So I'll give the Education Minister another chance.

Will she stand up today—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

Stop the clock. The Minister of Families needs to come to order.

Mr. Ewasko: Will the Education Minister—she has one more chance to stand up and apologize to Manitobans for misleading them, either her or the Premier (Mr. Kinew)—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: Manitobans know who they can trust when it comes to public education. That's why it's our government that brought in the teacher registry, and that's why it's our government that took the leadership and acted immediately when we need to go in a new direction.

And why did we do that, Honourable Speaker? We did it for the kids. We did it for Manitoba families.

Let's review their record. Let's review some of the headlines when the failed member from Lac du Bonnet was the failed Education minister. Okay, let's go, let's—in the Free Press in September 2022: Groups speak out against underfunding public education and a move to privatization. That's his record, Honourable Speaker.

Here's another headline: Winnipeg School Division raises concerns about chronic underfunding in the new budget—from 2023, his time in office. Let's read—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: In fact, this Education Minister can't focus enough to answer this question, Honourable Speaker. Matter of fact, this Education Minister signed a new contract with the former commissioner that extends from April 13, which is this past Monday, to July 13, 2026, which Ms. Taillefer has said that was signed by the Education Minister and her.

Does the—is the Premier aware of this, or is this going to be another contract that the member—or the—Mrs. Taillefer is going to be fired from, Honourable Speaker? I'll give the Premier a chance to apologize for misleading Manitobans on this file.

MLA Schmidt: When it comes to protecting kids here in Manitoba, Manitobans know who they can trust. Manitobans know they have a government that will take leadership and will act.

But let's look at his time as the failed interim leader of the failed PC caucus, Honourable Speaker. As the interim leader, he failed to take action against

the MLAs accused and his former colleagues of ethics violations, a member that continues to sit in this Chamber today, the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton), who should be disgraced and ashamed of his behaviour.

What else did he do as interim leader, Honourable Speaker? As interim leader—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: —the member for Lac du Bonnet refused to address the MLA for Borderland's Islamophobic remarks. He refused to remove Patrick Allard. What else did he do?

We still haven't heard about the intimacy coach, Honourable Speaker. What happened to the intimacy—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Teacher Professional Conduct Commissioner Concern Regarding Part-Time Nature of Position

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): This Education Minister has a chance to be honest here today with Manitobans. Yesterday, she refused to back up her Premier and denounce what the former registrar said. Instead, she tried to deflect and dodge like she continues here today.

What my constituents want to know is, did this minister always think that protecting Manitoba children was a part-time job? Or did she also only discover that about the position after Mrs. Taillefer resigned?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): The fact of the matter is, is that the Premier and I worked very closely on this file and it's unfortunate the way that it's played out in the media, but what we did, Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: —was in the best interest of Manitobans.

And it was done to make sure that Manitoba kids are protected by a commissioner that lives and works in Manitoba. So sue me, okay?

What we do is in the interest of Manitobans. That's what we're always going to do. So the members opposite can get up and we can debate all day; it was a firing, it was a hiring, it was a termination.

The fact of the matter is, kids today in Manitoba are safer under this NDP government than they ever were under this failed PC mess of a joke.

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

Ms. Byram: When our PC government brought in the framework for the registry, it was always envisioned as a full-time role. But this minister was okay with it being done part-time. Why, she was even okay with Mrs. Taillefer continuing to work full-time in Saskatchewan at the start of her contract.

So is Bobbi Taillefer right? Was her firing a political move by the Premier, or was her working conditions always a problem?

MLA Schmidt: I don't know what to tell you, Honourable Speaker. We are moving forward in the best interest of Manitoba children and Manitoba families and Manitoba schools. We're working hard to identify a brand-new commissioner that's going to be working right here in Manitoba, and that's what Manitoba families expect. That's why we took the action that we did.

And we've been hearing amazing feedback from the sector about the appointment of our interim commissioner, David Yeo. We thank him so much for taking on this very important role.

And, again, I want to speak directly to Manitobans and reassure them that despite the negative, dark insinuations coming from the other side of the House that we remain committed to protecting kids. The office of the independent commissioner remains open to receive your complaints, investigate your complaints and make sure every student here in Manitoba is safe.

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

Request for Public Release of Correspondence

Ms. Byram: The minister can't have it both ways. Either Bobbi Taillefer resigned or was fired, and there is no middle ground. The Premier said there was no ambiguity.

If this minister has nothing to hide, will she commit to publicly releasing the emails between Mrs. Taillefer and her deputy ministers? Public records either exist or they don't. If the minister and her Premier have been honest with Manitobans, wouldn't they want to release the evidence?

MLA Schmidt: Yes, it's really unfortunate, Honourable Speaker. The teacher registry is a monumental step taken by our government to protect students here in Manitoba. That's what we should be talking about. But this is what Manitobans have come to expect from

the opposition. They want to talk about—they want to make political attacks; they want to make—worse—disgusting personal attacks. That's what they want to do. They think about themselves; they want to try to score their political points.

What we're doing on this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, is dealing with a commissioner that needed to be dealt with. We're going to appoint a brand new commissioner. And we're going to do that because what we're focused on is serving Manitobans and protecting Manitoba kids, giving them the very best experience that they can have in school, not just so that they're safe, but also, they had more than 800 new teachers—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Port of Churchill Plus Project Co-operation Agreement

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans appreciate the potential of the Port of Churchill as a gateway to global markets and a driver of good jobs across the province. With new federal partnerships growing and growing international interest, the potential is finally being realized.

Can the Premier please tell the House how our government is working with partners to unlock the full potential of Churchill?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to thank our colleague from McPhillips for this amazing and timely question.

When we see what's going on in the world right now, and then we look across western Canada and all the economic growth that happens because of the resources in the West, we know that we need to hit international markets more quickly and with higher throughput.

So we have tidewater in Manitoba which creates this generational opportunity. And though the war in Iran has punished everybody at the pump, it does mean that our potential export partners in Europe, in Asia are even more desperate to buy our resources.

So that's why I was in Ottawa yesterday to announce the co-operation agreement that ensures that when we build the church of—Port of Churchill project plus that there'll be one project, one review, people getting to work more quickly, respecting the environment, working with Indigenous nations but making sure that we take our economy to the next level.

Good news for Manitoba. Good news for Canada. Good times are here—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Economic Growth in Manitoba Business Investment Concerns

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Manitoba's economy is eroding under this NDP. Moody's credit rating agency has issued warnings to this government on Manitoba's economic growth. Deloitte has actually downloaded Manitoba's economic G-D-P-G—projections for 2026 to just 1 per cent.

And, just today, the Canadian federation for independent business latest report release shows that business confidence is being eroded. In fact, under this NDP, the last six consecutive quarters, more businesses in Manitoba are closing than entering. That's fewer private-sector jobs, fewer opportunities and a shrinking economy.

Why has this NDP created a high tax, high regulatory, anti-business climate that is driving—

* (14:20)

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, the last Stats Canada report showed 11,000 jobs created in Manitoba last month.

An Honourable Member: Ten thousand in the private sector.

MLA Sala: And 10,000 of those were in the private sector. We're doing the work of building the economy here in Manitoba. Also happy to say, one of the lowest unemployment rates in the entire country.

And, of course, we continue to do the work of building up the economy. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) was just in Ottawa yesterday moving Churchill forward. We know that's an incredible opportunity for our economy.

And that's in addition to all the important work we're doing to build up our workers here in Manitoba. Our recent budget invested over 7 million new dollars to train 'apprentishes'—apprentices to make sure that we can do the work of supporting businesses and supporting more economic growth right here in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Stone: Let's walk through this NDP's record since they came into office: six consecutive quarters of business exits verse entries; lowest economic growth in the entire country; highest education taxes across the entire country; the highest provincial income taxes in the West; second highest equalization transfers and handouts; and \$40 billion of debt. That's this NDP's record since they came into office.

While the PCs are committed to increasing the basic personal amount to \$30,000 that will actually help Manitoba families who are struggling, the NDP is doing the opposite.

At what point will this NDP admit they're driving the economy into the ground while more Manitobans are struggling?

MLA Sala: Let's review the record, shall we, Honourable Speaker? In one year, we took a \$2-billion deficit down by 40 per cent. And then, with our most recent budget, we posted the lowest deficit number in the entire country.

Let's read the headlines from the credit rating agencies and financial institutions. DBRS headline: Balance within reach. BMO headline: Surplus is calling. Royal Bank headline: Manitoba Budget 2026, path to balance maintained despite negative in-year surprise. National Bank: Budget on track to be balanced next year despite new affordability measures and higher capital spending.

What are they saying, the experts? That we're getting the work done, we're investing in fixing health care, making life more affordable while we bring forward a fiscally sustainable path.

This government is going to do the work of supporting Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Increase in Retail Theft in Brandon Request for Business Supports

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Honourable Speaker, small businesses in Brandon are sounding the alarm as retail theft continues to rise, with data from Brandon Police Service showing a 40 per cent increase in shoplifting incidents. The Brandon Chamber of Commerce has made it clear that this is not just a business issue; it's a community issue, with local shop owners now facing growing financial losses, rising security costs and concerns for staff safety.

My question to the minister is this: Can small businesses in Brandon and across Westman expect support from this government or will they be continued to be left behind?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I appreciate the question.

We were just in Brandon yesterday meeting with the chamber of commerce. They were very excited to hear about the work that we're doing. Our plan to get tough on crime and also tough on the causes of crime is working, and it's bringing down the crime rates across this province, including in the city of Brandon.

We know, across Manitoba, the Crime Severity Index is down by 4 per cent. We know that youth crime is down by 10 per cent across this province. And retail theft—you know, an area that we have focused on as a government—we are seeing improvements.

We're going to continue to work with the people of Brandon, with the chamber of commerce, the mayor and the chief of police. And we're going to continue to get results.

Youth School Attendance Rates Crime Reduction Measure

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Manitobans are appalled at the level of street crime under this government and especially appalled by youth crime. Angus Reid released a poll last week that revealed only 27 per cent of Manitobans feel the Kinew government has done a good job on crime.

Winnipeg Police Service says youth shoplifting up 50 per cent, youth break and 'enter' up 30 per cent, youth crime is up 29 per cent over the past five years, and I'll table the report.

These are crimes happening during the day when children should be in school, but aren't. The Premier has known 15,000 children are chronically absent from school. Keeping those children in school not only protects them, but it also reduces youth crime.

Why does this Premier continue to refuse to act?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): When we're talking about keeping you safe, we're talking about one of the most important responsibilities that we have in government, and that's why I'm proud of the fact that the Minister of Justice has overseen a dramatic drop in the homicide rate in Manitoba. It's at the lowest level that it's been in more than two decades.

When it comes to recreation and education and keeping kids on a positive path, this is why we're building rinks, we're building ball diamonds; this is why we started the universal school food program so that every kid can learn and not have to do so on an empty stomach.

There's a lot of hypocrisy from the member. He makes himself wealthy off of defending the very criminals that he's trying to practise scaremongering about in the Chamber here today. We kicked him out of our caucus because he makes money off of Peter Nygård.

On this side, we'll always condemn activities like that, we'll always condemn the Epstein files and we'll focus on you, making our community safer by investing in young people and—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: I would ask all members to remain in their seats. I have a ruling.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): On a matter of privilege.

The Speaker: On a matter of privilege. I will hear your matter of privilege as soon as I've done this point of order—or, this ruling, I'm sorry.

Following oral questions and the raising of a matter of privilege on March 17, 2026, the honourable First Minister rose on a point of order, alleging that in his response to the matter of privilege, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson) had reflected on the Chair in violation of the rules.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader spoke to this point of order, and I took it under advisement.

Reflecting on the Chair is a serious circumstance in any parliament or legislature. In the fourth edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Janse and LeBlanc state in citations 7.7 and 7.8 that: (7.7) The actions of the Speaker and any other chair occupants may not be criticized in debate or by any means except by way of a substantive motion; (7.8) Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker—an allegation of bias, for example—could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly.

In the Hansard transcript from the exchange in question, the honourable Opposition House Leader did mention that I had to call the government members to order on several occasions. In making such a comment, I would say the member came dangerously close to reflecting on the Chair, and I would urge the honourable Official Opposition House Leader to take more care with his comments in the future.

I'm ruling that the honourable First Minister did not have a point of order in this instance.

However, while I'm on this topic, I would note that there have been numerous occasions in recent weeks when members have criticized the actions of the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker.

I am respectfully requesting that in the future, all members carefully consider their comments before they speak in the House to ensure that what they say cannot be taken as a reflection on the Chair, on the role of the Chair, on a ruling of the Chair or on the performance of the individuals in the Chair.

Thank you for your attention to this ruling.

* (14:30)

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): It's unfortunate that so quickly after I had recently gotten up a couple of weeks ago to point out really egregious, disgusting, bigoted behaviour for—from the member of—for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), the Leader of the Opposition, I have to rise again to put on the official record for all Manitobans to read at some point in history that, once again, a member of the PC caucus has shown his true colours and has created a toxic and unsafe workplace for members of our side, in—of our caucus here.

The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), during QP, yelled across as he was heckling as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was speaking and answering his questions that were posed to him. The member for Lac du Bonnet yelled over at the Premier: You're drunk, you're drunk. I thought you quit drinking.

I would've thought that after everything that happened and was proven to be true last week, that members opposite would've learned something, anything. But again, the member for Lac du Bonnet has shown that members of the PC caucus can't control themselves. They're rearing their anti-Indigenous racism, which I will point out is not the first time that a member of that PC caucus has said something so degrading and disparaging to the Premier that—in respect of him being

an Indigenous man and leaning into those racist tropes about Indigenous men.

Everybody in this Chamber knows that the Premier lives a good life. And yet the member for Lac du Bonnet is so incredibly disrespectful and so incredibly disgusting that he has to heckle something that is so uncalled for towards the Premier. That is a personal attack. It contributes to a toxic and unsafe working environment for the Premier, for the Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara), for every single member of our NDP caucus.

Day and day, week after week, year after year, we have to put up with members opposite and their bigoted, racist, misogynistic comments that they level towards us on this side of the House. And it never stops. Even last week, when the Leader of the Opposition was shown to be putting false facts on the record, here we are again.

Honourable Speaker, I ask the member for Lac du Bonnet to get up in this House and apologize to the Premier.

And I also refer this to a committee.

The Speaker: The—before I recognize other members to speak to this matter of privilege, I would remind members to keep their comments germane to this matter of privilege. The—oh, sorry.

MLA Fontaine: Sorry, Honourable Speaker. I move, seconded by the Minister for Education, that this be referred to a committee of the House.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): This is just another tactic to try and distract from the failing NDP government. Transphobic—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Johnson: —misogynistic, bigot, homophobic, racist: those are words that have been yelled across the House from the government side. And that's—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —that's just to me, Honourable Speaker, and that is just from the Government House Leader. These are words that mean a lot, are not accepted in other parts of this country as parliamentary language, but they continue to be slung across this House over and over and over again.

The member does not have a standing order. The motion that was moved was not submitted in writing, as it's supposed to be. And I await your decision, but this is not a member-matter of privilege.

The Speaker: So I thank members for their contributions. To the speakers, I am going to take this matter of privilege under advisement.

But while I'm taking it under advisement, I would ask all members: How many times have I cautioned people about screaming insults back and forth across the Chamber? How many times have I cautioned members about, I can't hear what's being said when people are screaming back and forth across the Chamber? So I will take this matter of privilege under advisement because these matters are important.

* * *

The Speaker: And the time for oral questions has also expired.

Petitions? No petitions. Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you—Honourable Speaker, can you please call the start of Committee of Supply. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

So the House will now dissolve into Committee of Supply, and I would ask the honourable Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ROOM 254

HOUSING, ADDICTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

* (14:50)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: I do.

The Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): On behalf of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, I'm pleased to present the '26-27 financial Estimates.

Budget 2026 reflects our government's continued commitment to lowering costs for Manitobans, strengthening communities and ensuring Manitobans have—can have access to safe housing and supports to ensure their success. The investments outlined in our government's budgets are a direct response to the challenges Manitobans face every day related to housing, homelessness, mental health and addictions. These issues are complex and interconnected and are rooted in history and systemic racism.

There are no simple solutions, but we are committed to doing the work with compassion and in partnership with communities and service providers. Budget 2026 builds on the work already under way through Your Way Home strategy, Manitoba's plan to end chronic homelessness. It demonstrates our government's ongoing commitment as a person-centred, evidence-based approach to care with a commitment to truth and reconciliation and providing meaningful support to Indigenous-led solutions.

This year's budget includes new investments to support people moving from encampments and shelters into safe, affordable housing. Almost \$9 million in investments will go toward the expansion of transitional and supportive housing for people exiting encampments.

Our government has also made a commitment to the ongoing development of a navigation centre, where people exiting encampments, hospitals or other institutions will be directly connected to housing and supports in their community. By doing so, we will make—we will help to reduce the strains on health care and the justice system.

Our government recognizes that we cannot make progress on ending chronic homelessness without addressing the critical shortage of social and affordable housing. Budget 2026 invests \$12.8 million in funding to support the creation of up to 215 new social and affordable housing units across the province.

* (15:00)

We have and continue to make generational investments, like 447 Webb. Members across the way never built or purchased one single unit of social housing in their seven and a half years of government. We know we need a continuum of housing needs and we are continuing to offer incentives. This includes a

commitment of up to \$176.5 million to support rental housing construction through to 2020—or 2030 under the rental housing construction incentive, with enhanced benefits available for housing. This includes \$13,500 for affordable units and \$8,500 for market rent units.

This is in stark contrast to our predecessors, the members across the way, who sold off social housing and boarded up Manitoba Housing, our Crown jewel, causing hundreds of Manitobans to end up homeless.

Honourable Chair, we understand that for many Manitobans exiting homelessness, securing housing is just the first step. Individuals need supports to heal, address trauma and build skills to succeed. Budget 2026 strengthens wrap-around supports in new and existing housing units, helping to ensure people exiting homelessness are set up for long-term success and stability.

Our efforts to increase the supply of social and affordable housing through new construction will be successful only if we protect what we already have. Budget 2026 includes significant investments to repair and maintain provincially owned social housing, ensuring these homes remain safe, dignified and affordable for Manitobans who rely on them.

Once again, I'd like to put on the record that it is our government—when we came into office, one of our first actions was to invest in Manitoba Housing, pulling the plywood off the windows that the previous government boarded up, ensuring that Manitobans had a safe, dignified place that they could call home. It is this government that values housing as an essential public asset, supports safer communities and works to maintain affordable—affordability today while continuing to grow the social and affordable housing supply.

Honourable Chair, this is a generational investment. Our government recognizes the harms and risks associated with homelessness. They are immediate and we are responding to these urgent needs. Budget 2026 invests nearly \$1.8 million in immediate supports for people experiencing homelessness, meeting people where they are at and providing timely assistance when individuals need it most.

Our government remains committed to building a compassionate, inclusive mental health system with addiction supports that prioritize dignity, safety, and recovery. This year's budget strengthens investments in harm reduction, outreach and stabilization supports for people navigating mental health and substance use challenges.

It's important that we interconnect between mental health and addictions and homelessness, that are recognized, that our work reflects this. We continue to work closely with partners across government and with community to expand treatment, recovery and navigation supports, ensuring Manitobans can access help when and where they need it.

Our investments build on and complement broader investments across government. By working alongside our partners in Health, Justice, Families and other departments, we're ensuring that the issues related to housing, homelessness, mental health and addictions are addressed through a co-ordinated, whole-of-government approach.

The most efficient way to address homelessness is prevention. As the cost of living continues to rise, more Manitobans are under pressure to make ends meet. Budget 2026 responds to these realities through a broad range of affordability measures, including increasing the renters affordability tax credit, removing the PST from all food purchases at grocery stores, making transit for young people free and enhancing supports for seniors and people with disabilities.

These measures play a critical role in the response to homelessness, stabilizing households and preventing homelessness before it occurs. They target seniors, families and Manitobans living with disabilities, who are among our most vulnerable.

Again, this is in contrast to what Manitobans experienced under the previous failed government. During a cost-of-living crisis and global pandemic, the members opposite were nowhere to be found. This government works on reducing costs for families and supporting Manitobans, unlike members opposite who didn't respond and left Manitobans.

Our government's budget is balanced and compassionate, one that responds to immediate needs of Manitobans, one that continues to build a system, one that continues to build partnerships, one that continues to build housing supply for long-term, sustainable change—generational change.

This is challenging. It's hard. It's complex heart work. And we recognize that there's still much more to do, but we're up for the challenge. We're up for working with our partners. That's why we continue to work with our federal partners, our municipal partners, our community partners. And we are working to ensure that those individuals' met—needs are met. Our government remains committed to listening to Manitobans, to learning from community and taking

action to make a meaningful difference in people's lives right here and across our province.

I want to thank all of those organizations that are on the front line each and every day that are working to ensure Manitobans are housed, that they're getting their mental health needs met, that they are ensuring that those that are struggling with substance use, that they are, you know, met with compassion and that we are keeping them alive enough to connect them with care, and that we are, you know, as a government, here to work alongside you, to ensure that we are taking a balanced approach. Because we can't treat people if they are not alive.

And we knew that coming into government, we had to create a new ministry, and we heard from Manitobans how important it was to meet people where they were at and to create an environment, an ecosystem where people could do well and get on a path of success. And that's exactly what our government is doing.

Miigwech.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the critic of the official opposition have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: Yes, thank you.

The Chairperson: The member for Portage la Prairie.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Thank you, honourable Chair, I believe I refer to you as. Is that correct?

Thank you. Just a couple—or just a couple things to say before we get started off, and then I think it's important that we get into the questions on this as quickly as possible.

I took over the chair—or the critic's position of addictions, homelessness and Manitoba Housing over the last number of months. And I spent a lot of time over in the Point Douglas area and other parts of Manitoba, hearing in my own community of Portage la Prairie about the issues that were going on in Manitoba Housing facilities. And it turned out that the people in the Manitoba Housing facilities helped to make change there.

It was referred to that there was over \$5 million spent on one of the Manitoba Housing facilities in Portage la Prairie, and when we FIPPA'd it, it turned out to be \$21,000. So, again, this is what we're talking about here when we look at, you know, what's going

on with housing and addictions right now. We just heard yesterday the amount of people that we're seeing that are homeless right now are at absolutely record numbers. In a country like ours, in a province like ours, this should not be happening.

We have not seen this government do anything to encourage or make that better in any way, shape or form. We've seen consultations happening, we've seen announcements happening and absolutely no plans.

So, I look forward to asking some of these questions so not only can we give it to the—to all of the public, but so I can go back to the people of Point Douglas, the people that are worried about their businesses, the people that are worried about their homes and the people that are worried that they're being kicked out of a place with nowhere to go, and I can tell them the answers to these questions I'm looking for.

Thank you.

* (15:10)

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. My apologies, I skipped—oh no, sorry—we're good. I'll start that again.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 24.1(a), contained in resolution 24.1.

At this time, we now invite the minister's staff to join us at the table and we ask that the minister introduce the staff in attendance.

Ms. Smith: So I'd like to introduce the staff that are here with me supporting, my amazing team here.

So first, I'd like to introduce Carolina Stecher who is my director of ministerial affairs. Carolina, prior to joining Housing, Addictions and Homelessness in January 2025 was a director in Labour and Immigration. She has over 25 years of political and organizing experience, working as an assistant formally to a city councillor, a member of Parliament and served in 10—served with 10 different Cabinet ministers and three different NDP governments—quite the experience. Carolina's also worked in the non-profit charitable sector in community engagement and as a senior researcher and writer for a major funder here in Winnipeg. She has extensive

organizing experience and holds a bachelor of arts from the University of Winnipeg.

And next to her is Charlene Paquin. Charlene is the deputy minister in my department. She joined us in March of 2025. She started her public service career as a practicum student in Veterans Affairs in the public service. In the public service in 2001, where she spent over 20 years with the Province. She then became a policy analyst and spent 15 years with the Department of Families, including as the executive director of Employment and Income Assistance Program and assistant deputy minister for EIA disability programs and early learning and childhood.

She also served as a Manitoba 'obudsmen'—*[interjection]*—Ombudsman before taking on the role of Civil Service commissioner. Quite the resume. She was a deputy minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage and associate clerk for public service transformation.

So, three years prior to her recent appointment, Charlene was with Deloitte Canada, where she worked specifically with government and public sector organizations across various provinces, with a strong focus on human and social services. Charlene holds a bachelor of arts degree in sociology and justice and law enforcement from the University of Winnipeg and a master's in social work with policy planning and administration from the University of Manitoba.

And then down, second from the end, is Brian Malkowich. Brian Malkowich started his career with the Manitoba government 36 years ago and he's an ADM and has served in a variety of senior roles with social services and has been, well, the COO and ADM for two years. Brian has a track record of working and is an integral service environment dealing with complex situations and collaborating with numerous stakeholders on a variety of intricate issues to achieve positive outcomes. His many years of experience in program management, service delivery and fiscal responsibility has been a valuable contribution that really helps take strategic priorities and turns them into operational business plans.

And when I first met Brian, I was coming for a tour and meeting staff, and people were coming in to pay their rent and they were like—knew Brian by his first name. And when I was coming for tours of buildings, people were coming up to Brian and knew Brian by their—by his first name. So it just speaks to the level of relationship that he creates with folks that are living in Manitoba Housing.

Carolyn Ryan, who's over here beside our deputy minister, started with the Manitoba government in 1999 and joined Manitoba Housing as a senior policy analyst in 2004, and she just celebrated 25 years with our government. So she's been working really hard.

And since then, she has served in a variety of leadership roles within the corporation, including in housing, delivery, portfolio management, strategic initiatives and operation. She's been the CEO, so chief executive officer, of the Manitoba Housing, and assistant deputy minister in the department of Housing, Addictions, Homelessness since 2023. Carolyn also sits on the board of End Homelessness Winnipeg. She's a graduate of the University of Manitoba. Carolyn has a bachelor of arts degree in economics and a bachelor of social work and a master of social work, or—yes, a master of social work. Carolyn's married and is a proud mother of two daughters, and yes, I go and watch them perform at Folklorama every year, so.

Heather, who is—yes, she's just raised her hand. Heather joined us recently, although I met her in the sector working in mental health. She joined Manitoba Department of Housing as a deputy assistant minister as—mental health and addictions division on June 2, 2025. She has over 25 years of leading and working within the community-based organizations across Manitoba, and most recently as executive director of Heartwood Healing Centre, and that's where I first met her.

Heather's vast experience and knowledge from her time working with community organizations really was an important, and is an important, asset in her current role within our department. She leads the development of provincial policy, service and system planning in the areas of treatment and continued care related to mental health and addictions, harm reductions and support for children and youth.

And then we have Rob, just over here—just raise your hand, Rob. Rob has been with the government for over 35 years, providing guidance and advice in both programming and finance for multiple departments. He began his career in 1990 as a Fisheries biologist in the natural resources sector, where he led programs related to Indigenous commercial and recreational fisheries throughout the province.

And no, Mr. Bushie, you cannot steal him with his knowledge—or Minister Bushie—

The Chairperson: I apologize for the interruption, Honourable Minister. We just need to refer to everyone in this committee room by their ministerial title or constituency, and then through the Chair. Apologize for the interruption.

Ms. Smith: I apologize for that.

With his knowledge and experience in resource planning, he turned his attention to the finance part of government to work with both internal and external partners to secure the necessary resources to implement a number of government-wide initiatives.

So over this past year and a half, Rob has been involved in co-ordinating the department's finance and corporate services sector-section by supporting high-profile, public-facing programs for the benefit of all Manitobans. So we're very lucky to have him on our team, as we are everyone I've introduced so far.

And then we have Dwayne—right beside him—Rewniak, who is the acting assistant deputy minister and also the chief executive officer of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation.

So, Dwayne joined the department in 2001 and has over 25 years of housing experience, including 17 years of managing in a senior level environment. Dwayne brings strong background knowledge in various housing specializations, including housing policy and programs, social and affordable housing delivery models, asset management, land management and intergovernmental relationships.

* (15:20)

And, again, anywhere I go, everyone just speaks highly of, you know, this team and how they work collaboratively to ensure that Manitobans—whether it's working towards meeting Manitobans where they're at with their mental health, addictions, housing or getting housing built, this team has worked incredibly hard to ensure that those folks are getting their needs met.

And I did miss one member of our team, Jorge, who—where is—Jorge, you didn't put your own résumé in here. So Jorge's—*[interjection]* Yes, you left your own résumé out.

So Jorge joined me also in March of 2025 and is my special adviser, or my special assistant—sorry, special assistant. And he works very closely with me and does amazing work and keeps me on task. So I want to thank him for the work that he does, as well, and he works alongside Carolyn and myself.

So this is a team that supports me and supports the work and supports Manitobans, and I just want to lift the work up that you're doing, civil servants but also our political team as well. You do such incredible work to support Manitobans, you know, whether that's, again, around mental health, addictions, getting more housing built or getting those folks that are homeless or that need—making sure that those folks aren't exiting to homeless—prevention work. You're doing incredible work, and I just want to lift you all up. But those that aren't even here, I also want to live up—lift up the civil servants that are doing amazing work across our sector.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

According to rule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Bereza: First of all, welcome everybody that's here today. I appreciate your bios and that, but we have a ton of questions that we want to ask here. So I want to get moving on this.

First of all, I just wanted to make sure that this is the official booklet for supplements of Estimates for Manitoba Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, as it looks a little thin.

My first question is: What is the total new spend for treatment facilities such as RAAM clinics or the Bruce or Anne Oake recovery centres and where would it be found in the supplement here?

Thank you.

The Chairperson: I would just like to gently remind all members that in the committee we are not permitted to use exhibits. So holding materials up and referring to them and their content would be considered an exhibit. So we need to refrain from that moving forward.

Thank you.

Ms. Smith: So while my team is putting together answers to that question that that member has asked, I just want to put some facts on the record that the member had put on the record with his opening statement. He had put on the record that we had put—I can't remember what the number was—\$21,000—or \$21,000 was invested in Oak Tree Towers.

I want to let the member know that, in fact, there—it was \$4.2 million that has been invested into Oak Tree Towers since we took government.

Under the former government, there was an 87 per cent reduction in maintenance in Manitoba Housing, which left Manitobans feeling unsafe, left Manitobans with less security, which left Manitobans without tenant support services, which left Manitobans without the security that they needed. Security guards were let go, tenant service co-ordinators were let go. People were being fired. People were—staff were fearful of their jobs.

The former government was selling off social and affordable housing. It took seconds to sell. There were hundreds of units sold under the former government. And, you know, we're playing catch-up under our government, and we've made generational investments. We're seeing, you know, folks get housed with the proper supports that they needed so desperately under the failed former government.

I want to bring the attention—and I'll update the—update this committee, the numbers today that we've housed. We've actually housed 217 folks out of encampments. These are 217 Manitobans who, under the former government, left without housing, without proper support. You know, these were folks who needed mental health supports, who needed addiction supports, who needed safe and dignified housing.

And members across, you know, under the failed government, didn't provide those services. Instead, they were focused on slashing and reducing staffing, reducing security for folks and leaving them in unsafe conditions.

When I took over this role as minister and I toured Manitoba Housing, I felt like—and I've said this, you know, many times—I felt like I was in Detroit. The level of graffiti in the buildings, soon as you walked in. People were coming out to me from units, saying, like, they didn't even want to come out of their units, they felt so unsafe.

And as I was meeting with these folks and listening to them, and as we were, you know, meeting as a team and strategizing how we were going to turn this around and the amount of work that it was going to take to get this back on track and get the safety and security of our buildings that were left in disrepair, that were boarded up when families needed housing; when, quite frankly, people were left out on the street without any support.

And, you know, members across the way have the audacity to say that, you know, we are not providing housing. They didn't build one single social housing unit under their government. They didn't—they sold off housing. They fired workers. They fired security guards. They didn't invest in housing until their last year because they were so desperate to keep government. But that didn't work. Manitobans weren't fooled by that. They knew that they had already did damage under their seven years before that.

So Manitobans won't be fooled, you know, by them any—in what they're saying, because they know that we're doing the work. We've housed 217 people. We put over 2,000 units back online that they took offline and boarded up, and we put families into those units.

* (15:30)

MLA Bereza: I'm wondering if the minister's apologizing for her department, since she's saying that the FIPPA that was received was—that we received was inaccurate, especially since it took the intervention of the Ombudsman's office to get the office to meet the legal requirements for FIPPA.

I also want to mention, when we're talking about Manitoba Housing units, I can talk about two specifically in my own constituency.

One that I spent a tremendous amount of time at was Oak Tree Towers. This was a building where the minister was often invited out to our meetings that we had. We still continue to have meetings out there. There was a number of drug dealers that were living in the apartment. I can call them drug dealers because that's what the RCMP was calling them. The front door of the building was broken so many times that they finally, after our recommendations, put in a glass or a plastic that couldn't be broken so the people could feel a little more secure.

There was people that were dealing drugs in the building, and we know that because we know that's why they were thrown out. The RCMP were there on a daily basis along with the community safety officers, which, again, they could have been doing other things with.

Again, there was no services for these people. There was nowhere for them to go. The people that were living in the building were threatened to be thrown out of the building if they kept contacting Manitoba Housing because it was for the same things over and over.

We have another apartment building in Portage la Prairie called Stephens Apartments that currently right now is sitting with a 40 to 60 per cent vacancy rate in the building, and nobody seems to know why.

There is no support for these people. People yelling and screaming in the Manitoba Housing projects—in the Manitoba Housing buildings that are there, and, again, invited time and time again.

Again the minister didn't answer the question that I asked, so I will ask it once again: What is the total new spend for treatment facilities such as RAAM clinics or the Bruce and Anne Oake recovery centres? So what was the spend on that and where can I find it in the Supplement to the Estimates and expenditures?

Thank you.

Ms. Smith: So the answer to that member's question: It is in the supplements in section 24.2 on page 107. So it shows the grants to organizations that delivers these services and it is an appropriation to community organizations to deliver services. So it does show a \$5.7-million, in new dollars, for treatment spaces. And again, we are increasing and supporting and meeting people where they're at.

I want to go back to security in properties and what's being done. So we're improving the safety and well-being of tenants and employees; that's been a priority from—for our government since we took government. We heard that from tenants when we, you know, visited the buildings. When we took government, we were receiving numerous, numerous, numerous emails, phone calls from residents, from employees. The staff turnover was so high because they were fearful of working in these buildings because the previous government was not resourcing these buildings properly.

In fact, you know, they were giving—telling the people who were working there that they have to evict people immediately. There was a housing shortage, and they were telling them that if they were more than one family—and we often know that families, especially Indigenous families, will live as more than one family unit.

And under a housing crisis, we know that we can't simply just, you know, kick people out, that we have to work with them. And if there—they aren't causing issue and the other family is okay with their cousin living with them or their aunt living with them or, in fact, their grandmother or even their mother, because intergenerationally, that's how we support one another.

But under the former government, what was happening is they were—someone was staying with them over 30 days, they were issuing eviction notices.

We changed that practice and we said, we know we have a housing crisis and, in fact, what we'd like to do is work with, you know, tenants. And if that's—tenants are okay with someone living with them and they're not causing any issue in the units, then we will, in fact, work with them to ensure that that is okay. And we will work to ensure, if there are, you know, bigger units, that we can move them to a bigger unit if—we'll put—if we can, because we have a national housing crisis.

And, you know, the former failed government put us further behind, in fact, selling off housing, not supporting people well, putting them further into their addictions. When I was in—the critic, all four shelters are in my riding. I would often visit there and I would see, you know, Jeff—I'm going to use just somebody's name—I would—they would get housed. I'd come back there six months later and Jeff would be back there.

And I'd say to Jeff: Jeff, why are you back? And he'd say, well, you know, I didn't get the proper supports I needed to stay housed. And we were gathering this information. And then I'd come back and I'd see another person that was back there and they'd say, I didn't get my mental health needs met. And I—you know, so we quickly were starting to gather all this information.

And when we came into government, we knew that all this was interconnected and we needed to create a department so that we could support people well and support them along a continuum so that they can be properly supported, not—in their homes, and not just give them four walls, but help them to be well in their homes, but onto a path of success, you know, whether that's getting their mental health diagnosis, whether that's getting their addictions, you know, met, whether that's reuniting them with their families, whether that's helping them get into programs.

We just were—in this budget, we're investing \$2.5 million into adult education because we know that people want to go back to school and get into programs. And that's the kind of work that this government is doing. We recognize that people want to move and get on to—out of the circumstances that the previous government put them in. And we're going to continue to do that work because we're listening to Manitobans.

MLA Bereza: The ministry—the minister recently told the media the first thing that she did on taking office was to throw out a stack of eviction notices.

* (15:40)

Is it this policy shift why I've heard from countless Manitobans and countless Manitobans living in Manitoba Housing who feel like violent criminals are allowed to run the buildings and there are no consequences for offenders? What message does this send to Manitobans who want to feel safe in their own homes? And I asked that question because that's exactly what was going on in the Manitoba Housing unit in Portage la Prairie that I refer to as Oak Tree Towers.

There was people in there—there was everything from prostitution, there was stolen goods being broken down, including bicycles. There was—again, this is information that I had received from both the community safety officers as well as the RCMP. There was the smell of drugs cooking in some of the apartments.

So, again, I'll ask that question: Is this policy shift why I have heard of countless Manitobans who feel like violent criminals are allowed to run the buildings and there are no consequences for these offenders?

The RCMP, time after time—in Portage la Prairie, there was even other people involved that were trying to get rid of these people but couldn't, and there was no criterium for who was taken in; it was just, if they needed a place to stay, that's where they could stay. And, again, we all want to see people housed, but we all want to see them with the proper services that are needed for them.

So, again, I'll ask the minister that question, if that was—if the eviction notices to throw everybody out was a policy shift.

Ms. Smith: Okay. I just—there's a lot to unpack there.

So, first, I'm going to give you a correction from the supplements because we thought you were looking at a different book. So correction just on the page of 107, where it shows the grants to organizations that deliver these services. So it's actually in that supplement book that you have on page 37 and page 46. So, just a correction, it's not on 107.

In terms of Stephens, Stephens is a sponsored, managed building. And, right now, we aren't tenating new folks into the building because we are doing a full refresh on that building. Again, former government did not do renovations on buildings. They left them in disrepair and there is lots of repairs that need to be

done on that building. So, again, we are making sure that we are keeping buildings, you know, in good repair and that we are providing safe housing that is dignified for folks.

Again, when I came into this portfolio, I went into buildings that I—you know, I spent time as a youth in poverty, and I lived in some pretty rundown houses. But to say that I've ever lived in something like that, I never have, and I've never been in something like that. And people were living in that. And the former government was allowing people to live in that, and I was ashamed. I have to say, I was ashamed that the former government would allow people to live like that.

But we're not doing that. We're going to ensure that we are fixing up what we—the, you know, Manitobans invested in. And that's our investment, and we're going to continue to ensure that they don't go into derelict conditions.

So let's talk about some language here that the member has used. So the member has used projects to talk about housing. These aren't housing projects. These are people's places of residence. These aren't housing projects. We're not talking about—you know, these are people's places of residence.

Language matters. You are, you know, essentially undignifying people's places of residence and saying that they live in projects. You know how undignifying that you were saying to folks. Like, these are folks that deserve safe, dignified living. And for you to use language—for the member to use language like that is not okay.

So I'd ask that member to withdraw and, you know, apologize for using language like that. Housing is housing is housing, no matter where they live and what they live in. And we are building in—our government is building mixed-market housing so that you do not know what or who is living in that housing, regardless of your income.

The second point I want to raise is, that member referred to people who are sexually exploited—

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Ms. Smith: —as prostitutes. They—nobody wants to be in that—

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Ms. Smith: Then I would ask that member to withdraw that language. Because, again, these are people who are sexually exploited. These are folks who do not, you know, want to be in these circumstances. Trauma has led to some of these folks being in these circumstances. And we need to put resources in place so people aren't having to do, you know, these kinds of work. So again, language matters.

I'm going to go back to, you know, Point Douglas, and you talked about, in your opening remarks, that we were kicking folks out of places—

The Chairperson: I apologize, Honourable Minister.

Just a reminder, comments needs to be made through the Chair, and I'd kindly ask for the background conversations and interjections to cease when it's not the member that has the floor.

Thank you.

Ms. Smith: Miigwech. I thank you for that interjection, honourable Speaker.

So in the opening comments of the member, he referred to people being kicked out—kicked out of where? On—in our government, we do take, you know, criminality in our buildings seriously. We are working with Winnipeg Police, RCMP. We do work through the RTB process. And if there is criminality in our buildings, we do issue eviction notices.

And safety and security in our buildings is No. 1. And, you know, for that member to say that that is not the case is false. And we have been working 'tirelessly' to get our buildings under control, something that the members opposite created.

MLA Bereza: I just want to point out while we're here, we need to get some questions answered, you know, and we haven't had any of that, that we've heard any answers to any of these questions.

Regarding the Stephens Apartment in Portage la Prairie, which I've been in a number of times: I've been through a number of these apartments. There is a tremendous amount of, like I said, vacancy in those apartments. To—the people that are running the apartment or renting out the apartment have told me over and over that they have been asking this government when those apartments will be refurbished, when they will be going through these changes, when they will be able to have people live in them.

* (15:50)

So if the minister could answer, so I can let my constituents know, the Stephens Apartments in Portage la Prairie, when will a refurbishing start and when will those apartments be able to be lived in again?

As we are seeing from what we heard in the media yesterday that the amount of homeless people in Manitoba is at record levels right now. None of us want to see people 'unhabited'; we want to see people taken care of; we want to see people have the proper services.

But again my question to the minister is: Can the minister let us know when the Manitoba Housing building that is being looked after by somebody else in Portage la Prairie, referred to as the Stephens Apartments, that the third party has been asking for it to be refurbished, when will that start?

Ms. Smith: So I did let the member know that, you know, the Stephens Apartments is third-party managed and that it was going through a deep refresh.

Communications with the tenants has happened. It's—approximately \$13.4 million is going to be put into interior and exterior upgrades. That work is going to start in '26-27 and it'll take approximately one and a half years, if everything goes as planned. It'll also include mechanical and electrical systems that need to be upgraded. The design and drawings are underway.

And again, holding vacancies is about minimizing disruptions once repairs start. We can't tenant, you know, these apartments and then move people. That's disrupting people's ecosystems, just like the members opposite did when they, you know, didn't support folks at Lions Manor, when seniors were begging the former government to support them when they—when that building got sold off; just like 385 Smith when they got—when that building got sold off and all those tenants had to move out.

And I'll add that many of those went into encampments, went into shelter and then later into encampments, many of whom I spoke to that later, unfortunately, you know, due to their own safety, had to stay up all night, got deeper into addictions because of their own safety and didn't have a government that supported them, didn't have a government who provided safe housing that, you know, took seconds to sell.

And that was, you know, getting rid of Manitoba Housing, which is a Crown jewel, which is the only way that we can ensure that we are providing rent geared to income—true rent geared to income as a

government. And we have, you know, the—we have that responsibility.

So I just got a confirmation that construction will begin in fall of 2026 at the Stephens Apartments, you know. And that's something that we should celebrate, that we are investing in the Crown jewel of Manitoba Housing to ensure that electrical is being upgraded, that these folks are going to have a beautiful new apartment to come back to—the exterior and the interiors; that the mechanical systems are being upgraded, something that, you know, the previous government didn't do in many of these buildings.

And now our government is having to, you know, play catch-up and bring these buildings up to code and ensure that Manitobans have what they should have always had—a beautiful apartment to live in, a safe apartment to build—to live in, to have staff that support them in a way that is conducive to having an ecosystem where everyone can come out of their apartment and say hi to their neighbours and feel safe and have a common space where they can gather.

But under the former government, that wasn't the case. People wouldn't come out of their apartments because the former government, they fired security guards, they fired staff. They were telling staff that they had to turn the work around that they were doing instead of building community, evict people. And, you know, we've turned that around, yes.

And I said we are still working with RCMP and Winnipeg police when there is a criminal matter. We are evicting people because we are tough on crime and we're tough on the proceeds of crime and we are keeping our building safe and secure and ensuring that, you know, people that are living in our buildings have a safe environment and they can build an ecosystem where they can build a community, unlike the former government who cut, slashed and didn't value community and the ecosystems that were built there.

MLA Bereza: I just want to refer back to the minister's comments a few minutes ago about some of the language that I was using. The language I was using was the language that I heard from the RCMP and also the CSO was there.

I do want to ask, you know, when it does come to—and Stephens Apartment, because it is in my in my constituency. I was just there last week and the third party that is looking after it took me into some of the apartments that are sitting vacant and empty. They look fine.

Could the minister let us know what repairs are required in those buildings and why nobody can live in them at this time? Again, that was why the third party took me in there because they were saying, at the time to me, that they thought that some of these places were able to be lived in. I'm not saying all, but some of them were—that they took me into. I'm not sure why there wasn't somebody living in them.

Thank you.

* (16:00)

Ms. Smith: Language does matter, and as a teacher, you know, when I was teaching, I was a role model in front of a classroom and I modelled what I wanted my students to be like. And we, in the last couple of weeks, learned that the Leader of the Opposition, who the member opposite sits beside, lied in the House. And, you know, the member had an opportunity to stand up and be a bigger person. And, again, that member talks about, this was the RCMP's language. That member has an opportunity to change that language and be that bigger person.

So I again, through the Chair, would invite that member to correct, you know, the RCMP's language. I often do that; I go and—

The Chairperson: The—I'd just like to remind all members we are not permitted to use the word lied in the Chamber or in the committee room, so I'll just kindly ask the minister to withdraw that statement.

Ms. Smith: Withdrawn.

So we heard early in the week that there was—you know, someone said they didn't say something and we know that that was untrue. And we know that because it was—the recording came out. And the member sits beside that member in the House, and that member had an opportunity to correct the record and not stand beside that person who said something that was untrue.

And, again, I want to just say that as an educator, you know, when I see something that is not right, that I'm not a bystander, that I'm an upstander; that I've, in the past, gone and done culturally relevant training for RCMP. And I've talked to them about language and that language is important and when we talk about anti-racism training, this is important.

And you are a leader. You are an MLA for, you know, your constituent, but you're an MLA for all of the province and you have an opportunity. So I'm going to preface that and then I'm going to just go back to Stephens again.

The Chairperson: I'd just like to remind all folks that we need to have all comments and questions directed through the Chair.

Ms. Smith: So I'm going to go back to Stephens now and Stephens needs a lot of repairs. Again, it's exterior, interior upgrades. And I would have asked—I would ask that member, you know, in that former failed government, why they didn't do the work on this apartment years ago when it was needed. This apartment is 30, 40 years old. Could have, you know, had the mechanical and electrical systems upgraded, probably years ago, but we're, again, we're having to come behind and do the work that should have been done years ago.

Do we want to put people in these apartments and then have to uproot them and move them? And, again, I used the, you know, the example of Lions Manor. That was a 55+ building. That ecosystem was disrupted because the former government didn't, you know, get involved and help support those seniors. That's no longer a 55+ building. That ecosystem's been disrupted. Those folks have moved in various places because they can't afford that rent because the former government didn't intervene and help those folks.

We will not be putting folks into a building where we're going to have to uproot them in the fall of next year—the fall of this year—and have to move them. So for that member to say, to put people in there and then to move them again, is, you know, shameful. I wouldn't want to work some—move somewhere and then have to be moved in a few—less than a year.

So I'm going to tell the member the scope of the proposed work in the next set of questions because there's like a lot of—I don't—well, maybe I can do this in 40 seconds.

So the deep refresh work includes: renovation of exterior, interiors, such as improved building assemblies of exterior wall finish; siding; windows; reconfiguration of studio suites to increase the number of one-bedroom suites.

So, again, there's a big need in Portage for one-bedroom suites, reconfiguration of main floor suites to accessibility suites—a need in Portage for accessibility units, interior unit and communal area upgrades, crawl space improvement, mechanical and plumbing upgrades, fire, life safety upgrade—you would want that for people of Portage in that building.

MLA Bereza: I didn't hear in there, and maybe I missed it or maybe it wasn't there yet: is the third party that's looking after the building, and correct me

if I'm wrong, you know, please let me know, but they said the place was infested with cockroaches, just like the current Portage hospital is infested with cockroaches.

So what I'm asking is, why the delay on the—the new Portage regional hospital when there's cockroaches in the current Portage hospital? So why is it okay to have people not living in Stephens Apartments, but it is okay for people to be living in the current Portage hospital that now the people will not move in there until next year at this time?

* (16:10)

Ms. Smith: So, you know, that member is raising questions about pest management in hospitals, so I would urge that member to take that question to Health. That's a health-related question that's—you know, is about the hospital that's got nothing to do with housing.

But what I will share with that member is that, you know, since we took government, the pest—the number of units that require treatment has gone down by over half. Under the former failed government, they were evicting people. They weren't supporting people.

Under our government, we actually are supporting and helping people that have accessibility issues, that have mental health issues, that need extra supports—and moving their furniture, we have folks that will come in and help support them. Under the former government, what they were doing is they were just evicting people. We're not taking that approach.

We know that we need to work and support tenants and meet them where they're at, something the former government never did. That's why we see the—you know, the high numbers of people in encampments, in shelters unsupported. We're going to continue to meet people where they're at.

We're going to continue to, you know, ensure that we're putting funds into maintaining our Crown jewel, Manitoba Housing, something the former government never did. They put boards on our Crown jewel and left people out in the cold, left people without services or supports.

We know that, from speaking and knocking on doors and listening to Manitobans, that they don't want to see people in encampments. They don't want to see people unsupported. They want to see people in homes with dignified support, with—you know, ensuring that they get mental health supports, ensuring that

there's a balanced approach. Unlike members opposite who are like, let's not save lives in Manitoba, let's, you know, leave people on the streets without any supports and let them die of overdoses. We know that Manitobans don't want that.

We can't, you know, support Manitobans without ensuring that we lead them to the supports and services that they need. And we're doing that right in our buildings, you know, whether that's through ensuring that we are working with Manitobans that need supports because they have accessibility issues and can't move their furniture if they do have pest management issues, whether that's—they need deep refreshes in their buildings.

And we're not going to continue to tenant those buildings because we don't want to disrupt an ecosystem and move them six months later, which is—which the member opposite is suggesting we do. You know, we're talking about the fall of 2026 and this member is saying, tenant that building and then disrupt them and move them out.

Like, these folks need accessible units in Portage la Prairie, which our government is going to do in the Stephens building. In Portage la Prairie, they need more single units in that building, which our government is going to do in this deep refresh. They need more. They need to—an upgrade on fire life safety. That member doesn't want that to happen in that building? We're doing that work because the former government didn't do that work in those buildings.

We're going to continue to support and meet Manitobans where they're at. We're continuing to put more housing online. Former government didn't build one single social housing unit. Only in their last year did they start putting money into maintenance because they were desperate to keep government. We're not that kind of government.

We're going to support, meet Manitobans where they're at. Because we know that we need to support them so they can get on a path of success, into programs, into jobs, you know, so they can get into market rent.

We believe in, you know, Manitobans, whether they're in encampments, whether they're in shelters, whether they've been in incarceration and they're coming out and they need another chance. We're going to help and support them wherever they're at.

Unlike members opposite who just say, pull your bootstraps up and, you know, do it, we know that people need help and Manitobans have sent us here

with that direction: to help and support, meet people where they're at and we're going to do that because we believe in them.

MLA Bereza: So what I'm hearing here, because I'm not getting an answer on this, is the minister seems to say that, you know, they're not—or they're—they don't want to disrupt people that are living in places like Stephens Apartments because of the cockroach issues. But it's okay to leave people living in a hospital with cockroach issues.

Is that what you're supporting? That it is okay to be—have a double standard; that it's okay for cockroaches to be in hospitals, like which is currently in the Portage general hospital right now. And we don't want to move people out of there to get them away from these cockroaches until this year at next time—next year at this time, according to this government.

But where there's an apartment with cockroaches, they should be treated differently and those cockroaches should be getting—be ridden of immediately. And yet, we leave people that could be lying in bed dying in a hospital where there's cockroaches in the hospital.

Is that correct, yes or no?

The Chairperson: Just a reminder to all members that we need to make sure all comments and questions are through the Chair.

And we've strayed a little bit away from the matter at hand today. The topic is the Housing, Addictions and Homelessness. And so we just ask the member to rephrase the question in a manner that's directly related to this portfolio.

Thank you.

MLA Bereza: Why is there a stark difference in the different departments in government regarding this issue?

The Chairperson: So what we are needing here is for the questions to be tied back to the Estimates specifically, not just the department as a whole. So the Estimates is the matter at hand here today, so something in the Estimates book that was made reference to earlier.

Thank you.

MLA Bereza: We'll move on from this. We were talking about cockroaches in apartments and I was asking about cockroaches in hotels—or sorry—in hospitals. And, again, it's still a pest, and the only

reason I said that is there's different departments, so why is one department treating it different than others?

I'll move on to my next question, which is: What is the total new spend for drug consumption?

* (16:20)

Ms. Smith: I would ask for clarification on that question. The member asked for—what is the spend on drug consumption. Is that member referring to what is, you know, what is the government investing into a supervised consumption site?

And, again, like, we can't put a dollar figure on saving lives. There has been no, you know, lives lost in any supervised consumption site in all of Canada, and I would point that member to the data that's on the Canadian website.

We know that Manitoba is taking a four-pillared approach, which is harm reduction so that we can lead people to treatment and recovery. We're taking a balanced approach when it comes to enforcement. You know, we're tough on crime, tough on the proceeds of crime. We're standing up a meth task force. We have the meth—the top person working on—that's working on the meth task force and ensuring that we are taking off—taking these drugs off of the streets.

And there's been, you know, some high-level drug busts that have happened in the community lately, and I really want to uplift the work that's been done on the front line—whether that's RCMP or Winnipeg police—in ensuring that these toxic drugs are getting off the streets.

We all are doing—we all want the same thing, right? We all want to keep our community safe. We all want to keep our kids safe. We all want to make sure that these toxic drugs are getting off the street, and I think we can say we're all on the same team when it comes to that. We want to keep Manitobans alive and we want to sure—ensure that we're educating Manitobans, which is why we've, you know, invested into the school nutrition program.

And we're even going further than that in this new budget: We're ensuring that kids are getting onto buses free so that transit isn't an issue in how kids are getting to school. Some families can't afford a school bus. You know, I lived in—quite a way from school, and when my kids were in—when they were in middle school, school bus was free. But then when they went into high school, I now had to pay for a school bus, so, you know, parents can't always afford that. So this is ensuring that kids can get to school free on transit.

We're ensuring that parents can also get free day-care as well. And this is, you know, going to be in some of our Manitoba Housing buildings and ensuring that when we're building, that we're building with that in mind. We have mixed-market units that are being built with daycares that are going to be in there. So, again, it's transformative work that is taking a whole-of-government approach and we are ensuring that we are, you know, making investments that are going to be generational.

I was talking to federal minister Chartrand the other day and we were talking about generational change and, what is it going to take and how are we going to do it and, you know just a big tackle.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: The member for Portage la Prairie, on a point of order.

MLA Bereza: Point of order on—we're talking about housing.

So am I okay to go ahead? So point of order on—we're talking here about housing and homelessness and we're talking about school nutrition and that, so that is my point of order. And bring it back to the relevance of what we're here to discuss today, which was my question regarding the drug consumption site.

The Chairperson: The minister, on the same point of order.

Ms. Smith: The point of order is, you know, out of order in terms of—we are taking a four-pillared, balanced approach, and education is part of that approach.

And I know that member is referring to transit, and getting kids to school is part of the education part of that. And, you know, schools are a part of education. And ensuring that kids are getting to school, graduating, is a part of the whole-of-government approach.

The Chairperson: So I thank all members for your comments.

This is not a point of order. Within the allotted five minutes per member for speaking and their contributions from both sides, we allow a little bit of variance and leeway and hope that all members draw it back before the end of their speaking point. We would get absolutely nothing accomplished here if we interjected at every point in time.

So I will now re-address the minister for the response.

* * *

Ms. Smith: As I was saying, we take a four-pillared approach, and the last pillar I was talking about was education and ensuring that we are getting kids to school, that they're graduating on time and that we have many tools in the toolbox to ensure that, you know, where we are taking a balanced approach, whether that is with adults and whether that is with youth and whether that's with families.

I want to, you know, just turn our attention to some great work that's being done right across our great province and uplift all of those organizations that are on the front lines each and every day that aren't trained to do the work that they're doing. You know, I think about Main Street Project, I think about North End Women's Centre—and I think that that member was at committee when those folks came and spoke—and I think about Point Douglas women's centre.

Many of these organizations came and talked about having to do overdose reversals. And that's not their work, right? Their work is to support and support women.

But they've had to, you know, pivot and, unfortunately, support people. And that's why it's so important that we open up a supervised consumption site, so that we can lead these folks that are unsupervised in the community to these supports, so that we can get them connected with the resources that they so desperately needed for so long.

You know, under the former government, they had a premier who threw a report on the floor that made the recommendation that a supervised consumption be opened. They had a minister that said that they went to Vancouver and visited a supervised consumption site and never even went inside: went and gawked at people outside, you know. How shameful.

And I'll continue on that line in my next question—or my next answer.

MLA Bereza: May we take a five-minute break?

The Chairperson: Is it agreed by all members that we take a five-minute recess? *[Agreed]*

The committee will now recess. We're starting the five-minute clock now.

The committee recessed at 4:29 p.m.

The committee resumed at 4:35 p.m.

The Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come back to order.

MLA Bereza: The minister alarmed me just now when she said she doesn't know how much her government is spending on drug consumption. Is that because of all the programs the minister is funding but not being open with Manitobans about, like the secret safe supply program Main Street Project is providing?

What provincial funding is being used to facilitate that organization and their program of literally giving drugs out to Manitobans?

* (16:40)

Ms. Smith: I did ask that member to clarify his question. So I didn't know what that member was referring to. He referred to drug—I don't remember even what that member was referring to, but I asked him to clarify whether it was a supervised consumption site that—if that was what he was asking, what the funding was—what he was asking what the funding was allocated for.

So I will give him two numbers. The first is for MOPS, which is a Mobile Overdose Prevention Site. So that is \$830,000 for '25-26.

And I know that member has spoken about—in proximity of where that mobile site does park. In January 2025, there were 10 overdoses at Logan and Main within a 45-minute span due to a 'partercularly' toxic back—batch of street drugs. We're still seeing that toxic drug supply out there.

That mobile overdose prevention work that they do is based on where they're seeing overdoses happening. And they're responding to ensure that people are getting supports and services that they need so that people aren't losing their lives in the absence of a supervised consumption site. I want to uplift them for the work that they're doing. These are folks that, again, the failed former government didn't provide funding for.

When we got into government, we supported these folks because we know how valuable the work is that they do. They are on the front line supporting—meeting people where they're at, helping to save lives.

But they're not only doing that. They are—you know, when someone presents and says, I need supports and services, they are leading them to those supports and services. In fact, they've helped house numerous amounts of people and get them stabilized.

Sunshine House does incredible work. They're one of our wrap-around support providers. They are working with our 2SLGBTQIA folks and ensuring folks that are in campments under the failed government didn't support into housing.

We are ensuring that there are, you know, many types of housing for folks, and this is an amazing service provider that is doing incredible work to support and ensure that people are properly supported. So I just want to uplift those folks and just—you know, I can't speak highly enough about the work that they do to support and meet people at their—where they're at.

As far as a supervised consumption site goes, we have spent zero dollars on operations. As the member knows, we are working on opening up that site. And, again, it's about supporting, meeting people where they're at, but more importantly, getting them onto a path of recovery. You can't get people onto a path of recovery if the supports and services aren't there and you're not providing and leading them to someone who can build relationships with them.

Right now, we're seeing people use unsupported, unsupervised, in businesses, on the street, in parks, in playgrounds where kids are, you know, going to school. And Manitobans have told us they don't want to see this. They want to see people supported.

They—you know, we saw a government who threw a report on the floor. We saw a former failed minister that said they went to Vancouver and visited the site: never went in, never talked to, you know, the service providers that were there that were providing essential life-saving services, that were medically trained to provide these folks with services.

We—I want to be clear that we are not providing safe supply. We've been very clear from that stance, as a government, that we are not providing a safe supply.

And, as far as Main Street Project goes, that—they've been—that is a private funder. They received a federal grant for the machine, and we are providing zero funding for that.

MLA Bereza: So just, again, I just want to let the minister know where I got this information from.

So it was a CBC article that was done in February of this year that Main Street Project is running a safe supply program for opioids. Again, so Main Street Project is providing drugs for people out there: Main Street Project's safe supply program provides those

addicted primarily to opioids with a prescribed daily amount of opioid hydromorphone.

So I'll ask the minister again if they are putting any money into this; and No. 2 if the minister supports what Main Street Project is doing with the safe supply of opioids.

Ms. Smith: Again, you know, I don't know if that member's not listening, but I did say we are not doing safe supply as a government. Main Street Project received a grant for the machine. It is privately funded. And as that member in—you know, introducing and reading from that article, it is prescribed; it is prescribed medication that these member—folks are receiving.

So, again, I don't know if that member, you know, is supporting members—supporting folks in getting prescriptions. Like, I'm on hormone replacement therapy. I go to a doctor to receive my prescription. Like, I go to a pharmacist to receive my prescription. And we know that people are on OAT, you know, we know that people need to receive medications.

We have been very clear, as a government, we are not providing safe supply. We are in full enforcement of anything illegal, whether we're tough on crime, proceeds of crime. We are taking a harm reduction approach so that we can lead people onto a path of recovery, which is why we've invested into, you know, treatment and recovery.

But we've even gone further in terms of putting housing online and making sure that people are, you know, properly supported, something that the previous government never did. And we can't afford to continue to leave people out in tents and allow them to, you know, go into addictions or go deeper into addictions, which is what the former government did. And we're seeing, you know, the aftermath of that. When we took government, twenty—almost 22,000 units were in—had boards on them. We came in, we took those boards off.

There's still more work to be done. We're doing that work. We're going to continue to do that work. We've, you know, been working with partners. We've built capacity around Indigenous partnerships. We've worked with First Nations, with our Métis, with our Inuit.

We have, you know, Inuit service providers that are providing wrap-around supports in housing. We have First Nations that are providing wrap-around supports to First Nations urban members. We have

Métis folks that are providing housing supports to Métis members as well.

And we know that, you know, folks that are homeless or that are coming from shelters or that are at risk of becoming homeless need proper supports, and the former government didn't provide those supports.

* (16:50)

We are ensuring that we have the staffing in our buildings that are providing proper supports with tenant service co-ordinators. We've hired an Indigenous service community co-ordinator who's working with our community to provide supports, whether that's, you know, cultural programming. We've had some, you know, deaths in our buildings, and we have a practice where we smudge every single unit when— if someone passes away. We want to ensure, you know, that that unit, in our belief, that that is smudged and it's purified and anything that is negative in there is brought back to positivity.

And we've just done so, so much work that the failed government didn't do in terms of maintenance, in terms of building up, you know, the stock of housing. We're going to continue to work with our partners and ensure that people are properly supported.

And we've seen the crime rate go down. We've seen, you know, the folks, in terms of having to be in survival mode, they've—they're so thankful to have a government that is supporting them; that is providing safe, dignified living; that they can build an ecosystem where they can have a neighbour who they can talk to; that they can go to a common space that is clean, that is nice; that they can do their laundry and they can have a security system that will respond, unlike the former government who cut all those services.

MLA Bereza: Minister said she wasn't supporting safe supply. When was she made aware of the—of this program?

They aren't doing supply. They're supporting Main Street Project to the tune of millions of dollars.

How does the minister square the circle of funding to an organization who provides this program? Their support is condoning this program.

Ms. Smith: Again, I want to remind that member that our government is not doing safe supply; that this is a prescribed medically oversight program that, you know, is life-saving for five individuals, and if that member is saying that that is not a service that should

be provided, perhaps that they should be speaking with Main Street Project. We do not fund that program.

We are a funder of the shelter, of detox, of some transitional services. They have private funders and donors, and they have some autonomy to do, you know, some other programming.

And what I will say to that member is, do they not—like—they do some really incredible, valuable work. They are sheltering hundreds of people. They are providing support services to many vulnerable folks, leading in them onto a path of recovery, leading them into transitional housing, often into jobs and out of a system, and into market housing, into jobs.

And some of them actually end up working at Main Street Project. And I've shared this story many times. When my mom and dad came—my dad came from Ontario, Cornwall; my mom came from her First Nation community of Pine Creek—they both ended up at Main Street Project. And, you know, it's a valuable service. And my dad ended up actually working at Main Street Project. And they still continue that practice today.

And so, if we were to, you know, as that member is saying, stop funding Main Street Project, where would these folks go? They provide valuable services. They do incredible work. They are moving people along a continuum that they've been doing for decades. I probably wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for their work. So I want to uplift Main Street Project for the work that they're doing. And, unlike members opposite, we'll continue to work and work collaboratively and work alongside and do life-saving work.

That's why we're working towards opening up a supervised consumption site, because, again, it's about working in a balanced approach and leading people to treatment and recovery.

And, again, we are not providing funding for this service. This was a federal grant that they received. It's prescription-based and it's got medical oversight. And they have, you know, funders and donors. And we, again, provide funding for the shelter detox and transitional services. And they do amazing work. And we will continue to fund the amazing work that they're doing in terms of providing shelter services, detox services and transitional services.

And if members opposite think that they shouldn't be funded, then he should square that circle with his constituents and tell them why they should put all those hundreds of people out on the streets and where

they should go and be sheltered and get their support from.

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

ROOM 255

ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (14:50)

The Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Advanced Education and Training.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: I do.

The Chairperson: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Good afternoon, chairs and members of the committee. Thank you for being here today. It's a privilege to appear before this committee to present the 2026-27 Estimates for the Department of Advanced Education and Training.

I am joined here by a dedicated team of senior officials who helped lead this important work. First and foremost, Jan Forster; she is the deputy minister and long-time civil servant and I'm incredibly grateful to have Jan's experience and wisdom on the team.

I have Carlos Matias; he's executive financial officer and assistant deputy minister of finance and the keeper of all of the knowledge of this department over the last number of years and even decades.

Kate Bolton, assistant deputy minister of student access and success. Kate is also a dedicated civil servant who is solutions-oriented and absolutely understands the value of the student experience in post-secondary in Manitoba.

I have Colleen Kachulak; she's assistant deputy minister of Advanced Education and the keeper of all of the rest of the knowledge.

The team—I could not ask for a better team of folks to work with in the department and I'm incredibly grateful. This has been a trying year in the post-secondary sector and we have weathered it as well as we possibly could and it is in no small part because of the amazing staff that are in the department.

And last, but certainly not least, I have my director of ministerial affairs, Serina Pottinger. She is keeper of my calendar, and my temperament some days, and incredibly grateful for the support and dedication that Serina brings every single day.

Over the past year, I've had the immense honour of being out in communities meeting with learners, educators, institutional leaders, Indigenous partners, employers and many, many, many community organizations. And I've also had the opportunity to speak publicly about the work under way to strengthen Manitoba's post-secondary and adult learning systems.

These conversations and the issues that Manitobans have been hearing about in the public arena have reinforced a clear message: people want a system that is accessible, affordable, responsive, and they want it to deliver real outcomes for families, communities and Manitoba's workforce.

Our department plays a vital role in supporting Manitoba's social and economic development and we do this by ensuring adult and post-secondary education is sustainable, accessible, accountable and affordable and by partnering with institutions and communities to align training and learning opportunities with Manitoba's needs.

Our work reflects the priorities Manitobans have seen this government advance publicly, which is really building health care, lowering costs for Manitobans and growing our economy and, importantly, advancing reconciliation.

In the 2026-27 Estimates, we set out how we will deliver on those priorities this year. Our department is working closely with Manitoba's post-secondary institutions and health partners to continue to expand and sustain health-care training across the province and particularly in areas where shortages are most acute and where training closer to home supports recruitment and retention.

So in rural areas, on First Nations, northern remote communities, we're working with our partners to ensure that there are opportunities for Manitobans in all of those places and that will continue to improve health-care outcomes for all Manitobans.

* (15:00)

Since 2023, Manitoba has added 209—or 290 new health training seats, with 67 per cent—that's 196 of those seats—focused in rural and northern communities.

In '26-27, the department is making targeted investments to strengthen Manitoba's health workforce pipeline, including \$115,000 in operating and \$950,000 in capital to create 32 paramedic seats at Assiniboine College across two rural rotating sites; \$57,000 to sustain the expansion of health-care aide seats from 30 to 130 seats annually at University College of the North; maintaining expanded capacity in remote communities and supporting 30 additional nursing students for the 2026 intake of French-speaking nurses at Université de Saint-Boniface; \$122,000 in operating to support the new paramedicine direct entry stream at Red River College Polytechnic and improving accessibility for learners and—directly entering from high school.

We've made some significant changes to our training offerings in this province to ensure that even more Manitobans are able to access entry into those training programs and that they are supported very well during their learning.

Budget 2026 also provides ongoing operating funding and an additional \$20.1 million in capital to sustain previously approved 258 training seats. This includes 30 new doctor training seats, 15 new physician assistant seats, 25 new nurse practitioner seats, 10 new physical therapy seats, 10 occupational therapy seats, 16 paramedic seats, 20 combined laboratory and X-ray technology seats, 20 medical laboratory technology seats, 100 health-care aide seats and 12 nurse re-entry seats.

We are also advancing major capital investments that support training capacity and modernize learning environments. This includes \$14.6 million in capital in '26-27 to advance construction of the new Bannatyne facility at University of Manitoba. That's \$5.5 million capital for equipment purchases and laboratory renovations to support the combined laboratory and X-ray technology and medical laboratory technology program delivery at Assiniboine College.

And all of these investments amount to more training opportunities that will help rebuild the decimated health-care system in Manitoba and ensure that, for years to come, we have a pipeline available for students to train here, and especially in our rural communities, to give young people the ability to see a future for themselves where they are.

For many Manitobans, the decision to pursue post-secondary education is made at the kitchen table, weighing costs, family responsibilities and the hope that education will open doors. Our job is to make sure

those doors stay open and that supports are clear, dependable and focused on student success.

Budget '26-27 reflects this as we continue to invest in province-wide affordability supports through the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, maintaining the \$10.5 million in '26-27 across partner institutions and organizations.

Budget '26-27 also supports students through Manitoba Student Aid by providing \$132 million to meet rising demands for student loans and grants. We don't want finances to be a barrier to students accessing post-secondary, and we'll continue to work to increase those supports for students.

The data shows that more students are benefiting from our increased investments and service improvements. In '24-25, Manitoba Student Aid experienced a 26.4 increase in funded students from '22-23, from 17,705 to 22,387. That is over 20,000 Manitobans who are opening doors for their future and are filling the workforce needs that this province has.

The total amount of Manitoba student loans and grants disbursed in '24-25 increased by 46.9 per cent, from \$83 million to \$122 million, and the total number of Manitoba bursary recipients increased by 17.8 per cent. The operational volume behind these results is significant, and in the '24-25 program year, Manitoba Student Aid processed 29,266 applications, reflecting both growing demand and strong delivery capacity.

I want to take another moment to shout-out Kate Bolton here, who is in charge of the student access program, and thank you sincerely for providing access to all of those Manitobans to receive supports for post-secondary. In '26-27, the department is enhancing student protection by adopting a Manitoba First approach, providing the Manitoba portion of student aid for students studying in Manitoba.

This ensures funding supports are directed to quality programs delivered by institutions accountable under Manitoba's legislative oversight.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Does the critic from official opposition have an opening statement?

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Well, thank you very much for everyone being here today. This is such an important part of our democratic process, being able to, you know, have conversations together and talk about what we're, you know, doing for the

province and about Advanced Education and Training for Manitoba.

As the MLA for Morden-Winkler and as the official opposition critic for Advanced Education and Training, I carry a great responsibility. It is my duty to hold the minister and the government accountable to the decisions that they make and the policies that they implement and it's an important part of what we do to make sure that we take care and meet all the needs of our—of those in our province. So, it's an honour for me to be here.

Education plays a key role in shaping the future of our communities and our economy. It affects our families, our children, our students. In both high school and post-secondary settings, students rely strongly on programs, supportive teachers and accessibility opportunities to build skills that they need for their life and for their work.

Trades education is also very important as academic pathways for many, many of the—those that don't want to go into a different kind of role, but they want to be hands-on and those are important programs as well. It gives students practical, hands-on experience and prepares them for careers that are essentially—essential to our province and that we need for everyday life.

I'm grateful for the schools and the educators who work very hard every day to support our students and our kids, essentially. Their dedication makes life—makes a real difference for the—in the lives of the students that they work with, especially for those who may struggle or need extra guidance. It's such an important role in our society and in our economy.

Many students succeed because of the encouragement and the effort that these teachers and staff put into their students. Many of these students wouldn't be where they are today without those that are supporting and encouraging them, so I just want to say thank you again to our educators across the board and our post-secondary as well.

At the same time, there are serious concerns that need attention, of course. In many—in Manitoba there is a growing gap in skilled labour and skilled labour training opportunities, in our health care as well. Many students are interested in better—who are interested in trades face limited spaces to enter programs, long wait times and lists and the lack of resources to get them to the place where they need to go to for the school, especially those in rural Manitoba. This makes it harder for them to follow

their chosen path and contribute to the workforce. Post-secondary schools are also feeling the effects of less international students. It's also one of the big things that have happened in the last little while.

* (15:10)

Students are facing increased challenges, including financial pressures, limited guidance and uncertainty about their future options. These issues can discourage them from continuing their education or training. And I think it's our job as legislators, and those in positions such as we have, to make sure we can do everything we can to support and encourage the post-secondary education and the skilled training that we can have offered in our province.

I bring these—I will bring these concerns forward to the minister and the committee with the hope that improvements can be made and that we can work collaboratively. That's my goal, is that we all are working for the same goal together to make sure that we can provide what we need for our students in our province and for the families, so that we can contribute—they can contribute to a healthy life and our economic growth of our province.

It's our goal to support, strengthen our workforce and build a more stable future for Manitoba. And I think that's all of our goals here today. So in our conversations, I hope that we can have good conversations and I'm looking forward to hearing information and—from the minister today.

So thank you very much for listening to me. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply.

Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 44.1(a) contained in resolution 44.1.

At this time, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that minister reintroduce the staff in attendance.

MLA Cable: I'd like to reintroduce the staff who are here with me today.

We have deputy minister, Jan Forster; director of ministerial affairs, Serina Pottinger; assistant deputy minister of student access and success, Kate Bolton; assistant deputy minister, Colleen Kachulak; and Carlos Matias—I always like to call him the money

man, but he has a more important title than that; he is the CFO.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

According to rule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner with questions put separately on all resolutions, once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you, honourable—how do I address him? [*interjection*]

Honourable Chair, quick question: Would the minister be able to just introduce everybody one more time? The mic wasn't on and I didn't quite hear. If that's okay? Okay.

MLA Cable: I am pleased to have with me today Jan Forster, deputy minister; Carlos Matias, executive financial officer and assistant deputy minister of finance; Kate Bolton, assistant deputy minister of student access and success; Colleen Kachulak, assistant deputy minister of advanced education; and Serina Pottinger, director of ministerial affairs.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you, Chair—deputy Chair? Chair? Okay. Thank you.

I'll just introduce Shannon Martin. He's here with me today as my backup and my research if I have any questions. So—and he is quite the history in this building, and it's nice to have him here to join me. Thanks, Shannon.

All right, okay. All right, so I'll just kind of ask a couple questions, and, anyways, it's great to meet all of your staff; it's really nice to meet all of you. I know we've kind of chatted a little bit and—I think during some of the briefings, but what you guys do is such an important thing, so thank you for being here and I'm looking forward to hearing the different information and stuff that you will bring today.

So one of my questions is: If the minister could just let me know as of January 1, 2026, how many students were enrolled at MITT currently, as of January 1?

* (15:20)

The Chairperson: Before I recognize the minister, a gentle reminder to all members to put their questions and responses through the Chair, please.

MLA Cable: I want to start by thanking the staff and administration at both MITT and Red River College Polytech for being so incredibly co-operative during this really difficult time of transition. As we're all aware in this room, the federal government made unilateral changes to international student allotments which have resulted in the current model at MITT not being sustainable.

So in being responsible with public dollars and ensuring that opportunities remain for Manitoba students in the Manitoba labour market, the responsible thing and the, I would venture, more visionary practice of looking to see how we can ensure that the best pieces of MITT are maintained is through this current transition model.

The member has asked about enrolment numbers at MITT and I have a full breakdown per category if that's helpful. So I'm going to start with the '24-25 school year and say that the high school portion was 436. The domestic post-secondary portion was 566. The MA millwright—the apprenticeships was 35 and the industry partnerships had 195 students. The international students were 1,988. The language programs were 318 students and the adult learning centres had 1,125 students.

For the '25-26 year, and you will quickly see where we have gotten to here, the '25-26 numbers, the high school number is 500. The domestic post-secondary is 581. The millwright is 48. The industry partnerships is up to 426. The international student allotment, 878. Language programs, 420, and adult learning centre, 897.

And why these numbers are important is because it clearly shows that there is a significant reduction in international students, and the majority of students that were attending MITT in the past were international students. That is no longer sustainable.

We have partnered with Red River to ensure a smooth transition for the programs that continue to serve Manitoba labour market, continue to serve Manitoba students and continue to be in high demand in our province.

The transition is going well. There is a good working relationship between both institutions, and the end result will see Manitoba appreciating even more training opportunities, specifically in the trades and in other high-needs occupations in Manitoba.

This is—the transition piece is difficult always, and again I thank the staff and the administration and the students for their patience in this transition, and

once again, reiterate that the unilateral decisions by the federal government have had an immense impact on Manitoba's post-secondaries and post-secondaries across the country.

I awoke to another news story this morning of further closures in Ontario. There are consolidations and full closures happening in Ontario. Manitoba is weathering this better than most.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Hiebert: Okay, thank you for that information. It's good to see the numbers. I will say that, of course this has got to be a stressful time for post-secondary institutions across the board with all the instability that's been happening, and that it must be a big adjustment and stressor for a lot of the staff working at both MITT and at Red River College Polytech.

* (15:30)

So my question would be, in regards to that—we know that this is a difficult time, we know that there's a lot of transition happening as a result of some of the federal government changes—my question would be—I was able to tour MITT in December and I really enjoyed—and the staff there were just amazing—and my question would be, when I was there meeting with the leadership and the staff of the school, we did discuss the changes that were happening from the federal government, and they were optimistic and they said they were going to be pivoting and they had a plan in place at that time.

Just wondering how many employees—what the number of employees are currently working at MITT, and how many will be looking for new employment after—and being laid off after the new transitions happening?

MLA Cable: Thank you for the question.

I'm sure you can appreciate this is an evolving situation. There are a lot of moving parts. I'm incredibly proud of the team, not only at Red River and MITT, but to the phenomenal staff in the department and our partners, really, across the sector in business, in labour, in education, who have come together to try to make this transition as smooth as possible.

You may have seen the MITT-Red River College transition update, and I'm pleased to table copies here, if that is in order. It was released by Red River College Polytechnic as a joint statement with MITT that reiterated that 19 unique academic programs are to continue at the Henlow campus. That was—those

programs were come to—the decisions around that were come to as a collaborative effort between both institutions.

Red River College has its own instructors, MITT has its own instructors. There are many unique programs at MITT that Red River does not teach, so it is a natural assumption that those instructors will transfer over with those programs. But I will not pre-empt those discussions here out of respect for all of the people involved.

Most of the employees at MITT in a teaching capacity are contract staff, and at Red River, many of them are permanent staff. There are 344 active staff at MITT, 24 on leave and 25 MTS teachers. And, again, with the unique programs that have transitioned over, it is reasonable to presume that many of those instructors will transfer with the program.

But, again, these are live conversations and there are processes that exist at each institution that we are going to honour. I have a couple more minutes here, so I just want to take a moment to sort of go back in time to when we first joined government here and we had the privilege of coming to serve for Manitoba.

And in looking at the seven years previous to me taking over this file, and the devastating cuts that happened across post-secondary in this province, and just to remind everybody here in this committee room so that we appreciate the full context of what's happening here, and that was that post-secondary funding was cut by 18 per cent.

I will also add that, in that time, there was labour unrest, or strikes. Collective bargaining agreements were not settled. There were cuts across the board. And when we were elected, the primary ask of institutions was to build better relationships and to have stable, reliable funding.

Our government has done that, even in the wake of many, many changes here, including unilateral changes by the federal government that have had a devastating impact on the sector. Our promise is to the students of this province because we know that an education, a good education, is the best ticket to success.

It is an opportunity to move—if you are somebody who is having financial challenges, it is an opportunity to move out of poverty. It is an opportunity to create goodness in one's life. And we know how important it is, as a great equalizer, to ensure that that gap between the very richest in our province and those who have the very least continues to go—become smaller.

There are many forces in this world that push it in the other direction. But our government believes wholeheartedly in access to education, and specifically access to opportunities for each and every student of Manitoba, regardless of the postal code that you were born into or the one that you hope to reside in for your senior years.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Hiebert: As I had mentioned earlier, the—I had been at a tour at MITT just in December and they were still quite positive that there was some way that they could make that work. Being it's a 40-year-old institution, I'm concerned that maybe we didn't do enough, because it's already—basically things are just turning over but the—while the programs are still staying.

* (15:40)

When did the minister take—make the decision to close MITT? The announcement in the media was on January 28. Just wondering when she made that decision.

MLA Cable: I just want to begin by correcting the record. MITT was actually founded June 12, 2014. So, you know, I am close to 50, and being born in 2014 wouldn't make anybody close to 40. So I just wanted to put that on the record. It is a younger institution than you had cited.

And to the question of when the decision was made, I will be very frank and say that, in December, the board chair and the president came to us when it was determined that their planned deficit would be larger than the provincial grant. And a fiscally responsible decision is not to continue when the circumstances that are driving that deficit are not going to change.

So we waited until the federal government gave us our provincial attestation letter numbers, which is their way of controlling the international students. And when it was clear that the federal government was not moving in a different direction and was, in fact, doubling down on their decision to cut international students, it became clear that there was—we needed to do something that would ensure that students weren't impacted and that we could continue to deliver the best possible education outcomes for Manitoba students.

This includes expanding trade opportunities, enhancing the connections to high school programs, ensuring that there are easier ladder pathways towards those Red Seals that we talk about when we

talk about building Churchill and expanding growth in Manitoba. We need those skilled trades, and we can't afford to gamble with Manitobans' hard-earned money on a prospect that wasn't going to change.

And I know it is hard for the members opposite to consider that a New Democratic government would make smart decisions around what is best for not only the economic future of our province but the social future as well, but that's who we are as New Democrats. This is at the core of who we are. We know that Manitobans work hard for their money and they expect us to be judicious with how we decide to make investments for our future.

So we've done things in other departments like the universal food program. The nutrition program is an investment that some people said was a bad idea but is ensuring that more Manitoban students go to the classroom each and every day, that they're able to focus, that they're able to do their schoolwork and that—frankly, that they're coming to school.

And, you know, making decisions like that one don't come without making decisions in other places as well. And as I—my heart goes out to the folks who are impacted right now because change is hard and the uncertainty is difficult, but this is after years and years of underfunding and cuts and the federal government's unilateral decisions layered on.

We're left with a situation that we need to manage for the best interest of all Manitobans. Not just a group of friends. Not just a—you know, somebody that is looking to start up a new business, maybe in silica mining, but, really, at what is the best investment for our province.

And I'll tell you that when I talk to people out in the community, so many people say this just makes good sense; that we know that there's now going to be a south end campus at Red River College, where young people in that community, folks who are re-skilling, up-skilling will have the opportunity to go to a trusted, tested institution where they can also ladder towards their Red Seal and other credentials that will make them invaluable in this province.

The transition piece is hard, but I know that we'll get through it together because there is a phenomenal 'teap' of—team of people who are leading it.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Once again, questions and responses through the Chair, please.

Mrs. Hiebert: Just a little information for you that that vocational–technical vocational centre was founded in 1983. It has changed names, but it has always been there since 1983, which is an important part of our history of our province because we do need to continually make sure that our trades in our education system is there, so.

And it's hard for me, Chair, to listen; it's—I understand what the minister's trying to say, but when you say change is hard, that's hard just—it's hard to say that when you have hundreds of people losing their jobs. I think that it's a bit more than just hard. I think that's devastating for many people, and I think we need to acknowledge that there's a big transition happening for families that are—have no idea what's going to happen.

* (15:50)

You know, adding up the—we've almost 400 staff at MITT, and my—if you take half of those staff, that's hundreds of people without job stability or any job at all that they don't even know where they're at right now as there's transition happening, and it's unfortunate. And that's not, like, something that we wish for anybody.

But—so in regards to the unemployment part, what is the minister and the current government going to be doing in in regards to the situation with several hundred employees being laid off or losing their jobs as a result of this transition?

MLA Cable: I understand political gamesmanship and how folks try to position things to score rather cheap political points. But I would caution the member opposite about inciting fear into places where there isn't right now. It's wholly irresponsible.

I said it in the Chamber two days ago and I will repeat it again: that there are processes in place; there are people working towards these ends, and it is very disrespectful to the folks who are actually impacted to create this fear narrative and not allow the process to work itself through. I can appreciate that it might make a good social media video to say that hundreds of jobs will be lost, but it's very irresponsible to say when that is not the outcome that we are looking at.

I want to remind this room again that the heavy reliance on international students came when the previous government chronically underfunded post-secondary institutions and institutions were looking for a stable funding measure. They were looking for a partner that would help sustain the operations. They

didn't have one in the previous PC government and they looked for revenue in other places.

Can we go back in time and change that? No, but we sure can do better with who we have at the table now. And I would ask—I would venture that any post-secondary that you go to now and speak to their leadership about the kind of relationship that they have with this government is exponentially greater than under the previous administration.

And why does that matter? It matters because we can solve problems together. I'll remind this room as well that it was the members opposite who fired hundreds of nurses, who had people out on the picket line. I was on those picket lines with people month after month after month. Even during the campaign, we had—Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries was still out on the picket line.

So while I appreciate the feigned concern from the member opposite, the party opposite's record really shows itself. It's very illustrative of where the priorities lie. And I can tell you that we have made more investments in post-secondary than the members opposite ever did. We've enhanced student loans and bursaries. Every single post-secondary has settled their collective agreements that were sitting outstanding for all of those years. Professors, instructors, librarians are making fair wages, and students have access to some of the best programming that's ever been offered here.

I am very proud of our record here, and while transition is difficult, we know that this is the right decision with the deck of cards that we have right now, that will help sustain training across the province, not only this year but for years to come. At this table here—and I know you can't see him on camera—is Minister Glen Simard, who represents the good city of Brandon—

The Chairperson: Order, please.

I would request—remind members to address colleagues with their constituency name or their title, please.

MLA Cable: My deep apologies, honourable Chair. Minister—MLA for Brandon East Glen Simard. Oh, I can't say his name; I retract. I apologize.

The MLA for Brandon East is here, and he knows first-hand that the investments that we have made in post-secondary since we've been in office are transformational not only for the city of Winnipeg, but for the city of Brandon and the entire Westman area.

We've expanded training in nearly every area of health care. Assiniboine College is receiving record investment, including in the Prairie Innovation Centre. And Brandon University is in line for a brand-new science centre at Brodie.

Mrs. Hiebert: I just want to ask the question again. The minister—am I allowed to say that? I'm talking to you? Okay.

The minister said that there are processes happening. When I asked the question about the 200 employees, if half the programs are going to be cancelled or not—no longer active, just on behalf of those that won't make the cut or that won't be able to transfer over to the new location, the minister did say processes are happening.

Can I ask what processes are happening? I'm sure—that is my question, that I think people have a right to know what's happening in that situation.

MLA Cable: I just wanted to share that, from a meeting today—it will be no surprise that we continue to meet regularly with leadership from both MITT and Red River College—and the leadership there have shared that staff at the town hall from both institutions shared with leadership that they are appreciative to be part of the RRCP future.

Red River College is continuing to build on the good work of MITT, and the south campus, for the umpteenth time, will continue to operate under the RRCP banner. It's still going to have a full suite of programming—19 out of 20 programs—and they'll need a skilled team to deliver those programs.

I'm wondering if the member opposite is suggesting that we continue to offer classes where there are no students in them because they were wholly subscribed to by international students. Is that a reasonable approach for Manitobans? Is that a reasonable approach for an institution? I would venture that we would say it is not.

* (16:00)

Again, communication at a recent town hall emphasized that Red River will continue to need skilled staff to deliver programming. There are processes that are under way that will ensure that current staff have first opportunity at new jobs.

And I would continue to reiterate that not addressing the fiscal needs of an institution is not a solution for long-term sustainability. And, again, because the minister who was previously responsible is now in the room, I'll just remind the committee here that under

the previous Pallister and Stefanson government, the cuts to post-secondary education amounted to 18 per cent across the board. They cut operating grants by \$15 million. And when factoring in inflation, this left universities with a \$100-million shortfall.

I'd also like to remind the members that in—during that time, there were no CBAs bargained. We lost very talented folks to other provinces because there were no increases in salaries or benefits and, frankly, no recognition of the phenomenal work that happens at post-secondary institutions.

In the seven years of the Pallister and Stefanson government, the University of Manitoba saw a 5 per cent cut to funding; the University of Winnipeg saw a 4 per cent cut to funding; Brandon University saw a 4 per cent cut to funding; University College of the North was cut by 7 per cent; and across the board, there was a 5 per cent overall reduction.

Our government understands and believes in the value of post-secondary education. We also know that while we are continuing to grapple with the unilateral changes that the federal government has made, that we have an obligation to our domestic students here and to ensure that as many students—as many Manitobans as possible can pursue post-secondary education successfully in the field of their choice. And in order to do that, we will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to make sure that as much programming, in as many parts of the province, are offered.

I'm incredibly grateful to the partnerships that we have with our many colleges to be able to deliver programming in places like Morden-Winkler, like Lac du Bonnet, like Beausejour. There's training available all over the province because we know how important that is to rural communities, to helping to keep Manitoba communities stable and to continue to supply the phenomenal businesses that exist all across our provinces with the top-tier talent that they need to be successful.

Thank you.

Mrs. Hiebert: Just a quick—you know, I'm accused of playing political games, and I'm here on behalf of over 200 employees who are possibly losing their jobs. So I think—as an opposition leader, I think that's my job here, to make sure that I represent everybody in our province. So I think we need to just take a look at that for a second.

Also—political games—let's talk about how what's happening with the high school trades stream and the programs that are happening there through MITT.

Those are big concerns, and I'd like to ask about those questions. The minister doesn't seem to think that it's important that the opposition leader or an MLA in their own community should be invited to a tour where she's involved in, when I was invited to participate in my community and I was literally uninvited.

So I think we need to talk about political games and say maybe I'm here—I'm actually here for the right reasons. I want to be here because I want to help and understand what's happening in our province. And I just have a question and, like, we don't need to sit here and grandstand about all the things we're doing and we're not doing. That's not why I'm here. I'm here to represent my constituents, the people in Manitoba, and I just want answers. That's it.

So I'd like to ask the question: What is this—happening to the high school students that are in programs right now through MITT, through skilled trades and they—that are possibly concerned? We don't have any answers about that.

Students want to know, parents want to know: How is this going to be affecting these kids?

MLA Cable: I appreciate very much that question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about how excited I am about the opportunities for the high school programs.

So there will be no negative impacts on any high school student; in fact, only positive outcomes. For the current students, they will continue on as they are: same bus, same school. It will continue on.

As we make this transition, Red River will be taking over the training, which will—and they have access to even more trades than MITT. This is opening doors for students.

Once Red River—we've made the legislative changes to enable Red River to take over the high school programs; there are also opportunities to move towards other school divisions as well. D-F-S-M—very happy; Pembina Trails—extremely happy. They're thrilled to know that these programs are staying and that the continuity for their students is there.

Once again, having a consolidated partnership will allow students to see a very clear pathway, a laddering towards the trade that they choose to be in. It will be easy on families to understand. It will be less disruptive, and frankly, there'll be more opportunities for students all across the province.

It's—I know it's hard to understand that, again, that we would make decisions that are for the betterment of Manitobans and not just to fill our friends' pocket-

books. But our government is committed to each and every student in Manitoba and regardless of which postal code or constituency a student lives in, we want the best possible opportunities for them.

I believe that a student in Brandon, Manitoba and a student in Nelson House should have access to the same opportunities. I visited—the member alluded earlier to a tour that I took at a phenomenal centre in her area, and it was fantastic. There was—I'm not sure what the conversation was about being uninvited; I genuinely have no idea what she's talking about.

But I can tell you that the people who are doing the vocational training at Red River vocational training are doing a phenomenal job. They're working co-operatively. There's a bus service that brings students from three or four different towns to go to training. There are students from Hutterite communities, from—near First Nations that are all going together to do trades training. And that is a great example of communities working together, of sharing resources and really looking at what's best for the most students—what is the best possible outcome for the most Manitobans.

And I said many times on the tour that I appreciated the model that they were using, because it meant that no students were left behind and that there was a real consideration for using resources judiciously. And so, again, thank you for that awesome tour that we had. I just received a note here; it was the Amazing Race tour for Red River technical vocational.

*(16:10)

And I would 'vite all members, actually, to take this tour. It's very cool. I don't have anything like that in my community. I have Louis Riel arts and tech centre, but they don't have the same sort of collaborative relationship that these other schools with the many buses going in different places. It was really an eye-opening experience and one that reiterated to me that co-operation is possible and that when we invite people to work together, that really great things can happen.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Hiebert: Yes, I'll say that we have got the most amazing area in southern Manitoba when it comes to working together and being collaborative. Everybody just assumes we all get along because that's what happens in Manitoba, in southern Manitoba. The programs and the educators and the students and families are just amazing, and I am so proud to represent them.

Unfortunately, when I was invited to attend The Amazing Race and that whole day of tours, as long—along with several of the mayors were invited, we were uninvited after the—they were found—they found out that we were coming. So, unfortunately, that's too bad. Maybe the minister should ask her staff about that. *[interjection]* I might be able to find information on that.

But, anyway, just a quick question about—the minister talked about increasing seats for health-care positions across Manitoba. Where will the additional seats be if there is a—if there's a current decrease in programming, some of the programs by—from MITT?

I know that she—the minister mentioned something about northern Manitoba having additional seats, being more in a definite desperate need for more health-care workers across the province. I know currently there's wait-lists all over Manitoba, rurally especially, to get into these programs, the nursing programs in southern Manitoba and Brandon, all over the area.

What is the—what kind of areas—or, how are these seats going to be increased in southern Manitoba and western parts of the province?

MLA Cable: Health-care training is actually one of the things that we're most proud of as government. We have built some really great relationships. Our team meets every two weeks with individuals from Department of Health; from business, mining, training and job creation; folks from the local regional health authorities to work together in a cohesive way to determine the needs in the province and to help focus our efforts.

So you may be familiar with the rural rotating sites for nursing; we've expanded those and we are continuing to move through communities and offering new opportunities.

We're also looking at how our adult learning centres factor into health-care training and have worked up a dual credential, so an individual can finish their high school while also having an—health-care aide certification. And this is important because sometimes people are ready to go to work right away. Sometimes people are ready to go back to school after years being away, and we want to make it so that there is no—that there are many paths and many options for folks.

There are new pathways opening for the beautiful new hospital in Neepawa, and we'll continue to support training in that area. But we—the key to getting all of this done, really, is the relationships between

governments, the regional health authorities, the post-secondary institutions that are delivering those programs, and being able to work together to find the best fit for the needs in the community.

I know that the North has seen a great advantage by having expansion of seats and by adapting their programming to include anatomy and physiology, which was previously a barrier to folks registering for the program. It is now fully embedded in the training for their paramedicine. And we continue to look at the course offerings and the programming with relation to the communities that are being served to ensure that as few barriers as possible exist for families.

I was pleased to be in Brandon to break ground for the combined lab/X-ray tech program that is coming to Assiniboine College. That would not have been possible without the good relationships with our friend and president, Mark Frison, and the head of the regional health authority for Prairie Mountain Health. We are able to offer a first-of-its-kind program in the Westman area that will ensure that lab techs are certified with X-ray tech capability as well, which is an absolute game changer in rural areas. Rural ERs and rural hospitals are not able to operate in the way that they need to without those very skilled training opportunities. And we'll continue to work with all of our partners.

You know, we know that fighting with other levels of government or other organizations is not how we get things done. We work collaboratively. We talk about the problem that needs to be solved, and we look at the ways that we can solve it that is the best for all Manitobans.

So whether that be bringing additional health-care aide seats to northern Manitoba and looking at how we support students so that they are successful or—I'm very excited about the new rural rotating paramedics program that's coming from Assiniboine College; that is an absolute—again—another game changer for health-care training in this province.

When the health-care system was decimated under the previous government, it wasn't only the system that was delivering the care; it was the system that was providing training to the future doctors, nurses, health-care aides, lab techs, X-ray techs, respiratory therapists. All of those pieces were impacted, and we are incredibly lucky to have great partners that are working with us to make sure that we not only repair it but we rebuild back stronger.

I want to thank all of the partners that are currently delivering training in the health-care field in this province, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on even more exciting projects.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you for that information. It's good to always hear that we're doing what we can.

So my question to the minister would be: We have quite a few hospitals opening up in—or, not quite a bit—we've got a few new hospitals opening up, for example, with—in health care.

* (16:20)

We really are at a shortage of health-care aides, administrative staff that are trained nurses. Specifically, beds aren't able to be opened because of—there's a shortage of positions that are being filled by nurses and health-care aides.

What is the minister currently doing right now to address specific community situations in education?

I do know that in southern Manitoba we have—we do have a nursing program, and they are both struggling with having to find enough teachers to teach the courses and also not enough spaces for people who want to take—or, for families that want to stay local and be able to go to school because that's what their support network is. They're struggling to have enough spaces. They think the spaces are all being filled up and there's no more room.

So what is being done to address these specific issues in, let's say, southern Manitoba, Winkler, Morden, Altona area, as an example?

MLA Cable: As I said before, it's exciting to talk about all of the various health-care training options that have been opened up. Winkler and Steinbach, both have adult learning centres for Red River College, and I was privileged enough to meet a graduating class from the health-care aide program in Winkler. So that was a large group of students that were not only finishing up their high school credentials but also graduating with a health-care aide certificate.

And I would say from those students there, about half of them were interested in joining a LPN program after, which we've continued to expand through various rural rotating sites.

This budget, you'll see, has additional dollars for Red River College to expand their LPN to RN training. That's—a lot of those are happening in community as well. We know that—in smaller communities in

particular, that it becomes essential that people can train close to home, but also that there are opportunities for jobs close to home.

And I know there are some unique models where Assiniboine College is delivering an LPN program out of a personal-care home. And that has provided real-world, on-the-job training for participants in that program. So there's a training facility in the basement, and they're able to move throughout the facility to do their practicum. And if you haven't had the opportunity to see what the new enhanced nursing campuses look like in terms of the—all of the interactive programming that's available, it is fascinating and is ensuring that nurses are getting real-world-type training before they even get into being beside the bedside.

So, you know, it's not only recruiting nurses to programs or health-care aides to programs, it is ensuring that in the training that we're doing, that we're setting them up for success so we can retain them in the health-care field.

So one of the things that is happening at the training facilities is that there are virtual reality situations. So you have a very lifelike mannequin that folks are training on that is so lifelike you can put IVs into it; you take pulses; you can provide full treatment, including stitches.

And there's also a back and forth where it is responsive, so you can have real conversations where the patient is delivering their symptoms to you verbally. And there is now new technology where the skin colour actually changes on the mannequin.

But having the opportunity for students to learn with this top-quality equipment and the highest level of training makes—ensures that—*[interjection]*—bless you—ensures that when they move into their practicum and they're at the bedside, that they're prepared for the kinds of things that come at them. It's not going to be predictable. There are going to be additional pressures. And we don't want early-career nurses to exit the field because it's not what they were prepared for.

So I'm really thrilled with the work that's being done with Assiniboine College and Red River College, along with the regulator and the health authorities, to ensure that our programming is very reflective of the Manitoba that we're living in and the patients that they're serving. *[interjection]*

Thank you so much for this information.

So the primary-care paramedic program—we've also made changes there to ensure that there is more access

to direct entry. So, again, this is not removing the requirement of anatomy and physiology, but it's baking it into the program so that students aren't required to first go to university and then apply for the program they want to be in, which is how it has been for—since the beginning. So we've made these changes to the curricula to ensure that it is a smoother pathway.

Last year, there were 39 applications for the PCP program; this year, there are 146 interested applicants for the program. That's a more than 200 per cent increase in interest, which substantiates that when you remove the barriers for people, you're making it more accessible, and they will come.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you for that information.

I do just want to reiterate that some of the nursing programs and health-care programs are not being staffed by teachers, or they don't have as much teachers as they do need. And I know I've also had the opportunity to meet with different post-secondary education.

And I did have a tour, and I did meet the mannequins, and it was quite something; it was amazing. The teachers and the students alike—it was a great time to get to know them and find out why they were doing this and how much their hearts were in it, what they were doing to make a better life for everyone around them and just to help people that they love. So that was just really great.

* (16:30)

But I do have a concern that some of the courses are being offered virtual because there's no teachers available in these smaller communities that are offering these classes. And I just want to commend Assiniboine College and other colleges that are really trying to do everything they can to come up with solutions to some of these issues that they're having and that they are being able to still offer part of the courses on—virtually because they don't have a teacher on site, so that's great. The collaboration there is just amazing to see, how we can continually make our education available to those that really need it.

So my next question would—for the minister is just in regards to skilled labour and in regards to a lot of the different streams that are offered. How does—how—who has the minister collaborated with, or who have you consulted with when it comes specifically to specific trades and what they need and where they're having a big lack of skilled trade workers applying for

positions because there's nobody with those specific skills that they need?

And there's—what are we doing as a Province or what's the Province doing to make sure that we address those shortages in our skilled labour and making sure that there's opportunity for us to make sure that we can offer that education?

MLA Cable: I do appreciate the question about apprenticeship and what we're doing to expand opportunities.

As you know, apprenticeship, the program, falls under the minister responsible for business, mining, training and job creation, but we work very closely together as the institutions that fall under my portfolio are responsible for delivering the training.

So, this budget, I'm pleased that there's an additional \$7 million being put towards Assiniboine College, Red River College Polytechnic and UCN, just to support the training and ongoing sustainability of our apprenticeship and certification system. We know that that is a worthwhile investment, and especially with the great news about Churchill Plus, we know that we need to get Manitobans trained up all across the province.

Again, so grateful to have the partnerships that we have with our post-secondaries to be able to deliver on standing up programs in communities where they need them. We work very closely with economic development, northern labour force, and, ultimately, our goal is to find a pathway for everyone.

So, of our adult learners, 1,500 were surveyed and—to see, what did you think, what do you need?

Of those, 67 per cent wanted more education. So we're looking towards advanced education, post-secondary of some respect. So these are folks that, for no fault of their own, had fallen off of traditional K-to-12 system, maybe had an interruption in learning, had decided to come back to pursue their grade 12 education. And we know, by talking to those folks, that they're interested not only in achieving a grade 12 education, but moving even further.

So the partnerships that we have for our Adult Learning Centres with post-secondary institutions are incredibly important. We have—if you've ever had the privilege of going to UCN, you'll know that their Adult Learning Centre is connected right on campus.

So when students start in adult ed at UCN, they are UCN students. So they will be in the bookstore buying themselves a hoodie; they are there as students

at the University College of the North. And they are proudly achieving their education goals in a centre that they can ultimately return to, once they've completed that goal, to pursue another level of education, whether that is through a technical training program or through a bachelor of arts, a bachelor of Indigenous languages—we've just added an Indigenous language program to UCN.

But, really, the goal is to ensure that there is no wrong door and that there is a pathway for everyone. So if you are somebody who sees yourself in the trades, that we will find an opportunity for you. We've made enhancements to facilities across the province to help ensure that there are more opportunities for folks, and we have made some changes that allow for some unique partnerships that didn't exist before, including having electrical workers have IBEW, have the opportunity to provide different levels of training.

* (16:40)

We are a government that truly believes in collaborating. You'll often hear our Premier (Mr. Kinew) say we do the big things together, and that is how we approach all of our work every day.

So the—I am incredibly grateful for all of the people, the instructors, the front-line administrators, the leadership at all of these institutions that are not only great to work with when there is a plan coming towards them but are excellent, are phenomenal at bringing ideas to us as government.

And our job is often to provide financial support, but sometimes it's just to get out of the way, to make regulatory changes so that they're able to do the work that they want to do, or to move other barriers out of the way.

So, we're going to continue to train more Manitobans than ever before and looking forward to a prosperous future in this province.

Mrs. Hiebert: So one of my questions was, specifically, we do know that there's a lot of desperate need for trained, skilled workers whether it's in manufacturing, in our housing, construction. Many of these positions require a Red Seal and that takes training, obviously.

Are we—how is like—how is the minister specifically addressing situations that are desperately needed in rural Manitoba in any of the areas, not just the North, but in all of the province, as well as areas that are economic drivers for the province?

Winnipeg has a lot of industry. Southern Manitoba has a large industry environment and there's always shortage of people that they need, like the minister had mentioned, in electrical, plumbing. There's—people who are doing welding.

There's so much happening in so many areas, and a lot of these areas—you know, mechanics for example, agriculture. They don't have enough space to be able to do the training within their large agricultural farming business that they have. So they all need skilled, trained mechanics for so many things.

So, question was specifically, like, what are—who has the minister consulted with to know exactly what is needed in those situations? Besides Churchill, what else are we—what else is the minister doing to make sure that we're meeting the needs that we have across the rural areas of Manitoba, for example?

MLA Cable: I've mentioned before that relationships are key to us getting anything done in this government. So there are a number of formal tables and informal avenues that we use to make sure that we are well connected to what's needed in industry and in municipalities. A number of programs have come as a result of conversations with mayors and reeves.

But first and foremost, PSIs need to be funded properly in order to be responsive to any of the needs in community. So we start from a place of ensuring that there is stable, predictable funding for post-secondaries across the province, so that when a mayor, a reeve or AMM comes to an institution like a Red River College or an Assiniboine College and says, we really need a program for licensed practical nurses in our community, or for water treatment or electrical engineer, that the institutions have the capacity to do it because they are being properly funded. None of this is possible without that stable, predictable funding, which is what we have provided to our institutions.

Our institutions are very closely connected to industry, and you can—if you look over at the Red River College campus, there are buildings with Gerry Price's name on the outside, and there are many, many other examples of industry being closely connected to what's happening at the colleges, not just as a name-sake on a building, but really as a partner to help move through issues that need to be solved.

There is—that applied engineering piece is so critically important for Manitoba businesses.

We were proud to be part of an announcement of an articulation agreement between University of Manitoba

and Red River College Polytech whereby any graduate from one of Red River College's engineering programs, whether that's electrical engineering, civil engineering, any of the engineering programs, have a direct entry into U of M engineering faculty now.

So that is a game changer for industry across the province, whether we're talking about the businesses that exist in Winnipeg or the ones in southern Manitoba. I know that pharmaceuticals and cabinet making and—there's a huge industry and lots of opportunity in southern Manitoba and part of the reason why it's so important that we properly fund post-secondary is to be able to be responsive to those labour market needs and to know that we have the best qualified people to be doing the jobs that are needed at those places.

Linkages, if you've never been, is a phenomenal opportunity to meet first-hand with First Nations leaders, mayors, reeves, educators, folks from all over the province who have their attention focused on the North and really looking at solutions for not only northern workforce, but northern development overall. It's coming up in—I don't know—two weeks, and we'll be there again to meet with representatives in the North. And that helps shape a lot of where we focus our direction as well.

We know that we can't support healthy communities without sufficient health-care staffing, without teachers and other essential workers. And we work closely with the sector councils. We—frankly, we empower our colleges to work directly with the communities who need them.

So there is phenomenal working relationships between all of the colleges and, most often, the communities closest to their hub of activity. But that's not always true. Assiniboine College, for example, is training more licensed practical nurses than anyone else right now, and they're all over the province doing that. They're doing that in southern Manitoba, in Westman area, northern Manitoba.

* (16:50)

And really, it is those conversations about what is needed, what is the capacity and how do we ensure that we get instructors. You mentioned the need for instructors. How do we compensate people fairly so they are motivated to stay in those roles and that they are able to offer their expertise for as long as we need them. It is a complex problem with a lot of partners at the table, and thrilled to be making it work.

Mrs. Hiebert: Question about the interprovincial training agreements that Manitoba, I'm assuming, has. Just wondering how many students are specifically involved in those? What agreements—what provinces do we have agreements and which schools do we have agreements with currently and what skilled programs those are that were—don't offer, or don't have in our province that they have to go into a different province for this training?

MLA Cable: Yes, I appreciate the question.

And, just for a little bit of context, we have interprovincial training agreements when either we don't have enough interest here to run our own program, or it's been previously determined that it would be cost prohibitive for us to launch a program, or there are other provinces that just do it better. So in the case of all of these agreements, it's one of those reasons that we have them.

I'm proud to say that the agreement that we have with Sask Poly for the CLXT, the combined lab and X-ray tech, that's an agreement that we will see come to an end in the next couple of years because we will have our own program at Assiniboine College.

So there's a regular review of what is needed for interprovincial, and we do regular assessments as to whether it makes more sense to launch a program here.

We have our existing agreements. We have electro-neurophysiology with BCIT. That's a two-year program that trains students to become lab technologists that use specialized equipment to monitor brain activity to assist with diagnosing neurological disorders. That requires special training and special equipment, and we usually only have one or two people participate in that.

Prosthetics—or prosthetics and orthotics is at BCIT as well. The combined lab and X-ray tech that I spoke of is at Sask Poly, so Saskatchewan Polytechnic. And we have funded additional seats this year to ensure that we are training more folks as we need them and to help put us in a better position for when we start training our own here.

We have a nuclear medicine technology, and that is with Alberta and Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, SAIT. It's a two-and-a-half-year program that trains nuclear medicine technologists who work in diagnostic areas related to cardiac care, oncology, thyroid and blood testing.

Cardiovascular perfusionist—it's a four-year program at BCIT. We usually train one a year—two in one year, one in the next year. It is a—its a long-standing agreement that keeps perfusionists working in Manitoba.

And we have the clinical genetics technology. That's also through BCIT.

And the one that most people are most familiar with is the veterinary medicine program through Western Vet.

So we—as I mentioned before, we're always looking to see if it would be better value to deliver that program here, if we have the capacity to deliver it here. And in certain cases we have moved to do away with interprovincial training agreements to work towards training our own here.

And, again, the CLXT is a great example of that. We know that we need more than we are able to get through an interprovincial training agreement. So that's why we've decided to launch our own training facility to be able to deliver that here at home.

It's an important investment, and I know every person I've talked to in the western Manitoba region is thrilled. At latest conversation with the president at Assiniboine College, there is an interest list of nearly 1,000 people. So it is clear that it is a training opportunity that people want to take advantage of.

And we'll continue to look at those options that are in demand, not only in the labour market, in our health-care system, but also in demand for students, that it becomes a desirable occupation that people are really looking forward to joining.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you for that information.

One more question about Advanced Education and Training—or, sorry, with adult education, where the—as regards to adult education. Just a question about how many spaces do we have for adult ed in the province of Manitoba, and how long are the wait-lists right now, currently—

The Chairperson: Order, please.

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

CHAMBER

FINANCE

* (14:50)

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): Okay, will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Finance.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Thanks for the opportunity to deliver some opening remarks here at Committee of Supply on the '26-27 Estimates for the Department of Finance. This is now my third opportunity to come before the committee and discuss our budget.

Before I get into some of the key points, I think it's helpful to reflect on where we are today and where we've come, from following the last election. For the 'benefitee' of commit—committee members and for those watching at home: Following the election, the government commissioned prominent accounting firm MNP to investigate the financial and budgetary decisions made near the end of the previous government's tenure, both in budget and with their first quarter report. MNP's report, the Post Election Financial Accountability Review, concluded that previous government made a number of decisions which, and I quote: collectively represent high budgetary risk.

As Manitobans know well, with the benefit of the audited public accounts '23-24, our government inherited a \$2-billion deficit. It was the previous government's risky decisions and lack of accountability that left our government with the task of digging out of a big financial hole. For some additional context, I should add that in addition to inheriting a \$2-billion deficit, we were left with some significant debt-servicing costs. The fiscal framework we inherited saw 9.9 cents of every dollar going towards servicing the debt. As Minister of Finance, one of my core goals is to get that number down as we work to fulfill our election commitment to eliminate the deficit during our term of office.

With that context in mind, let me say a few words about Budget 2026. This year, we're projecting a \$500-million deficit, down 75 per cent from the \$2-billion deficit we inherited. And I'm very pleased to share that with this budget, the cost to service our debt has declined to 8.9 cents, and we're projecting that figure to decline further to 8 and a half cents at the end of our fiscal forecast. Reducing these debt-servicing costs are saving us over \$200 million this year and roughly \$400 million a year into the out years. In my view, this is significant progress, keeping us on track to balance the budget next year as promised.

Let me also share for members of the committee that this budget is squarely focused on the priorities of Manitobans: good jobs, lower costs and better health care.

On good jobs, we're continuing to make considerable advancement on a generational opportunity with the Port of Churchill. Just yesterday, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) met with the Prime Minister for their second quarterly meeting on the Churchill Plus project, which followed the signing of a one-project, one-review collaboration agreement to streamline the regulatory process for major projects. To support this, Budget 2026 invests over \$200 million for the Arctic Gateway Group to develop the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay rail line, as well as creating the Churchill Plus Catalyst Fund to support early stage proposals for an energy corridor to the bay.

In addition, Budget 2026 invests heavily in key infrastructure with the largest capital plan in Manitoba's history. And we're making significant investments in training in the trades, so we have the workers to harness the opportunities before us, whether that's in new critical minerals projects, building new schools and hospitals or continuing to build out key trade-enabling infrastructure.

This budget is also focused on lowering costs for Manitobans. As we announced, effective July 1, we're planning to take the provincial sales tax off of all food sold at the grocery store. We're continuing to make it easier to own a home by increasing our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,700 a year. And we're making life easier for renters, increasing the renters tax credit to \$675.

Finally, let me say a few words about health care, which is the largest single investment in this year's budget. After years of cuts and neglect under the previous government, we're working to deliver better health care. To date, we've hired 4,054 net-new health-care workers who are now working on the front lines. We're lowering ER wait times with new alternative-level care beds and new specialized zones adjacent to ERs where patients can be seen by a specialist right away. We're building new ERs at the Victoria Hospital and the hospital in Eriksdale and a new CancerCare headquarters. We're developing a new personal-care homes in Bridgwater, Transcona, Lac du Bonnet and Arborg. And we're investing \$6.3 million to recruit more doctors to rural Manitoba.

I could go on, but for the benefit of members, let me just end on this point. We inherited a \$2-billion deficit. Today, it's down by 75 per cent and we're on

track to balance the books next year. We're making investments in health care, education, public safety, while supporting municipalities after years of PC cuts. And we're being open and transparent with Manitobans on how we do it.

* (15:00)

For the first time since 2017, Manitoba received a clean audit opinion from the Auditor General. That's something I'm very proud of, because another takeaway from MNP's Post Election Financial Accountability Review is that it was important for government to be transparent with Manitobans on the state of provincial finances. And for seven years, the former PC government couldn't present a clean set of books. We're taking a different approach and we're going to be transparent with Manitobans.

So let me finally conclude on a well-known adage: Budgets are about choices, and this year Manitoba chose a different approach than many other provinces. We're maintaining our commitment to fiscal balance. We have the lowest deficit-to-GDP in the country. And as many big banks and credit rating agencies have noted, this makes us unique. I'm proud that we can focus on what matters: good jobs, lower costs and better health care, all while we continue to fulfill our commitment to eliminating the \$2-billion deficit we inherited from the previous government.

Thank you, and I look forward to the discussion this afternoon.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening remarks?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Today, we're here not just to look at numbers on a page, but the financial direction of our province under this NDP government.

The minister's financial Estimates are built on a lot of assumptions and a lot of hope. And for the second year in a row, we're seeing rosy revenue projections that do not align with independent forecasts. Respected organizations like Deloitte and Moody's credit rating agencies are warning that the—this NDP's growth assumptions are too optimistic, so Manitobans have every right to question the credibility of this minister's budget. And when those projections miss the mark, as they have consistently done since this NDP came into office, the result is larger deficits, more borrowing, more debt and higher taxes, all on the backs of Manitoba and Manitoba families.

Year after year, we have seen this NDP government miss their own deficit projections, and not by a little, but by a significant margin. Last year, with a projected deficit of \$800 million, this NDP government and minister exploded that deficit to \$1.6 billion, and that was before they added an additional unbudgeted \$200-million special warrant that did not come to the Chamber for the scrutiny from the Chamber members. This is the second time this minister has added an unbudgeted special warrant since he came into office. This reflects poor budget planning by this minister and this NDP government.

The consequences that Manitoba's debt is continuing to climb—is now over \$2.3 billion this year and the third largest government expenditure. This limits Manitoba's ability to respond to challenges like we've seen this past year with the devastating wildfire season that Manitoba experienced. And it puts additional pressures on families and on services that Manitobans rely on. Manitoba's growth was the lowest in the country last year at just 1.1 per cent, and Deloitte has now downgraded Manitoba's 'economic' GDP growth to just 1 per cent for 2026.

So while other provinces are moving forward, Manitoba is falling further and further behind, and this leads back to the rosy projections again within this minister's budget. In fact, Moody's credit rating agency indicated that the minister's growth projections are not in line with reality. And when a credit rating agency issues a caution or a warning, that should be of significant concern to Manitoba and Manitobans.

So despite increases in spending, there's no real meaningful tax relief. Instead, what we've seen since this NDP has come into government is a lot of ad hoc tax policies, a lot of temporary measures, short-term fixes, freezes, but yet no long-term real meaningful tax relief for Manitobans. These measures do not address the underlying cost pressures that Manitobans are seeing year after year.

As we've seen with this minister's record, education taxes are the highest in the country and have skyrocketed to historic unprecedented levels as a result of direct decisions that this NDP government made. Income taxes have increased as this government has not increased the basic personal amount, and they ended indexation of income taxes, which is pushing more Manitobans into a higher income tax bracket.

So any increase in wages that Manitobans might get, they will not feel because of inflation and being pushed into higher tax brackets. In fact, almost every

single province has continued and maintained with indexation except for Manitoba. While other provinces at the same time are actually increasing the basic personal amount, this minister and NDP government has decided to do neither.

So with that being said, I look forward to getting into the details of those issues and the failures of this Manitoba budget, and during this Estimate process.

Thank you very much.

The Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 7.1(a) contained in resolution 7.1.

At this time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber, and I would ask the minister and critic to please introduce their staff in attendance.

MLA Sala: I'd like to introduce two staff who are going to be here to support me: my DOMA—Director of Ministerial Affairs—Paul Bretscher, and Jeff McCulloch from Treasury Board Secretariat.

Mrs. Stone: I'd like to introduce our finance researcher, Levi Cottingham, who has joined us here today, along with my esteemed colleagues, the MLA for Steinbach and MLA for Red River North.

The Chairperson: In accordance with the subrule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put on the resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates the questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Stone: I'll just start off with a couple questions regarding office operations. So if the minister could please outline what political staff work out of the minister's office or within their purview, and please provide the name and position.

MLA Sala: I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question, and I'll provide the breakdown of those staff as requested there momentarily, but I just want to take the opportunity to recognize the incredible people we do have supporting our office in Finance.

* (15:10)

I want to start front of House with non-political staff: our incredible ATM, Pamala Wambach, Monica Ramirez, and Chris Tan, who are our correspondent secretaries, just do an amazing job setting a tone in our office, welcoming people in and just really manage things in an incredibly efficient way. We're really grateful to them for all the work that they do in support.

Also think it's valuable to take this opportunity to thank all the incredible people supporting us throughout the Department of Finance, throughout Treasury Board Secretariat. Just an amazing, amazing group of people there doing work for all of us here in Manitoba.

Specific to the question asked, I'll just outline the names and titles. So, Paul Bretscher, who we've met here today already, our DOMA. Secondly, Lindsey Solmundson, who's the special assistant in our office. Sara Fehr, who's the executive assistant supporting our team. And then two advisers, Rory Henry, who's the adviser on energy. And then Tim Johnson, who's my adviser on Treasury Board.

Mrs. Stone: I thank the minister for his response, and also want to say thank you to his staff who are very responsive when I have constituency-related questions that come to his department as well. So thank you to Paul and the team for being available to me personally so I can get some answers for my constituents as well. So thank you for the work that you do.

Has the minister hired any external consultants or advisers? And if so, please provide their names and salaries, wages and/or contract amounts.

MLA Sala: Appreciate the question.

So there are no external consultants or advisers external to our office who are contracting for support at this point.

Mrs. Stone: In follow-up to the minister's last—or last answer, have there been any external consultants or advisers hired to support the minister that is not within the Finance Department but is perhaps hired through a different department but still might advise the minister on various issues—or deputy minister?

MLA Sala: Apologies for the delay there. I just wanted to make sure we brought accurate information.

So there's an individual who's been contracted to the deputy or in Finance supporting us on energy and has been acting as an adviser in regards especially to the 600 megawatts of new Indigenous wind that's coming online. His name's Chris Henderson and he's—he works with a company called Indigenous Clean

Energy. So he's been supporting us for the last, I think, just under a year or so as we've worked through that wind project.

Mrs. Stone: Okay, thank you.

How much has the minister's office expensed for travel in the past year?

MLA Sala: We've got a tough line of sight here, so figure it out in a while.

To the question: So I'm happy to share that all of our office expenses are posted online for full transparency. They can be found on the Reports and Expenses site in the Department of Finance, and they are all up to date. And I can share that, beyond that, just simply put, the extent of our travel has been limited to FPTs and our investors tour that we took last year, which was to, of course, support meeting with credit rating agencies and investors so we can keep doing the good work of building those relationships and making sure that we work together to meet Manitoba's cash requirements and to keep our costs as low as possible in the process.

* (15:20)

So—looking forward to making that trip again soon.

Mrs. Stone: Can the minister please identify the projected spend on advertising from his department?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, I don't want to delay things any further. We are still getting that information. I commit to providing that in this discussion or during this committee here. So let's just move on, maybe, to the next question and we'll make sure we get that within today's time frame.

Mrs. Stone: I appreciate the minister could get that information.

So, just in the spirit of time, if, while he's gathering that information, if he could also provide a breakdown as to where those advertising dollars are going: break down how much advertising dollars are going to advertise the budget? How many of those advertising dollars are going to advertise a Manitoba Hydro campaign or any other advertising campaigns? How—*[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Sorry, the honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: If the minister could break down the total average of savings per Manitoban from their recent PST cut at the grocery store and confirm for the record the total cost to Manitoba's books? So I'm looking for

the average savings per Manitoban as a result of this PST cut.

*(15:30)

MLA Sala: Appreciate the question and I appreciate the interest in the work we're doing to make life more affordable by reducing the cost of food for families. We know that, when it comes to affordability, food costs are the biggest driver of affordability challenges that families are facing, and that's why we wanted to make sure we acted on that with this measure.

Maybe before I share the details that were requested, I want to talk a bit more about the work we're doing on food broadly. No. 1, the member will of course know about the work we did to freeze the price of a one-litre jug of milk. I think we've also taken really important steps forward with getting rid of some covenants that were preventing more grocery competition in our communities. I hope the member can agree to the idea that more competition is a good thing that will help us to ultimately see costs come down in grocery stores across Manitoba, thanks to that action.

The other thing that I think is important to talk about here when it comes to food costs, I'm really proud of the work that we're doing when it comes to legislation on surveillance pricing to ensure that Manitobans are protected against the use of their personal data to charge them more when they go to do their shopping online.

We've seen in other jurisdictions the use—the growing use of this type of exploitation of personal data for the purpose of charging one consumer more than another consumer who are perhaps buying the same thing at the same point in time. And that's a concern to see the growing use of data to be weaponized against consumers and ultimately used to raise their costs.

So that's something we're—proud to be on the cutting edge there and to have brought forward that legislation. And I think, ultimately, that's going to put us really ahead of other jurisdictions across North America when it comes to protecting our citizens against that type of practice.

To the fourth item I'll speak to in terms of our work of reducing the cost for food for Manitobans, the member's asking about our initiative to take the PST off of all groceries at grocery stores. And I think that's something we can all celebrate. We know that, again, with the rising cost of food, governments maybe can't do everything, but where we can act and pull levers,

we should. And I think this action to eliminate the PST off of all food in grocery stores is, again, one of those important actions we're taking.

The overall cost in a full fiscal year, annualized, is \$32 million in a year. We're expecting the overall cost this year to be \$24 million and that's assuming that it gets put in place on July 1.

Now, in order for Manitobans to benefit from that on July 1, we also need the members opposite, of course, to support that. So that's assuming that they want to help Manitobans reduce their grocery costs that that would come into effect on July 1, making this year's total cost an estimated \$24 million.

Terms of the total savings, we talked a bit about this at budget time, but we're estimating the savings for a family of four to be around \$100 a year. And, again, that's in addition to the many other important initiatives that we've undertaken and that I outlined here today that are focused on reducing costs for Manitobans.

Mrs. Stone: So the minister's savings is \$8 a month and less than \$2 in a given week. That's how much he's saving with this so-called celebrated and affordability measure by this minister.

Compared to our PC plan and PC team plan of saving Manitoba families \$3,500 within a given year for a dual-income household, Manitobans would have \$3,500 more in their pockets, not less than \$100 per year in their pockets.

So if you're comparing apples to apples, Manitobans would certainly be better off under our plan to increase the basic personal exemption to \$30,000. This goes back to my opening comments where the minister has not brought forward any real, meaningful, long-term tax relief at a time when 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting that they are within \$200 of insolvency.

So when it comes to this minister's budget and advertising of their PST reduction for grocery stores, how much is the—how much has the minister budgeted to advertise the PST cut for grocery items?

MLA Sala: I appreciate the question.

Maybe before I get to the answer specifically for—that was being requested here, just talking broadly about affordability. You know, the member likes to suggest that our government isn't acting, but of course we know that that's fiction and I'm happy to just talk a bit about the good work that we're doing to lower costs

and the work that we've done since coming into government.

Of course, you'll know that one of the first things that happened when we got in was we offered Manitobans a one-year fuel tax holiday. That was followed, of course, by a permanent cut to the gas tax going forward, which continues to benefit Manitobans right now at a time of elevated energy costs.

We also know that we brought in an increase to the basic personal exemption, changes to brackets that are allowing more of your money, as a Manitoban, to be taxed at a lower level. So those personal income tax changes are providing huge benefits to Manitobans that we supported as a new government and brought forward. And now Manitobans are benefiting from those reductions.

* (15:40)

We also, of course, after years of massive under-investment in education, are not only investing adequately in ensuring that school divisions have funding that's above the rate of inflation, finally after years of cuts. But while we're ensuring that education is funded adequately, we're also bringing forward important reductions to school tax costs for Manitobans in the form of an education property tax rebate, which we call the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit.

Of course, that started with \$1,500 off your education property tax bill, went up to 1,600 bucks at last tax season, and next year Manitobans can look forward to a \$1,700 reduction in their overall tax costs for education property taxes. And, again, this is something that we talk about a lot in this House.

The member, in her community, nine out of 10 people are better off or have more money in their pockets as a result of that measure. That's something I continue to be confused about how she's communicating when she goes back to her riding and talks to residents, and I'm not sure how she squares that, but the reality is, is that nine out of 10 people in her community are better off as a result of that change. And that's something, you know, I think we can be proud of, that we're reducing those costs for Manitobans in all corners of the province.

In addition to that, of course, reducing costs for renters through our increases to the renters tax credit, a tax credit that the members opposite cut on those who need the most help. Often, again, people who are seniors, people on fixed incomes, for some reason they saw fit to raise costs on those folks. And so proud that our last budget continued to do the work of

meeting our commitment to raise that renters tax credit back to the value it was before the PCs raised those taxes on Manitobans.

And then, of course, in addition to that, we're doing all this other great work in reducing the cost for food for Manitobans. The members sort of scoff at the amount of money that we said that we're going to help put in people's pockets. I guess to some extent it depends on how many rotisserie chickens their family is eating along with other fresh foods. But what we can say is the average family is going to save money. And I know, again, for the members opposite, they seem to think that, you know, dollars—those dollars are insignificant. On this side of the House, we recognize the reality of the challenges families are facing. And I said at the beginning of my last answer about food affordability—I'll say it again—we can't do everything, but we can pull the levers where we can. And this is one area where we know we can help to make a difference, again, among many other areas.

The best part, Chair, of this is that not only are we doing this and bringing these savings to Manitobans, we're doing it in a way that ensures we not only bring in affordability benefits, but that while we continue our fiscally sustainable path—something that I'm really proud of—we continue to be on track to deliver on our balanced budget commitment to Manitobans next fiscal year. And, again, it's very different than the kind of record that the members opposite left with us. They left Manitobans with a \$2-billion deficit hole.

And the proposal that was again raised here today, which is to raise the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, we know that initially they hadn't even costed this. We now know that this proposal is about a billion-dollar revenue leak for the Province, should it come in. And, again, we know that, ultimately, the impacts of that mean more closures of hospitals, more health-care workers getting fired, more underfunding for education. They bring this forward—clearly, they hadn't even costed it, so they hadn't done that piece of work—but it is really concerning to hear them bring forward a proposal that would (a) result in credit downgrades; or (b) result in cuts—more cuts—to health care and education and the many things that they did when they were in government.

So Manitobans can see why they've got a lot of reason to be worried about the return of the PCs to government at some distant, distant point in the future.

Mrs. Stone: So, you know, quite frankly, this minister has no leg to stand on when it comes to the education property tax file, considering we know that 55 per cent

of Winnipeg properties are worse off under this plan. Their increase to \$1,700 doesn't start until next year, which, quite frankly, wouldn't even cover the cost of school division hikes and school tax hikes for this year, let alone next year when a general assessment takes effect and property values continue to rise.

I can certainly say for my constituents, they would rather not see an education property tax at all, and were very much in favourable of the PC government's plan to eliminate education taxes off of properties altogether.

And if the PCs were still in power, that amount would be a 75 per cent rebate, going up to 100 per cent rebate, which would put Manitoba homeowners, Manitoba families, in a much better position than the poorly planned, sloppy rollout of the homeowner affordability credit that this minister brought forward last year.

But my question was specific to how much advertising dollars are going towards the P-C-PST on groceries tax cut.

MLA Sala: Yes, I appreciate that.

And, again, when we're talking about education, it seems almost comical to hear the members opposite talk about their record, and it's quite a revisionist history we hear when we listen to them talk about their approach to education during their time in government.

We know if you talk to anyone in—who's leading—in a leadership position within a school division, they'll tell you those are very difficult years and I know that the members opposite know that. I know that when they have conversations with school division leadership, they would hear this message loud and clear.

And so we know that school divisions are happy to finally be getting funded at rates that are above the rate of inflation; that's long overdue. And, of course, while we fund school divisions at the rate of inflation and beyond, we're also bringing in big savings with these education property tax rebates that are helping Manitobans. And, again, like the member opposite in her community, nine out of 10 people are better off as a function of that.

So I don't know how she squares that when she talks to residents in her community, but I think that's something that I'd love to hear from residents of her community about what they think about her advocating for higher costs for her residents.

To the question that was asked, the members opposite—you know, it's fun to chat away in here but it's tough to kind of keep focus on the question, so it would be good if we could just keep things respectful. The answer to the question that was asked is the global amount spent last year in advertising was \$1.6 million. We're expecting that this year, that the amount spent on advertising will be relatively similar to that amount. Of that amount—or within that amount that the expenses, as it relates to advertising on budget, which is where you would have seen some advertising around the PST reductions on groceries, would be included within that number.

So, again, the overall number is expected to be \$1.6 million and specific to the question that was asked, those expenses would be part of the expenses that were brought forward as part of budget advertisements. So \$1.6 million is the expected number for the upcoming year.

Mrs. Stone: Can the minister please confirm how much of that \$1.6 million in the global advertising budget is going towards advertising the PST cut at grocery stores?

* (15:50)

MLA Sala: So the total amount spent this year for budget-related advertising specifically—but this includes billboards, all the printing that we do, all those nice-looking books, really the—all costs pertaining to budget advertising were \$174,000.

And so—but, again, that reflects the totality of our expenses as relates to budget which also include, of course, advertising pertaining to PST reductions and otherwise.

Mrs. Stone: Okay, thank you, just shifting gears a little bit here.

Can the minister please walk us through how his department determines Manitoba's economic forecasts and the model that they use for revenue projections?

MLA Sala: Before I offer the answer, I just want to talk about something that was said in the opening statement by the member that I think needs to be just—the record needs to be set straight. Something I've heard them repeat before but that it relates to the economic results for Manitoba for 2024.

The number that they presented was wrong, and just to be clear, this comes from economic accounts from Stats Canada. Manitoba had 1.7 per cent growth in that year and that was compared to Ontario that had 1.6 or BC that had 1.1. So the repeating line that we

were last—just to be clear—Manitoba performed at 1.7 that year, and that's coming right from Stats Canada.

Moving on, you know, happy to provide the information that was requested in relation to how we do our economic forecasting. I can share that, of course, there's perhaps different aspects to this and, you know, specific to how we calculate real GDP and use that in our forecasting.

We use seven private-sector forecasts. We partner with seven private-sector agencies that provide us with those forecasts, plus the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics also does their own analysis that supports that. So, again, that's to help support calculating real GDP, and I think, again, we're taking a responsible approach when it comes to identifying economic forecasts and ensuring that we budget accordingly.

Just to speak to, you know, how this is distinct from what we've seen from the members opposite, they'll know that, again, we did this report with MNP that found some pretty concerning decision making from the members opposite before they left government. And we know that that MNP report identified that they had taken a number of very risky, concerning decisions that led to that \$2-billion deficit number. I think it's important that we remind Manitobans of what occurred there, and what that report outlined was that, not only did they use—we'll call them rosy—economic assumptions, but they also used—again, we'll call them rosy—assumptions when it comes to Manitoba Hydro's forecast.

That year, they had forecasted an estimated net income for Hydro above \$500 million, which is, again, something that is, you know, wildly irresponsible. We know that that is not a realistic type of forecast, and that's saying nothing about the fact that, when they reported out to Manitobans their Q1 result before an election, only a couple months before an election, at a point by which they would have been very clear on Hydro's destination when it came to their net income, they chose not to share that.

And that was, of course, a real lack of transparency on their part. Manitobans should have gained a line of sight on the fact that they were going to see, ultimately, hundreds of millions of dollars of negative variance with Hydro's net income.

They would have known that before that Q1 report. They chose not to share that and, ultimately, went into an election with Manitobans having a conception of our fiscal position that was hundreds of millions of

times—hundreds of millions of dollars better than ultimately where we were in reality.

So that's a concern, and, of course, that report also outlined how there were a number of major expense decisions that were made after the budget was released that they didn't account for in that Q1 report. So that is the kind of thing that Manitobans need to be really worried about, that kind of an approach to budgeting, that type of lack of transparency.

And I think, ultimately, when I think about what they've brought forward here with their proposal, again, there's a lack of transparency with Manitobans about what it would mean to give a billion dollars to the wealthiest in Manitoba and the impacts of that on our—ultimately, on our ability to continue to operate as a Province and provide services.

You know, it's interesting to hear them bring this forward without any accounting for what the impacts would be, but, again, we can share: it's going to be (a) credit rating downgrades, or (b), again, more massive cuts to health care as we saw under the PCs during their time in government.

So that's an irresponsible approach to fiscal management. That's what we know we can expect when the Conservatives are in government. That's what we saw when they left government. They left us with a big mess to clean up. MNP, an independent accounting firm, confirmed that that was the approach that—and that's, ultimately, it was their decisions that led to that \$2-billion hole. We're climbing out of it. Our most recent budget is a 75 per cent reduction relative to that deficit number that they left us.

So, again, we're proud to be doing the work of showing a fiscally sustainable path forward while we make life more affordable, and we're going to keep working with good—to bring forward great quality economic forecasting in partnership with these economic agencies.

Mrs. Stone: From the minister's own department and economic report in December of 2025, the economic GDP growth was 1.1 per cent.

So is the minister admitting that his own projection was 1.7 per cent, and then, under his failing government, it was downgraded to just 1.1 per cent? Is that what he is admitting, that his own projection was 1.7 per cent and then ended up being only 1.1 per cent for economic GDP growth?

* (16:00)

MLA Sala: Apologies for the delay there, and if I'm not—if I didn't get the time periods correct, I'll let the member clarify.

So I just do want to reconfirm: economic accounts for 2024 showed Manitoba landed at a 1.7 per cent growth, which is not the lowest in Canada. We were above Ontario and BC. And, then, just pertaining to the forecasting numbers that were identified by the member, I can say that December 2025 Q2 report, we were projecting 1.1 per cent growth. And then at budget, which is our Q3 report for 2025, we had revised that upwards to 1.6 per cent.

Mrs. Stone: So the minister has projected a 1.7 per cent real GDP growth for this coming year, yet Deloitte has recently come out and downgraded that to be 1 per cent for real GDP growth for 2026.

So seeing as how the past couple of years under this NDP government, their projected real GDP growth has not been met with reality in the end of our economic GDP growth, so does the minister stand by his projection, or does he agree with Deloitte's projection that Manitoba will be downgraded to a 1 per cent GDP growth for this year?

* (16:10)

MLA Sala: We'll wait a moment for the critic.

The Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Finance.

MLA Sala: Thank you so much, Chair.

So in regards to the question, one thing I can share is—well, I already shared earlier—we work with seven private-sector forecasters who help us determine economic forecast looking forward. The consensus forecast in January was 1.3 per cent growth and that consensus forecast remained at 1.3 altogether with those seven forecasters at the time of budget.

So I'm sure the member can appreciate that at a certain point, we have to lock in and Deloitte is the only one of those seven that had adjusted their forecast downward from January to March.

Overall, that consensus forecast remains at 1.3. So, again, one of seven revised downward; the rest held or went up. And so it's important we look at data, we look at all the data and together it holds at that 1.3 per cent level.

You know, since we're talking about data and so forth, I also want to use this opportunity to flag how happy we were to see the latest StatsCan data that said that we've added 10,000 jobs last month. That's, I think, a good sign about the work that we're doing

in helping to grow opportunities and create jobs here in Manitoba.

And it's building on the 30,000 that we'd already talked about in this House a lot, and so we're seeing a lot of great momentum when it comes to creating opportunities for Manitobans to move ahead, creating a lot of—more growth opportunities for folks in every corner of Manitoba. Proud of that work.

And, again, back to the forecasting question, happy to answer any other further questions as it relates to this.

Mrs. Stone: So Moody's credit rating agency has issued a cautionary note to this NDP regarding its budget projections coupled with slow economic growth. I would ask the minister if he could clearly state for the record if any credit rating agencies, whether it be Moody's, S&P or DBRS, have issued any other cautions, warnings or negative outlooks regarding Manitoba's fiscal position.

MLA Sala: I appreciate the question. Maybe it gives me a chance just to talk about the important work that we're doing as it relates to building good relationships with credit rating agencies. I'm proud of the fact that we've done two investors' tours since we've come into office. We're going to be doing our third within the next month.

And those visits to our investors and with credit rating agencies are incredibly important. It gives us a chance to dig into our budget, to dig into our forecasts and our thinking, and gives them a chance, frankly, to really pressure test our budget and our thinking. And we welcome that. We welcome that opportunity to have those conversations, to be accountable to the numbers that we print.

To date, I think we've shown incredible progress on reducing that deficit that was left with Manitobans. I think, again, one of the biggest signs of our progress is that reduction in our debt-servicing costs. That's going to bring a lot of benefits to Manitobans.

As it relates to the question and, you know, comments from credit rating agencies, the member would know when credit rating agencies do reports, they make them public and so those will be visible for all the world to see when they come in.

But, again, I want to use this as an opportunity to just highlight the headlines from the credit rating agencies or at least some of them here. I'll just speak to DBRS's: Balance within reach. We're seeing some great quotes here from the three credit rating agencies.

Again, I'll read one from Moody's: The improved forecasted fiscal plan lowers Manitoba's need to borrow for operations, with debt primarily needed to fund capital projects for the province and for government business enterprises.

We are, I think, showing with our—the incredibly modest deficit that we brought in this year, which is only half a per cent of GDP, the lowest in Canada, that we're very serious when it comes to good fiscal management. I think the credit rating agencies can see that, along with financial institutions and investors, and we're serving Manitoba well.

And with all that work, what does this translate into? More preferential or lower costs of borrowing that we can put to good work, put to good use in making further investments in health care and affordability and the many areas that were cut for many years under the members opposite.

So that link between fiscal accountability and ensuring we do this important work of working closely with credit rating agencies to understand the seriousness of our commitment to a balanced budget, the seriousness of our—you know, our focus on sustainability. It's something that, you know, the average person doesn't really get a chance to hear about or to think about.

And, you know, it makes me proud that we're doing the work of, again, helping to lower those borrowing costs because we know those dollars need to be put to good work in investing in health care and education and many areas that saw reductions over the seven and a half years that the PCs were in government.

I will leave it there.

Mrs. Stone: So it's also important that when a credit rating agency issues a cautionary warning or—a cautionary note or a warning that we also, as a province, look at those red flags from within the report.

And from the Moody's credit rating agency, the key areas of concern from their report included: inconsistent projections that do not align with the slow-growth economic forecast that challenges the credibility of this government's fiscal plan; risks in the budget's reliance on a major financial turnaround for Manitoba Hydro, which has suffered losses in recent years; red flags regarding the government's ability to balance the budget next year; and trade uncertainty and US tariffs that could continue to impact Manitoba's revenue and economic outlook.

When a credit rating agency issues red flags regarding a government's fiscal plan, that puts Manitoba's fiscal position in significant jeopardy within its credibility.

So can the minister please tell us, and for the record, when he and his department were made aware of Moody's credit rating warning or cautionary note and concerns with the Manitoba budget?

* (16:20)

MLA Sala: Appreciate it, and appreciate the opportunity to respond to the question.

So, very important to flag that while the member's trying to characterize it otherwise, it's not a rating decision, just comments within the document that had been put out. And when did we learn about that? When all other people around the world were able to access that document when it was made public. We are eager—we're going to be meeting with Moody's at the end of the month as part of that tour, and we're looking forward to meeting with them and answering any questions they have, because that's how we operate. There's going to be full transparency and we're eager to dig into things with them.

As it relates to just some of the characterization here around Hydro, it is important to speak clearly on the record about how our government has approached Manitoba Hydro and our budgeting as it relates to them. This year's net income forecast is \$140 million; very modest net income position.

For what it's worth, for the member, I'll outline that that net income forecast is based on a number of factors, but it's based off realistic projections or understandings of where our current reservoirs are at. And from there, we build a forecast based on some weather forecasting and historic water levels.

But it is a very realistic budget number for this year, and very modest, especially when you compare that \$140-million net income figure to the over \$500-million net income figure that the PCs had used in their last year in government. So supporting that and just, I think, speaking further to the work we're doing to ensure Hydro is fiscally healthy and, I think, speaking to really why what the member is saying is not accurate, where they're suggesting that we're somehow overly reliant on some rosy projections at Hydro. Again, not only are we starting from a very modest net income forecast, but also we're helping to support Hydro's financial health through changes we made.

We eliminated the capital tax, which keeps a lot more money in Hydro's coffers. And we changed the debt guarantee fee. We reduced that last year, and we reduced it again this year. And the net impact of that is an additional \$220 million a year is staying in Hydro's coffers. And so when you account for that, along with this incredibly modest net income position that we've put forward, which is itself accounting for our lower water position with our reservoirs, I hope the member can see—and I'm doing my best to really help them understand here—that our approach to Hydro is very modest, is a very modest approach when it comes to how our forecasting.

And so we're eager to talk more about this when we get out West to talk with the credit rating agencies, talk more about how we came to this forecast, and speaking to how our budget is credible and the—other details that folks are going to want to dig into.

So with that, I'll pass it back to the member.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, so these cautions came directly from Moody's credit rating agency. These are red flags that one of our three credit rating agencies has raised as a result of Manitoba's fiscal position and Manitoba's budget. They didn't come from me. This is coming from a credit rating agency. And although the minister is claiming that this is not going to result in a downgrade, it is still a red flag from a credit rating agency, and that needs to be taken seriously.

So what's—does the minister disagree with Moody's assumptions—or, assessment of Manitoba's fiscal position?

MLA Sala: So, again, I know the member, on the record, is trying to overstate what Moody's has said. It was not a rating decision. In fact, we've been preserved at AA stable, and we're very proud of that. And I think, you know, the—in terms of her question about whether we disagree with Moody's assessment, I took—you know, I spoke at length about how Hydro's forecast has been developed this year. I spoke to why it's credible, why that is a very modest net income position and why we're helping to keep Hydro in a good fiscal position.

So that's just one of many things that we're eager to connect with Moody's over and to discuss, to talk about the good work that we've done in preparing this budget.

Mrs. Stone: So with that being said, has Moody's, S&P or DBRS or any other credit agency advised the Province to slow its borrowing, slow its spending or improve its revenue realism?

* (16:30)

MLA Sala: So just in response to the question, you know, what did we hear from credit rating agencies, I'll let the reports speak for themselves. I think they provide a lot of detail that the member can review.

But I'd say, overall, the reaction to our budget and our forecast were very positive. And we see that by the virtue of the fact that our credit ratings have been preserved post-budget. We're looking forward to that Moody's report later in the summer and, again, we're looking forward to having that conversation with them near the end of the month.

I do want to speak to the fact, though, that it's very impressive, I think, by any measure, that through a period where we faced record wildfires, a horrible wildfire season that affected over 30,000 Manitobans and ultimately led to, you know, over \$350 million in expenditures to support those Manitobans, in addition to it being one of the worst drought years since 1940-41; where Hydro had a massive revenue variance tied directly to that natural event, that even in the context of those significant economic impacts from those events that are, again, completely outside of our government's control, we've still been able to show to those credit rating agencies that we have a plan that they can have confidence in.

And so even in the context of all these headwinds, it's clear that credit rating agencies continue to have confidence in the plan that we've put forward, even in face of those massive headwinds that we faced as a province last year.

And so I think that speaks to the good work that's been done in developing a path forward. And, of course, we are seeing, in some other provinces across Canada, some downgrades happening. And, of course, those are in provinces that perhaps haven't faced that same level of in-year impact. So even in the face of really historic wildfires and droughts, our government is doing the important work of ensuring that we're putting forward a fiscally sustainable plan that's credible with credit rating agencies.

And we can see that by virtue of the fact that they continue to preserve our good ratings even within a challenging period. I think that speaks to the quality of the work that is being put forward. I think it speaks to the quality of the forecasting and leadership that our government is bringing when it comes to managing the fiscal purse here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stone: So, speaking of our credit rating, what specific steps or requirements have the credit rating

agencies demanded of the Manitoba government to ensure that our credit rating does not get downgraded?

MLA Sala: So, in response to the question, I can share that these things are not kept secret. The member might know that credit rating agencies make their pronouncements very public. And I can speak to, just to answer the question, something that Moody's shared in one of their reports last August.

I'll just read this out: factors that could both lead to an upgrade and factors that could lead to a downgrade. But for the member's benefit, I'll read all of this. Factors that could lead to an upgrade according to Moody's: Rating could be upgraded if a strong fiscal and economic recovery supports a faster rise in revenue than we currently anticipate; allows for a material reduction in the debt burden; a significant increase in cash and investments, including long-term liquidity sources, would also contribute to upward pressure on the rating.

On the flip side, the rating could be downgraded if an economic slowdown and a more prolonged period of trade uncertainty resulted in meaningful revenue declines arising spending, contributing to larger or longer lasting deficits than we currently project. A material increase in the debt burden, including a rise in the indebtedness of Crown corporations such as Hydro, would also result in downward rating pressure.

So, again, this is not secret. This is publicly available, something that was put out into the world last August. And, of course, we look forward to continued work in collaboration with those credit rating agencies to make sure that they can learn more about the good work we're doing to ensure a fiscally sustainable path forward.

Mrs. Stone: So, with those requirements, Manitoba under this NDP government is in a very significant fiscal position for a credit rating downgrade as Manitoba Hydro's debt has now exploded to \$27 billion and is slowly closing in on their \$29-billion debt wall.

At the same time, under this NDP government, they have posted back-to-back deficits, missing their quarterly deficit projections by not just a little bit, but by a significant margin. As we saw last year, they projected an \$800-million deficit and then that became \$1.6 billion. That didn't even include a \$200-million unbudgeted special warrant.

So I ask the minister that, if Manitoba were to receive a credit rating downgrade, what would be the estimated cost to Manitoba taxpayers, and how is the

estimated additional interest that Manitoba would have to pay to credit rating agencies?

MLA Sala: I think—you know, just important to speak to some of the comments that were made there. First year, our first fiscal result, as I spoke about earlier in the House today, we reduced that \$2-billion deficit that was left to Manitobans by 40 per cent. So that was a huge reduction and showed progress relative to what they had left us in terms of a fiscal hole to climb out of.

Last year, the fiscal result the member's referencing: What I can share is that it's building on my comments about Hydro and the wildfire impacts. Absent those impacts, we were on target. And so, you know, as a government, again, it's tough to control for historic wildfire seasons or the worst drought since 1940-41, but those events will have an impact on any government's ability to budget accordingly.

And so, we know that, ultimately, every year, the reality is, at Manitoba Hydro, you can have significant variability in terms of your forecasting around water. Hydrology can change in a year. The difference is, our government will actually tell Manitobans when things change, relative to what we saw from the members opposite, which was very different, when they had what was clearly a massive variance from their net income projection of over \$500 million, which they didn't share with Manitobans.

So, again, you know, when it comes to the path forward, we continue to manage, I think, overall, in a very fiscally responsible way.

The members spoke a bit about Hydro. I do have to speak a bit about, you know, the work that we're doing there. I can say I think what we've brought forward very quickly in short order, in just effectively two years of government, is a response to the failure on the members opposite to ensure that Manitobans would have access to affordable, reliable energy when they needed it.

Honestly, Chair, they really put us in a precarious spot. Fortunately, again, within a year, we had brought in our affordable energy plan that showed the path writ large, moving forward, as to how we were going to keep energy affordable and ensure that Manitobans had access to the power they needed.

* (16:40)

Most recently, the IRP that was brought forward by Hydro, all Manitobans have the ability to look at that document. That IRP shows the path forward,

which, yes, does involve significant investments in our energy infrastructure.

And, frankly, Chair, those investments are long overdue. And we're doing that because we know that's incredibly important, not only for reliability and affordability reasons, but also because we know that's essential to economic growth here in Manitoba.

It's kind of strange to hear the member opposite speak negatively about the fact that we're investing in Manitoba Hydro after years of their failure to take any action to move us forward in meeting our capacity requirements, something that, frankly, was going to have a chokehold on our ability to grow our economy here in Manitoba. You can't grow your economy unless you have energy to support that growth.

And for seven and a half years, we didn't take a single step forward in that regard. I mean, that's—it's irresponsible. I don't even know what type of words I would use to characterize the decisions or the lack of decisions that we saw. But all I can say is that it was harmful. It was harmful to the prospects of our economic future and put us in a very difficult position.

So I think we've done really, really important work when it comes to finding that path forward for Hydro, not only involving, I think, significant investments and assets like bipole that are going to help to make sure that we can bring that energy reliably from northern Manitoba down to southern Manitoba, but also, again, that we expand the amount of energy that we have available to make sure that we can meet our energy needs going forward.

And while we're doing that, we're going to make sure that hydro rates remain affordable. In fact, the rate path that has been put forward by Hydro is a rate path that shows lower rate growth than what Manitobans experienced under the members opposite. And the truly incredible thing about that, Chair, is that our rate path is lower while we're making the investments that we need to ensure we have the energy capacity we require to power homes and businesses, while for the members opposite, the rate hikes were higher and Manitobans didn't get a single thing for it.

I think it's important that we let that sink in, that, you know, for years, the members opposite, their only focus when it came to Hydro was jacking up hydro rates on Manitobans without giving us anything to—or showing anything for those investments or that they were going to do anything with those revenues. That's their record.

Our record, again, responsible fiscal management. We're going to keep doing that good work. We know that's important for the future of the province.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, only an NDP minister would claim that a \$373-million surplus left by a former government would put them in a precarious position. But now the minister is going into almost his third year in office, and it's time for him to start taking responsibility for his spending and his back-to-back deficits that have occurred under his watch.

So can the minister state for the record: Is he confident that Manitoba will not receive a credit rating downgrade by any of the credit rating agencies?

MLA Sala: What I'm confident in is that we've done a lot of really good work that led to a budget number that is, again, the lowest deficit by GDP in the country: half a per cent of our GDP.

And so, you know, that didn't happen by accident. That happened because our team did a lot of really hard work, focused work, to first of all develop a budget that was focused and targeted on those priorities that we know Manitobans have for us right now and have been clear about, that we're hearing on doorsteps and that we're hearing in community. And, ultimately, you know, that's what Manitobans can expect, is a very responsible approach.

So I can state that with confidence, that we did an incredible amount of work, first of all, to determine a cost structure going forward. It wasn't just about staring at our shoelaces and thinking about things year to year. We had a multi-year outlook that we brought to bear to understand what our basic cost structure would be. We developed very clear targets for colleagues around the Cabinet table to support us getting to that \$498-million deficit number, to continue making progress towards that balanced budget target for next fiscal.

That didn't happen by accident. And so what I'm confident about is that we have done the work necessary to set us on a good, fiscally sustainable path. And I'm also confident that we're going to continue to do the important work of communicating how we came to this budget number with credit rating agencies, with investors. And we're going to keep doing that great work of meeting with them to make sure that they have every opportunity to dig in to our assumptions, to dig in to our structure that we've brought forward and to help them understand the important work that we're doing to stay on that fiscally sustainable path.

Mrs. Stone: I'll rephrase the question: Does the minister expect Manitoba will receive a downgrade from a credit rating agency?

MLA Sala: Again, Chair, what we're confident in is that we've done the work. And that work involved, again, many long nights with this—actually both these gentlemen here that are sitting in front of me, where we—you know, we worked, and I think we were very thorough in, first of all, putting forward an overall structure that will help us—helped us to understand what our cost pressures would be over the coming years.

We were very intentional and deliberate about looking at major spending decisions to understand how those would map over our core cost structure, and then from there we were very deliberate in ensuring that colleagues around the Cabinet table were able to participate in that work of getting to that \$500-million deficit number through doing the hard work of going back with their departments, bringing focus to their Estimates proposals, bringing focus to ensure that, together as a team, we're working to ensure that we deliver on a fiscally sustainable path forward.

I'm incredibly proud of that, and, again we're doing this in a very, of course, challenging economic environment, where provinces and countries around the world are facing economic headwinds. And, again, we're proud to be doing that because we know that right now, during this period where we are facing those increased levels of challenge, of course, from tariffs to the south of us and beyond, that that work has never been more important, that that work has never been more essential in ensuring that we can continue to make investments in the areas that we know are important, like health care, like improving affordability, like making Manitoba into a safer province to live.

So, again, that deficit number didn't happen by accident. We're confident that we've done the good work of setting us on a strong, fiscally sustainable path, and we're very confident that we're going to continue to do the work of working closely with credit rating agencies to make sure they have every opportunity to engage us on our assumptions and how we came to those numbers and how we developed the budget, because we know that's important.

So we're going to keep focusing on that and I'm looking forward to our trip in a few weeks where we're going to get to have those very conversations.

Mrs. Stone: It sounds like the minister is a little nervous about answering with certainty whether Manitoba may or may not receive a credit rating downgrade by the credit rating agencies. So perhaps

the minister—I didn't receive an answer to one of my previous questions, but, hypothetically for his sake, in the event that Manitoba does receive a credit rating downgrade, what would be—even by a single point, so let's say a single point—what would that be, that interest to Manitoba taxpayers?

MLA Sala: Well, ultimately the impacts of that type of eventuality would play out through the spreads and changes and spreads for our province. But, again, so very difficult to answer the question in an accurate way. What we can say is that, as a government, we're working very hard to make sure that we deliver on that goal and on that commitment to Manitobans, which is a balanced budget next year.

Again, I think it's a great opportunity to reread some of the helpful—or some of the headlines that we saw. For example, DBRS credit rating agency: Balance within reach. We're seeing some amazing quotes from, for example, major financial institutions that, you know, have some computing capacity, like BMO: The bottom line, Manitoba looks to be on track to achieve surplus by fiscal year '27-28, despite a backdrop of elevated uncertainty. The province's diverse economic base and attractiveness for infrastructure projects leaves it well positioned to benefit from efforts to boost Canada's resilience.

So what we're seeing, again, is a very favourable response to our budget, to the forecast contained within it, and, ultimately, we're going to keep doing that important work because we know that with this increased focus and continued focus on fiscal sustainability, that will give us the resources and the dollars we need to keep making the important investments that need to be made after years of cuts and chainsaw hacking away at every department, for example, areas like health care, education and community safety. So we're going to keep doing that important work.

* (16:50)

And, again, to the very specific question that was asked, impossible to calculate that because it will all come down to decisions from investors about spreads that would ultimately enlarge should that eventuality come to pass.

We're going to keep working to ensure Manitoba credit—our credit ratings stay at the levels that they're at and, hopefully, we're going to see them improve.

Mrs. Stone: Just in the spirit of time, I just wanted to revert back to some questions I asked at the beginning of this Estimates process and just clarify a couple of

the numbers that the minister provided as it relates to the advertising budget.

So the minister had indicated that \$1.6 million is the global advertising budget. He then indicated that \$174,000 is specific to the budget itself, including the PST at grocery stores. So can the minister please tell us where the rest of the \$1.4 million of that advertising budget is going to?

MLA Sala: So the response has not come as of yet. What I would say is I think we're probably going to be sitting in committee again tomorrow, so I'll commit to bringing that answer tomorrow when it comes forward.

Mrs. Stone: Okay. In the meantime, while he's collecting that information for tomorrow, can he also, if he doesn't have the answer today, also tell us how much has been spent to date on the budget from that advertising budget?

MLA Sala: So, again, in the interest of time, we'll come back with more information. I can share that, of course, this year so far, the main thrust of those expenditures will be expenditures tied to this year's budget-related printing.

But one thing I'm happy to talk about was—as part of those costs is a large poster that the member might have seen that highlights that Manitoba had the lowest deficit as a percentage of GDP in Canada. If she hasn't seen that, I'm happy to show it to her. It'd be wonderful if she's interested in checking that out. I have it prominently displayed in my office now. Premier (Mr. Kinew) was dragging it around for a while.

But that would be one small piece, of course, of those overall costs we'll share more about tomorrow.

Mrs. Stone: The minister, in his comments at some point this afternoon, either his introductory or beyond, mentioned BITSA. So can the minister please tell us when he expects to table BITSA.

MLA Sala: Yes, I appreciate the question very much. We'll not be sharing that information today. But I am looking forward to seeing the member, hopefully, support the elements within BITSA and, of course, the overall budget like taking the PST off all groceries in our grocery stores, like reducing costs for child care for those families that need the most help, like taking the costs for bus fare off of family budgets for kids.

So we know that there's some really important affordability measures coming forward in BITSA and overall with budget, and eager to see if the members are wanting to support those measures to support folks across the province to lower their costs.

Mrs. Stone: In last year's budget, the minister ended indexation of income taxes, which—indexation is a widely held and common policy across Canada. In fact, Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Yukon and Northwest Territories all index annually. You know, clearly indexation is the default and responsible policy across Canada.

Can the minister explain his justification for ending indexation and pushing Manitobans into a higher tax bracket?

MLA Sala: So, again, I appreciate an opportunity to talk about the important work we've done to reduce taxes for Manitobans. The member will know that shortly after we came in, we brought in a really significant personal income tax reduction for Manitobans. We made a huge lift to the basic personal amount or the basic personal exemption. And, of course, we also made some changes to brackets that saw many more dollars for Manitobans being taxed at a lower tax rate, overall reducing their personal income tax burden, in many cases by thousands of dollars. So I think that was a really important move that we made coming in as a new government and, I think, a really solid sign of our commitment to reducing taxes and costs.

Of course, they'll know our gas tax elimination for a full year brought an incredible amount of savings to Manitobans, and then we didn't stop that after that year. Of course, we brought in a permanent 10 per cent cut, which we know is important in continuing to provide benefits to Manitobans during—at a time—

* (17:00)

The Chairperson: Order.

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

And call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

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