

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

Vol. LXXVIII No. 58A - 10 a.m., Thursday, May 16, 2024

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AL TOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 16, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Grant Jackson (Deputy Official Opposition House Leader): Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen). The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Keep Hard Drugs Illegal.

The Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon West. The title of the resolution is Calling on the Provincial Government to Keep Hard Drugs Illegal.

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Mr. Jackson: I would ask that you call for resuming of second reading debate on Bill 203, The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLSBill 203—The Occupiers' Liability
Amendment Act

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume debate on Bill 203, The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act. Debate is standing in the name of the honourable member for Waverley, who has four minutes remaining.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Aujourd'hui, nous nous réunissons pour discuter des modifications proposées à la Loi sur la responsabilité des occupants, spécifiquement le Projet de loi 203. Ces amendements soulèvent des préoccupations significatives qui méritent notre attention.

L'exigence pour les parties blessées de notifier les propriétaires ou les gestionnaires dans les 60 jours suivant un incident est préoccupant.

Souvent, la véritable étendue des blessures subies lors de chutes, notamment sur la glace, ne devient pas immédiatement évidente. Des conditions comme les commotions cérébrales ou les blessures internes peuvent prendre du temps pour se manifester.

Le délai de préavis de 60 jours est non seulement peu pratique, mais potentiellement injuste, car il peut empêcher les Manitobains de chercher justice une fois l'impact complet de leurs blessures est connu. Ce cadre temporel rigide impose un stress inutile à ceux qui font déjà face à une récupération physique et émotionnelle.

S'attendre à une soumission complète des réclamations complètes dans une telle période ignore les complexités de la guérison et peut dissuader de nombreux individus de poursuivre des réclamations légitimes en raison de défis procéduraux.

L'amendement risque de limiter l'accès à la justice, en particulier pour les personnes marginalisées ou celles qui ne sont pas familières avec les processus légaux. Il introduit une barrière qui pourrait affecter de manière disproportionnée ceux qui sont les

moins équipés pour naviguer rapidement dans le système juridique.

Étant donné la sévérité de nos hivers, la loi devrait faciliter – et non entraver – la poursuite de la sécurité et de la justice. Les blessures dues aux chutes sur la glace sont trop courantes, et notre législation doit offrir un soutien robuste à ceux qui sont affectés.

Je nous exhorte à reconsidérer ces amendements. Nous avons besoin de lois qui tiennent compte des réalités de la récupération après blessure et des hivers rigoureux du Manitoba.

Assurons-nous que notre législation défende les valeurs de compassion, d'équité et de justice pour tous les Manitobains.

Je vous remercie de votre dévouement à un Manitoba plus sûr.

Translation

Today, we are gathered to discuss proposed amendments to The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, namely Bill 203. These amendments raise significant concerns that deserve our attention.

The requirement for injured parties to notify property owners or managers within 60 days of an incident is concerning.

Often, the true extent of injuries sustained in falls, particularly falls on ice, does not become immediately apparent. Conditions such as concussions or internal injuries can take time to manifest themselves.

The 60 day notice period is not only impractical, but potentially unfair, as it can prevent Manitobans from seeking justice once the full impact of their injuries is known. This rigid time frame places unnecessary stress on those already facing physical and emotional recovery.

Expecting full submission of complete claims in such a time frame ignores the complexities of recovery and may deter many individuals from pursuing legitimate claims due to procedural challenges.

This amendment risks limiting access to justice, particularly for marginalized people or those unfamiliar with legal processes. It introduces a barrier that could disproportionately affect those least equipped to navigate the legal system quickly.

Given the severity of our winters, the law should facilitate—not impede—the pursuit of safety and justice. Injuries from falls on ice are all too common, and our legislation must offer robust support to those affected.

I urge us to reconsider these amendments. We need legislation that takes into account the realities of injury recovery and Manitoba's harsh winters.

Let us ensure that our legislation upholds the values of compassion, fairness and justice for all Manitobans.

Thank you for your dedication to a safer Manitoba.

English

Thank you very much.

I want to spend a moment to speak in French because I had some young folks in the constituency who were speaking to me recently and asking if I could do that for them. So thank you very much for giving me that opportunity.

And I look forward to hearing the remainder of this debate on this very important topic.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): It is always a pleasure and honour to rise in the House and put a few words on the record, especially for an important conversation that we're having today about the occupiers' liability.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), for bringing this important bill forward, especially living in Manitoba, Winnipeg–Winterpeg—when we know what the weather is like here.

I want to thank the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) as well for putting some great words on the record in French. I wasn't aware he could speak French so fluently, but that is amazing. So good for him, and I want to thank him.

When it comes to this bill here, it's important to notice that—note that this is—it's not a political issue, really. It's really a safety issue when it comes down to what's being done in this province and what's being done in other jurisdictions across Canada.

Winnipeg, as we know, has over 200-plus days of minus 0° temperature. It is very slippery outside. It is full of snow. Winter wonderland. I, myself, have fallen numerous times outside walking, and it's—not only is it embarrassing, it's quite painful. And I'm sure many colleagues in this building have also had their fair of slips and bumps along the way.

* (10:10)

Now, it has been a while since we've discussed this bill last, so I just want to go back and mention and

little bit about what this is about. And it simply requires that, under amendments to The Occupiers' Liability Act, notice of a personal injury claim related to snow or ice on private property must be given within 60 days of the injury occurred. The notice must be given to an occupier of the property or a contractor engaged to remove snow or ice on the property. Notice given to one of them is notice to everyone who may be subject to the claim.

The—this is the important part here: the 60-day notice does not apply in cases of injury resulting in death or if a court determines that there was a reasonable excuse for failing to comply and that injury does not prejudice the defendant. The limitation period for bringing a claim is not affected.

There is a bit of background on this bill as well. It was introduced, bill 41, in the Fifth Session of the 42nd Legislature. It was not specified, so it was reintroduced in November of 2023. And here we are again, bringing this forward.

It's important to note that this bill really emphasizes four key aspects of, I guess, safety and what this bill really underlines is it increases transparency and accountability. Anyone can imagine that if they're walking outside, especially in winter here in Winnipeg, it is very slippery. People do fall. People do get injured.

It's important that this is, and it's important to note that this is on private property. The argument can be made, well, doesn't municipalities cover this? Aren't there any other requirements as far as limitation goes? But it's important to note that this is different across jurisdictions in Canada. And in one particular, under The Municipal Act, where an individual is involved in what we often call a slip or a fall related to snow and ice that results in injury, they can also be under a two-year limitation period. Again, that's The Municipal Act, not private property.

It is different across jurisdictions, as I mentioned, and there are rules and legislation in place to protect that. But on private property, this is not the case. There isn't the notification period in Manitoba. There is in other provinces, but not here. That's one of the key reasons why this was brought forward as well.

So this particular piece of legislation would put in a notification period. It is not as strict as The Municipal Act for municipalities, but it provides, within 60 days of an individual who has suffered a slip and fall because of snow and ice on private property, they would have to notify the occupier that this happened.

A few other key things that this bill does touch on, and I really hope the members opposite are paying attention and will support this going forward, because it is all about safety for Manitobans walking in Winterpeg. It enhances safety. It also brings requirements closer in line with government reporting. I did mention in other jurisdictions, as well, in Ontario, is similar, as well, where they passed a 60-day reporting period for incidences like this.

So this bill is a very important bill. I hope that members opposite are giving it its due course and debate, and we look forward to passing this bill today.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): C'est un plaisir de m'adresser ce matin à la Chambre au sujet du Projet de loi 203 modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des occupants.

Évidemment, notre gouvernement veut absolument prévenir les blessures et assurer la sécurité des Manitobains. Les propriétaires et gestionnaires de biens doivent être tenus responsables s'ils ne respectent pas des pratiques raisonnables en matière de santé et de sécurité.

Cependant, cette modification impose un préavis de 60 jours qui, d'après nous, est trop court pour les personnes, surtout si elles sont hospitalisées pendant une longue durée.

Bien que les blessures doivent être évitées à tout prix, lorsqu'elles se produisent, les Manitobains devraient avoir le droit de signaler et de demander justice pour une blessure injuste. En vertu des modifications apportées à la Loi sur la responsabilité des occupants, un avis de réclamation pour blessure personnelle liée à la neige ou à la glace sur une propriété privée doit être donné dans les 60 jours suivant la survenue de la blessure. L'avis doit être donné à un occupant de la propriété ou un entrepreneur chargé de déneiger ou de déglacer la propriété. Un avis donné à l'un d'eux vaut avis pour tous ceux qui pourraient être concernés par la réclamation.

Le délai de préavis de 60 jours ne s'applique pas en cas de décès, ou si un tribunal détermine s'il y avait une excuse raisonnable pour ne pas se conformer, et que le défaut ne préjudice pas au défendeur. Le délai de prescription pour intenter une action n'est pas affecté.

Notre interprétation de ce projet — ce projet de loi jusqu'à présent — est la présente : la modification vise

à imposer des réglementations plus strictes concernant la période de notification des réclamations pour blessure personnelle liée à la neige ou à la glace sur une propriété privée.

Cependant, il y a des inquiétudes importantes selon lesquelles ces modifications pourraient ne pas servir les meilleurs intérêts des Manitobains et des Manitobaines, et pourraient potentiellement entraver l'accès à la justice.

Donc, la définition – toute courte, toute simple – d'un occupant dans cette modification désigne une personne ou entité qui possède la propriété où la blessure survient, ou une personne ou entité qui est responsable de contrôle de la propriété où la blessure survient.

Selon la loi originale, les occupants ont le devoir de garantir que quiconque quoi que ce soit entrant en contact avec la propriété soit raisonnablement en sécurité. De cela, il n'y a pas de responsabilité automatique si quelqu'un glisse et tombe, mais la personne qui est tombé doit prouver à l'occupant que l'occupant n'a pas réussi à corriger ou remédier à un danger comme la neige ou la glace.

Alors, notre critique de l'amendement est clair : y'a un manque de flexibilité. Cette modification met la responsabilité sur les victimes qui sont déjà entravées pour poursuivre un conseiller juridique, alors qu'elles devraient se concentrer sur leur rétablissement.

Le délai de préavis proposé de 60 jours crée un calendrier rigide qui ne tient pas compte des diverses circonstances qui pourraient affecter la capacité d'une personne à fournir un avis en temps opportun. Par exemple, les personnes peuvent ne pas réaliser immédiatement l'étendue de leur blessure, ou peuvent rencontrer des difficultés à rassembler les informations nécessaires dans le délai prescrit.

Alors, disons qu'il y a une charge pour les parties blessées. Exiger des parties blessées qu'elles fournissent un avis dans un délai strict leur impose un fardeau indu, en particulier lorsqu'elles sont déjà confrontées aux répercussions physiques, émotionnelles et financières de leurs blessures. Cette exigence peut dissuader les personnes de poursuivre des réclamations légitimes par crainte de non-conformité et de ses conséquences potentielles.

Pour les petits entrepreneurs, la modification est vague quant à l'impact de cette modification sur les petits entrepreneurs en déneigement. Ils peuvent être

aussi des agriculteurs cherchant du travail en hiver, ou des opérations de personne simple.

* (10:20)

En raison de l'état terrible dans lequel le gouvernement précédent des Conservateurs a laissé l'économie, nous ne devrions pas servir contre les personnes – ou, je m'excuse – nous ne devrions pas sévir contre les personnes qui essaient de gagner leur vie.

Notre gouvernement du NPD veut s'assurer que nous équilibrons la sécurité des Manitobains et des travailleurs essayant de déneiger et de gagner un revenu supplémentaire.

Alors l'accès et l'impact sur l'accès à la justice est la suivante : la modification proposée pourrait avoir un impact significatif sur l'accès à la justice pour les Manitobains, en particulier ceux qui pourraient être marginalisés ou vulnérables. Cela pourrait affecter de manière disproportionnée les personnes ayant des ressources limitées ou celles qui ne sont pas familières avec le processus juridique, élargissant ainsi davantage l'écart en matière d'accès à la justice.

Alors il y a un certain préjudice pour les défendeurs : alors que la modification vise à protéger les défendeurs contre les préjudices, elle ne tient pas compte du préjudice potentiel infligé aux parties blessées qui ne peuvent pas se conformer à l'exigence des modifications – c'est clair, l'honorable Président. Refuser aux individus la possibilité de poursuivre leur réclamation en raison d'obstacles procéduraux mine les principes de justice et d'équité dans le système juridique.

Alors, bien que la modification inclue des exceptions pour les cas de décès ou d'excuse raisonnable, ces exceptions peuvent ne pas prendre suffisamment en compte les diverses circonstances auxquelles sont confrontées les parties blessées. Il est nécessaire de disposer de dispositions plus complètes tenant compte des facteurs tels que les urgences médicales, l'incapacité mentale ou le manque de connaissance des exigences légales.

On le sait, la météo au Manitoba – la glace, la neige – sont imprévisibles. Bien que le Manitoba ne soit peut-être pas l'endroit le plus enneigé du monde, nous faisons face à de nombreuses conditions météorologiques inimaginables. Les propriétaires devraient être adéquatement préparés à affronter les hivers auxquels nous pouvons généralement nous attendre chaque année. En février 2022, les Manitobains ont été frappés par la plus longue

tempête de neige depuis 25 ans, avec des rafales de vent entre 40 et 80 km à l'heure et une visibilité réduite par la neige pendant neuf heures à l'aéroport de Winnipeg. Au cours des dix dernières années, les chutes de neige annuelles ont en moyenne oscillé en 90 et près de 170 cm.

Alors c'est sur ces paroles que j'aimerais finir avec mes commentaires, et je crois que nous devons sérieusement reconsidérer cette loi qui ne tient pas compte des besoins des Manitobains et des Manitobaines.

Merci, l'honorable Président.

Translation

It is a pleasure to address the House this morning on Bill 203 to amend The Occupiers Liability Act.

Obviously, our government is committed to preventing injuries and ensuring the safety of Manitobans. Property owners and managers must be held accountable if they fail to follow reasonable health and safety practices.

However, this amendment imposes a 60-day notice period, which we feel is too short for people, especially if they are hospitalized for an extended period.

While injuries should be avoided at all costs, when they do occur, Manitobans should have the right to report and seek justice for an unjust injury. Under amendments to The Occupiers Liability Act, notice of a claim for personal injury related to snow or ice on private property must be given within 60 days of the injury occurring. Notice must be given to an occupant of the property, or a contractor engaged to remove snow or ice from the property. Notice to any one of them is considered notice to all others who may be affected by the claim.

The 60-day notice period does not apply in the event of death, or if a court determines that there was a reasonable excuse for non-compliance, and that the defendant was not prejudiced by the default. The limitation period for bringing an action remains unaffected.

Our interpretation of this project—this bill so far—is this: the amendment is intended to impose stricter regulations on the notice period for personal injury claims related to snow or ice on private property.

However, there are significant concerns that these changes may not be in the best interests of Manitobans and could potentially impede access to justice.

So, the definition—very short, very simple—of an occupant in this amendment means a person or entity that owns the property where the injury occurs, or a person or entity that is responsible for controlling the property where the injury occurs.

Under the original law, occupiers have a duty to ensure that anyone who comes into contact with the property is reasonably safe. From this, there is no automatic liability if someone slips and falls, but the person who fell must prove to the occupier that the occupier failed to correct or remedy a hazard such as snow or ice.

So, our criticism of the amendment is clear: there is a lack of flexibility. This amendment puts the onus on victims who are already hampered in pursuing legal counsel, when they should be concentrating on their recovery.

The proposed 60-day notice period creates a rigid timetable that does not take into account the various circumstances that could affect a person's ability to provide timely notice. For example, individuals may not immediately realize the extent of their injury or may encounter difficulties gathering the necessary information within the prescribed time frame.

So, we argue that there is a burden on injured parties. Requiring injured parties to provide notice within a strict time frame places an undue burden on them, especially when they are already dealing with the physical, emotional and financial repercussions of their injuries. This requirement may deter individuals from pursuing legitimate claims for fear of non-compliance and its potential consequences.

For small contractors, the amendment is vague about its impact on small snow removal contractors. They may also be farmers looking for winter work, or single-person operations.

Because of the terrible state the previous Conservative government left the economy in, we should not be cracking down on people trying to make a living.

Our NDP government wants to make sure that we balance the safety of Manitobans and workers trying to clear snow and earn extra income.

So the access and impact on access to justice is this: the proposed amendment could have a significant impact on access to justice for Manitobans, particularly those who may be marginalized or vulnerable. It could disproportionately affect those with limited resources or those unfamiliar with the legal process, further widening the gap in access to justice.

Then there is some harm to defendants: while the amendment is intended to protect defendants from harm, it does not take into account the potential harm inflicted on injured parties who cannot comply with the amendment's requirement—this is clear, Honourable Speaker. Denying individuals the opportunity to pursue their claims because of procedural barriers undermines the principles of justice and fairness in the legal system.

So, while the amendment includes exceptions for death or reasonable excuse, these exceptions may not sufficiently address the diverse circumstances faced by injured parties. There is a need for more comprehensive provisions that take into account factors such as medical emergencies, mental incapacity or lack of knowledge of legal requirements.

As we know, Manitoba weather—ice, snow—is unpredictable. While Manitoba may not be the snowiest place on earth, we face many unimaginable weather conditions. Property owners should be adequately prepared for the winters we can generally expect every year. In February 2022, Manitobans were hit by the longest snowstorm in 25 years, with winds gusting between 40 and 80 km per hour and visibility reduced by snow for nine hours at the Winnipeg airport. Over the past ten years, annual snowfalls have averaged between 90 and nearly 170 centimetres.

So it is with these words that I would like to end my comments, and I believe that we need to seriously reconsider this legislation, which does not take into account the needs of Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I think, as legislators, one of our No. 1 priorities is keeping Manitobans safe. We want to prevent injuries. We want to prevent crime, if possible. We want to make sure people have the tools they need to be safe or to protect themselves, and tools to—in the event something happens, there should be recourse.

And so, when we're talking about Bill 203, I have some real concerns about this, and I don't know that members opposite have really thought this through. I don't know that they've looked at all sides of this. In fact, I think they're going to do more detriment to occupiers and private property owners and managers than they think.

Private property owners and property managers should be accountable for upholding reasonable health and safety practices and standards on their property.

I know that for myself, on my personal property, we ensure that our driveway is properly shovelled, that our steps are shovelled, that we put salt down if they're a little bit icy so that we can protect workers that come to our home. We can protect unionized postal workers who, day in and day out here in Winterpeg, as, you know, we've coined Manitoba, that they're safe when they're doing their jobs, that we can hopefully prevent injuries to these folks, because we know that a slip and fall in Manitoba could be extremely dangerous and lead to very serious out-consequences. I think it's important that we understand that when people enter our property, it is our responsibility. We need to be accountable for what they encounter.

But, in another turn of—another way of thinking of this, I don't think it's on—the onus should be placed on citizens who enter into these places to notify folks within a 60-day period that they've experienced an injury or, you know, perhaps broken something or damaged personal property. I think that's completely unreasonable.

But I also think it does something that the members opposite hadn't thought about. Now, if folks are given 60 days to notify a property owner or a management company that they've taken a tumble on their property and possibly hurt themselves, we're going to have folks jumping the gun quite quickly, moving forward to put in claims of injury to these places.

I think we need to remember that, as citizens, we can have an injury that sometimes creates consequences later on or they're nagging, very simple injuries that we suffer from, for a longer period of time. I know myself, like many of us, I've taken a tumble. I've slipped on ice. I've tripped on things. I've hurt myself, and it takes time sometimes for those injuries to heal. I've done that on people's private property. We, as legislators, we knock on a lot of doors, we enter a lot of properties.

But I also understand that I am taking that responsibility as someone who's not invited onto that property to be careful, to pay attention to where I'm going. I took quite a tumble about a year ago, where I fell in a driveway that was broken and damaged, and part of the reason I fell is I noticed that the side—the stairs I was about to walk up on were all equally crumbling and dangerous. And so I was more focused on where I was going than where I was at in that moment. I fell and I actually ended up spraining my ankle quite badly, that I am still dealing with.

But I wasn't prepared to put the onus on that property owner that they didn't do their due diligence to protect me in that moment. So I think we really need to look at this in more reasonable terms.

I don't think an amendment is required. I think it's going to do the opposite. I think it's going to have more people being forced to deal with citizens who claim or who have injured themselves on their property jumping the gun prematurely for injuries that could be very minor but nagging. And so I think it's important to think that way.

Also, I think we need to put the onus back on property owners, especially business properties, places where you're inviting the public to, you know, enter into your premises, to make sure that they are maintaining their property. A good example: my father later in his career worked for a management company. He was a property manager, and, in fact, he was so diligent that in the winter months if there was a snowfall, he was up and out the door at four in the morning, making sure that every single property was shovelled, that salt was put down, that the premises were safe for people to enter.

And so I think it's possible for us to put the onus back on property owners and management companies to do this. It requires some diligence. It requires follow-through. And I don't think we need to put the onus on the contractors, necessarily, who are hired to clear ice and snow on behalf of a property owner. I, as a small-business owner, if I had someone clearing the snow in my parking lot or on my sidewalk, if they didn't do a really, you know, proper job and they left things behind that were dangerous, clearly I would follow up with them and make sure that they did a better job in the future. I would hire another company. And then I would take it upon myself to ensure that my premises are safe for people.

Under this amendment, we're giving folks 60 days. Now we can look at it from two perspectives. I've already mentioned one, where I think it's going to force people to jump the gun prematurely, to put claims in against property owners for injuries they sustained.

* (10:30)

But I think it also puts the onus on folks to—who maybe have barriers in front of them, who don't necessarily know how to navigate a system like this; that they would not be able to meet that deadline and therefore maybe not be able to put in a claim that is necessary.

I know that the—with this amendment, it doesn't apply in cases of death and that a court could determine that there was an 'excrea'—reasonable excuse for failing to comply, however, why does that have—onus have to be placed on the defendant? I couldn't imagine trying to navigate a system where I have to prove why I didn't put a claim in within the 60-day period. I think it's just unrealistic.

I know this amendment aims to impose stricter regulations regarding the notification period for personal injury claims, but there's significant concerns that this doesn't serve the best interests of all Manitobans, not only the private citizen but also the occupier of that property.

And so I think we need to leave the act as it is because, according to the original act, occupiers have a duty to anyone, anything that comes in contact with the property, that they will be reasonably safe. From this, there isn't automatic liability if someone slips and falls but the person who has fallen has to prove to the occupier that the occupier failed to address or remedy a hazard.

That's absurd. That is, you know, I couldn't imagine trying to prove that someone else was negligent after I've fallen and hurt myself. Am I going to take photos, am I going to have witnesses? That doesn't always happen. We, you know, there's a lack of flexibility with this amendment, putting the onus on victims who are already hampered to have to pursue legal counsel when they should actually be focusing on recovering or getting physiotherapy or whatever they need so that they are up and mobile again.

It creates an inflexible timeline that fails to account for so many different circumstances. Individuals might not immediately realize the extent of their injuries. They might face difficulties in gathering necessary information within that time frame.

Requiring injured parties to provide notice within a strict time frame places an undue burden on them, particularly when they're already dealing with the physical, emotional, financial repercussions of their injuries.

I think about folks who, you know, take a tumble somewhere and they hurt their leg, break a bone. That impacts them in so many ways. Perhaps they're a parent; that impacts their ability to parent. They, depending on the type of job they have, it may impact their ability to go to work. Perhaps they don't have enough sick time to actually cover them through that period.

We cannot, as government, in good conscience, put this kind of burden on citizens. It's going against everything we should all stand for in this building. We're here to support every Manitoban, to make sure that they have timely and efficient access to justice, if they need it, or legal remedies. Strict time frames just don't cut it.

This, you know, like I said before, this requirement might actually encourage folks to step forward and put a claim in more quickly than they would have if you were to not make an amendment, but it also might deter individuals from pursuing legitimate claims due to fear of their non-compliance or potential consequences or not knowing how to navigate the system adequately.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I appreciate the time to put a few words on the record.

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

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): We have lots of questions on this bill.

So one of the questions that we have on this side is, like, who exactly, on that side, are they, you know, championing the bill on this behalf of? Is it for all Manitobans? Is it for people that they wish to avoid justice when they're responsible for critical injuries?

Every Manitoban should have the right to justice if they've endured an unjust injury as a result of poor property management.

And I want to talk about, you know, folks that are vulnerable, folks that don't know how to access the justice system when they've been injured or have had a slip or a fall. We think about those that, you know, are unhoused, that we, you know, have never been able to access a lawyer. And this puts real strict, you know, timelines on when someone can access a lawyer; 60 days. Someone might not know how to even do that.

And if they're in the hospital or they're recovering and their emotional and physical well-being, and they don't know how to access that or they're in the hospital, how are they supposed to be able to do that? And what this bill does is—it's very preventative in terms of helping these folks to be able to, you know, get justice. It's shortening the notice period and really, you know, putting barriers in place for those that are most vulnerable.

So, you know, our question is: Who is this bill championing for?

This amendment, you know, the occupiers' liability, it's a notice of a personal injury claim related to snow or ice. Well, we know we live in Winterpeg, and sometimes we don't even have to have skates on to, you know, skate in our city.

And I think about, you know, some of our postal workers, for instance, when they're coming on property and having to deliver mail, right? And think about our seniors and, you know, their mobility issues and how they're not able to get out in time to be able to shovel or, you know, come out and clear the ice.

And I want to give a huge shout-out to the Manitoba Métis Federation for the work that they do in terms of coming out and helping seniors to clear the snow and put ice melt down, because we have so many folks in this province that have mobility issues that are seniors or that have, you know, issues where they're not able to get out in a timely fashion to be able to shovel and that need that extra support.

And they might have financial issues, as well, where they can't get out to be able to do that. And we're putting this extra burden on them to say that if someone slips or falls, that there are 60 days' notice that they have to, you know, make a claim if someone falls on their property.

And, you know, we have other organizations like Bear Clan, who also is helping the community.

I think about them in the North End. We have a lot of folks that are financially, you know, they need support. And a lot of these are young parents, single parents. A lot of them are going to school, working minimum-wage jobs, have children, and they also don't have the means to be able to access a lawyer. And sometimes when you're waiting for legal aid, even that, you know, is—you have to pay a certain amount to access. And it takes time, and sometimes you can't get a lawyer within 60 days.

So again, you know, shortening that period of time to 60 days. And if someone, again, is in a hospital bed and isn't able to access that, it's, again, putting barriers in front of people and putting a burden on the injured party to do that. You're requiring injured parties to provide notice in a strict time fashion. And, again, you know, people are going through emotional distress.

I remember getting into a car accident and we were T-boned. And it was on my daughter's side, and

even though it wasn't on my side, I was still emotionally, you know, impacted because my daughter was the one that was injured. And I didn't feel the impacts for probably three months, and my neck was injured but I had felt, you know, I was really concerned for her.

And I think about, you know, folks that may experience that 90 days later, and they're not able to access a lawyer or access this, you know, this really egregious, you know, Bill 203, occupiers' amendment act this—that you're trying to bring forward that limits 60 days. If somebody, you know, all of a sudden after 90 days feels some pain from a fall on a property, you know, all of a sudden they're not able to come forward with that. People, you know, all of a sudden feel pain afterward.

* (10:40)

So—and I think about, you know, the impact on the access to justice. This proposed amendment significantly impacts access to justice for Manitobans, particularly those, again, who are disproportionately affected and have limited resources and who are unfamiliar with the legal system. And then you're, again, further widening the access to the justice gap.

And you're bringing prejudice to defendants. And this amendment aims to defend—to protect defendants from prejudice. It fails to consider the potential prejudice inflicted upon injured parties who are unable to comply with the notice requirements.

And I think about, you know, someone, again, who may be living in a shelter that is just trying to get housed, just worried about surviving, worried about where they're going to get their next meal, worried about, you know, getting on maybe EIA or even worried about getting their children back. And they've been injured and, you know, you're putting a timeline on this. And now they have to go through the justice system and they have 60 days. And they don't even have access to a phone. They don't have access to Internet. And here, you're putting a timeline on this.

So need for consideration of exceptions. While the amendment includes exceptions for cases of death or reasonable excuse, these exceptions are not adequate. They don't address the diverse circumstances faced by injured parties, and there's a need for more comprehensive provisions that account for factors such as medical emergencies, mental incapacities or lack of awareness of the legal requirements.

And, again, a lot of folks that have never accessed a lawyer is not going to know how to, you know, go and make a claim. They're not going to know that

there's a 60-day period. And if they're in the hospital, they're not even going to know that they can make a claim. And this really is, you know, putting barriers in place of Manitobans. And it's not serving, you know, the best needs of all Manitobans.

I think about, again, our seniors and, you know, the safety of our seniors when we are looking at, you know, the snow and ice and how—just how, in 2022, we had the biggest storm here. And sometimes we were, you know, snowed in. We couldn't even drive our cars. We couldn't go out. And how the call came out for community to come together to support and, you know, help our most vulnerable in terms of bringing food up, coming to help shovel folks out so that they can get out to medical appointments and make sure driveways were clear. And, you know, community came together in terms of helping folks. But that's not the instance for everyone, right?

And I had this fox in my yard last summer. And it was very dark in my yard, and I have these front stairs. And it's—there's only a step up. Actually, it's only one step. But they had dug underneath, and I had someone come and visit my house. And they fell in this big, large hole that, you know, this fox had dug in. And they were living underneath my step. And they fortunately didn't hurt themselves and they'd come in and told us that, you know, there is a big hole in front of our steps, but we didn't have our outside light on. And we went out, and we had filled it in, and the next night, they had come back and, you know, dug it again.

But it's things like that. Had someone not told us, we could have, you know, been a part of this. And thankfully, they didn't get—but a senior, again, wouldn't have known about this had—and would they have been able to dig that in?

So again, this does not take into account those that are marginalized, those that have mobility issues and are seniors. And those are the most vulnerable.

So again—

The Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): Happy to rise to speak to The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, Bill 203.

I do have some concerns about this amendment. We were all elected to serve Manitobans, and I worry that this amendment may not be in the best interests of Manitobans and could, in fact, hinder Manitobans' access to justice.

I'm concerned that this amendment may put too much of the onus on victims, that the 60-day notice period may in fact create a timeline that's unrealistic and may disallow some Manitobans from seeking justice. For instance, some individuals may not know the extent of their injuries or may be simply focused on recovery.

Our government always stands with regular Manitobans, regular, average folks that'd go about their day, try to put food on their—on the table, provide for their families. And we want to ensure that all Manitobans have access to justice.

I also think that each of us in the Chamber have been hurt at some time in our lives and maybe didn't know the full extent of those injuries until later, sometimes much later. It could be days, it could be weeks; sometimes it's—we don't even connect the dots of some of our symptoms.

And I worry that this could require injured parties, that the requirement to provide notice within a strict time frame may put this undue burden right on them. This is especially the case when we have Manitobans dealing with physical, could be emotional, could be financial, repercussions of their injury.

Honourable Speaker, I do recognize that there are exemptions put forward within the bill when there are injuries resulting in death, or if a court determines that there was a reasonable excuse for failing to comply and that failure does not prejudice the defendant. In my mind, however, this still could make things more difficult for some Manitobans who are seeking justice.

Another concern I have is that the amendment is vague on the impact on small snow removal contractors. Our government wants to always take a balanced approach, one where we're ensuring that Manitobans can be safe, but that workers can also be able to earn some extra income and provide for their families.

Additionally, the proposed amendment could impact disproportionately those Manitobans who are marginalized or vulnerable. And I appreciate the words of my esteemed colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Ms. Smith) on bringing up those important topics.

Honourable Speaker, those individuals with limited resources or those who are simply unfamiliar with the legal process could in fact be hindered by this amendment and it could further widen the access to justice. I worry that this bill doesn't help Manitobans who are injured through no fault of their own, that this bill in

fact doesn't help responsible property owners, those landlords, those contractors or businesses that are acting reasonably in keeping their property safe and free of risks.

Slipping or tripping or falling on a premises does not automatically entitle Manitobans to bring a claim against the occupier. Those who act unreasonably and who neglect to resolve those hazards that lead to innocent parties being injured deserve to be accountable, Honourable Speaker.

I think that this amendment and bill is quite simply an example of the PCs making it harder for everyday Manitobans. I think it's going to allow landlords, big corporations, other businesses that are maybe trying to dodge the task of ensuring Manitobans are safe on their property—those bad actors; that does happen from time to time.

Honourable Speaker, I do find this bill to be particularly ironic, that it's being brought forward by the PCs, given their record of cutting and privatizing the snowplowing services that resulted in our highways being less safe.

* (10:50)

One issue to also take into account is that while any Manitoban may fall due to our wintery conditions, as the members opposite alluded to—you know, we live in Winterpeg, we have—we often have lots of snow, although maybe not this past season—that it's our senior population that often are the most vulnerable with our winter weather. It is our seniors that, while any one of us could fall, regardless of our age, no matter how young or spry someone might be, it's our seniors that are most likely to be admitted to a hospital as a result of a fall.

According to Shared Health, falls are the leading cause of injury related to hospital admission among older Canadians, and that's problematic.

And I would be—I'd be remiss if I wasn't concerned about those seniors that are—that, through no fault of their own, an innocent senior going about their business falls and, as a result of their injury, maybe as a result of not being able to access legal services or not being knowledgeable about that, weren't able to access justice. Our seniors deserve the best care. They deserve to be considered in all of our decisions in government. And I worry that it is a bill like this that could cause further harm to some vulnerable populations, some of which are—sometimes can be our seniors.

Some other numbers that are out there. There were 6,261 inpatient hospitalizations. It's going back a few years, in 2020 to 2021. And that relates to all ages. But what that speaks to is the fact that there's—there are a number of Manitobans that could be impacted by this bill, by this amendment. It's—could happen to any one of us. Any given year, there's thousands of Manitobans that are impacted by a fall and have to be hospitalized. There's numerous others that probably don't go to a hospital. And so that gives me pause. It gives me pause to make sure that we're getting the bill right, that we're ensuring that all Manitobans are being considered and that we're not going to have unintended consequences because we did not consider an aspect of this bill.

So I think that there's—that it's clear that there are some deep concerns about this bill. I think that we always need to govern for all Manitobans, that we should be taking a balanced approach, regardless of what we're talking about, whether we're talking about this amendment or whether we're talking about any other issue. And we need to make sure that Manitobans have access to justice, regardless of where they're coming from or their background or their ability to seek it.

So again, I think that this bill has unintended consequences. I think we need to be really careful about this amendment. I think that Manitobans deserve this. I think that, especially that our seniors deserve this, Honourable Speaker. And we need to have the utmost care in considering this.

We want to make sure, on this side of the House, that we are caring for all Manitobans, that we're ensuring that we can keep Manitobans safe and that Manitobans can seek justice when needed.

So I thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the time to put a few words on the record. I would caution members opposite and other esteemed colleagues in this Chamber to consider this bill carefully so that we are not causing harm to Manitobans and especially those seniors.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): I really appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record in regards to Bill 203, The Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act.

And it brings together two concepts that I really am quite passionate about. It's that idea of healthy and safe communities and also that—the importance of access to justice, because I think these two are very

intertwined when, in fact, we sometimes look at them as different areas of concern. We can really bring them together, and this is a good opportunity to talk about both of those worlds; both access to justice and also healthy communities.

I want to thank all my colleagues who have spoken so passionately about this amendment. The honourable members for Riel (MLA Moyes), Point Douglas (Ms. Smith), Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), Seine River (MLA Cross) and Waverley (MLA Pankratz).

An Honourable Member: St. Boniface.

Mr. Blashko: And St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle). Apologies; St. Boniface.

And so I think we need to take falls incredibly seriously for people across the ages. I will admit I have occasionally fallen. I have sometimes been caught in shoes that don't prioritize grip, and I've learned my lesson. I've learned my lesson crossing many streets thinking it was a puddle, but, in fact, it was a little patch of ice—

An Honourable Member: Hole.

Mr. Blashko: —or a hole.

So yes, I have fallen victim to a slippery spot once or twice in my life.

But members of my family have also slipped. And I know the impact it can have on someone's health, their mobility and also, depending on their age and their capacity, really lead to a deterioration of their overall health.

So this is an important topic that we need to take very, very seriously. And we need to address it. We have tools at our disposal in this House, in this Chamber, to meaningfully ensure that people are living long, healthy lives, and we know how serious falls are for many members of our community.

So we do have some concerns or I, personally, have some concerns about these amendments. It's—we really want to prevent injuries, and I think—I always talk about that upstream work we can do. How do we work to prevent falls. How do we prevent people having to access the justice system. You see that in our work around the universal nutrition program, trying to ensure that students have access to nutrition and can be in a good spot to do the work in schools. And so that upstream work is something that I am passionate about and I know our government wants to do.

I do want to take some time to talk about the 60-day window that's being suggested in this amendment. And it's quite, quite concerning for a variety of reasons. It's important that people have access to justice, and I think the assumption built into this, that people will always be in a position to access a process in a swift way or even know they have the option to or that they have the resources to really engage in a process through the justice system. It's an assumption that isn't founded in reality. There's a real need to help people work through a process and ensure that there's meaningful engagement. And I think it comes back to, like, access to resources and also literacy.

I know I did a lot of system navigation work in my past life, my past career, and our systems are complicated. I don't know if anyone in this Chamber has ever had to navigate different public services or bureaucracies, but sometimes it can be confusing and sometimes it can be frustrating, and it leads to people disengaging with a system.

And so assuming that people can work through our systems, be in a spot to move forward in a claim like this in that small 60-day window, is unrealistic and also really doesn't account for the fact that injuries evolve over time, and something that may seem minor initially can evolve in a very, very negative way.

So we talked a little bit about the lack of flexibility, but I also want to talk about the burden it puts on the injured parties. And it really expects swift movement for someone who's just faced an injury. And I don't move too swiftly after my injuries.

And so I think the 60 days—

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Holding the Provincial Government Accountable for Security Rebate Commitment

The Speaker: The hour is now 11 o'clock and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning, brought forward by the honourable member for Lakeside, is Holding the Provincial Government Accountable for Security Rebate Commitment.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter),

WHEREAS businesses throughout Manitoba have publicly advised that retail crime is getting worse under the Provincial Government; and

WHEREAS the executive director of Osborne Village Business Improvement Zone, noted that the recent closure of the Starbucks in the Osborne Village "is a case where . . . safety is the only thing, and that to me is why it's so alarming, and I hope that it rings some alarm bells . . . because this is a problem"; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government made an election commitment to provide \$2.5 million towards security cameras, alarm systems, motion detectors, reinforced doors or windows, anti-graffiti film, paints, security gates, pull-down protection shutters and permanent security fencing; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has only provided \$500,000 in funding for the promised initiative, a reduction of \$2 million; and

WHEREAS this \$500,000 is only enough for 1,700 Manitobans, or .0013 per cent of the Province's population, to receive the full \$300 rebate; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Federation of Independent Business noted that the Provincial Government's failed funding commitment is "a drop in the bucket for a lot of businesses who are spending up to tens of thousands of dollars"; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba Restaurant and Food Services Association noted "that \$300 [security rebate] amount wouldn't even cover the PST [of a security system]".

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately fulfill its election promise and increase funding to the security rebate by \$2 million and meet with business owners and security firms to develop a funding model that will actually meet the costs of installing and maintaining these security measures.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Lakeside, seconded by the honourable member for Borderland,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately fulfill its election promise and increase funding of the security rebate by \$2 million and meet with business owners and security firms to develop a funding model that would accurately meet the costs of installing and maintaining these security systems.

Mr. King: I thank you for my very first opportunity to—for the—my first private member's resolution in this House, so I get the opportunity to rise and—*[interjection]* Thank you.

So the resolution itself, Honourable Speaker, is pretty self-explanatory for anyone who has taken the time to read it. The whereases explain that \$300 for a security camera or whatever they want to spend \$300 is just, it's just not near enough for what small businesses and homeowners in Manitoba need to feel safe and secure in their homes.

The—this NDP government, in their campaign, campaigned a 2-and-a-half-million-dollar funding for such security measures for businesses and homeowners, and they've cut it to—down to \$500,000, just a half a million bucks. So in my math—I know the NDP with their budget, they're—had a little trouble with mathematics. My math, that's \$200 million short of what—or \$2 million, sorry, short of what the NDP's campaign promises were to make small businesses and homeowners feel a lot safer.

An Honourable Member: They're full of broken promises.

Mr. King: Yes, yes. No, they're not as advertised, most definitely.

So we, as a PC team over here, feel that they need to restore that \$2 million into the budget to help small businesses and homeowners actually afford to be able to make their homes and businesses safer.

Some of the key points on this resolution, as we see retail theft and vandalisms occurring on a regular basis, more so especially since the NDP was elected in the last seven months. And it's negatively impacting our local businesses here in Winnipeg and throughout rural Manitoba.

And just some experiences of my own, in the rural areas, we're seeing it more and more. Farms are being broke into and more and more farmers are—and businesses are spending huge amount of dollars to secure their properties with gates and barred windows and barred doors just to protect their investment, their inventories and their personal belongings.

So these costs are huge. They're into the thousands of dollars. And this government has brought forward a \$300 subsidy for these types of things that stakeholders are telling us that won't even pay the PST on the investment they have to make to make their homes and businesses secure and safer.

Crime not only has financial impacts but it makes neighbourhoods and communities unsafe. It puts patrons, employees and our owners and—well-being at risk. So even during operational hours, we're seeing now that employers and employees are at risk of unsafe criminals and crime happening.

I mean, we're seeing the Burger King closed in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) riding. Just yesterday, it was announced that two No Frills will be closing in Winnipeg. Even though they say it's not because of criminal activity, it certainly has a bearing on it. And just down the street on Portage Avenue the other day, we have employees trying to help protect theft and losses and revenue from the Food Fare. The suspect attacked the employees, so we need to invest in our businesses here to help them spend the money—and like I said, it's going to cost them thousands of dollars to protect their buildings, their assets and inventory, and we're seeing that we need to come up with measures for them to protect their employees as well.

It's becoming very serious and we've heard from various stakeholders. We've heard from the restaurant and the food industry that something needs to happen soon, immediately. We've heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that this is a serious, serious problem. They're—they'd be thankful if the NDP would live up to their two-and-a-half-million-dollar promise.

Mrs. Rachele Schott, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So if you divide that \$300, it's less than half a per cent of our population that can benefit from this. So another \$2 million would have certainly helped. I think maybe more of an investment.

But we're also hearing from our law enforcement people that it's becoming a serious issue and, you know, they just don't have the resources to go around. So security measures will help them be able to control the crime and the activity that's going on in our businesses and homes.

When I speak to law enforcement—I got a lot of quotes here from many of the stakeholders stating their concerns and one of them being our Inspector Max Waddell. Max is actually a pretty good friend of mine with the Winnipeg Police Service, and he says retail theft is much more than a monetary loss; I am of the belief that retail theft is driving much of the violent crime you're seeing in the city today. This is what Max Waddell says.

When criminals steal goods from stores, they're turning goods into cash; it's done in the underground

market, it's done in the black market. And when they convert property to cash, they're often buying illicit drugs and potentially weapons; in extreme cases, they're buying firearms. So we need to take some more measures and help these businesses and homeowners protect their properties.

Three hundred dollars will not suffice to look after our homes, never mind the businesses, so there's so many things that the businesses can invest in to secure their properties. You know, there's intrusion detection, there's surveillance cameras, there's access control, there's alarm systems.

And once you get into all this technology and there's so much of it there that can help deter these criminal activities—alarm systems—but they all require monitoring, which is a cost. It costs tens to hundreds dollars a month to maintain and monitor these systems. So again, the \$300 isn't going to go very far. The half a million dollars set out in the budget is only enough for 1,700 Manitobans or, again, less than half per cent of the province's population that could receive this rebate.

* (11:10)

So—and we see it all as we walk the streets of our city of Winnipeg here and in our rural communities, that more and more businesses are being boarded up because it's just not safe. They're losing revenues from theft.

And, you know, a lot of these employees take pride in their work, and they want to help their business owners, you know, be efficient and make money. But when you're losing these revenues to theft and criminal activity, it also affects our employment opportunities. People get scared. People don't want to work in these businesses because of the crime that's happening around them. And again, we've—we witnessed it—the many closures that are happening, not just in the city of Winnipeg but in our rural areas.

And people that experience these crimes, the people being beat up or stabbed or whatever. You know, that's something that stays with them for a long time. They suffer from mental problems when they experience these types of things.

So again, Honourable Speaker, with this resolution, I really want to encourage the NDP government to live up to their election promise of the 2 and a half million dollars that they said they were going to use to support homes and businesses from criminal activity and making them—at least helping them feel safer.

So our team has brought forward this resolution—I have brought forward this resolution to see what we can do to help make Manitobans feel safer, protect their investment, their businesses and their homes.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker—Deputy—

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member of another party; any subsequent questions must follow rotation between parties. Each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): The numbers don't lie. In 2022 alone, there was a 40 per cent increase in homicides, a 39 per cent increase in firearms offences and a 20 per cent increase in both robberies and break and enters. Seven and a half years of inaction by the previous PC government have left Manitobans less safe.

Our government, the NDP government, is going to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. That's why we are—have introduced legislation to crack down on drug traffickers. We're enhancing bail measures. And we recently hosted a safety summit.

So my question to the member opposite is: Can you accept that crime rose under the failed previous PC government? And—

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): The member's time is expired.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you to my colleague across the way from McPhillips for the question.

I think we've been seeing that crime has been on the rise, and statistics are showing, as of now, in January 2024, it's the worst, some people are telling us, in four decades. So in four decades, that would also add in the 16 years of the previous NDP government and most definitely the last seven months of the new NDP government. And we're certainly, in the last seven months, have not seen a decrease in crime.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): To my colleague, with the over \$2-million reduction in supporting businesses, can you tell me what the average cost of putting in a security system into a restaurant itself would be?

Mr. King: Well, I thank my friend from Selkirk here for the question.

And, you know, it—the cost of any security system in any building can vary, of course, depending on the technology you want to use, depending on whether you want to put bars on the windows, you want security cameras, you want a panic button for your employees.

But we're talking into—your average would be about \$7,000, but it could add up to more and more, so we're talking thousands of dollars not hundreds of dollars. It's a huge cost to—if you want your employees to be safe, you want to protect your investment, you're looking at spending a significant amount—

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): The member's time is expired.

MLA Devgan: The PC's record on public safety is pretty clear. They don't take it seriously and after seven and a half years, we are less safe now as a province. In 2023, they advertised an ankle bracelet monitoring program that didn't even exist. They misled Manitobans about tracking high-risk criminals when not a single offender wore a bracelet under their watch.

What did happen under their watch was a 40 per cent increase in homicides, 39 per cent increase in firearms offences and a 20 per cent increase in B and Es.

My question to the member opposite is: Will they stop using fear-mongering tactics to score political points and actually support the safety of Manitobans?

Mr. King: I think the issue here is we all want to protect and keep our people of Manitoba safe.

I would like—I would invite the member from McPhillips to maybe dig up the statistics of what the crime activity has been from October 2023 'til today. I could definitely have some statistics here we could share with him but, again, I'll say: the crime has been on the rise over the years and we've got a lot of things to do in order to help keep our community safe, feel safer at work and feel that their investment is protected.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I'd like to thank the member for Lakeside (Mr. King) for bringing forward this important resolution and our bill today.

Can he explain a little bit better what can be done to support the businesses? I know he touched a little bit about it on his speech that he did shortly after the introduction.

Can he just elaborate a little bit further?

Mr. King: Thank you to my friend and colleague from Dawson Trail for that very important question.

Yes, I did touch on it in my opening remarks, but what we need here, what we need to do to support our business is the NDP needs to fulfill their promise of 2 and a half million dollars that they promised they were going to support our businesses and homeowners with. They're \$2 million short in the budget.

They've allowed \$500,000 which I stated is not going to go far. So the biggest support right here, right now, is restoring that number into the budget to support our homeowners and businesses to do whatever they need to do to make things secure.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): The member's time has expired.

MLA Devgan: What the PCs need to do is support our bill to make life safer for Manitobans. We're connecting with law enforcement and community members with an all-hands-on-deck approach. In contradiction, the MLA for Portage la Prairie mocked the idea of security cameras saying: Let's put a doorbell camera up so we can hide in our houses and take pictures of criminals.

Does the member opposite disagree with his colleague and does he believe that the need of security cameras rebates for families—is needed for families?

Mr. King: Thank you, the honourable member of McPhillips, for the question.

Security cameras are important for our homeowners, absolutely. It's going to cost—the today's technology, I don't think we can go and buy a security camera for \$300. It's certainly going to help our homeowners, but again, this resolution talks about our small businesses. It talks—small businesses want more than just a security camera. A security camera isn't going to protect their employees. It's not going to protect the employers, not going to protect the people that are shopping or eating in these establishments. So it's a much more significant investment to keep these people safe than \$300.

* (11:20)

Mr. Perchotte: I'm proud to stand up and ask some questions on this very important piece of legislation.

With so many business owners in our community facing threats of violence, theft, vandalism, what is a current vacancy rate that we are seeing under this NDP watch in downtown Winnipeg?

Mr. King: Thank you, again, to my friend and colleague here from the—from Selkirk for that question.

The statistics are showing us—and we see it as we walk down the streets of Winnipeg. We see that our rural, urban communities—the number is 30 per cent; I'll answer your question right off the hop.

But yes, as we walk down the streets, we see windows boarded up, doors boarded up, businesses are closing. And that all turns into that 30 per cent that we're talking about. In this—2024, those are recent, recent statistics: 30 per cent.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Member's time is expired.

MLA Devgan: Honourable Speaker—Deputy Speaker, our NDP government is doing the hard work of working with law enforcement and consulting with communities.

We're enhancing bill measures, introduced legislation that cracks down on drug traffickers and even hosted a public safety summit.

But the members opposite spent the entire month of April stalling legislation that would crack down on drug traffickers and are questioning the need for doorbell cameras.

So does the member opposite agree with his PC colleagues in thinking that bettering public safety isn't a priority for them?

Mr. King: Very important that we crack down on crime here. We wouldn't be spending that time debating a bill for as long as we have if it wasn't something that we've already—have as legislation. And that legislation is already—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Order. Order. That's enough with the hollering across.

Mr. King: I appreciate that silence so I can answer the member's question.

So, again, if the members opposite want to bring in some good legislation and some good safety measures for our community, this resolution certainly is going to do that, whereas debating a—or, bill that is already in legislation has certainly been a waste of time. So this isn't a waste of time.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Member's time is expired.

The time for question period has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): The floor is open for debate.

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I would have to say at the outset that this resolution basically, I don't think, is the type of resolution that the member actually wanted to introduce. Because this program, whether it's in Chicago or any other jurisdiction, including Manitoba, it is designed—it's open to residents, all residents, businesses, religious institutions and non-profits and renters.

What this member has done is he's simply attempting to take all of the money and give it to business. And I'm sure that was not his intention, but if he reads his own resolution, that's exactly what he's doing.

So what we're doing here is kind of neat because he decides that the government's not spending the full two and a half million upfront. So, well, let's take it all and take it away from those residents, take it away from those churches, take it away from those tenants and give it only to business. That's what he wants to do.

And if you read the resolution further, talks about, oh, he's going to sit down with the business council and the installers of the cameras, and he's going to make sure they get enough of reimbursement for putting in this system.

So maybe he'd want to retool this resolution, come back in a few weeks with a more comprehensive approach and not try to take all the money for business.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, this idea's been around for a while, longer than I knew it was around. But back in the civic election of, I guess, 2022, November 2022, Councillor Schreyer and I were knocking on doors in Elmwood. And the catalytic converter issue was very hot, and we were running into a lot of people that had their catalytic converters stolen. In addition to that, garages broken into and other break-ins. And it occurred to me that maybe we should be looking at some sort of a tax credit at the civic level for this kind of system.

And so we did some checking and we found out that other places had it. Chicago had a rebate program; Washington had a—DC had a rebate program and several other cities, even one or two in Canada.

So we did a resolution and we introduced a resolution here to the Legislature starting on November 29, 2022 through to May 18, 2023: a total

of 19 petitions. And those who are here heard those petitions at the time.

And I asked a question to the premier—the former premier that is, on March the 10th, 2023. And, of course, the premier didn't answer the question—didn't answer the first question, didn't answer any of the supplementaries. And Minister Squires answered it. Never provided any answer. Never provided any answer as to the viability of a program such as this.

So if you take it a little bit further, it was not the Conservative Party that announced they would bring a program like this in. It was the NDP in the summer—last summer, before the election. Where were the Conservatives then? At every step of the way, they were nowhere to be found on this program.

So the government got elected. It's brought in the program. Nobody says that it has to follow another jurisdiction's program. We have government insurance in BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba for many, many years, and none of the programs are exactly the same. Why would you expect it would be the same program here? So each program's going to be a little different. The government has just started. It's only been in government a few months and already it's brought in parts of this program.

So you should be encouraging us to maybe increase it. But let's see what kind of uptake we get. You know, maybe \$300 isn't going to be enough, but let's wait and see. We're not saying it's not going to develop further. But for reference, I mean, if the members want to check, they could check Chicago. And like I said, it's open to residents, businesses, religious institutions, non-profits and renters. And they want to give it all only to business. What about all the other people? What are they going to get?

In Chicago, eligible costs up to \$600—reimbursement is given for two cameras, okay? There is a one-year subscription cost for cloud-based video storage for a maximum of \$200 per annual subscription. Rebates of \$270 for lights, because what's the point of having cameras if you don't have lights to light up the area that you're taking pictures of? Rebates of up to \$130 for two vehicle GPS tracking devices. And a one-year subscription cost for GPS tracking applications up to \$150. That is the Chicago program, okay?

Nothing says we have to do the same program here. But, clearly, you have—the opposition have an idea where they want to go. They just want to turn it all over to business. Well, let me tell you that if you're

operating a business in Manitoba or anywhere else, you budget. You budget for safety, security. Every business does that. Tell me one business that opens its doors and doesn't put some adjustment in the budget for security cameras. They do that. And you can't tell me they don't.

I listened to the members before talk about break-ins in their areas, and there are break-ins in their areas, and they know how the system works, and they know that people have security cameras. We're simply trying to help the situation out here by having people feel more secure in their homes by being able to put some cameras in and get a rebate as a result of it, and anybody that's operating a business—and the member will know this when he talks to his business council people—that the type of cameras they're talking about, I would hope, are high-quality cameras. They're not your Costco cameras.

* (11:30)

I know I've had those Costco cameras for many, many years, and they don't always work when they're needed. So you end up spending five—you spend up five or 10 thousand dollars; five or 10 thousand dollars for a proper security system. You'd get high-definition cameras, you'd get good lights, you'd do all these things.

But you do it as part of your business. It's part of your business operation. And \$300 is not going to affect most businesses I know. They not going to be asking—I thought they were free enterprisers. I thought they believed in pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and doing your own thing, not go to the government asking for subsidies. So what—how many business—I don't know many businesses that want money from the government. They pave their own bills. It's part of doing business.

So you should be thinking about—you all represent constituents. What about the seniors who are worried about this? Wouldn't they like to have a \$300 credit, right? Think about that.

But you don't want to give it to them. You want to listen to the business federation and tell you that they want to have more money for installs, and the people that install these cameras. Guess what? You know, I get calls from all over the city. Why am I getting these calls from Charleswood and all kinds of places for the last year and a half?

Well, they're people that have an interest. They're, you know, they're install—I don't fault them for that. They like the idea that the government is going to

put up some money so they can install more cameras. And more power to them. And—but I know the reason behind it.

So you shouldn't—the members here should not be just following narrow business interests. They should be looking at their whole constituency.

And yes, criticize the government if you want and say it's not enough money. But, you know, look, you got to start somewhere. Budget is tight; the members should know what kind of condition they left the province in. So what are we going to do? Start out with, like, \$1,000 right up front when we don't even know how many people are even interested in the program?

So you start small and the minister is on top of that whole issue right now and developing the program. And if members have some points they want to make about how the program should be developed, then they should come forward and give some advice, but not just make these outlandish criticisms and try to take all the money for their business friends and the business community. They can largely take care of themselves and I think they're going to take care of themselves.

Thank you.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good morning, everyone. I'd like to start by thanking my colleague, the member for Lakeside (Mr. King), for bringing this resolution forward to the House: holding the provincial government accountable for the security rebate commitment.

So I will speak to why this resolution brought forward by the member of Lakeside came to be and why this resolution is important.

I'm sure many of us are aware that, prior to the 2024 Budget being brought forward, there were conversations had that told a very different story from what we're seeing now. The Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association had conversations with the Canadian federation for independent businesses and said that, during the 2023 general election, the NDP announced \$2.5 million in funding to go towards this program. When the budget came out, there was only \$500,000 announced in funding for this.

The math is pretty basic here, but that is a \$2-million difference. That is a \$2-million difference between what was being promised by the NDP during the campaign and what was actually allocated—what

was actually the allocated amount after the election was held.

In April of this year, after the budget was released, the Minister of Justice, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), announced that, as part of the community safety initiative, they would be providing a \$300 security rebate for homeowners and small-business owners for the purchase of security equipment.

Now, just bear with me as we break this down. There is \$500,000 total and each eligible applicant would receive \$300. That means this program will help at most 1,700 Manitoban homeowners or small businesses; that is 0.0013 per cent of Manitobans—of Manitoba's population.

I'm not sure if any of the members opposite have had to install any sort of security equipment. I'm also not sure if they have conversed with any business owners in Manitoba to find out what the actual cost is. I've had conversations and experiences myself, and let me tell you, any sort of security system that would be appropriate for keeping themselves and their employees and their property safe costs thousands and thousands of dollars. The \$300 rebate really isn't significant when you take into account the actual cost for any kind of legitimate security system.

What we should be focusing on in our province and in our towns and cities is attracting more small businesses. Small businesses truly do foster local economies. What is happening now is places where we would expect and hope new businesses would be opening, none are. And, as a matter of fact, we are seeing businesses close. In 2023, 10 more businesses closed than opened in downtown Winnipeg. I believe it was roughly 30 per cent of downtown—I believe it is roughly 30 per cent of downtown storefronts that are currently vacant.

Crimes at retail locations, thefts and violent incidents have been significantly increasing year over year. When theft occurs, businesses are losing product that was meant to be sold, which is an immediate loss of income to them. It is also directly impacting the ability to offer these products to their customers who want to buy them. This means oftentimes customers will find it elsewhere and, in turn, will not necessarily return.

We also see businesses having to raise their cost for goods and services to make up for lost profit and incomes. The businesses know that taking preventative measures against future theft is important and many will enhance their security measures and invest

in very costly but necessary services. The problem with this is we're already dealing with their immediate losses as a result of theft and, or vandalism where there are now hefty install fees as well as ongoing surveillance fees and subscriptions that may come hand in hand.

Our small businesses are not only financially struggling, but with the increase in violence, our business owners and their employees are also worried about their safety. As I'm sure any business owner would agree, your employees are your family, your customers are your family. You want to do everything in your power to help protect them, and the mere thought of what terrible things have been happening are enough to make you lose sleep at night.

When we look at the incidents that have been happening in our province, in our towns and in our cities, we know more must be done. Some of the stories are absolutely terrifying and heartbreaking. And as—and we, as elected officials, should be doing everything in our power to ensure we can support our businesses in every way we can.

Jennifer McKinnon with the Winnipeg Police Service said, we see suspects brazenly entering stores, taking items with no effort to conceal them and brandishing weapons at employees, security and any customers that are in the way. This had led—this has led to innocent people who are just going about their day being assaulted with bear spray and stabbed.

Just this month, Giant Tiger has closed multiple locations, citing retail theft and crime as the cause. Starbucks in Osborne Village closed down, also citing crime as the reason. There was an assault on three Food Fare employees, a horrifically violent incident at a Burger King, as well as an assault on a customer that was visiting a Liquor Mart just within the last month.

I know the members opposite like to talk about how this is only happening under our government, but it would appear that these violent incidents happened within the last month.

* (11:40)

These attacks are not something anyone would ever expect to be prepared for, but they're most—they most definitely are preventable measures, and there are prevental—preventable measures that can be implemented in the hopes to provide additional safety measures to business owners, homeowners, employees and customers.

Everyone should be able to feel safe in their home, in their communities and while at their workplace. Unfortunately, the reality is that this is not always the case. That is why this resolution for holding the provincial government accountable on their security rebate commitment is critical.

The increase in crime, the theft and violence is most certainly leading to the rapid closure of many Manitoba businesses. It is a—it is damaging to our province's economy and to our society with the increase in job loss we are seeing for Manitobans. More must be done to help keep all Manitobans safe and to help our small businesses keep their doors open.

The Manitoba Restaurant and Foodservices Association and CFIB have criticized the NDP government, saying that a \$300 security rebate is not enough. Let me repeat that: It is not enough. And that immediate action needs to be taken and the current pace they're moving at is unacceptable.

So the question I would like to end my words with is this: A business has their storefront vandalized, windows smashed and the criminals entering steal their goods—a loss of quite possibly \$10,000. Then the business has to go in and purchase a security system, install and the monitoring costs, thousands of dollars, plus the annual monitoring fee of \$100—of hundreds of dollars.

Do we really think \$300 to only 1,700 businesses is doing all that we can and that it's going to be enough to keep all businesses open in Manitoba?

Thank you again to the member for Lakeside (Mr. King) for bringing forward this important resolution to be debated on the floor today.

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): What I would like to say on this point is Manitobans can count on our government to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. The failed previous PC government was soft on crime, and they continue this by stalling legislation that would crack down on drug traffickers.

We are committed to introducing the \$300 security system rebate to help families and small businesses be safe. We're taking the necessary steps to address public safety in this province and our security rebate being one of the many measures we're taking to keep businesses, families and seniors safe.

Now, our NDP government knows that everyone should feel safe in their home and in their community. Manitoba families should not have to choose between keeping their family safe or buying groceries. As a

part of our public safety strategy, Budget 2024 includes this \$300 rebate for any Manitobans purchasing or upgrading a home or business security system.

Now, Manitobans can purchase or install a home or business security system of their choice and then apply to the government for a consumer refund of up to \$300. It's that easy.

Now, we understand that families across the province are struggling with the rising costs, especially under the previous government's watch. That's why we're providing a simple solution to ensure that you can feel safe in your home. Any security system purchase made after September 1, 2023, is eligible to receive the \$300 rebate. Now, the application process will launch this June.

We're building a culture of safety throughout our province and following through on that commitment. By taking advantage of this rebate, people can equip their homes with cameras, lights or other security measures and save some money while doing so. Manitoba families know that we have their backs as we make communities safer in our province.

Now, our record, the NDP, on public safety: Our NDP government is working to make our communities safer. The \$300 security system rebates for small businesses and families in Manitoba is just one part of that strategy to increasing public safety in our neighbourhoods.

In Budget 2024, we have made investments that support law enforcement, as well as those who are looking to make a difference in their lives and their communities.

An NDP government is increasing funding for police agencies by \$13.7 million to better support those who serve and protect. And we're also investing \$4 million to hire 25 more mental health workers to work alongside law enforcement, \$8.6 million for services and programs that support justice, crime prevention and responses, victims services and providing resources to families navigating the justice system.

We're also funding the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program as a direct response to call for justice. We're going to be quoting here: To transform Indigenous policing into an exercise in self-governance and self-determination and ensure that funding is equitable with other non-Indigenous police services in Canada.

Our NDP government remains committed to searching the Prairie Green Landfill. And, importantly,

we understand, and we saw throughout this entire divisive campaign that the PCs ran on, the PCs failed these women, and they failed the Indigenous community time and time again, every time they refused to meet with their families or search for their bodies. It's utterly disgusting. We included \$20 million in Budget 2024 to search for these women. And we'll work with Indigenous leadership and law enforcement in doing so. We're also providing \$500,000 to support the families of these victims during the trial that's occurring right now.

We introduced bail reform because Manitobans deserve to feel safe in their communities, no matter where they live. The previous PC government allowed crime to rise, failing to take action to protect communities. Our approach through bail reform will ensure that law enforcement will have the tools necessary to track repeat offenders and review and share crime data with other jurisdictions.

We are also investing in intensive supervision and expanding mental health supports to help them meet their bail conditions. Our plan is also making bail policies stronger by including considering the impact of bail on victims and the community. We're also expanding on existing legislation to protect women and children and other vulnerable people by amending The Intimate Image Protection Act by including AI-generated images.

Our work will not stop here. We've brought together community members, law enforcement and other agencies for a public safety summit, which I had the honour of emceeding, to discuss how we can work together to address crime and the root causes of crime.

Our public safety summit was an opportunity for participants to truly express their concerns about gaps, issues and hopes for public safety in Manitoba, something that the PC government never thought to do—to collaborate, to speak with the community members, to talk with people about their concerns. And we're a listening government. This is what the NDP team does. And Manitobans, they're ready for a change. We saw that in the outpouring of support for the summit and the feedback we've already received about its impact.

At the summit, we were joined by Indigenous leaders and governments, representatives of law enforcement, community resource centres, organizations that work in housing, family services, mental health and addictions and restorative justice. We also had the business community, unions, employment and

training organizations, victims services, youth organizations and child protection, community economic development, newcomer settlement services, arts organizations, folks from the legal community, academia and much, much more.

These folks were truly inspired by the time that they had during this day to be able to meet and discuss their concerns and their issues and be heard by a government who will take that feedback and pour it into policy that will make changes.

* (11:50)

Tackling multi-faceted issues requires a multi-faceted solution, something that the PC government just didn't get. That's why we're building up a community-and sector-informed public safety strategy so that we can meet the needs of communities in Manitoba directly. We're setting a standard for a public safety strategy where people from many walks of life work together to make our communities great places to live.

Everyone in this room and in the province—we all share the collective responsibility to build public safety. The summit was only the beginning and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will travel across the province to hear from other organizations about how we can work together to build safer communities in every part of Manitoba.

Now, Manitobans are struggling after years of rising costs under the former PC government. Rather than helping, the PCs raised rents, raised hydro rates and raised MPI rates. They hurt families, communities, small businesses and seniors in Manitoba.

Our NDP government is taking a different approach. We took direct action in our first 100 days by cutting the gas tax, saving people 14 cents at the litre at the pump and making Manitoba gas the cheapest in Canada. We heard from Manitobans across the province that they were so relieved to feel savings from this cut. So we made sure to extend the gas tax another three months to help small businesses and families. Cutting the gas tax made it easier for people to commute every day to put food on the table. And we ensured more families could take their kids to hockey practice and still have a bit left over.

We also made a broad middle-class tax cut to make it easier for families to join the middle class in Manitoba. This tax credit will eliminate or reduce school taxes for 85 per cent of Manitobans. Our \$1,500 tax credit for homeowners will make it easier to own a home. Our renters tax credit will also help to restore the cuts made by the previous government and

help those who want to save for a home to put a bit extra aside for once their rent is paid.

Members on this side of the House actually care about affordability for Manitobans. Budget 2024 gives Manitobans 21 new ways to save money, including the \$300 security system rebate.

The PCs are trying to scare Manitobans, when Manitobans can be reassured that they have a government that is working for them and their needs.

Small-business owners are going to feel the savings of Budget 2024 and more as we continue to lower costs for them. Manitobans have not forgotten how the PCs abandoned small businesses during the pandemic—

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): The member's time is expired.

Honourable member for Transcona.

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you, Honourable—

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): I apologize—*[interjection]* I apologize; Honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

MLA Altomare: Another round of applause. I even got some from the other side of the House there.

Thank you. I want to thank the member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway) for doing that. That actually adds to the—not only the aura and the atmosphere in this place, but also signifies your commitment to what we're doing as a government here in Manitoba.

It's a really important piece and something that I take great pleasure in standing today, Assistant—Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, in representing the people of Transcona. I will say that I will answer to both Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning and the MLA for Transcona because it is, indeed, a pleasure to get up and an honour to represent our constituents here in this hallowed Chamber, because a lot of what we do has to be connected to community.

I will say that earlier this week, we had a community event in the constituency of Transcona, and at the event, what was very, very clear is how appreciative our constituents are of the work that we're doing here as an NDP government for the people of Manitoba and for the people of Transcona.

Certainly, one of the really biggest pieces that was identified is our commitment to ensuring that we have

investments in areas that really matter to our constituents, and I can tell you that the investments that are made through the Department of Justice, especially through some of the pieces that are being brought forward today, are really important.

I can tell you, I do want to echo the words of the member for Elmwood who got up and astutely pointed to other jurisdictions throughout North America that provide these type of rebates to ensure that people get a sense of knowing that their government is there with them every step of the way and in doing what they need to do to create safe neighbourhoods.

I know many of us in this Chamber remember when we were young. We remember when the neighbourhood was really populated by a ton of people walking to school, parents walking their children to school, that the whole sense of community safety was something that was really tangible because we looked after each other. I think, when you look at this budget and you look at this initiative, you see that this government is walking together with the people of Manitoba to not only create the Manitoba we want to see in the 21st century, but also to create that sense of safety, security, that sense of knowing that we're all in this together to make this place a better place, to be the exemplar for the nation.

So when the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) gets up and outlines in meticulous detail, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, in meticulous detail, the initiatives that we've brought forward that will work with Manitobans to make this the best place to live in Canada, I can only applaud that member for bringing that forward. That is something that was truly remarkable to hear and a really good review as to what we stand for on this side of the House.

I do also want to remark on the following: you know, when we talk about initiatives like this, Assistant–Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, initiatives like this take a whole-of-government approach to ensure that we're meeting the needs of Manitobans. That was made very clear early on in January, at the end of that month, when we announced our school funding announcement, which made it very clear that now school divisions, school boards have an active engaged partner so that they can provide the very best for the children, especially with that announcement.

Many, many school divisions—I can tell you about one of them. Prairie Spirit School Division, Assistant–

Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, who, because of the announcements that we made at the end of January and ensuring predictable stable funding for public schools, one of the things that they really appreciated was, now, the ability, because they identified, throughout their meeting with me and meeting with people in the department, they identified a need for mental health support workers.

And this particular piece of legislation that we're trying to debate earlier—and of course they're delaying, which I really don't understand—is a significant investment in mental health workers. Not only do we, as a government, recognize that now, as people are adults, but we also know, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, that these investments need to be made early on in classrooms.

Now I do hear the former minister of Education applauding our pieces that we're putting in the budget. I do hear the former minister saying that these are important pieces that have to be included because we do want to build a better Manitoba for all children in our province. That's the important piece.

So when a school division like Prairie Spirit says to us—they say to us, we want to thank you for providing that piece, because it's important that we invest in schools because we want to be preventative, just like this particular piece of legislation that we're trying to debate earlier—and of course, it's being delayed by the opposition benches. We're not getting a chance to really dig into what is important to Manitobans.

I can tell you, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, that Manitobans, when they put us in this Chamber, expect us to do the work that's important to them. Piece of legislation that's being delayed and is sort of connected. I mean, I will echo the words of the—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Order. I'd encourage the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) to stop hollering across the floor.

The Minister of Education may continue—oh.

Thank you.

MLA Altomare: Oh, I had so much more to say.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Yes, well, when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have four minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 o'clock, the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 16, 2024

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