

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. 72B - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 8, 2024

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 8, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I have two leave requests for the House.

First, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow me to make a statement to the House, without responses, before commencing with routine proceedings?

The purpose of the statement will be to offer an apology on behalf of the government regarding reparations for Manitoba's Children's Special Allowances policy.

Second, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow the following individuals to be seated on the floor of the Chamber for this statement: Acting Grand Chief Betsy Kennedy; Grand Chief Garrison Settee; Margaret Swan; Minister Mona Buors; Lareina Settee; Janelle Peters; Karlii Beaulieu; Mary Derendorf.

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow the Minister of Families to make a statement to the House, without responses, before commencing routine proceedings?
[Agreed]

Leave has been granted.

Is there leave to allow the eight individuals listed by the Government House Leader to be seated at—on the floor of the Chamber for the statement? Is there leave? [Agreed]

Leave has been granted.

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

Ask that we all rise as the guests enter the Chamber, please.

As previously agreed, I'll now recognize the Minister of Families to proceed with the statement.

And please be seated.

GOVERNMENT STATEMENT

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Today, as Minister of Families and on behalf of the people of Manitoba, let me express our deepest sorrow

and regret to every Manitoba child denied the children's special allowance.

For 14 years, Manitoba required Child and Family Services agencies to return over \$335 million in federal CSA payments, funds meant to support your well-being, education and opportunities to thrive. This was not just a financial mistake, it was a profound injustice, leaving some of our most vulnerable children without the supports they needed and rightfully deserved.

These funds should have nourished your dreams, helped you learn, grow and flourish. We recognize the pain, loss and harm caused by past government practices taking away that which was rightfully yours. We are sorry.

Our government has taken a long-overdue step in correcting this wrong. We have agreed to a settlement of \$530 million to compensate those who were denied these funds. This settlement is not just about righting the past; it's about paving the way forward. It's about restoring dignity, healing wounds and building a better future for the children of Manitoba.

To the children, young adults and families affected, I say this: Your courage, your resilience, your determination to stand up and demand fairness has been heard. You are not just survivors, you are warriors of justice. You have been at the forefront of showing Manitobans the path to reconciliation.

Miigwech for your unwavering strength.

I stand before you not only as the minister responsible but also as someone who feels this profoundly on a personal level. I, like the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith), were once in—children in care, too. We understand deeply what it means to experience the child-welfare system.

And so today, we acknowledge the deep scars left by this deprivation. Scars carried not just by you but by families, friends and our communities.

Today is only the beginning of this journey. Our government commits to continuing to learn from the past, to listen and to act with integrity, ensuring every child, now and in the future, will grow up with the full support and love they deserve.

I also want to share something deeply personal. I know healing is possible. I know, despite the hurt, unfairness and despite the obstacles, there is a path of healing and a way forward. You have the right to thrive, to pursue education, to build careers, to dream freely and to live a life full of joy and opportunity. Our greatest hope is you now have the space to not just survive but to truly thrive.

We see you. We see your beauty. We see your strength. We believe in your future. We believe in you. We are here to support your dreams and want nothing more than for you to live a full, joyful life that you so rightfully deserve. You are loved today and always.

Miigwech.

* (13:40)

The Speaker: Going to ask the Sergeant to please escort our guests.

And please be seated while we take a moment to rearrange the Chamber. Thank you.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: At this point I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson) indicating that the opposition caucus had identified Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, as their second selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each recognized party to select up to three private members' bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote. I have therefore been advised that Bill 221 will be debated at second reading on Thursday, October 10, 2024, starting at 10 a.m., with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I am pleased to table annual reports—the reports for the Manitoba Indigenous Economic Development for the fiscal year 2023-2024; the Department of Manitoba Municipal and Northern Relations for the fiscal year 2023-2024; The Manitoba Water Services Board for the fiscal year of 2023-2024; and the Communities Economic Development Fund for the fiscal year of 2023-2024.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other tabling of reports?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I am pleased to table the annual report for Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning for the year ending March 31, 2024.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I am pleased to table the annual report for the Housing, Addictions and Homelessness for the fiscal year of 2023-24; and Mental Health for this fiscal year of 2023-2024.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

Ministerial statements? There are none.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. Bartholomew Anglican Church 65th Anniversary

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): This year, St. Bartholomew Anglican Church is celebrating its 65th anniversary. They have been a pillar in our community and have been faithfully serving the people in Southdale for decades. Located in Windsor Park, the church began in 1959 when a few dedicated members of the church had remortgaged their homes to purchase the building. Today, that unwavering desire to create a welcoming community space still lives on through the dedicated members and staff at St. Bartholomew.

Today, I would like to immortalize the continued and faithful dedication that St. Bartholomew has had to Southdale. Their commitment to fostering hospitality and community leads them to hosting and creating programs to uplift their diverse congregation. They create and strengthen connections by regularly organizing women's circles and social events.

They uplift their community through their food bank, which has run for 30 years, and host both a daycare and back-to-school program for newcomers at Frontenac School. St. Bartholomew has hosted the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts for 60 years, fostering the next generation of Manitobans. It is through programs like these that create a difference in our province, and it is so encouraging to see how determined these individuals are.

So please join me in celebrating St. Bartholomew Anglican Church for their 65 years of exceptional service and honour their commitment to making our community a better place. Their dedication to the

collective well-being of our neighbourhood is inspiring, and I am delighted to see the meaningful differences they make in our community. I am honoured to have them in my constituency and pleased to see the incredible amount of joy and love they bring to Southdale.

Please join me in thanking St. Bartholomew and please allow me to submit their names to Hansard.

Wilson Ackinwale, Carol Bailey, Dave Bailey, Lynn Doyle, Ada Greeley, Bill Greeley, June James

Brandon University's Co-operative Program

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): As a proud alumnus of Brandon University and a former board of governors member, I am thrilled to celebrate a remarkable achievement as we commemorate the university's 125th anniversary. For the second consecutive year, the BU Co-operative Education Program reached an incredible milestone: 100 per cent employment for its co-op students this past summer.

Brandon University exemplifies the power of experiential learning. Across disciplines, BU ensures that students gain hands-on experience directly related to their fields. Education students are placed in local schools, nursing students go on practicums, music students receive performance-based education, and arts and science students have access to co-op. This applied learning deepens students' academic journeys and equips them with practical skills that prepare them for successful careers.

The success of the BU co-op program reflects the hard work and determination of our students, as well as the strong partnerships that Brandon University has forged with local businesses. These collaborations create valuable opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience while providing businesses with skilled and eager workers.

Experiential and work-integrated learning like co-op enriches education. The BU co-op program develops critical skills in students, enhances their readiness for the workforce, and fosters a sense of community and collaboration.

As we celebrate the significant milestone of educational excellence at Brandon University, I want to commend the dedicated faculty and staff—many of whom join us here today—for their commitment ensures that our young people are graduating not just ready to work but also fully equipped to lead and innovate in their chosen fields.

Let us continue to invest in initiatives like the BU co-op program. By doing so, we strengthen our local economy and create a brighter future for youth in our province.

Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the invaluable work of the Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia. For over a century, the Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia has served as a space for the community to gather and learn, with folks coming from all over Manitoba.

* (13:50)

The Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia is comprised of three buildings: the 1856 Red River Frame House, the 1911 Municipal Hall and the Interpretive Centre. Originally built by William Brown, a worker for the Hudson's Bay Company, the 1856 Red River Frame House underwent extensive restoration projects in 1973 and 2007.

The 1911 Municipal Hall has served many purposes since its formation. Before it reopened as the Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia in 1970, the building was used as the Assiniboia Municipal Hall until 1968, a meeting hall for community members, classrooms for Kirkfield Park School and even a police station.

Lastly, the Interpretive Centre hosts exhibits on tools and the processes of blacksmithing, transportation, butter making and agriculture during the 19th and 20th centuries.

As a charitable organization, the museum relies on public support to continue offering its educational and community programs for free. It's critical that we take care of our historical sites so that the important work that the Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia does can continue.

This is why I'm excited to partner with the Historical Museum of St. James-Assiniboia to help draw more attention to the space and the role that it plays in educating children and the broader community. But most importantly, this museum brings people together in a good way.

Please join me in recognizing the good work of the folks at the St. James historical museum.

Thank you.

Brandon University—Contributions to Manitoba

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Today, I recognize the outstanding contributions of Brandon University, not only to our community of Brandon and our Westman region but also to our province as a whole.

Brandon University is Canada's finest regional university, and BU helps Manitoba shine on the national stage. As we celebrate BU's 125th anniversary, it's important to reflect on the impact this institution has had on education, research and community engagement.

Recently, Brandon University has made headlines for its significant strides in research and innovation. The university's researchers are tackling critical issues in areas such as sustainability, health and community development. These efforts not only advance knowledge but also contribute solutions that benefit our society. A recent instalment of the university's Research Connection shows BU scholars examining cost-effective flood solutions for the city of Brandon, inspired by nature.

Moreover, Brandon University is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. The expansion of student services, including mental health resources and academic support, reflects the university's commitment to the well-being of its students. Investment in student success is critical as BU prepares for the next generation of leaders.

I also want to highlight Brandon University's engagement with the Indigenous communities, especially as we also recently marked the Truth and Reconciliation Week in Brandon. BU's initiatives that enhance Indigenous student support and promote cultural awareness are commendable. They strengthen our commitment to reconciliation and ensure that all students feel valued and empowered.

As we celebrate 125 years of excellence, let us continue to support Brandon University in its mission to provide quality education, foster innovation and contribute to the betterment of our communities.

Government Initiatives Since Election 2023

MLA Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Honourable Speaker, today I rise to thank Manitobans one—who, one year ago, elected us as their government and gave us their confidence to serve as their representatives in the Manitoba Legislature. I am very proud to be a part of such a dynamic group of people and to work alongside

a Premier (Mr. Kinew) who has such immense dedication to Manitobans and their well-being.

As fuel prices continue to rise nationwide, our government introduced a gas tax holiday, which has just been extended until the end of the year, providing Manitobans with much-needed financial relief after seven and a half years of rising costs.

After introducing a universal accessible nutrition program in schools, we are feeding children; every corner of Manitoba.

We are rebuilding health care. As of last month, we have hired 873 net new health-care workers, which will improve both patient care and wait times.

We have hired over 630 educators so that our kids have the support in the schools. We are also making a \$6-million investment in infrastructure here in The Maples to improve Mallard road, beginning next construction season.

We have accomplished so much in one year by focusing on the goals Manitobans elected us to deliver. These initiatives demonstrate our government's commitment to one future, one people, one Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* * *

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I just need to correct the record on the annual report. I said I was tabling the Mental Health annual report. In fact, it was just the Housing and Addictions annual report for 2024.

The Speaker: Thank the minister for that correction.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And prior to oral questions, I have some guests to introduce that are in the public gallery.

I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today from Brandon University: president David Docherty; vice-president, administration and finance, Mr. Peter Hickey; Mr. Grant Hamilton, director of marketing and communications; Sarah-Jane Moar, co-op student; Zhara Acero Lopez, co-op student; Charles Adamu, president of the Brandon University Students' Union; Joy Chidinma Chikezie, president of operations of the Brandon University Students' Union; Kesha Haulder, president-vice-president of engagement of the Brandon University Students' Union; Cora Dupuis, co-operative education co-ordinator; and Tawsha Bristol, who is one of the MLA interns this

year and an alumna of BU co-op program. They are the guests of the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) and the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson).

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today. *[interjection]*

Order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cancellation of Surgeries Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Once again, congratulations to BU for being here in today's gallery.

Honourable Speaker, I start off today with a quote, and I quote: Sorry, we have cancel the surgery for today because we have no beds. End quote. That was what a constituent was told a few days ago by a nurse at 8 a.m. in the morning, as he lay in his hospital gown and an IV was being administered.

Let me be clear, Honourable Speaker, this was no last minute squeeze-you-in surgery. This was planned for months. The constituent and their partner drove several hours to Brandon general hospital. This constituent stopped taking their medication for diabetes and high blood pressure in the days leading up to the cancelled surgery.

If this government cannot even handle scheduled surgeries, what hope does any patient have here in Manitoba, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Happy to take a question on health care, which is the No. 1 priority for you, the people of Manitoba and for your provincial government, our Manitoba NDP team.

We know what the PCs did in office. They closed the biggest emergency rooms in the province. That destroyed the health-care system right before the COVID-19 pandemic. And what did they do to workers during that pandemic? They froze wages and they cut job positions.

* (14:00)

In one year, our Health Minister and the rest of our team have hired 873 new people to join the front lines to deliver more surgeries and improve health care.

But we know this: The greatest threat to continued success in rebuilding health care is the Progressive Conservative Party. Our team is going to

keep showing up to work to defend those on the front lines of health care from more PC cuts.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Premier stands today and disrespects Manitobans with that type of answer.

I quote, again: I had to leave my crop out un-combined as I was told the surgery was critical to get done. End quote.

This is what this Premier and this—and his minister fail to recognize, that there are often more than just physical consequences to cancelled surgeries. Oftentimes there are economic consequences for the patients. In this case, acres and acres of crop, the literal fruits of his labour, left in the field.

Can this Premier stand up today and apologize to this family and many others because he's cancelled various different surgeries?

Mr. Kinew: I'm sorry we weren't able to win the 2019 election to prevent more PC cuts. They closed the biggest emergency rooms in Manitoba. We lost hundreds of beds. What did they do with surgeries? They privatized and they destroyed the capacity for us to be able to take care of people here at home.

Now one year into office, we're turning things around: 873 new people working on the front lines of our health-care system and a new information management system that does away with the hidden surgical waits that we saw under the PCs and brings a new era of transparency and straightforwardness to the people of Manitoba.

We know that it is going to take years—years—to repair the damage caused by the PCs to our health-care system, but we are up to the task. The way we beat them in the election was by implementing a plan over multiple year-after-year-after-year time horizons. We're bringing that same stick-to-it-iveness and commitment to you, the people of Manitoba, to repairing your No. 1 priority, our health-care system.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans' No. 1 priority: health care. This Premier showing that it's so far down the list—once again, was elected in 2023; no plan to show for anything.

I quote: I have three aneurisms in my body; the one in my hip is critical to get out because of the size

of it. End quote. One of the Premier's first acts was to cancel out-of-province options for Manitoba patients. A successful option, I might add, Honourable Speaker.

If three aneurisms and a cancelled surgery after months and months of waiting in pain doesn't warrant expedited care, then one is left to ask, what does?

I table the documents today, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Kinew: You know, we had the opportunity to thank the great people of Manitoba for giving us the honour of our lives, to serve you, the people of this wonderful province.

Job one that we were given was to fix health care. We are delivering on that. More staff are working on the front lines today than worked under the PCs.

I also want to share that this task of fixing health care is indeed a sacred responsibility, and our partners in that are those on the front lines. That's why I want to thank our partners who were able to come together to offer a good deal overnight to those working on the front lines of this health-care system.

We started behind the eight ball because wages were frozen and jobs were cut by the members opposite. But we're fixing the damage, we're staffing up the front lines, and we're giving good, improved wages to the hard-working people who serve you each and every day.

Crime and Public Safety Timeline for Legislation

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) promised Manitobans that if they just gave them 100 days, he would ensure that they were, and I quote, safe at home.

Recently in Brandon, a resident and her children discovered that a break and enter with intent, possession of a weapon dangerous for the public peace, administering a noxious thing and unlawfully being in a dwelling house all qualify as being safe at home by this minister.

How does multiple children exiting the home coughing and spitting and a five-year-old boy vomiting due to the mace qualify as safe at home?

Is the minister willing to acknowledge that under his watch, these residents were clearly not safe at home?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Your Manitoba NDP government is making communities safer right across

this great province. We're doing it by working together.

We're working together with law enforcement. We're working together with foot patrols on the front lines, including a foot patrol in the community of Brandon that we're funding the establishment of.

We're also working with community residents to ensure that when they have an issue that needs addressing like, say, retail theft in the community, we're going to be there with responsiveness, with compassion and with real long-term solutions.

The members opposite wanted to trivialize law enforcement and to trivialize justice during last year's election campaign. We reject that. We embrace real results for you, the great people of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Balcaen: I can speak from experience that this government supported strongly all initiatives of public peace and safety within our province.

Safe at home obviously means something vastly different to this Minister of Justice than it does for all other Manitobans. This weekend here in Winnipeg, a 16-year-old boy died from a gunshot wound. A family is absolutely devastated by this travesty.

Can the Minister of Justice tell this House and this young person's family how exactly he made this 16-year-old safe?

Mr. Kinew: Any time we lose a young person in this province, it causes our government heartache. And on behalf of the provincial administration, I send my deepest condolences to you, the family of this young person who was taken from your loving arms far too soon.

What I say about the politicization of this issue: All that I will urge the member opposite is to reflect on the shameful election campaign he was involved in last year and to think twice before he politicizes the death of other people in Manitoba again.

When we talk about solutions, whether that's in the inner city or rural Manitoba, it's clear that we need a joint comprehensive approach that brings law enforcement and justice initiatives with community investments such as our universal school food program. That is an investment in young people today that is going to produce safer communities and healthier communities for generations to come.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Just hours ago, Winnipeg police responded to another stabbing, this time at the intersection of St. Mary's and Vivian. Despite the rhetoric of the Minister of Justice, his edged weapon bill remains stuffed in his desk drawer, helping no one.

How many more Manitobans have to be stabbed, have to suffer life-threatening and life-altering injuries, before this minister introduces his legislation?

We on this side of the House are prepared to fast track it for the security of all Manitobans, but the minister appears to be on the slow track.

Mr. Kinew: No question there, but I did hear confirmation that there are going to be no more unnecessary delays from the members opposite, so we look forward to keeping them to their word.

I want to talk about a troubling trend that we witnessed in the community of Brandon in the year 2022, however. There was an 80 per cent increase in crimes involving a weapon, there was 17 per cent increase in reported assaults, 31 per cent increase in fraud, so that we know that this is a widespread spike in crime in that community.

Of course, the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe) today is taking action to making Brandon safer. But I want to know from the members opposite: who was in charge of law enforcement at that time? Oh, right. It was the member for Brandon West. That's the documentation of his failings when he had a chance.

Breast Cancer Patients Treatment Wait Times

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Today I would like to share the story of Bridget Tenzon, who discovered a lump in her breast in February. After waiting nearly five months for a mammogram, she faced further delays for biopsies, consults and finally surgery, which is now scheduled for late October, eight months after first finding the lump.

* (14:10)

In a letter that I'll table, Bridget shares that she felt scared for her life. While waiting for care, her breast cancer grew to 2.5 centimetres, large enough to potentially metastasize and spread throughout her body. She now stands on the threshold of stage 4 breast cancer.

Despite reaching out to the minister on September 14, she has yet to receive a response.

Why is the NDP so dramatically failing breast cancer patients like Bridget?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): We take the issue of breast health in Manitoba very, very seriously. I want to, you know, offer a direct line to Bridget. I'm happy to contact her directly to have a conversation about what her experience has been in the system so far.

I also think it's really important to note that our government is taking real steps to make sure that Bridget and thousands of women across this province and folks who need this care have better access as we move forward.

We're making sure that more people get trained to be technologists. We're working with our partners across the system to boost capacity, which is something that did not happen for seven and a half years under the previous PC administration, which attacked women's health care instead of strengthening it.

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

Mrs. Cook: Well, I'll just advise the minister that the email is in their inbox. It's been there since September 14.

CancerCare Manitoba's guidelines, which I table for the House, recommend that treatment occur no later than 60 days from suspicion of breast cancer. These guidelines also stipulate that mammograms should be conducted within seven days of an ordered test; biopsies within seven days of a mammogram; and the first surgery within thirty days of a consult.

None of these targets were met for Bridget. In what should have taken 60 days, Bridget was forced to wait over 240.

How does the NDP government justify these kinds of delays for high-risk patients like Bridget?

MLA Asagwara: To answer that member's question: we don't. Those waits are unacceptable for someone like Bridget and other folks who depend on this care in Manitoba, which is why our government has been working since the early stages of our administration to understand this area of health care, to build capacity in this area of health care and to take real steps like lowering the breast screening age here in Manitoba so that more women have access to the care that they need in a timely manner.

But I want to be clear, Honourable Speaker: this comes after seven and a half years of a previous PC

government that cut this area of health care year after year. In fact, they cut the very service that 25 per cent of women access to get that screening: mobile breast cancer screening.

They failed to train the people we needed. Can she answer for that?

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

Mrs. Cook: Thousands of advocates have been calling on this NDP government to take action. It's been a year, and mammogram wait times have only increased. They're now over a year in Brandon.

No woman should have to endure what Bridget has over the last eight months. She was failed at every step of her breast cancer journey, from her lack of a family doctor to the wait time for a mammogram, a biopsy and surgery. And now she's just hoping she won't face further delays to see an oncologist and start radiation.

In light of cases like Bridget's, will the minister commit today to supporting Bill 221 that will provide real action and, more importantly, accountability and transparency to Manitoba women?

MLA Asagwara: Our government understands the importance of women's health care being treated with the respect and dignity it did not receive for seven and a half years under the previous PC government.

They cut women's health care. They closed the services they depend on. They fired health-care providers who provide the very care that Bridget and thousands of women across this province depend on. And I will table the document that spells out the damage done by the previous administration to breast health care in Manitoba.

We're taking real steps. We're lowering the breast screening age. We're training the technologists who do mammography care in Manitoba. We're working with partners to build capacity, and we're going to keep doing that work, because in Manitoba under our government, women's health care matters.

Labour Relations Amendment Act Consultation and Transparency Concerns

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, yesterday during bill debate, we heard troubling information from the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv).

He raised serious concerns about The Labour Relations Amendment Act contained in the BITSA bill. He stated that the bill was modified by the

Premier (Mr. Kinew) without input from caucus or Cabinet.

The government failed to introduce this bill, therefore not allowing it to go to public committee. And now we find out that government caucus and Cabinet members didn't even get input.

So I ask the Premier—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Byram: What is he trying to hide?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Look, we know that the PCs are very desperate to change the channel from events that transpired over this past weekend. How we know why? Because they've admitted to falsifying financial records. They've admitted to ignoring staff who try to follow the law.

And this is particularly mind blowing. They've admitted they have no idea if their party purchased intimacy services. The member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) said yesterday said, quote, not from what I know.

This is the state of affairs in the PC caucus. What is going on, Honourable Speaker?

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

Order.

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, as legislators—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would ask both benches to calm down a little. I can't hear the questions; I'm sure you can't either.

Ms. Byram: As legislatures, we have a responsibility to Manitobans to properly consult and engage and follow due process when we draft and introduce new laws. Power should not be concentrated in the hands of one individual.

Why did the Premier undermine democracy and change this bill in secret? What is going on?

MLA Sala: You know, I'm glad it's question period because, of course, there are a lot of questions to be answered by the members opposite.

A PC staffer says there are even more fraudulent invoices. They spent over \$300,000 on a vendor called Campaign Compass. Where have we heard that name before? Oh, that's right. The member for Fort Whyte's (Mr. Khan) leadership campaign.

He needs to tell the House: Did he know about these false invoices, yes or no?

The Speaker: The honourable member for Agassiz, on a final supplementary question. *[interjection]*

Order.

Ms. Byram: Maybe we can answer this—maybe they can answer this. By including The Labour Relations Amendment Act in BITSA, the government has undermined democracy and is not being transparent or accountable to Manitobans.

Can the Premier (Mr. Kinew) explain why he and his office hid this bill from Manitobans and his fellow caucus and Cabinet ministers?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we could not be prouder of that BITSA bill because it's working to make life more affordable and fix the health-care system that the members opposite damaged for seven and a half years.

You know, the plot just keeps getting more interesting, Honourable Speaker. Media says, quote: A well-known politician is connected to the falsified invoices. And now we know at least one politician who's connected to at least one invoice.

It's time for the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) to tell the truth. Did he know his party was breaking elections law? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Need for New Schools Request for Construction Plan

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): We know that this government, one of their first acts when they got elected was to cut the construction of nine new schools and attached daycare spaces from across the province, and we know the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) is yawning at that because she's bored.

But Manitobans are prioritizing and calling on this government to build more schools.

So when is this minister going to come forward with a plan to build more schools for Manitoba students?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): We are proud of our capital budget, but you know, I'd like to comment that it is really a remarkable day when the Leader of the Opposition says point-blank to the media, not from—not what I—

not from what I know, when asked questions about his own party's internal matters. Not from what I know.

* (14:20)

The PCs have admitted to falsifying financial records, they have admitted to telling their staff to ignore the law. Who knew being a law-abiding citizen was considered a demerit during a job interview with the PCs?

And now, they have no idea if their party used public funds to purchase intimacy services. It is a sad state of affairs on that side of the House, Honourable Speaker.

Will they stop hiding and will they tell the truth?

The Speaker: The—*[interjection]* Order. Order.

I would caution members that even when they're not recognized as speaking, they shouldn't be using unparliamentary language, hurling insults back and forth across this Chamber.

Mr. Jackson: Here's the truth, I'll put on the record, I was up in that minister's constituency at the former Sumka greenhouses site where there should be a school getting built right now, except her Cabinet cancelled it. And that is a fact.

So when is that minister going to step up for her community and get that school built for northeast Winnipeg?

MLA Schmidt: I thank the member opposite for visiting the great riding of Rossmere.

But, Honourable Speaker, the only question that the members opposite should be worried about are the questions that they are clearly refusing to answer.

A PC whistle-blower says there are even more fraudulent invoices. Campaign Compass invoiced the PCs for \$300,000. Did they help develop the stand firm billboards? Did they book the bus bench ads that had pictures of the member for Fort Whyte touting a hateful and transphobic rhetoric? Is that why he hired them, for their leader—for his leadership campaign? Did he know about this invoice?

They may have hired a company called Campaign Compass, but what they really need, Honourable Speaker, is a moral compass. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jackson: We understand that the members opposite are obsessed with the member for Fort Whyte, but we are going to stick to the issues that

Manitobans are bringing forward, and that is the fact that they have introduced hallway education to Manitoba.

So does this government have a plan to build more schools and end hallway education in Manitoba, and when will they be sharing that plan with Manitobans?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, I would argue that questions of fraud coming from the opposition benches are important to Manitobans.

According to the media, a well-known politician on the PC benches—and maybe he was on bus benches too—is connected to these falsified invoices. The dots are getting pretty easy to connect, Honourable Speaker.

Which member of the PC caucus has hired the same firm for his leadership campaign that invoiced the PC party for \$300,000? Well, there's only one of them running for leader, Honourable Speaker. That's how desirable the job is. And no wonder, given the state of affairs on that side of the House.

Will the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), since the current leader seems to have no idea, get up and tell us: Did he know his party broke election law? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MRI Services Portage la Prairie

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I want to talk about people today.

There are over 24,000 people waiting for an MRI, some for more than a year. I asked on behalf of Manitobans last week if the minister was coming to the MRI open house in Portage on October 22; there was no answer. Yesterday evening, I sent a personal email invitation to the minister.

Will the minister be coming to the meeting in Portage, yes or no?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, when I came into the role of Health Minister, I was shocked to learn that the previous government not only cut health care, cut staffing, closed emergency rooms, they didn't bother to do any work to develop a plan to strengthen diagnostics in our province. It's really, really deplorable.

What we've done in our time in office is work with our experts to boost capacity in this area and better understand how we can improve delivery to Manitobans. That's part of the reason why we announced, for the first time ever, there will be an MRI in northern Manitoba, and there's more good news to come on that front.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: I guess that's a no.

Honourable Speaker, wait times for MRIs in Manitoba have climbed by over 16 per cent under this NDP's time in government. Wait times at HSC have gone up by over 13 weeks as of June of this year.

A new MRI in Portage la Prairie would dramatically decrease wait times, not only in our community and the surrounding communities, but also provide additional capacity to patients in Winnipeg willing to travel.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, do you know what supports having improved capacity and delivering more MRIs? More people on the front lines of our health-care system, which is why our government has shared the good news that we've hired a net new 873 health-care workers in our health-care system, including allied health-care professionals.

Honourable Speaker, do you know what hurts our capacity? A PC government that would cut and fire health-care workers from our health-care system.

Do you know what also hurts, Honourable Speaker? A member opposite who would misinform constituents about what is required to stand up that kind of capacity. That member has touted false information throughout his constituency for weeks, which is shameful.

On this side of the House, we use facts and work with experts and the front lines to make health care better.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: Again, I welcome the member to come out and clear that up.

Manitobans are waiting or know people that are waiting for MRIs, and they want to know why this minister's office does not open, read and respond to emails on this subject. Honourable Speaker, I table this email that shows: not read and deleted.

Will the minister come to the community and listen to the—what residents and municipal councillors, First Nations and health professionals have to say about the need for an MRI in their community and region?

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we believe as a government that Manitobans deserve to have more access to health care across this province, which is why we've hired a net new 873 health-care workers to the front lines. It's why we're working with our provincial clinical leads to improve capacity and train more technologists to deliver this care. It's why, in the most recent months of our reporting, we are actually delivering more MRIs than we ever have in this province since 2016 right here in Manitoba, and there's much more work to do.

But, again, I want to be clear. We have looked at the facts, we have studied the evidence, and that member continues to go out and misinform constituents for his own political benefit. That is shameful. That is not transparent, and it is unbecoming of any member of this House.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Portage la Prairie will quit hollering across the hall. He'll restrain himself from now and try and not continue in the vein that he's been carrying on in.

Hydro Diversion Channels—Norway House Lake Winnipeg Bank Erosion Mitigation

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): According to residents in Norway House, Manitoba Hydro's diversion of channels and mismanagement of Lake Winnipeg water levels in pursuit of its electricity generating operations are negatively affecting the community and surrounding environment.

The community has scientific assessments documenting that erosion is ongoing and accelerating.

Will this government commit to taking action to prevent further erosion by adding rip-rap in all areas where erosion is currently taking place?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Honourable Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member.

* (14:30)

Look, our government shares concerns about the historic impacts of hydro in Manitoba. That's why

we're engaged deeply with First Nations and Métis communities in Manitoba at doing that important work of having those conversations and working to reset that relationship with Hydro.

There's more work to do. We're going to keep having those conversations because we know how important they are to the future of our province and to First Nations and Métis people in Manitoba.

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

MLA Lamoureux: From 2003 'til 2022, there have been approximately 80 to 100 metres of shoreline erosion at the inlet of 2-Mile Channel. The silt and debris are being deposited within the water column downstream. This has hurt Norway House's commercial fishery, recreational use of the lake and has made it difficult for wildlife to access the lake.

Will this government commit to immediately working with Indigenous communities in a timely manner to come up with engineered solutions to prevent further damage?

MLA Sala: Again, I appreciate this very important question.

I have had an opportunity to meet with leadership from the Norway House community to hear their concerns as expressed today. And again, we're eager to continue having those conversations to understand how we can work together to respond to these types of concerns.

We know how important it is that we continue to do the important work of engaging directly with First Nations and Métis communities here in Manitoba to keep having important conversations on how we work together to continue advancing hydro but also supporting their communities.

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

Impact of Hydro Projects—Lake St. Martin Consultation with Indigenous Communities

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I am encouraged to hear about the consultations with Norway House.

A similar issue is taking place in Lake St. Martin, where Manitoba Hydro projects are negatively impacting their community.

What consultations have taken place with the Indigenous people who live in this community and who have been negatively impacted by these projects?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): We did have a chance to meet with the community, and I will say that we did recent-release our energy policy, which our government is very proud of.

Part of developing that energy policy involved many, many discussions with First Nations and Métis communities around the province. And through those discussions, we learned a lot from those communities. And those conversations were very valuable in helping us to inform our outlook and our approach as it relates to hydro.

We're going to keep having those important conversations. We know how critical it is. First Nations and Métis communities can count on it. They certainly couldn't count on it when the members opposite were in power. It's a new day in Manitoba with a government that's listening and is eager to make sure we move forward together.

Health-Care Support Workers Tentative Agreement Reached

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Honourable Speaker, health care is our government's top priority.

When we got elected a year ago, we made it clear: health-care workers in Manitoba would no longer be disrespected the way that they were under the Stefanson PC government.

After years of frozen wages and PCs' refusal to sit down at the bargaining table, we finally have a government that is listening to front-line workers. And on this side of the House, we respect workers, we listen to workers and we value workers.

Can the Minister of Health share with the House the steps that our government is taking to ensure all health-care workers have a voice at the table and are treated with respect?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleague from Radisson for that really, really wonderful question.

Every day, our government is showing up for health-care workers. It was a hard road under the Stefanson PCs, but today, front-line health-care workers have a government that stands with them and meets them where they're at.

In the early hours of the morning, a tentative deal was reached with health-care workers. You know,

Honourable Speaker, when you show up, when you roll your sleeves up, when you work together, you can get things done.

I want to thank all parties who came together and worked very hard to get to this point and reach a tentative agreement. Honourable Speaker, we said to Manitobans that we would fix health care. We are doing that work with the front lines, and we're getting things done.

Discarded Needles—Swan River Safe Consumption Site Concerns

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Swan River and bordering municipalities are voicing their concern about the influx of discarded, used needles plaguing their community.

I quote: I would invite any politician pushing harm reduction as a solution to come and spend a day in Swan River and maybe even spend the night so they can see it for themselves. Quote by Swan River mayor, Lance Jacobson.

With the NDP pushing public injection sites throughout Manitoba, can the minister advise if she has taken up the mayor's offer, or is she unwilling to see the consequences of her policies?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I want to thank the member for that question. It gives me an opportunity to talk about harm reduction, something that the Stefanson government never took.

I had an opportunity to talk to Mayor Jacobson, and they agree that we need to work collaboratively together to find solutions. And the solutions are with the community.

So we are going to work, and work with community and work with organizations, something that the previous government, the Stefanson government, never did. They never worked with municipalities. They never were able to work with mayors. They were never able to work with front-line organizations. And they never took a harm reduction approach.

We're not going to take that approach. We're going to take a compassionate approach. We are working on the first supervised consumption-ever site in Manitoba that is Indigenous-led in all of Canada. And we are helping—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Responsibility for Clean-up

Mr. Balcaen: The mayor has shared, and I quote: There have been people that have been stabbed while walking. It's dangerous, and some of them are just left in community places like playgrounds or schoolyards, and it's a huge concern. Unquote.

Can the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness advise who's responsible for cleaning up dirty and used needles in the playgrounds, in the schoolyards of Swan River and the other communities? Or is it her plan to make this part of the school kids' annual spring cleanup?

Ms. Smith: You know, that just goes low. When they go low, we go high.

We will continue to work with front-line organizations. We'll continue to listen to the experts. We want to work collaboratively. We don't want to get into us and them. We're all about working with community, something that members opposite never did.

We're working on hiring mental health workers. We're working on opening up the first supervised consumption site. We are behind seven and a half years on harm reduction because of members across the way. Stefanson government, they even went to the extent of saying they visited a supervised consumption site in Vancouver. Imagine that.

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: I've actually toured and spent seven hours inside the east side downtown of Vancouver and saw the harms of safe injection sites.

The mayor noted in reference to used needles littering the community, quote: I'm a compassionate person; I want people to get the help that they need, but as the mayor, I also must focus on community safety, and it's just not safe here anymore.

That's worth repeating, Honourable Speaker: It's just not safe here anymore.

The question is simple: Will this minister send a used needle cleanup crew to Swan River and Swan Valley West, or is she too busy defending her dysfunctional and toxic NDP government?

Ms. Smith: Again, we will take a collaborative approach. We are working with community. Community has the solutions.

Unlike members opposite, who likes to get into this and them and put themselves on the bad side, you know, the negative side of things, I want to, you know, just tout some of the great things that front-line organizations are doing. We opened the first-ever Indigenous-led RAAM clinic in the province. We just opened the first virtual Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine. This is going to help reduce barriers for folks getting access to rapid addictions medicine.

First ever in Manitoba, something members opposite never did, because they didn't care about—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:40)

PETITIONS

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

Four—

The Speaker: Kindly ask members to take their conversations to the loge or to the back. I can barely hear the member speaking, and he's sitting 10 feet from me.

Mr. Johnson: To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to

non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying for those whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition is signed by Sawyer Balcaen, Brittany Gawcizuk and Darin Balcaen and many, many more Manitobans.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must give—be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health support to provinces to improve access to these supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illnesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is their sole condition; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition has been signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

Hearing Aids

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) A hearing aid is a battery-powered electronic device designed to improve an individual's ability to perceive sound. Worn in or behind a person's ear, they make some sounds louder, helping people hear better when it's quiet and when it's noisy.

(2) People who suffer hearing loss, whether due to aging, illness, employment or accident, they—not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, family or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

(3) Hearing loss can also impact the safety of an individual with hearing loss, as it affects the ability to hear cars coming, safety alarms, call 911, et cetera.

(4) A global commission on the state of the research for dementia care and prevention released an updated consensus report in July 2020, identifying 12 key risk factors for dementia and cognitive decline. The strongest risk factor that was indicated was hearing loss. It was calculated that up to 8 per cent of the total number of dementia cases could potentially be avoided with management of hearing loss.

* (14:50)

(5) Hearing aids are therefore essential to the mental health and well-being of Manitobans, especially to those at significant risk of dementia, Alzheimer's, a disorder of the brain affecting cognition in the ever-growing senior population.

(6) Audiologists are health-care professionals who help patients decide which kind of hearing aid will work best for them, based on the type of hearing loss, patient's age and ability to manage small devices, lifestyle and ability to afford.

(7) The cost of hearing aids can be prohibitive to many Manitobans, depending on their income and circumstances. Hearing aids cost on average \$995 to \$4,000 per ear, and many professionals say the hearing aids only work at their best for five years.

(8) Manitoba residents under the age of 18 who require a hearing aid, as prescribed by an audiologist, will receive either an 80 per cent reimbursement from Manitoba Health of a fixed amount for an analog device, up to a maximum of \$500 per ear, or 80 per cent of a fixed amount for a digital or analog programmable device, up to a maximum of \$1,800. However, this reimbursement is not available to Manitobans who need the device who are over the age of 18, which will result in financial hardship for many young people entering the workforce, students and families. In addition, seniors representing 14.3 per cent of Manitoba's population are not eligible for reimbursement, despite being the group most likely in need of a hearing aid.

(9) Most insurance companies only provide a minimal partial cost of a hearing aid, and many Manitobans, especially retired persons, old-age pensioners and other low-income earners do not have access to health insurance plans.

(10) The Province of Quebec's hearing devices program covers all costs related to hearing aids and assistive living devices, including the purchase, repair and replacement.

(11) Alberta offers subsidies to all seniors 65 and over and low-income adults 18 to 64 once every five years.

(12) New Brunswick provides coverage for the purchase and maintenance not covered by other agencies or private health insurance plans, as well as assistance for those whom the purchase would cause financial hardship.

(13) Manitobans over age 18 are only eligible for support for hearing aids if they are receiving Employment and Income Assistance, and the reimbursement only provides a maximum of \$500 an ear.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to consider hearing loss as a medical treatment under Manitoba Health; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to provide income-based coverage for hearing aids to all who need them, as hearing has been proven to be essential to Manitobans' cognitive, mental, social health and well-being.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and

computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

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

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

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you. Thank you.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This has been signed by many, many, many Manitobans.

* (15:00)

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Remove Carbon Tax

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Scott Peluk, Lee Anne Gould, Chris Parks and many, many, many more Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition, and these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the ages of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) Federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental-health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

And Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by Tony Peters, Neffie *[phonetic]* Peters, Adeniyo Adredaline *[phonetic]* and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the ages of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance; and

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

* (15:10)

This petition has been signed by Susannah Wark, Sierra Krahn, Leah Krahn and many, many Manitobans.

Child-Welfare System—Call for Inquiry

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Speaker in the Chair

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This has been signed by many—by Crystal Heinrichs, John Heinrichs and Jacob Heinrichs and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Trunk Highway 2

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 2, or PTH 2, is a 315-kilometre, 196-mile highway that runs from the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border to Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway.

(2) A significant portion of PTH 2 runs through the constituency of Spruce Woods, from the border of the rural municipality of Pipestone and the rural municipality of Sifton to the border of the rural municipality of Victoria and the rural municipality of Norfolk-Treherne.

(3) This route is historically significant, as it follows the original path taken in 1874 by the North West Mounted Police in their march west from Fort Dufferin to Fort Whoop-Up.

(4) PTH 2 is a significant commuting route for Westman families and is also utilized by those in the trade, commerce, tourism, agriculture and agri-food industries.

(5) The condition of PTH 2, from the east side of the town of Souris straight through to the hamlet of Deleau, is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(6) The newly appointed Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has confirmed the department has no plan to refurbish this stretch of road until the 2028-2029 construction season.

(7) The minister outlined that the current 2028-2029 construction plan does not include the stretch of PTH 2 that runs through the town of Souris, but instead starts on the west side of town.

(8) The communities in the area have been clear that any reconstruction of PTH 2 must include the stretch that runs through the town of Souris.

(9) The minister and the Premier have a duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to immediately prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Trunk Highway 2 in the upcoming construction season; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Trunk Highway 2 that runs through the town of Souris in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Gail Williamson, Disha Patel, Lucero Moro Afuni and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Tammy Vandekerckhove, Liz Peixoto, Marjorie Olson, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (15:20)

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering with mental illnesses.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as 'followin'—as follows:

To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those whom mental illness is the sole condition.

And to urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition has been signed by Landon Hudson, Charlene Nikkel, Theresa Narth [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition has been signed by Colin Ramsden, Taylor Dracass, Henry Snitynsky and many, many other Manitobans.

Child-Welfare System—Call for Inquiry

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth noted this case highlights the failures of the government to respond to our recommendations.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by Theodore Denhard, Helen Denhard, Andrea Penner and many, many more Manitobans.

Louise Bridge

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 113 years.

(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years, and it has deteriorated extensively, is now functionally obsolete and therefore more subject to more frequent unplanned repairs, cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

* (15:30)

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement of the Louise Bridge on a site just east of the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new Louise bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed.

(9) The City exploration process has begun. The \$6.35-million street upgrade of Nairn Avenue from Watt Street to the 113-year-old bridge is complete.

(10) The new City administration has delayed the decision on the Louise Bridge for a minimum of one year, and possibly up to 10 years, unless the Province steps in on behalf of northeast Winnipeg residents and completes the overdue link.

(11) The Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping the old bridge open for active transportation in the future.

This petition has been signed by Harlan Perchotte, Reed Sutherland, Gerald Sawatsky and many other Manitobans.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This position—or, pardon me. This petition is signed by Ashley Redik [*phonetic*], Leah Engbaek, Guy Lagimodière and many, many more fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call the Ethics Commissioner report debate, followed by the Ethics Commissioner appointment resolution, followed by resuming debate on second reading of Bill 37, followed by, after that, should we finish that, second reading of Bill 38.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will first call the Ethics Commissioner report debate, followed by the Ethics Commissioner appointment resolution, followed by resuming debate on second reading of Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, followed by second reading of Bill 38, An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other Amendments).

ETHICS REPORT MOTIONS

The Speaker: So before we begin debate on the first ethics report motion in this House, I would like to remind members of the process for the consideration

of these motions as agreed to by the House on October 2, 2024.

Here are the provisions governing these debates:

(1) An ethics report motion shall be considered as the first item of business under orders of the day, government business.

(2) Debate on an ethics report motion shall be limited to one sitting day.

(3) The House shall not adjourn until all members have had the opportunity to speak to the motion. When there are no further speakers in the debate, the Speaker shall put the question.

(4) An ethics report motion cannot be amended.

(5) The Speaker shall read the motion to the House to open the floor for debate.

(6) During debate on an ethics report motion, no member shall speak longer than 10 minutes.

(7) All members may speak to the motion in the following debate rotation: the member who is the subject of a complaint or a member of their party, followed by the 'complainant' member or a member of their party; followed by a member of the subject's party; followed by a member of the complainant's party; followed by an independent member.

Further to that, before reading the motion to open the debate, as the Speaker of this House, I will read into the record the recommendations contained in the report from the Ethics Commissioner regarding the honourable member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) dated September 19, 2024.

On page 17 of the—of that report, the Ethics Commissioner wrote: For the reasons given above, it is my opinion that the honourable member for Keewatinook did not contravene the act by having a contract with the Government of Manitoba prior to April 1, 2024.

However, he did contravene the act by having a contract with the government of Manitoba on and after April 1, 2024. He also contravened the act by failing to include the contract in his disclosure statement of assets, liabilities and sources of income.

I also conclude that the honourable member for Keewatinook's contraventions were inadvertent. I therefore recommend that no penalty be imposed.

* (15:40)

The motion before the House is: that the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Ethics Commissioner regarding the honourable member for Keewatinook, dated September 19, 2024, and approve the recommendation contained therein.

The floor is open for debate.

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Indigenous Economic Development): First of all, I would like to thank the Ethics Commissioner for his thoughtful work and engagement throughout the process of developing this report. As this is a new act that came into force in 2023, I want to thank the commissioner for helping us navigate through this process.

I want to start by saying that I wholeheartedly accept the commissioner's judgment; I take full responsibility for this mistake. It was an error in judgment on my part and I take full accountability for my actions, period. I am committed to rectifying this situation, I'm committed to being accountable to Manitobans, and the confidence the public has in our team and all the elected representatives in this Chamber.

That's why as soon as it came to light, our government cancelled the contract. I worked with the Ethics Commissioner to provide all relevant information needed, and followed the procedure every step of the way.

The commissioner's report demonstrates that I co-operated throughout this process in a transparent way. I respected every deadline set by the Ethics Commissioner throughout the process. It was also important for me to speak to my caucus colleagues, as they are trusted members of our team and I wanted them to understand what happened; and again, that was another conversation that happened immediately.

It is important that I show that I am taking full responsibility for this mistake. The commissioner's report notes that the fundamental purpose of the act is to build public confidence in their elected representatives and in our democratic institutions. I believe that building such confidence has never been important as it is today.

In the same manner, I would like to unequivocally offer my apology. I have endeavoured to follow both the spirit and intent of The Conflict of Interest Act, and where I have fallen short, I am committed to doing better.

All MLAs and ministers owe Manitobans their trust and honour, and I'm dedicated to living up to the trust they have placed in me. I accept full responsi-

bility of my actions, and I would expect all members of this Assembly to do the same.

There is a sacred trust between Manitobans and their elected leaders that demands the highest standards from all involved. Wherever and whenever I fall short, I am committed to acknowledging my failure, doing better and to living up to the expectations that Manitobans have for all of us, their elected representatives.

Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): This is a unique opportunity, obviously not one that members seek out in the House, but this is also a new process by which all of us are learning.

I'll begin my comments by saying to the Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Mr. Bushie) that my comments and any concerns I might have are certainly not personal. I've known the member for now a few years, and I actually—I have gotten along quite well with him and I respect the work that he has done and I have, on a personal level, found him to be an honourable member. So I want to begin my comments by saying that.

However, of course, the rules that we have in the Legislature are there for a reason and they are important. Extension of those rules, of course, are our ethics rules and the Ethics Commissioner; and we'll be talking about the reappointment of Mr. Schnoor later this afternoon, are a part of those rules that all of us are expected to adhere to. If you are in Executive Council, those rules are more onerous for, I think obvious reasons, than if you are not, but all of us are expected to follow the rules in which we are ascribed to in our various positions.

Of course, there are good reasons that the public would expect this. The one that is, of course, obvious and I think that the member opposite spoke to is transparency. There's an important element of transparency that the Ethics Commissioner, and through the ethics legislation, is tasked with enforcing in this Assembly, among all members.

And sometimes I know that for members, that is a bit onerous depending on how many, you know, outside interests you might have; it can be difficult to ensure that you're always complying with the rules, but the public demands transparency. More than ever before, they expect to know what it is that elected members of a legislature or a parliament are involved with. And for those who find that to be onerous or difficult, of course, those are the decisions you have to make before you let your name stand on a ballot,

because that is simply the way it is at all levels of government, I think, even including municipal levels of government that are higher levels of transparency that are expected, and in this case, obviously, that was not met, as found by the Ethics Commissioner.

The second issue, of course, that is important, is fairness. When it comes to government contracts being awarded, the tendering process in government is well laid out. It's there to ensure that those who might be able to bid on that tender and provide the services being asked for can do so in a fair way, to know that their bid will be considered fairly and that there is nobody who has an inherent advantage by virtue of a position that they hold.

You can talk to anybody, of course, who bids on Manitoba government contracts and this is incredibly important. The sealed bid process and other sort of mechanisms are there to ensure that individuals who are trying to win a contract for something government is procuring—and government procures a lot of services in a province like Manitoba—that it's being done fairly.

And so when an MLA or a minister is able to get a contract because of a business that they have, there is an extra level of expectation for transparency and disclosure to ensure the public and others who might otherwise bid on that particular service that the MLA, by virtue of their position, weren't given an advantage, a specific advantage because of that.

And that's not the accusation laid against the minister in this particular report, but that's the reason why the rules are there: that the public needs to believe that the awarding of these contracts was done fairly and that all Manitobans who might otherwise have an ability to bid on that particular contract had an equitable way to access that particular procurement.

It is also very important to ensure that these are disclosed so that when decisions are made in Cabinet or in the Legislative Assembly more generally, when we're voting on things that members have the opportunity and the obligation to recuse themselves from those decisions.

Recusing yourself from a decision of Cabinet is not an arduous process, but there is a bit of a process. If you're recusing yourself from a decision in this Legislature, you need to declare what could be a conflict. I've gone through that process myself. And you do that so that the public understands that you are not influencing a decision that might benefit you, either through a contract or some other type of mechanism.

So that is why these reports are serious. That is why the finding from the Ethics Commissioner was serious, and I hope and I trust that the minister, in his words, has taken it seriously as well.

The troubling part for me, mostly, is that this is early in a government's mandate, where they're running into these ethical problems. We, of course, and I—not to veer off topic—and the Honourable Speaker will have—I'm sure that I don't. We've seen some challenges in the last two weeks when it comes to this government and how they're operating behind closed doors with their own members and potentially with staff as well.

Now, layered onto that, we have this particular report that's come out, about at the same time, about something where the Ethics Commissioner did find that there was a breach of an act and we've barely hit one year in the NDP mandate.

And so that is particularly concerning, that at this very early stage, we're already seeing these allegations that are serious when it comes to things like abuse and also ethical violations which have been found now, by the Ethics Commissioner. One would never want to see these in a government—when it's particularly a concern when they are coming out so early in a mandate.

So we will obviously be watching this government. We have a role as the official opposition to ensure that the rules of the Legislature that ethics are upheld, to ensure that the government is acting in a way that the public will have trust in the actions. Clearly, this is something that was brought forward by members on this side and disclosed, and might not otherwise have ever been disclosed but for the work of members on this side of the House. And that is the role and the function of an opposition. And we don't necessarily take any great pleasure in that.

* (15:50)

It is difficult, sometimes, to raise issues against another member in this House because all of us don't do well when there are ethical complaints and when there are findings of ethical violations. It generally brings down the trust in government from the public as a whole.

So we thank the work of the commissioner, Jeffrey Schnoor, in this particular case. He brought 'brack' a clear finding that there was, in fact, a breach of a violation. Our hope is that the government will have learned from this and that we don't see repeat actions of the violation.

And I know that the member opposite, again, who, again, as I've mentioned I have no personal ill will to, I believe that he feels that—I think he feels remorse for how this has all come about. And I hope that members of his caucus and his Cabinet have learned from it.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I'd just like to follow up on a few of the comments made with regard to this Ethics Commissioner's report, the first that's been made under this new act, and, you know, follow up on some of the comments made by the honourable member from Steinbach.

But, of course, would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the minister's comments today. Certainly appreciate the accountability that he took for the findings in this report today on the record. I think that, you know, shows some recognition of the—what's transpired here and what the Ethics Commissioner's findings are, and he talked about the need to enhance the accountability of this building and, you know, reaffirm Manitobans' support for their trust in this, the most important of public institutions, their democracy.

And so just wanted to take that first minute or so of this to recognize the minister's comments, because they are serious. As we know, this is a new act. And for—as a newly elected MLA, it was certainly complicated to go through the disclosures process. And I—anybody who's looked at my disclosures would know that it's relatively simply compared to most people in the Chamber.

But nonetheless it is a complicated act with a lot of changes that came in new which were effective for the very first time. And so I think, you know, this is the first report under this new act, and it's important to take the recommendations and the findings of it seriously.

And so you know, we would be remiss if we didn't thank the Ethics Commissioner himself for his important work that he's done on behalf of Manitobans and of the accountability and the integrity of this institution. He serves a very important function in our democracy, and I know we're going to get to his reappointment discussion later today. Some of us have been meeting with him. We're hitting the one mark—one-year mark of our election here, and so there's no question that he serves an important function.

And so we're here discussing the first report under this new act. And the findings of it are serious. We

appreciate that the minister has taken accountability for failing to disclose this. We're not sure how it was missed.

It's pretty comprehensive, Honourable Speaker. Most Manitobans won't know, but you've been through it, as we all have, that there are several prompts when you first log in to the ethics website—we're all disclosing online now versus the in-paper format of days gone by. And there's several prompts that you have to click through before you can start filling out your disclosures. And they, you know, any contract, it's very clearly written out in there that you are the sole proprietor of a business that's receiving a contract, you need to disclose that, et cetera.

And so how this was missed—because the finding was that it was inadvertent—so how this was inadvertently missed by the minister and the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) is unclear. We had hoped that he would, you know, disclose a little bit more of that in his comments, but nonetheless that's where we're left with.

And so we hope that this NDP government is taking it a little more seriously as we move forward with the one-year mark disclosures that are happening right now, marking one year since our election.

As our colleague from Steinbach mentioned, you know, there is a higher standard of Manitobans who sit around the Cabinet table who are Manitobans that are privileged to serve in Executive Council. There is a higher standard for those individuals because they are awarding contracts for tens of thousands, in some cases tens of millions of dollars, that significantly impact our economy and business and Manitobans in general.

So they are held to a higher standard of account, rightly so. And so we hope that, you know, this situation, all Cabinet ministers on the government side are reflecting and checking up on their disclosures to make sure that they—if they weren't done appropriately last fall and they have gotten away with it for the first year that those are being updated now as part of our one-year requirement to renew those disclosures to ensure that that work is properly done and Manitobans understand the other interests that they may or may not have on the go while they're advocating and making decisions and awarding contracts at the Cabinet table.

And so while we appreciate that, you know, I'm sure there's an internal review going on here. We hope that there are some more public commitment from this government to ensure that something like this doesn't

happen again, you know, and that we can move forward and Manitobans can have trust and faith that their government, you know, isn't awarding contracts to themselves but, in fact, it's happening through a transparent and public process.

And so we'll leave that with the government members to decide whether they choose to put anything further on the record. I know we've got significant time left today to discuss this report. Hopefully, a few of them rise to speak and put some words on the record. We'll see.

And I think, you know, another question, you know, we've seen the member has responded that he's actually selling his business as a result of this situation and that's really unfortunate that this is a long-standing family business that serves a need in a community, and he has felt pressured by this situation to let that business go.

So, you know, whether that's as the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) perhaps has suggested, some pressuring from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) or the Premier's office or just this report alone, it's unclear. But, you know, if that's the result, I think that that's a disservice to Manitobans who would seek to come into elected office, that they're being pressured to completely give up their past lives and what informed them as individuals, as they were in the process of running for office and getting elected here, but they just have to disclose it properly.

That's why we have this act. That's why we have an Ethics Commissioner who meets with us, goes through what's required of elected officials, walks us through the process in an in-person meeting that's required every year to ensure that this is done appropriately so that MLAs and whatever background or walk of life they come from make sure that everything's disclosed, everything's above board and that Manitobans can have confidence that they're making decisions that are not personally motivated.

And so we are where we are now with this report and the minister's decision and we'll see where we go from here, Honourable Speaker. I'm sure there is likely more to come but nonetheless, I'll leave my comments there today.

And I would quite sincerely say, you know, we thank the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) for taking accountability, for acknowledging that this was an inadvertent mistake after the Ethics Commissioner has confirmed that the rules were in fact breached and we look forward to this NDP government doing a

better job of ensuring their disclosures are completed appropriately going forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I think when you assess an ethics report like this, you have to start with the facts because every situation is very much fact-dependent.

The member here, long before they were elected, were—was contracting with the Province since 2012. And the last two renewals of the contracts were never sent to him. And it appears the Province was acting with auto renewals, which is concerning in and of itself, and on April 1, 2024, the Province, without the knowledge of the member or his consent, auto-renewed his agreement again, and I think that's critical.

And when the agreement came to light, the government reacted very quickly: June 3, they cancelled the contract. The total amount paid out to his company was \$105.12. And so that's the context.

* (16:00)

And I think, you know, this place can get hyperbolic and supercharged. We're talking about \$105.12, and we need to be fair to the member.

So this is clearly, according to the commissioner, a breach of the act. He did receive a benefit, he did contract with the Province after becoming a minister, but it's also clear it was unintentional. It's also clear that this was more negligence than anything nefarious or any attempt to try to get away from anything.

And of course, the commissioner's recommended no penalty. And I understand where he's coming from, and I certainly don't disagree with that conclusion. If I did attach a rider to it, I think, in fairness, the member should pay back the \$105.12 that the Province paid. I think that would sort of make things right.

But I have some concerns here and what happens next; I'm concerned that we're going to trade one ethical breach for another. We've heard that the Kinew government has announced that the MLA from Keewatinook will sell his business. And this is deeply troubling, because there's quotes in the media from the MLA that doesn't indicate that he's particularly enthusiastic about that option.

This is a family business—28 years. The member has been here for five. If he wanted to sell the business, he would've done it by now. And the most logical time for him to have sold the business was a year ago when he was first elevated to Cabinet. He

didn't do it, and there's a reason he didn't do it: he didn't want to do it.

So my concern, and having lived through it just very, very recently, is how toxic and dysfunctional the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) office is, and my concern is that he's not voluntarily selling that business—that he's being bullied into it. And it's happening for less than honourable reasons—that this is a public relations response on behalf of the Premier. This is not some sense of self-reflection on anybody's behalf or some—you know, we're going to make sure that we double our i's and cross our t's.

And so my own experience with the Premier's office—I have experienced bullying, ultimatums, threats in relation to my law practice, so I strongly suspect that the member from Keewatinook has experienced the same, and I suspect that the price of him remaining in Cabinet was to sell this family business. And I'm concerned that this shows absolutely no empathy or proportionality on the part of the Premier that the intergenerational impacts of selling a family business in a community like that; it's impulsive and it's unnecessary.

The Ethics Commissioner has not called on this member to sell the business. In fact, I've had discussions with the Ethics Commissioner. He actually doesn't think the act goes further enough, and thinks that this act should be amended and that we should move to divestment—that any minister divests of all the assets in their control. I don't know if this Legislature would go that far. But despite the Ethics Commissioner's view, he did not recommend that that happen in this case. Isn't that telling?

So it appears the only person advocating for this is the Premier. And I have a firmer—firm—well, very significant concern—Premier had appeared at an NDP provincial Executive Council meeting recently, and he was talking about the situation involving myself, and he was talking about the situation involving the MLA from Keewatinook, and he started using political marketing language. He told this assembled group that—here, look at the contrast. And that's how he explained it to the group, that, you know, the MLA from Fort Garry wasn't selling his business but, look, the MLA from Keewatinook is.

And so I'm very concerned that for sort of impulsive political marketing reasons, this member's family and him are being basically used as pawns on a chessboard for essentially what's a political cheap shot. And we can't treat each other here. First and foremost, we're all co-workers and colleagues. We all

have lives outside of this building, and we will return to them. And, honestly, that should be a no-go place for politics, and it hasn't been in this building.

So I have known the MLA for Keewatinook now for five years. He is a kind and honourable man. I certainly support him. And I take him at his word that this was inadvertent and an easily missed oversight, and it was corrected immediately upon discovery.

So my heart goes out to him. My heart goes out to his family. I hope he's not being bullied into this in order to make some type of cheap political point. And, again, you don't fix one ethical breach by creating another one.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thanks for the opportunity to make a few comments on this report.

First of all, I want to thank the Ethics Commissioner for, you know, his duties and, you know, carrying out his responsibilities for the new legislation of us all making our disclosures. And it's great work that he's done here. I think it's been a—it was a detailed report that I don't think any of us here today have any negative things to say about. The commissioner certainly did a good job.

And I want to thank the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) for—thank you, Jodie—for his co-operation with the Ethics Commissioner and giving him the information they need and stepping it up to present all that he was asked for. And most of all today, listening to him reading the report and again, today, listening to the fact that he has taken the responsibility and the accountability for not disclosing this particular question of his disclosure.

So let this all be a lesson in ethics to us all. In fact, that was going to be part of my comments, was just a good lesson not to just our side here in the Chamber, but especially maybe to the NDP side with ethics, the code of ethics and accountability and transparency going forward with the dysfunction and toxicity in—I have many of the same concerns as our colleague from Fort Garry with the member from Keewatinook having to sell his business.

Now if I was told by anyone, through this, that I would have to sell my farm or a quarter section of land just to carry on being a member of the Legislative Assembly, I think that would be—it's very disappointing. So I do hope—but it does seem suspicious—that maybe the member from Keewatinook was bullied into

selling his business, which is—could be very unfortunate.

I've gotten to know my colleague across the way there, the minister for municipal and northern affairs and Indigenous Economic Development, just from being the critic. And I find him to be a very, very kind individual, easy to talk to when we need to on certain matters. So I have no doubt in my mind that his was an oversight by the member, inadvertently didn't disclose what he was supposed to disclose on his report.

And as my colleague from Souris said earlier, it is quite an easy process to go through your disclosure, and the commissioner also is very helpful to each and every one of us on checking the boxes and dotting the i's and crossing the t's.

So, yes, just a concern of how it was—how it was missed, this disclosure inadvertently would be my question. But again, I don't question the member's—you know, his ethics, because I do believe the individual that it is—that he is, it was certainly just overlooked.

* (16:10)

So as I was saying, I think—and we see it often, just in the questions that we pose to our government across the way for transparency and good ethics and accountability, that maybe this should be a good lesson to all of us going forward, how we shouldn't be hiding things, whether it be inadvertently or on purpose.

We need the public to know the truth and, you know, that's—people have, I don't know; in my whole process of being nominated and elected to do this, people have lost faith in politicians. And I don't want to be one of those, and I don't want to have to work with any of those types of people, so I think it's important that we stand up for the meaning of ethics.

And ethics is based on well-founded standards: right and wrong, prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness or specific virtues. So this has got a lot to do with checking off our boxes of disclosure.

Ethics and values makes an individual aware that their choices have consequences, both for themselves and others. Now, I was quite pleased that the member of Keewatinook didn't have to face any consequences

on failing to disclose his contract, because of the type of individual he is.

I was—I think we're all—well, none of us like to see anybody face any consequences should they not have to; but on the other hand, should someone need to face those consequences, they should. And that's what the Ethics Commissioner is there for, and to—it's that fail-safe, that check and balance, to make sure that we're all here being accountable and transparent.

Doing and being that which I feel, believe or know to be the right and good: ethics is doing what you said you were going to do when you said you would do it, and in a way that is respectful to all stakeholders. So I just want the NDP to maybe take a listen to that from some of their campaign promises and maybe doing what you said you were going to do when you said you would do it. Just put that in quotes.

So ethics, maybe we all need a little bit of a lesson in it just to hold ourselves accountable for what we're here for in this Chamber, that we're all so lucky to be a part of. And, going forward, hopefully we can all work together and hold each other accountable. And we'll continue to do that when any of these types of incidents arise. That's what we're here to do, be, as an effective opposition. And I would hope on the other side they would do the same to us.

So Honourable Speaker, those are my comments that I would like to put on the record today in regards to this report. And, again, I thank the commissioner for his great work, and I thank the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) for being so co-operative with the commissioner and giving us such a detailed report. Good report—good outcome of it for him.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is: that the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Ethics Commissioner regarding the honourable member for Keewatinook, dated September 19, 2024, and approve the recommendation contained therein.

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

I declare the motion carried.

As previously announced, we will now go on to the Ethics Commissioner appointment resolution.

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Reappointment of the Ethics Commissioner, Information and Privacy Adjudicator and Lobbyist Registrar

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Where is—oh. I move, seconded by the member—the Minister for Justice,

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Ethics Commissioner for a term of five years; and

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Information and Privacy Adjudicator for a term not to exceed three years from the date of commencement; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to subsection 11(1) of The Lobbyists Registration Act, a person shall be appointed as the registrar by resolution of the Assembly.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to sections 33 and 34 of The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act, Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Ethics Commissioner for a term of five years; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 58.1 of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Information and Privacy Adjudicator for a term not to exceed three years from the date of commencement; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to subsection 11(1) of The Lobbyists Registration Act, Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Lobbyist Registrar for a term not to exceed five years from date of commencement.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) [*interjection*] No.

WHEREAS the Standing Committee of Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Ethics Commissioner for a term of five years; and

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Information and Privacy Adjudicator for a term not to

exceed three years from the date of commencement; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to subsection 11(1) of The Lobbyists Registration Act, a person shall be appointed as the registrar by resolution of the Assembly.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the—that pursuant to sections 33 and 34 of The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act, Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Ethics Commissioner for a term of five years; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to section 58.1 of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, that Jeffrey Schnoor be appointed—reappointed as the Information and Privacy Adjudicator for a term not to exceed three years from date of commencement; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, pursuant to subsection 11(1) of The Lobbyists Registration Act, Jeffrey Schnoor be reappointed as the Lobbyist Registrar for a term not to exceed five years from date of commencement.

Is it the will of the House to adopt—[*interjection*]

Are there any speakers to the resolution?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Just a few words on the record regarding the reappointment of Jeffrey Schnoor.

And, first of all, I want to thank Mr. Schnoor; I assume that he has agreed to accept the reappointment—it's not like conscription or a draft, you have to agree to do the job and so I'm assuming he's agreed to take this on again.

Not all members will know, but many will, that Jeffrey used to be the deputy minister of Justice many—or several—years ago. He was the deputy of justice—deputy minister of Justice when I was Justice critic for a relatively long period of time at a different time in our lives.

So I interacted with him a little bit in that role, sometimes in the Estimates process and that sort of thing, and was always appreciative of the way he conducted himself in those roles and those committees and I'm sure, for the ministers of Justice at the time, they would have appreciated his counsel as well as the deputy minister of Justice.

So now he's been acting in different roles in the Assembly as an independent officer for several years and I think that all members have appreciated their interactions with him; we of course have to meet with

him on an annual basis as we file our conflict of interest forms, and this is a unique independent officer role of the Assembly. A lot of the independent officers—like the child's advocate is an example—would have more of a public-facing persona where they would be dealing more with the public.

* (16:20)

And then of course, they report to members and they would report to the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) directly, but really they interact with the public on a day-to-day basis.

The Ethics Commissioner, and I know he has other roles as well, including the Lobbyist Registrar and the information officer, but the Ethics Commissioner role interacts perhaps more with MLAs, and in terms of giving them advice.

And it has already been mentioned as a previous matter of debate in this House this afternoon—this is relatively new legislation. So Mr. Schnoor has been acting as the Ethics Commissioner under older legislation for a number of years. That didn't give him as many powers in terms of exploratory or investigative powers. It didn't give him as much freedom to be able to provide advice to members in a way that they could rely upon, which we thought was important.

And, of course, there were some other changes to the Ethic Commissioner's role, some of which might be considered more arduous for members, but there's reasons for that. And not to trample over the ground that I laid before on a previous debate this afternoon, but when you look at the role of independent officers as they relate to MLAs, there's good reason for it.

Not an independent officer, but the pay and benefits commissioner, Michael Werier, also acts independently, and that's for pay and benefits. The public, of course, would find that to be important because MLAs shouldn't be seen to be setting their own salaries or their own benefits. So we, wisely, many years ago, decided to take that role outside of the hands of MLAs.

And so whether the public thinks that those decisions are good decisions or bad decisions, or whether MLAs think that those are good decisions or bad decisions, at least they are being made independently. And the public can be assured that it's not MLAs who are in any way advancing their own salaries or benefits, simply by virtue of vote of this Assembly, it's done by an independent commissioner.

In a similar way, before the Honourable Speaker asked me to come back into relevance, in a similar way, the Ethics Commissioner also acts independently, but works with MLAs. So we have a set of rules that we need to follow in terms of disclosure, and the Ethics Commissioner gives us guidance in that to ensure that we're doing it well. I've relied on his guidance even in the last year, regarding certain things, to ensure that I wasn't doing things in conflict or receiving things that I shouldn't receive. And I followed up on his advice and did it the way that he suggested that it be done.

And I find that helpful, because there are rules, and then there are interpretation of rules. And we've all gone through this before in different ways in this Assembly, where we're not actually trying to break the rules, but the interpretation can sometimes be challenging. And sometimes it's difficult to get a clear answer in terms of the interpretation of a rule.

And so being able to go to the Ethics Commissioner and say, this is what I'm facing in terms of a situation, this is what I understand the rules to be under the ethics legislation, but I need you to give me clarity whether or not—if I take this particular action or I divest myself or invest myself in something, that that's going to be considered to be within the rules of the ethics commissioners. All of us as MLAs rely on that, and we should rely on that particular advice.

And so an independent officer working directly with the Assembly and more closely with MLAs is critical. And I think that Mr. Schnoor has demonstrated to be able to do that in a way that all of us appreciate in our annual meetings and other meetings that we might have with him regarding other factors.

He also—and I don't want this point to be lost, Honourable Speaker—he also can give advice in terms of how the act should maybe be changed. And this is important. Not unlike the rules of this House, which are always being reconsidered and perhaps changed, the ethics rules should often be revisited, in my opinion.

And I think that Mr. Schnoor would provide advice, now particularly because we have a new legislation. I believe I was the minister who brought that legislation in for better or for worse. But I think that he would be the first to say that he would like to give advice in terms of how that legislation could be bettered or how it could be improved for the benefit of the Assembly, for the benefit of members, for the benefit of the public.

And I think that we should seek out that advice on a regular basis from the Ethics Commissioner. It's important that there aren't unintended consequences to legislation, as sometimes there are, and I'm sure that he would have advice for us there as well.

Now often overlooked but not to be ignored are the other roles that he has in relation to the adjudicator for freedom of information, and that's an important role, as is the Lobbyists Registry role. Neither of those roles get the attention, it seems, that the Ethics Commissioner role gets, either by us as MLAs or maybe by the public more generally.

But I know, for an example, the Lobbyists Registry is something that now existed in Manitoba for some time; I believe it was something that former premier Gary Doer thought was important and brought that forward, so that those who are lobbying government—and there's definitions for that—have to register so that the public knows that these are the individuals who are lobbying government.

And I believe—though you'll correct me or others will correct me if I'm wrong—I think that there's some reporting mechanism where they have to indicate when they've in some ways met with ministers and how, you know, in general how those lobbying efforts go.

And, I mean, that's sort of important transparency and that's important that we are meeting with people who are—and I often, as a minister, you know, the obligation falls on the people who are doing the lobbying, but as the minister I would, you know, want to make sure that somebody who was meeting with me felt like that activity was one of lobbying, was actually registered on that particular registry so that they were doing it well. And, again, the obligation falls on that individual and not the minister but, of course, things could be embarrassing if it's not done properly. So he also has the responsibility for that.

I believe that a lot of the—that has gone online now. So we've talked about—my colleague and my friend from Spruce Woods talked about the ethics filing now going online. We also, I believe, have the registry that's online. So I think you can search out those who are registered lobbyists in Manitoba and how it is that they're registered as lobbyists, and I think that's important information as well.

But that's not a role that he gets as much focus on. Maybe that's good. Maybe that means that it's going well, or maybe it just means nobody knows it exists; I don't know which it is. But it's important that he has

that role as well, even though I'm sure that it doesn't take up as much of his time.

And then the adjudication of freedom of information requests, whether that's on an appeal or other sort of things, that freedom of information act is one that's long-standing in Manitoba; it's been here for decades. It's evolved, of course, over the decades, but it's an important part of ensuring that there's transparency of information within government of which can be disclosed.

There are exceptions, of course, information that is disclosed by the government. Sometimes people argue that those exceptions are not used well. But they are laid out in legislation in terms of how they are actually applied.

We can also encourage—and I think that the former Progressive Conservative government was a leader in Manitoba, maybe not a leader in the country, because I do think that there are other jurisdictions who do it better—but in terms of proactive disclosure. There are things that should be proactively disclosed.

We know that there are things that are repeatedly asked for when it comes from the media, more often the media than the public, but sometimes the public. Whether it's, you know, wait times or capacity in provincial jails, those should be proactively disclosed. Sometimes there are requirements; more topical these days are the travel expenses of the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and Cabinet ministers; those need to be and should be proactively disclosed.

But there are some things that are governed specifically under freedom of information and that you have to make an application for and wait for the response from the various departments and the officers of freedom of information in those departments provide you with the response. And I believe that Mr. Schnoor plays an important role, although not public of a role, in being an adjudicator on those as well.

So, in conclusion, I want to thank Mr. Schnoor for the work that he is doing on behalf of Manitobans, yes, but on behalf of members of this Assembly as well. At its best, the ethics rules are not there to ensnare members of the Assembly although sometimes it feels like it can be that way, but that's not what they're intended to do. They're there actually to protect members of the Assembly, and Mr. Schnoor is a conduit to that. He is an asset and aid in ensuring that members are following the act and then by virtue of

that, the public has confidence in the work that we do as elected members for them.

So I want to again thank him for agreeing to take on this additional term for the next three years. I would encourage him to bring to the Assembly and to members, whether that's through LAMC or through annual reports or whatever mechanism is the best mechanism, suggestions for changes to the act where he feels that there are gaps or insufficiencies, I would encourage him to bring those forward, and I would encourage members to consider all of those when they're brought forth.

* (16:30)

Thank you for the opportunity to put a few words on the record, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I just wanted to take just a moment—thank you. I appreciate the applause from my colleagues and I think the reason that they're applauding so vigorously this afternoon is because of the work of Jeffrey Schnoor.

The work that he's done for this province—in service of this province—which, as noted, has gone back decades now, has been exemplary and now in his newest role that he's taken on, or his various roles that he's taken on, he's certainly been a very valuable resource, I think, to every member of this Legislature. And so, on behalf of our House Leader and on behalf of our caucus, it's important that we take just a quick moment to recognize the important work that Mr. Schnoor has done.

I also wanted to pre-emptively thank him for taking on this role. I know we have to still pass this motion here in the House—or, this resolution here in the House—and of course his willingness to take on the role and continue to do the good work that he's doing is again so much appreciated by our caucus and by our government.

You know, we've asked so much of Mr. Schnoor over the past number of years, in terms of adopting new rules and new regulations, also helping to shape those during the process when the previous government was starting to look at some changes.

And I've had an opportunity at an individual level, as an individual MLA and then as minister, to sit down with Mr. Schnoor to talk about my own specific disclosures and, of course, just—I don't have much to disclose so it's—really, these meetings don't take that long in terms of my own personal assets or complications.

But what I've been able to do is increasingly spend more and more time with Mr. Schnoor over the years to really pick his brain to get a better sense from him the steps that we—he thinks that we can take to enhance and improve the legislation. And now going forward, we hope that there's real opportunities and I look forward to working with him in that role as well.

He has been very, very helpful in helping us to untangle some of the potential pitfalls that we might encounter and when we have encountered those pitfalls or encountered others that we hadn't anticipated, his advice has been, I think, incredibly important to the Legislature as a whole.

So really what this is—this job is all about is, or should be about, is transparency and giving the public the ability to understand what those conflicts might be, what any kind of ethics consideration should be. The Lobbyists Registrar work that Mr. Schnoor does is incredibly important. Members in this House will—if they've spent any time in the United States—will understand that it's a completely different animal, in terms of the impact that lobbyists have in this province; but it is important for those who are attempting to lobby government or individual members to be very transparent about that. So again, transparency, and then ultimately, it's about accountability.

And really, every member should be endeavouring to be as accountable to the people of Manitoba as possible. Mr. Schnoor helps us to do that. He enables us to get the right kind of rules in place to ensure that that happens.

So I want to thank him for the work that he's done. I want to make sure that he understands just how much we appreciate that work and thank him for potentially taking this role on again and working with us for many years to come.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

The resolution is accordingly passed.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

The Speaker: As previously announced, we will now resume second reading debate on Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act,

standing in the name of the member for Spruce Woods, who has 11 minutes remaining.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I thank my colleagues for that warm, warm welcome. Another 11 minutes to talk about this bust of a BITSA bill.

Where did we leave off yesterday, Honourable Speaker? No schools, no follow-through on their commitment to freeze hydro rates, a \$2-billion deficit, an \$800-million deficit in the first quarter of this fiscal year, no sign of slowing down, cutting grants for municipal policing, cutting capital funding for infrastructure projects and for new school construction. This is the legacy of this BITSA bill.

And, you know, we're concerned. We're very concerned. And I know Manitobans are very concerned about the contents of this bill, the undemocratic way in which it came forward to this Legislative Assembly following the Government House Leader's (MLA Fontaine) inability to get her government legislation introduced before the specified bill deadline.

And so now we've got a budget bill that has matters tacked onto the back of it that have nothing to do with the budget at all. They'll have economic impacts, sure; lowering the amount of apprentices that can get trained in this province, et cetera, will have an economic impact, but they have nothing to do with this government's spending—and boy, are they spending. They seem to have no idea the impact—the long-term impact of what this spending will have on my generation and the next generation and the next generation after that.

And so, you know, they've—one thing they've done, I suppose, is introduce this gas tax holiday for \$340 million, and rural Manitobans appreciate that. They won't appreciate it when it comes off—I'm sorry—when it goes back on—whenever that happens to be, when the Finance Minister finally decides to stop paying the price for this tax relief.

You know, we think it's important for drivers. I think the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) raised important points about the fact that it doesn't serve anybody who doesn't drive; doesn't do them any good at all. All the people that we're supposed to be encouraging to take transit, et cetera, you know, it doesn't do them much good at all—who are predominantly renters, of course, too. I think the member for Fort Garry made that point as well.

So no impact for them, and it has made zero impact on the price of groceries. And we know that that was a big threat of this Premier (Mr. Kinew) when

he was first elected. Said he was going to force grocery store retailers to lower grocery prices or there would be consequences. Seen any of those? Neither have I. Not sure what he meant by that. I'm guessing he probably doesn't know what he meant by it either. Certainly, his Finance Minister hasn't been able to figure it out or come up with something that would resemble a consequence for grocery store owners and operators. And so, grocery prices in Manitoba still remain at some of the highest levels in the country.

So when you're talking about value for money: a \$340-million gas tax holiday that hasn't reduced grocery prices. Okay. Have they taken any other steps, any other steps in BITSA, to reduce grocery prices? Nope, not that we can see; not that they've been able to point out either, because it's important to acknowledge that, you know, the debate on this bill's been broken up by sessions, sittings and now days.

Not many members on their side getting up to defend it. Not many members on their side getting up and outlining some of the questions that we have about the contents of this bill, the questions that Manitobans have. It's just sort of radio silence from the folks over there. Just keep quiet. Keep your head down. Let's see if we can get this thing through as quick as possible. And that's concerning. You know, they're only a year into government. This is their first budget implementation and tax statutes amendment bill. You'd think they'd have something good to say for the first one out of the gate.

Well, there's still many hours of debate left to be had here, and so we, you know, maybe hope springs eternal, as they say, Honourable Speaker. Maybe some NDP members will get up there and actually speak positively towards this piece of legislation.

* (16:40)

You know, out in Westman, we have a couple of industries that are totally ignored by this NDP government, and have—and in fact, are in—harmed. And one of them is our oil and gas industry, which, along with my colleague from Turtle Mountain and my colleague from Riding Mountain, we're privileged to represent the vast majority of the oil and gas industry in this province.

They're adding paperwork, burden for oil and gas production, by making them store records for longer. That's all they got, and this first budget from the NDP, who talks about balancing the economy and talks about, you know, slowly introducing electric vehicles while on the same time supporting our natural gas and

oil and gas industries. And all they got in this, a huge piece of our economy in this province, and all they got from this NDP government in the first BITSA bill was more paperwork.

Well, we understand that that's the Minister for Justice's priority, because he just got rid of the red tape reduction act unilaterally. Not worried about that building up. So why not add more paperwork to some of the core industries that fund our provincial economy? Makes sense to the left, I guess.

And so we wonder, you know, how is this BITSA going to be reflected when we look back on its implementation? We know it's going to result in less homes being built in Manitoba. We know it's going to drive up your education property taxes. We know that the gas tax is going to have to go back on at some point.

We know that hydro rates are going up, and they're definitely going to go up if the minister implements his plan to build a whole bunch more generating capacity by overloading Hydro and taking on a bunch of increasing debt with that Crown corporation which, you know, any person would tell you, it can't afford.

And so where does that leave us? We've got concerns. And I think it's important, you know, to talk about, as, you know, one of a few Gen Z members of this Legislature—

An Honourable Member: Ageist.

Mr. Jackson: Ageist, says the Minister of Health. Oh, dear.

No, but seriously, to think about the impact for my generation and the generations that are coming after us, and the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) should agree. She and I are the same Gen Z generation.

The Minister of Health feels concerned I'm being ageist. I've got nothing against other generations. I just want to speak from my age group about the impacts that these massive spending undertakings are going to have on the rest of my life and everybody else's life that's my age who wants to make this province a home.

And, you know, we've got an increasing debt load, higher taxes are not going to—you know, the best part about this is they talk about, you know, attracting medical officials and all the rest of this stuff. And, you know, there are very few doctors in this province who are making under \$200,000 a year.

And so the NDP have decided, yes, we're going to put all this programming and funding towards recruiting doctors, but we're going to raise their taxes at the same time. And they seem to believe that, you know, doctors are going to be fine with that. Oh, yes, that—don't worry, you know, we're going to stick it out in Manitoba, we're going to come to Manitoba, paying higher taxes here than we would in any other province. I seem to think that that's going to, you know, have no impact on recruitment, which is, of course, ludicrous. It's totally bonkers.

And, you know, doctors are going to be waving goodbye. Oh, no, don't worry. I'm not leaving because you're raising my taxes, I'm moving to BC because of the weather. You know, it—that's the only reason. It has nothing to do with the fact that I'd be paying higher taxes in Manitoba to work and provide my essential service to Manitobans than anywhere else in the country.

And so, you know, we've got concerns with that as well. We'll see the results of that with their recruitment efforts. You know, we know that there's a massive shortage of doctors in Prairie Mountain Health region, that's for sure. They talk about all these net new positions that they've, you know, allegedly brought into the system.

Been no net new doctors in Prairie Mountain Health; not a single one. They've hired new doctors over the last year, sure, but it has barely kept pace with the amount of doctors that are leaving at the same time or retiring. And so that's not a success story. Despite the government flying the mission-accomplished flag, that's not a success story for Manitoba patients who are waiting to get a GP, who are waiting in—to see their specialist, who are waiting to get primary health care.

And so we know that this BITSA bill is just in a continuation of the tire fire that has been their first year in government. We don't expect it to change. We hope it will, because Manitobans are not well-served by this piece of legislation, by the untransparent processes of this new, new again, old again, everything is old again that's new again NDP, and we hope that they will change their ways to ensure that they are delivering better services for Manitobans while not burdening all of the future generations of this province with a debt load that we can't dig ourselves out of.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to be able to rise here this afternoon and speak to BITSA, Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax

statutes amendment act. We know this is a very important piece of legislation, as it is every year, and this one in particular, it's become quite the bundle of legislation, Honourable Speaker. And I'm going to talk a little bit about what has been included in this legislation and why it's so important that we have thorough debate on it here today.

Just before I dive into that, Honourable Speaker, I do want to express appreciation to the departmental staff. This is an extremely difficult portfolio, and I reflect on attending the bill briefing for this portfolio. And unfortunately we didn't have as much time as we would have liked within the bill briefing, and not all of our questions were actually answered during the bill briefing. We were told we were going to hear back from the minister and, unfortunately, I don't know about my colleagues here in the House, but the questions that I asked, I never heard back.

And so there are still a lot of questions about this piece of legislation and hopefully, through debate here today, we can talk about that, Honourable Speaker.

There seems to be a very general feeling that this bill is like the kitchen sink. A lot has been tossed into it, and a few of the big topics—I want to start with this gas tax. I want to start with it, Honourable Speaker, because I've had people come to me on both sides of the issue, some saying it's a great piece of legislation, some saying it's an awful piece of legislation.

Honourable Speaker, with respect to the gas tax, I think it's excellent that so many Manitobans who drive, particularly fill up their vehicles, they do benefit from this legislation. I think that it was a bit of a showy thing for the government to do when they first formed government, but they're entitled to do that, and I do believe that people have benefited from it.

With that said, though, Honourable Speaker, I've heard a lot from people on two factors: one, the environmental factor, and two, the cost factor. When you think about the environment, here in Manitoba we need to be taking the lead. We need to be doing way more work right now, not two years from now, to protect our environment. Unfortunately, the gas tax actually encourages emissions. It's encouraging people to drive when we should be trying to find alternative methods of transportation. We should be encouraging more people to take the bus, just as an example.

And this goes into the cost. You know, I was listening to people respond to the budget yesterday, Honourable Speaker, and I believe it was my colleague

from Fort Garry who was giving the comparison. He was comparing how, would Manitobans rather a \$15 gas credit—or coupon, I believe his words were, a gas coupon—or would they have rather all that money go towards our health-care system?

I'm willing to make the argument that there are a lot of Manitobans who would want to see investments in our health-care system more than a tax coupon, Honourable Speaker. And we can make this argument with almost every single department, whether that be Education, Infrastructure, Immigration. I think that there should have been an at-large conversation on how funds could best be used, especially following an election year.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I lose my breath very quickly these days.

* (16:50)

Part of Bill 37 that really does bother me, and this is because I've been working with hundreds of individuals over the last eight, nine years on it, is the seniors advocate. Honourable Speaker, the independent office for the seniors advocate first began being talked about here in the Legislature in 2016, and I'm very proud to be able to say I was the first one to bring it forward.

I actually, back in 2016, went down to Victoria and met with the seniors advocate, came back here to Manitoba, and started advocating saying: we should have a seniors advocate here in the province because of this, this and this; and I'm going to get into all of that, Honourable Speaker.

But when I first started advocating for it, we had the PCs who were in government, we had the NDP who were in opposition, and nobody supported it. So years go by, years go by, lots of advocacy happens, and when I was speaking to it, I was talking about long-term-care facilities, and not just personal-care homes. We have to talk about supportive housing homes, retirement homes, hospices, 55-plus homes.

We need to talk about enabling seniors to better remain in their homes, whether this be through home repairs, home-care services. You know, I've heard horrific stories of those who have received home care here in the province, and the bottom line is it's often a result of home-care workers feeling so pressed for time that they don't get to dedicate the amount of time that they would like to with those whose homes they are currently at, Honourable Speaker.

And I was actually looking back into home care and what it was when it first came to Manitoba. And a lot of people don't know this, but when home care first started here, it included a whole lot more than just a 15-minute visit of tidying, handing out the prescription medications. It actually included shoveling the driveway as an example, helping carry groceries in from vehicles as another example. And, again, unfortunately, because time has become so tight and often home-care workers are going from one end of the city to the next, they're feeling so rushed; all the work is not getting done, Honourable Speaker.

The independent office for a seniors advocate needs to be having these discussions: what can we be doing to enable seniors to remain in their homes?

We can also talk about day programs and just how critical they are for seniors. Yet about, I think maybe four, five years ago, the prices for day programs actually went—almost doubled in price. Again, this is backwards. Most often, seniors are on fixed incomes; they can't always afford to do extracurricular type of activities, Honourable Speaker. We should be cheapening, we should be ensuring that these day programs are affordable and accessible for seniors.

We can talk about healthy meals, about transportation, supports with respect to confidentiality and advocacy for our seniors. We heard horror stories throughout the pandemic of seniors in long-term-care facilities—and I believe this started way before the pandemic but they're starting to come to light more and more, Honourable Speaker. And that is in part why we need an independent office for a seniors advocate.

So back in 2016, 2017 when I first started talking about this, again, nobody supported it. We fast-forward to 2020, Honourable Speaker. It was during the pandemic. The NDP came out and said, you know what, we like the seniors advocate idea, we're going to come out and support it. And this made me feel really, really good. Now we had two parties here in the House, the NDP and the Manitoba Liberals, calling for an independent office for a seniors advocate. This was great news.

So we fast-forward again and we go to this past election. The NDP formed government, a majority government. Okay, well good news with this at least: the seniors advocate; we're going to be able to implement one. They campaigned on it, they've been talking about it since 2020. We can actually start to make some effective change here in Manitoba.

It has now been over a year, Honourable Speaker, and there's been no improvements for seniors. In fact, you know, I actually—I go to the McDonald's every single Saturday and there's a few regulars at the McDonald's so if it ever gets quiet, I have the opportunity to talk with some of them. These regulars are seniors, and the stories that they tell me are things are only getting worse.

They feel neglected, Honourable Speaker. Oftentimes their surgeries are being postponed; those receiving home care, it has not improved. In fact, a lot of people who are receiving home care are being cancelled on, the day of. What are these families supposed to be doing?

There's so much that still needs to happen, and this government, they had over a year now to introduce actual legislation. If they had followed the rules, read the rules, they would have introduced a singular bill about the independent office for a seniors advocate, which is what seniors here in our province deserve. They deserve more than the seniors advocate being tossed into the kitchen sink, this BITSA.

Honourable Speaker, we can do better by seniors in a non-partisan way. It deserves its own piece of legislation. We need to debate it. It needs to go to committee. We need to have seniors and Manitobans be able to comment on it, present to it, so we can actually learn. This legislation doesn't allow for any of that.

There's a couple more topics that I'd like to discuss, Honourable Speaker. And I appreciate my colleagues in their support here. I know I'm over nine months pregnant right now, so I do—I lose my breath quite quickly here in the House. But I appreciate it.

Honourable Speaker, election financing, it is a concern here in the House. It's a new discussion and I believe it should be debated, but it needs to be debated thoroughly. And again, I've heard colleagues speak about this in their response to the budget. But when it comes to election financing, this was not an issue brought up by constituents at the door in everyone's respective electoral ridings.

What people were hearing at the door were issues about health care, issues about education, issues about infrastructure, issues about children in care. There are multitude of issues that we should be debating, but instead, this NDP government is bringing forward an issue that was not an issue prior to them forming government, which can't help but raise some red flags.

It makes us question, why are they bringing it forward right now, what is the purpose of it, why are they squeezing it through in the BITSA bill? Why can't we have a more thorough debate on it, make sure it's in the best interests of Manitobans?

I don't think anyone is saying it's totally awful, but I do think it deserves its own piece of legislation. It deserves to be better debated, and I would argue, it shouldn't be top priority right now. I think we have so many issues that are bigger and larger here in Manitoba that do need to be a bigger priority, Honourable Speaker.

Election financing is something that—it feels—and again, we'll let the NDP government prove us otherwise, it feels a little self-serving. It feels that they're introducing this now so that three years from now, when the next provincial election is, it's been oodles of time and they're going to be hoping that Manitobans have forgotten about it, and rather than focusing on the big issues at hand, they're doing what they think is going to set them up better in the next general election, Honourable Speaker.

And again, that's why I think it's just really important that, whether it be the seniors advocate, the gas tax, whether it be election financing, we need to be able to have a more thorough debate on this.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to be able to talk about replacement workers. It was interesting when I saw this in the BITSA bill, because it's something that we've been talking about—or I've been talking about—since last November, almost a year ago.

I want to refer to—it was November 12 that I actually called on the government to introduce anti-scab legislation. I'm going to table a copy of this. This is from the Winnipeg Sun, Honourable Speaker. And again, disappointed because for years, for seven-plus years, when the NDP were in opposition—thank you—when the NDP were in opposition, they stood loud and proud in here and said, we're going to support—we're going to fight for things like anti-scab legislation, we want to support our union workers.

But then they formed government, and silence. Nothing. Nothing on anti-scab legislation. Nothing on replacement workers. And so I brought this forward November 12—I just tabled it, Honourable Speaker—calling on the government: Do something about it.

What is the date now, Honourable Speaker? It is October 8 and only thing we've heard is them trying to squeeze it through in this BITSA piece of legislation.

I also—I want to table a tweet of mine as well. Now I'm not a huge Twitter or tweeter person, but when I do tweet, I try to share some of the facts.

* (17:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hour now being 5 o'clock, when this matter is before the House again, the honourable—yes—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 16 minutes remaining.

The hour now being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned; stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Ethics Report Motions

| | |
|----------|------|
| Lindsey | 2699 |
| Bushie | 2700 |
| Goertzen | 2700 |
| Jackson | 2702 |
| Wasyliw | 2703 |
| King | 2704 |

Government Resolution

Reappointment of the Ethics Commissioner,
Information and Privacy Adjudicator and
Lobbyist Registrar

| | |
|----------|------|
| Fontaine | 2706 |
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Debate on Second Readings

Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax
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| | |
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| Jackson | 2710 |
| Lamoureux | 2711 |

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