

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AL TOMARE, 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
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
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

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

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

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 36—The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 36, the regulated health professionals amendment act, be now read a first time.

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 36, The Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**MLA Asagwara:** The purpose of this bill is to increase the transparency of health profession regulatory bodies when they take action under the act to cancel the registration or certificate of practice, or both, of a member of the profession who was convicted of an offense that is relevant to their suitability to practice.

The amendments reflect the importance of ensuring the public can observe, have a college response to these situations.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Primary Immunodeficiency Week

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** Honourable Speaker, today I rise in recognition of Primary Immunodeficiency Week, a global campaign held annually between April 22 to 29, aimed at raising awareness about primary immunodeficiencies.

PIs cover hundreds of different disorders which range in severity and cause.

Treatments and management strategies are similarly varied, but folks with PIs find many commonalities in their medical and social experiences. They may need to be extra cautious of certain social or physical environments, and they may need extra supports and accommodations so that their body can properly fight off infectious agents.

Like many chronic conditions, PIs often result in invisible disabilities that aren't fully understood by the public. While an estimated six million people live with PIs worldwide, 70 to 90 per cent are thought to be undiagnosed.

This year's theme is centred on access to care for all PI patients everywhere.

When health-care professionals, educators, parents and everyday folks take the time to learn about PI and how it shapes many of our neighbours' lives, we can build a more inclusive society. By ensuring access to timely diagnosis and appropriate, effective and high-quality treatments, we make a real difference for the millions worldwide who live with primary immunodeficiencies.

We are joined in the gallery by Suzanne Glavin and virtually by Immunity Canada representative Khalie Jackson-Davis who have worked tirelessly to increase

awareness about PIs in our province and across the country.

I invite all my colleagues to recognize Suzanne, Khalie and all the other advocates, researchers, educators, caregivers and health-care professionals who are at the forefront of this very important work.

### School Bus Driver Recognition

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** I rise today to pay tribute to many fine Manitobans in Spruce Woods constituency and across Manitoba who have worn the hat of a school bus driver. These individuals play a critical role in our education system, ensuring that school is accessible to students regardless of where they live, and also that they arrive to and from school safely which, knowing any of us who drive in Manitoba's winter weather, is no small feat.

These individuals are consummate professionals whose parents can rest assured that they will do whatever needs to be done to keep their kids safe.

And on a day like today I think of my own school bus driver, Mr. Don Doherty, who is now in his 80s, and will be watching this video, either virtually today or at a later date, who was a staple of my generation of students at Souris School and played an important role in my educational journey and that of many of my school cohorts.

School bus drivers build relationships with people, and it was an annual tradition to purchase Christmas gifts for mine, most of them school-bus themed, so I'd like to take this opportunity to apologize to Don's wife, Alva, for all the school-bus-shaped Christmas ornaments that she received over the years.

But in all seriousness, Honourable Speaker, these folks are so important to our educational system, which is why I am so pleased that the MLA for Lac du Bonnet introduced The School Bus Driver Day Act back in 2015, ensuring that the third Wednesday in April of every year is held to appreciate school bus drivers across Manitoba.

Thank you, school bus drivers.

### Ajit Kaur Deol

**MLA Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** Honourable Speaker, I rise to recognize someone who is known in our community as Mrs. Deol. Born in India in 1926, Mrs. Ajit Kaur Deol was a beacon of inspiration in our community.

In the late '60s she, alongside her husband and three daughters, navigated the challenges of moving

to Canada. Her determination led her to pursue further education and teaching.

Her influence as an educator extended beyond the classroom. Her time as the first female president of a gurdwara in North America showcased her commitment to culture and communal harmony.

Mrs. Deol actively served numerous organizations, including Boys and Girls Club of Winnipeg, Seven Oaks foundation and hospital foundation, the Women's Immigration Settlement Association, Manitoba Intercultural Council and the Human Rights Commission of Canada.

Mrs. Deol also received countless honours, like the Order of Manitoba, the Queen's golden diamond jubilee pins and her honorary diploma from the University of Winnipeg.

\* (13:40)

Her legacy is a testament to her unbreakable spirit. She's an enduring source of inspiration for all.

As we celebrate the life and achievements of Mrs. Ajit Kaur Deol, we also extend our deep appreciation to her family for sharing Mrs. Deol's story. I recognize Mrs. Deol's daughter, Minny, who is watching the livestream from Florida, and Pamela, who is in the gallery with her children and extended family. And Monika is unable to join us due to an emergency in the family.

I would all-like to add the names of my guests to the Hansard, as well, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

*Sienna Basra, Summer Basra, Pamela Deol, Aghazbir Dhillon, Sukhmanpreet Dhillon, Aleisha Wadwa, Kaeten Wadwa.*

### PC Record on Education

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** As a teacher, I'm pleased to speak to the investments that our PC government made in the schools and daycares.

Manitoba's Progressive Conservatives strongly supported the education sector, with our last budget investing 25 per cent of all spending into early childhood education and K to 12, at a 6.1 per cent increase to Manitoba school divisions.

We committed to the building of 23 new schools, 14 of which are completed, under construction or in design stage, ahead of schedule. For the 2023-24 school year, we increased funding to school divisions

at historic levels, Honourable Speaker. Largest in over 40 years; over \$100 million.

For my own constituency in Lac du Bonnet, Sunrise School Division, over the last three years received over \$7 million. This year, in the '24-25 school year, just under \$250,000 from this NDP government, Honourable Speaker. And for families and young children, we invested \$76.1 million to implement \$10-a-day child care and increased child-care spaces.

In February of 2023, we announced the recipients of ready-to-move child-care projects, which created more child-care spaces for my own constituency and the province. This project had the goal of creating almost 23,000 spaces, of which 74 are going to the community of Tyndall.

Unfortunately, under the NDP, gone are the plans to have nine more schools built, gone are the promised 660 daycare spaces and gone for the affordability measures that we put in place for Manitobans by—phase out the education property tax and rebating the education—the reduction to Manitoba homeowners.

I brought forward, as the member from Spruce Woods mentioned, the passing of The School Bus Driver Day Act, which annually 'proclaims' the third Wednesday of April to be an appreciation day for the school bus drivers of Manitoba. Today happens to be School Bus Driver Day. I want to thank all those that are involved with staffing our education system and providing high-quality education to our students in—

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

### Support for Seniors

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I rise this afternoon to advocate for many of my constituents.

The individuals in the gallery have been sharing ideas with respect to seniors and ways we could better assist provincially.

Many seniors are not able to afford their prescription medications, and this is creating further health-care issues and costs on our health-care system.

A few ways our province could help is by working towards affordable deductibles for all, creating a dental plan, ensuring vaccinations are available for preventable diseases like pneumococcal, respiratory viruses, shingles and ensuring the Manitoba hearing grant remains active and easily accessible.

Honourable Speaker, in 2016 I called for an independent office for a seniors advocate. It is very important that the advocate this new government is

introducing provides a wrap-around approach and remains non-partisan.

We need to do more for seniors and housing. Many seniors want to be able to remain in their homes, but it is becoming increasingly more difficult due to factors including affordability, costs of home repairs, maintenance and, often, home-care services.

Back in the day, home-care services used to include everyday chores and errands such as shovelling the snow or cleaning in the house. However, because our home-care workers are so overworked and stretched thin, they often don't have sufficient time. Investing in home-care workers is important, especially with the baby boomer generation aging.

Honourable Speaker, evidence shows how much healthier it is mentally and socially when seniors can remain in their communities with their loved ones and pets. We need to be investing in keeping seniors in their homes for as long as possible and in addition to this, we also need more community personal-care homes, supportive housing homes and 55-plus homes, so seniors are not forced to leave their community altogether when needing more assistance.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, I want to thank those who have taken the time to join us here today and ask my colleagues to join me in appreciation for their ideas brought forward.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

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

We have with us today in the public gallery Margaret Ellis, Ruth Swan, Trish Rawsthorne, Kardene Campbell, Terry Hayward, Dianne Kennedy and Jean Luc, and they are the guests of the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Welcome.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Pledge to Lower Food Prices Request for Government Accountability

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, every day Manitobans are making tough choices at the grocery store. People are putting back meat that's not on sale or vegetables that have skyrocketed in price because they just can't afford it any more.

This affordability crisis follows false hope given to them when the NDP leader threatened grocery stores. He claimed that he would lower grocery prices and would crack down on grocers, and I table that article for them to read.

He told the media he wanted to see those savings realized immediately or there would be consequences. There've been no such savings on groceries.

Will anybody on the NDP side stand up and take accountability for their failure to lower prices on food and for breaking their promises once again, Honourable Speaker?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Honourable Speaker, I thank the member, the Leader of the Opposition, for that question.

Our government takes affordability very serious. We know it's top of mind for Manitobans. We've been hearing from Manitobans for years that affordability challenges have been, you know, top of mind for them.

And the previous government failed to take any action to make life more affordable for Manitobans. That's unfortunate. That's reality. That's their record.

Our record on this side of the House is cutting the fuel tax on January 1 to zero and making life more affordable for Manitobans. We've made decisions on this side of the House to improve affordability for Manitobans after seven and a half long years of a PC government that only made their lives more expensive.

There's more work to do. Budget 2024 does more of that work.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Well, Honourable Speaker, we're hearing it on this side of the House from our constituents, and we're also hearing from their constituents that things are worse than ever when it comes to the cost of living right here in Manitoba. Not only is the NDP not doing anything about it, their steady, shameless propaganda and dishonest talking points have misled Manitobans and given them false hope.

This NDP government is not as advertised. When the NDP leader threatened grocery stores to lower prices, a professor in food distribution chimed in and said, and I quote, it's dangerous for a government to make that kind of guarantee to the public, end quote. It was practical advice, not political. Lot of factors affect grocery prices.

But the danger in empty promises and hollow guarantees is that false hope has a real impact on people who are struggling with food prices.

Will anyone on the NDP benches stand up and take accountability for their failure to lower food prices and apologize for, yet again, another broken promise carried forward by this NDP government?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, Manitobans made a really important decision on October 3. They made the decision to elect an NDP government that will prioritize putting people first.

You know, we have a government here—we have financial experts across the country that are making it clear that when we formed government, the fiscal house was not in order due to the actions of the previous government.

Despite that mess that we are cleaning up, we have made decisions and taken action to make life more affordable for Manitobans. The homeowner tax affordability credit; reducing the costs and expenses for Manitobans at the fuel pump.

There's more that we can do. There's more that we are doing. We're making life more affordable every day.

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

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Well, the Deputy Premier, you're welcome for the quarter-of-a-billion-dollar surplus we left you.

\* (13:50)

Honourable Speaker, there's been no savings to Manitoba either on groceries. Manitoba food inflation was 3.3 per cent last month that was leftover—that was left out of the minister's news release just yesterday.

Our provincial neighbours to either side have lower food inflation prices. We're hearing from Manitobans who thought grocery prices would go down because this Premier (Mr. Kinew) gave them false hope and threatened grocers. The NDP has done absolutely nothing to lower food prices.

Will anyone in the NDP benches stand and take accountability for not only their failure, but, once again, another broken promise, Honourable Speaker?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, we have the lowest inflation in the country for the third month in a row here in Manitoba. We have the lowest gas prices

in the country here in Manitoba. And Manitobans for years, for years under the previous government, had the lowest premier approval rating in the country.

But you know what's up? Do you know what's gone up here on this side of the House? We have the most favoured Premier in the country on this side of the House, here in Manitoba.

### **Addiction and Mental Health Programs and Resources for Youth**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, the children's advocate has called for additional resources for addressing youth addictions and mental health. This Minister of Families was quick to blame, but is ignoring the fact that for seven months her government has done nothing and we've seen an 'exaltation' of crisis with children and youth.

She was asked to invest resources yet all she could do was sling attacks. While this minister does nothing, the advocate is doing their part. Today, the advocate released plans for a stakeholder roundtable to address these issues. They are doing their part.

Why isn't the minister doing theirs? And why won't she take accountability for herself and her own government?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** Miigwech to the member opposite for the question.

First and foremost, I want to just acknowledge the Manitoba Advocate Sherry Gott. Sherry Gott comes to that office with an extraordinary amount of expertise and experience, you know, supporting all Manitobans, but particularly in support of Manitoba youth.

I know that the minister opposite—or my minister-colleague there and I have a lot of respect for Sherry Gott. We've worked with her for many, many years in the community and we really have confidence in the work that she does there and we're looking forward to our continued relationship with the Manitoba Advocate.

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

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, this minister has repeatedly ignored calls from the advocate to invest necessary resources for children and youth in care. But in fact, this government has actually done nothing. Government web pages for specific youth programming have not been updated since the PCs were in power last July. No new programming. No new resources. And I table this document.

What is the minister's plan for youth addictions and why has there been nothing new announced in their seven months of government?

**MLA Fontaine:** It's unfortunate that the member continues to get up day in and day out and put just wrong information on the record, Honourable Speaker.

I want to be explicitly clear with the member because I don't think she fully appreciates the damage that her previous failed government and her colleagues opposite did in respect of addressing and tackling addictions and mental health crisis here in Manitoba.

We had minister after minister, failed ministers after failed ministers who buried their head in the sand while we on this side of the House routinely got up in the Chamber and asked and pleaded for them to do something to address—

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

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

**Mrs. Stone:** I'd like to remind the Minister of Families that she's now in government and it's her job to be accountable to Manitobans. The advocate is calling for special-specific assistance for youth struggling with mental health and addictions.

Since the Minister of Families won't answer my question, perhaps the Minister of Mental Health, Housing and Addictions can.

Since no new resources can be found under this NDP government, can the minister elaborate on what specific issues and resources they plan to immediately address for youth struggling with mental health and addictions?

**MLA Fontaine:** So once again, the member opposite is putting on just wrong facts on the record here.

As I've shared, and as the minister has put on the record, and as is in our budget document that I would encourage the member to read, let me just talk about some of the investments: \$1.8 million for a provincial suicide prevention strategy; 50 per cent more funding increase to the integrated youth services for holistic health supports in rural and northern Manitoba; \$1.5 million for a range of addiction supports, including supports for youth.

So the member can choose to get up day after day and keep putting on wrong facts, or she can get on board and work—

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

### Health-Care System Staffing Vacancies Filling Permanent Positions and Job Postings

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Can the Minister of Health tell us how many job postings for permanent positions in our health-care system are currently active, and how does that compare to the number of known permanent position vacancies in our health-care system right now?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** I thank the member for that question.

Our government's top priority is fixing health care. After seven and a half years, Manitobans were feeling pretty disheartened at the state of health care due to the cuts, closures, mistreatment of health-care workers and callous approach to health care of the previous government.

Our budget makes massive investments—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We can quit screaming back and forth across, particularly if you want to hear an answer; you have to be quiet enough to hear the answer. I can't hear the answer, so I'm sure you can't hear the answer.

So let's just keep it down a little and quit hollering back and forth.

**MLA Asagwara:** It's interesting that members opposite, when I answer questions—try to answer questions—show me about as much as the same level of respect as they showed health-care workers in the front lines for seven and a half years, and that's really disappointing.

We're making investments in health care to staff across the province; \$309 million in our budget to retain, train and recruit nurses and health-care workers—

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

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Cook:** It seems like the minister's unaware, but training institutions, health-care workers and union leaders are aware of the vacancies in our health-care system, and they're saying that these jobs are just not being posted.

This week the president of the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals said in an article that I'll table, quote, we know there are lab students at Red River looking for work when they graduate, but we don't see jobs posted even when we

know there are staffing deficiencies. He's worried we will lose those grads to other provinces.

Why is this minister not posting these job vacancies?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, it's been really wonderful to work with the allied health-care professionals union and allied health-care professionals across the province to do what the previous government failed to do, which is invest in enhancing the training and education of those professions across our province.

For seven and half years the previous government wouldn't even allow paramedics to work to their full scope in rural Manitoba, and the impacts are being felt today.

Our government's taken a different approach. We're investing in the recruitment, retention and training of these health-care professionals, which is why advanced-care paramedics, for the first time in seven and a half years, are going to be working in rural Manitoba, and we're supporting them getting the education they need here in their own province.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Over the past month, in articles that I will table, the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists pointed out publicly that there are delays in filling vacant MRI positions, and some known vacancies aren't being posted at all.

The Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals has also said that MRI techs are not seeing enough vacancies posted to actually fill known needed positions. The president added, quote, students are just not seeing any permanent job postings.

\* (14:00)

Why is this NDP minister failing these students and failing to post these vacancies?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I've had the pleasure, along with the Premier (Mr. Kinew), on the front lines of our listening tour to hear directly from these students, and these students are excited that for the first time in many years, they have a government that's not only investing in their education, but is investing in making sure the culture in health care is a place they want to work in Manitoba.

I had the opportunity to meet recently with the president of the technologist's association, Dayna. Super smart, super sharp, has great ideas. Lucky to be



working alongside her and others to strengthen this area of health care.

It's important to note that changing the culture in health care takes time, especially when a previous PC government mistreated them for so long. We're getting it done every day alongside front-line health-care workers, and every grad's going to get an offer of letter—a letter of offer of a job from our government right upon graduation.

### **Emergency Management Office Funding Resources to Combat Wildfire Season**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Northern municipal leaders, grand chiefs, members of the Wildfire Service and the federal government have raised red flags that the wildfire season this year will be out of control. Combining a dry winter with a forecasted dry summer means more fires. It's just simple math.

Yet this year's budget, which I'd like to table, the NDP chose to cut funding by 50 per cent to the Emergency Management office.

Why would the NDP government choose to cut the office in charge of managing emergencies within our province?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Acting Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

Communities in Manitoba and across the country are experiencing the impact of climate change in the form of increasingly frequent and intense wildfires.

Our fire crews already this year had to deal with this year's first wildfire on April 8 in Cranberry Portage. There is extremely dry conditions, particularly along the west side of this province, and it's going to suggest an early start to the fire season.

Manitoba Wildfire Service is taking steps to increase its ability to prevent, mitigate and fight wild-land fires in the province. They are working closely with other government partners to—

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

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

**Mr. Narth:** Well, what I got from that is yes, that we're in a situation in Manitoba of great risk, but yet the 'cunding' is—the funding has been cut.

Chief David Monias of Pimichimak [*phonetic*] Cree Nation was quoted regarding this year's wildfire season,

saying, you feel a certain sense of helplessness. This helplessness is compounded by the NDP's cut to the office built to navigate the disasters, like a bad wild-fire season. Chief Monias added that, quote, a fire could spread fast and we also need to make sure that there's adequate resources that are available to us, like right now.

Will these resources be available to communities like—

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

**MLA Marcelino:** We want to assure Manitobans that we continue to recognize the seriousness of this dry season that's coming up. Unlike members opposite, we are working collaboratively with First Nations, northern communities, RMs, cities and towns to update these folks on the coming fire seasons, along with the programming in place.

The member opposite is putting incorrect facts on the record. We have invested \$8 million more in capital for wildfire protection, upgrades and new bunkhouses, additional attack trucks, enhancing the weather-monitoring systems to better protect their communities this year.

We want to encourage all Manitobans to help protect our forests, because all Manitobans have a part to play.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Mr. Narth:** Unfortunately, I hear no reassurance. And last week, Grand Chief Merrick raised the same concerns. And she said, quote, to cut emergency funding in half is an extremely dangerous and ill-advised decision that has serious implications for rural First Nations.

We agree. Cutting emergency services is short-sighted and ill-advised.

Will the NDP reinstate emergency management funding immediately, yes or no? Very simple.

**MLA Marcelino:** Honourable Speaker, the member opposite can't hear my response because of all the heckling on his side, so I'd ask them to simmer down so they can hear the questions that have been answered. It's another \$8 million, was what I said, in capital for wildfire protection.

Well, let's take a look at their record. The former PC government left vacancies in the conservation officer service, leaving communities unsupported and unprepared. They did nothing to encourage conservation officers to stay here and work here in Manitoba.

As of October 4, 2023, the vacancy rate was 13.4 per cent, but because of our government's recruitment efforts, we're going to be filling those spots by this month.

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

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

### **Crime in Rural Manitoba Request for Plan to Address**

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Honourable Speaker, Kam Blight, the president of AMM, has talked about the lack of commitment from this government towards fighting rural crime in the—in this budget. On a monthly basis we see crime stats that show increased levels in crime in rural Manitoba.

What has this government's response been? How about we put a single camera on a three-to-five-thousand-acre farm operation?

Does this Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) think that a single camera on a farm will protect our rural citizens, yes or no?

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

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. You folks are cutting into question period; you won't get all your questions in.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Once again, the members opposite are completely missing the point. The point is is that we work with communities. We continue to work with municipalities. This government increased funding where this previous government cut and froze for seven and a half years.

This government over here is partnering with communities to say we are going to make security systems more affordable by offering a \$300 rebate. That's in Budget 2024.

Manitobans have told us they want to work together, they want to be one Manitoba. These members opposite need to get on board.

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

**MLA Bereza:** Honourable Speaker, when crimes occur on rural properties, it erodes that farm family's sense of safety and it can dramatically impact their farm operations.

And what is the NDP's government solution? Let's put a doorbell camera up so we can hide in our houses and take pictures of criminals. In fact, the provincial policing and policing services have staffing cuts in this budget.

Why is this government refusing to support local rural property owners and why is this government refusing to support public safety?

**Mr. Wiebe:** You know, Honourable Speaker, the way that the member opposite frames his question is unfortunate because we know that law enforcement, in fact, has asked us to support the communities and the individuals who want to protect themselves and the larger communities that they come from.

You know, he's talking about one security system. That's not how this rebate will be applied. In fact, what we'll—it will do is support all individuals to come together, come together as one Manitoba, to protect their communities and make themselves safer and at the same time support law enforcement.

Now, we're not just stopping there. We're supporting law enforcement by increasing funding, by increasing funding to municipalities. We're doing the complete gamut to make our communities safer while these members opposite have no solutions and—

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

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

\* (14:10)

**MLA Bereza:** The RCMP in Portage la Prairie cover almost 1,400 square kilometres. The NDP government is suggesting that you hide in your homes and you take pictures of criminals.

Our farmers contribute \$10 billion to our Manitoba economy, but their families and safety are taken for granted every day by this government.

When will this government come up with a plan to protect those that are feeding our country and feeding the world?

**Mr. Wiebe:** The members opposite don't need to take it from me. They can listen to the Keystone agriculture producers, who said they welcome \$13.7-million increase to policing grants, which support rural police

services who keep communities safe, as well as the creation of a \$300 security camera rebate to provide producers with some support to install security systems on farms.

I'm surprised that the member opposite is so off-side with KAP. This government here will listen to KAP because they stand with producers, they stand with communities, while this government opposite, they let crime skyrocket under their watch.

We're getting to work. We're making communities safer.

### School Construction Projects Child-Care Spaces

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** In Budget 2024, the Minister of Education and this NDP government cut the construction of nine new schools across Manitoba. Each of these buildings were planned to have an attached daycare as part of the facility.

With all nine being put on the chopping block, can the minister tell Manitobans how many child-care spaces were cut with this decision?

**Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I want to thank the member for that question.

But before I get to the answer of that particular question, this is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day. I do want to shout out three particular bus drivers. They used to work in the Sunrise School Division. Their names were Georgette King, Marion Molnar and Gail Miller.

What made them particularly outstanding, Honourable Speaker, is that, once they were done their routes in Sunrise, they drove to my school in River East-Transcona and worked in the lunch program. The very great thing about this is the training that they had with—directly applicable to working with students, and we had probably the best program in the school division thanks to Gail—

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

**Mr. Jackson:** It's very nice from the minister. It would have been nice if he bothered to make a ministerial statement about it today instead of using up time in question period, but alas, here we are.

The minister didn't answer, but luckily I can share with him just how many child-care spaces his NDP government have cut. Each of the nine schools was scheduled to have a minimum 74-space daycare attached to it, which means that this minister cut a minimum of

just under 700 child-care spaces when he refused to prioritize the construction of these schools. Honourable Speaker, 700 fewer spaces for Manitoba children—that's this minister's record.

Can this minister get up and explain where he plans to build these kids child-care spaces instead, if not in those nine schools?

**MLA Altomare:** Again, I want to do—I do want to thank the member for that question, because here's what's important. It's very interesting he picks that number, 700. Last time, when they were in government, that's the amount of spaces they were creating in one year. It would have taken them 30 years to get to the 23,000 that they were on the record of creating.

So what do we do, the very first day we got to work? We got to work with child-care centres immediately. We're on pace this year for 8,500 new child-care spaces, and by the end of next year, 13,500.

I hope that member goes out to his constituency and reminds them of our record as it compared to theirs.

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

**Mr. Jackson:** No answer because the minister has no idea where he plans to build those child-care spaces. The NDP has no darn plan.

I know the minister doesn't want to admit that these schools were formerly planned for, but a formal RFQ went out. These nine schools were identified by school divisions as top priorities to meet surging student populations, and they absolutely would have been budgeted for in Budget 2024 under a Progressive Conservative government.

Will this minister get up and admit that because the 14 educators on that side of the aisle failed to make education and early childhood learning a priority for this government's first budget, Manitoba families will be waiting longer than ever to get the child-care spaces that they need? *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Altomare:** Well, Honourable Speaker, you know, far be it for me to quote that member, but woulda, coulda, shoulda. I can tell you this—*[interjection]*—I can tell you this, and I want to tell Manitobans, where they built false hope, we're going to build real hope in our education sector.

I can tell you, Honourable Speaker, if they were so concerned about public schools and the funding of public schools, they wouldn't have sent million-dollar

cheques to out-of-province billionaires. Can you imagine, had they kept those dollars in Manitoba—

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

### **Adult Vaccination Program Request to Update**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Today, I am joined in the galleries by some of my constituents who bring forward many good ideas to improve the lives of seniors. These are concerns that adult—or there are concerns that adult vaccinations and medications are becoming increasingly inaccessible. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons have cited serious risks for seniors due to out-of-date public vaccination programs.

Will this government follow CARP's recommendation to update the public adult vaccination program with the latest approved and recommended vaccines such as pneumococcal, respiratory viruses and shingles?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** I thank the member for that really important question.

I'd like to welcome our guests and thank you for being here today. And I'd like to extend an invitation to meet with you folks. If you have the time, I'd love to set up a meeting for all of us to connect and talk about this really important issue.

Our government is prioritizing the health of seniors, the protection of seniors, across our province. It is so important that seniors who helped build Manitoba and make our amazing province what it is know that they have a government that is in their corner listening to them and advancing health-care policies that keep them safer.

And so our budget does invest in strengthening health care for seniors, but I do look forward to meeting with these guests who are here today and the member to talk about the work that is soon to come as a part of our budget.

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

### **Access to Funds for Seniors to Age in Place Home Repairs and Maintenance in Budget 2024**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Evidence shows that seniors are healthier mentally and socially when investments are made to keep them living at home.

Page 36 of the government's budget includes funding for older Manitobans to safely remain in their

homes and communities, but it is unclear as to whether those funds will go towards home repairs and maintenance including accessibility upgrades.

Can the minister clarify whether there is an allocation in the budget for home repairs and maintenance, and if so, how can seniors access these funds?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** I thank the member for that question.

Yes, there are funds allocated in our 2024 budget for seniors to be able to make their homes safer. It's really important to our government that seniors have access to the resources they need to be able to age in place in their communities if they so choose.

It's also really important that seniors have access to the services throughout their communities to live a full life. And so our government—our department, rather, of Health is working across government to do just that. I can provide more details to that to the member, but there will be news soon coming that will be widely available to Manitoba seniors and families in that regard.

\* (14:20)

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

### **Personal-Care Homes for Winnipeg Construction Inquiry**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Wait times for long-term-care facilities are too high, and we know that there are not enough beds available. In addition to this, oftentimes when seniors are going into facilities, it is done prematurely, and they're being separated from their communities and loved ones, and often pets.

We have seen the toll this can take on senior morale, and unfortunately, how facilities have been planned, then cancelled, then planned again, then cancelled again under consecutive governments.

Does this government plan to create any new personal-care-home facilities in Winnipeg for seniors, to ensure that they can remain close to home as they age?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** I thank the member for the question. The short answer to that question is yes. We are going to build more personal-care homes.

We did announce recently that we're building a long-awaited personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet.

But we are going to build personal-care homes here in Winnipeg. I appreciate that the member is talking about care for seniors in a really holistic way. I think that's a really important approach to health care that our government is taking.

It's not just about adding personal-care-home beds, which we're doing; it's not just about strengthening home care and community services, which we're doing. It's about seeing seniors as whole people who are dynamic, and meeting the variety of needs they have, which our government is committed to doing in this budget and future budgets, something the previous government failed to do.

But we're working on behalf of seniors and the people of this province.

#### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** If I could get the clock stopped for a minute. I just want to interrupt question period very briefly to acknowledge some guests in the gallery who are going to leave before we're done here.

Joining us today we have, seated in the public gallery from a home-school group, 20 students and five parents under the direction of Jennifer deGroot.

Welcome.

#### Prenatal Care Benefit Government Announcement

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** Today, the Minister of Families took another step toward making life more affordable for Manitoba families. Our investment in prenatal care is an investment in communities, and provide pregnant Manitobans the financial support many need to help ensure a healthy pregnancy.

Can the minister elaborate on how doubling the prenatal benefit will help Manitoba families?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** Miigwech to my colleague for the best question of the day. Having a baby is expensive, and while the cost of living has increased since the benefit was established in 2001, the benefit has not increased.

So today, surrounded by the cutest babies, Honourable Speaker, I was so happy to announce that our government added an additional \$800,000 to the prenatal benefit in Budget 2024, doubling the benefit and making it the highest across Canada.

A study from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy showed that new parents receiving the prenatal

benefit have healthier babies, fewer low-birth-weight babies and fewer pre-term babies.

This is our government's approach to—

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

#### Selkirk Bridge Replacement Timeline

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, the previous PC government had approved the replacement of the Selkirk bridge. My recent meeting with the minister confirmed the NDP government only approved the design and consultation process, and there is no guarantee the construction will ever begin.

Can the minister assure the residents of Selkirk this dangerous bridge will be replaced?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Acting Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** It's my great honour to speak on behalf of the highway budget that, obviously, we know the previous government chose to do various components that the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba have—suffering with.

And let me just share an example of we don't need to have no lessons from the previous government. And let me just 'reaffer': 2018, they cut back a budget \$347 million; 2019, they only spent \$336 million; and then in 2020, they only spent \$333 million, and in 2021 they only spent \$397 million.

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

The honourable member for Selkirk, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Perchotte:** I apologize if the member opposite thought I was giving a lesson; it was a question. The bridge in Selkirk is extremely dangerous, with its narrow laneways and extensive rust.

Can the minister take these safety concerns serious and confirm the bridge will be replaced soon?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Honourable Speaker, I just want to remind members opposite I spent seven and a half years on the AMM board, and we talked about the time where this government chose to freeze infrastructure spending for the municipal governments and all people related in—unfortunately, what we've now witnessed, the freeze that happened seven and a half years, the cost of building X road is probably doubled and even maybe 200 per cent greater.

So I ask members opposite: Do you think you did any favour to the municipal affiliations or the people

that use highway bridges? Because that obviously had consequences.

So—and that it is, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order. Order. Order. Order.

And I would remind the minister the correct title is Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, it's apparent that the member opposite is very used to being in opposition.

Did cutting \$163 million from the Infrastructure budget mean Selkirk would be stuck with a 1930s crumbling bridge for the duration of this government, putting the citizens of St. Andrews, St. Clements and Selkirk at risk with no darn plan?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** It is definitely—I know members opposite didn't listen to our budget because they didn't want to hear all the great news that we brought forward in 2024.

But let me share this with members opposite. I want to share the good news of Budget 2024: \$1.7 billion invested in our roads for capital projects; new funding for winter roads to remote communities, Honourable Speaker; increased funding for highway maintenance, and 24-7 Perimeter snow clearing is a top priority of ours.

Every single municipality is getting more funding—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

The time for oral questions has expired.

## PETITIONS

### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this position—petition is as follows:

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.

\* (14:30)

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oils 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 this 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 Teresa Jaenen, Mike Therrault, Donna Fraser and many, many Manitobans.

### Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I wish to present the following position 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 been seeing some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and 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 that 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 the farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agriculture 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 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 Manitobans—Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitobans—Manitoba consumers.

And this is signed by Margaret L. Kilcup, John A. Nichol, Ed Enns and many, many more.

Thank you.

**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 loaf—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 and their 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.

\* (14:40)

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 Bart Witherspoon, Steven Wright, Brock McIntosh and many other Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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.

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.

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° Celcius annually.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

**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° Celsius 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 Nancy Sprott, Ron Knopf and Jon Roblue [*phonetic*].

### **Medical Assistance in Dying**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

The the reasons for the petition are as follows:



(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, persons struggling with mental health as the 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 illness 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 medical illness—or sorry, 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 Francyne Lemoine, Guy Hutlet, Viviane Deschambault and many other Manitobans.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for the 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.

\* (14:50)

(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.

(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.

These—this petition is signed by Colleen Zacharias, Joe Zacharias, Peter Teichreb and many, many Manitobans.

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

The—[interjection] Thank you. These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17 of 2024, persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) 'Suicily' 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 illness to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalization—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 medical—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:

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 a 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 has been signed by Tamara Janzen of Chortitz, Manitoba; Nela Loewen of Conner Hill, Morden, Manitoba; and Weldon Yeo, Evergreen Drive, of Morden, Manitoba; and many, many other Canadians—or Manitobans.

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

Just a reminder that all that's required is to read the three names. We don't need their addresses.

### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

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 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.

\* (15:00)

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadian 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.

Therefore, 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 many, many, many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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 is signed by Tim Hykawy, Dave Sullivan, Cliff Labelle [*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 Legislature.

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 agricultural 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.

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 Joanne Findlay, Tim Cornborough [*phonetic*], Lisa Hogg and many, many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

\* (15:10)

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; and

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

Signed by Kolten Courtney, Todd Riznek [*phonetic*], Rick Rivers and many, many other Manitobans.

### Medical Assistance in Dying

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Beginning March 17, 2024, 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 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 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 is signed by Rick Chase, Danielle Kirpluk, Roger Hebert and many, many other Manitobans.

### **Removal of Federal Carbon Tax**

**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:

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.

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.

\* (15:20)

(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 has been signed by Jeanine Pitre, Mark Owen, Matt Manness and many, many, many more Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** Grievances?

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

### **House Business**

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

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

**Mr. Johnson:** I would like to table a list of four bills designated by the official opposition for the—for this first session of the 43rd Legislature.

Our designated bills for this session are—no drum roll? Okay—Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act; Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to the Statutes and Regulations Act; and Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

And I will table the list.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced by the honourable Opposition House Leader that the list of bills designated by the official opposition for the First Session of the 43rd Legislature will be the designated bills as follows: Bill 7, The Public Sector Construction Projects (Tendering) Repeal Act; Bill 21, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Bill 16, The Regulatory Accountability Reporting Act and Amendments to the Statutes and Regulations Act; and Bill 9, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** I have a number of leave requests related to House business this week.

Could you please canvass the House for leave: (1) to allow the debate provisions for second reading of specified bills in subrule 2(10) to apply tomorrow, April 18, 2024, at the beginning of orders of the day, government business, instead of at 4 p.m. tomorrow; (2) to agree that only the following specified bills will be called for debate tomorrow and in this order: Bill 10, Bill 5, Bill 6, Bill 14, Bill 15, Bill 22, Bill 23; (3) for the House to rise either following the questions being put and resolved on second reading of Bill 23 or 7 p.m., whichever is earlier, unless unanimous consent is granted to rise earlier or later.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave, No. 1, to allow the debate provisions for second reading of specified bills in subrule 2(10) to apply tomorrow, April 18, 2024, at the beginning of orders of the day, government business, instead of at 4 p.m. tomorrow; No. 2, to agree that only the following specified bills will be called for debate tomorrow in this order: Bill 10, Bill 5, Bill 6, Bill 14, Bill 15, Bill 22, Bill 23; (3) for the House to rise either following the question being put and resolved on second reading of Bill 23 or 7 p.m., whichever is earlier unless unanimous consent is granted to rise earlier or later?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

\* \* \*

**MLA Fontaine:** Could you please call for the continuation of second reading, debate of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, criminal property forfeiture act and corporations act amendment; followed by second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

**The Speaker:** Just to remind everyone we're in orders of the day, government business.

It has been announced that we will resume debate on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended); following that, second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

### Bill 30—The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended)

**The Speaker:** The floor is open to resume debate on Bill 30, standing in the name of the honourable member for Roblin, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Order, please.

Apparently, I failed to recognize you, so, the honourable member for Roblin—and still has 13 minutes remaining.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** You know, I was a little worried that I might not have enough time, so I really appreciate you putting those seconds back on the clock for me. Thank you.

When I was speaking yesterday and 5 o'clock rolled around so unceremoniously, I think I was talking about the Cullen Commission. And I had noted that had I just learned what the Cullen Commission is, and I had not previously been aware of it, and I owe that to my colleague, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who mentioned it in his comments. And that prompted me to go to the worldwide web and google the Cullen Commission, and I learned that it's very relevant to the bill that we're discussing today.

The Cullen Commission was established in BC in response to significant concern about money laundering in that province. And, of course, money laundering is perhaps the most significant way that criminals can profit from crime. There, in BC, the public was disturbed by the prospect of criminals laundering their cash and making good on those illicit proceeds.

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

And they gave this commission a very broad mandate to inquire into and report on money laundering in that province. And one of the key recommendations that came out of the Cullen Commission was a much more vigorous approach to criminal property forfeiture.

\* (15:30)

So that report is available online, as I've mentioned, and it notes that asset forfeiture is widely regarded as one of the most effective ways of stifling and disrupting organized crime groups and others involved in serious criminal activity. That's because not only does it deprive these groups of the profits of their unlawful activity, which therefore takes the profit out of crime; it also prevents those funds from being reinvested in the criminal enterprise, where they can be used to purchase drugs or weapons or vehicles or property that's necessary to support their criminal activity.

And the commission noted that, in many cases, the seizure of unlawfully obtained assets will have a greater impact on organized crime groups than the arrest and prosecution of low-level members. So—and that's really what this is about: hitting them where it hurts and making sure that crime doesn't pay.

And the Cullen Commission also noted that, with respect to civil forfeiture, it's critically important to expand its focus from the forfeiture of the instruments of crime and low-value assets initially identified in law enforcement investigations and expand that to the identification and forfeiture of high-value assets owned or controlled by those involved in serious criminal activity.

And in the case of BC, the commission recommended that their Civil Forfeiture Office expand their operational capacity by adding investigators and analysts capable of identifying and targeting unlawfully obtained assets that are not identified in the police file.

And that was in BC, but certainly the same principle holds true here in Manitoba. We saw steps along these lines taken by the previous PC government, expanding the office of Criminal Property Forfeiture to include additional investigators and financial analysts.

And that's why it's so surprising to see members opposite actually cutting resources to the Criminal Property Forfeiture office at a time when it's clear that, now more than ever, they need adequate resources to do their job.

So if he hasn't already, I'd urge the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) to give the Cullen Commission report a read; I found it really interesting. I know he—I'm sure he's a busy guy—even just the executive summary. One can learn a lot from that.

And I've talked a bit about BC, but there's precedent for this type of legislation in other jurisdictions. In fact, we know that wealth orders are currently being used in over 100 different jurisdictions.

In 2023, British Columbia brought in amendments to their Civil Forfeiture Act to allow that province to pursue ill-gotten gains more efficiently and compel people to explain how they acquired their wealth when there are suspicions about criminal activity so they would take these proceeds and redirect them to community safety and crime prevention initiatives.

And as we've been in the Chamber for the last few days discussing Bill 30, I've learned a lot about criminal property forfeiture and the criminal justice system generally. I have found it very instructive to listen to my colleagues, you know, both the members that have been here longer in this Chamber than I have, but also new members, like my colleague from Brandon West, who is eminently credible on this issue. As a former

police chief, he's perhaps more credible on this issue than almost anyone else in this Chamber.

And when he spoke to this bill last week, he talked about the real purpose of criminal property forfeiture. He talked about it as a means to infiltrate organized crime, to hit the criminals where it really hurts, and that's their bank accounts. And he mentioned that many criminals simply look at this as the cost of doing business. They look at jail time and probation or parole as a cost of their criminal enterprise.

And he noted, quite rightly, that at the end of the day, their business is money, because money is power, and the purpose of criminal property forfeiture is to hit them where it hurts: in the bank account. Take away that wealth, take away that income.

So, in doing some research for this bill, and knowing that I would have an opportunity to speak to it, I wanted to take a look at the crime statistics for the area that I represent. And the Winnipeg Police Service publishes these, so I was able to easily find some crime statistics for part of my constituency, the part that falls within the City of Winnipeg, and that's—of course, is Charleswood.

And I found it interesting that in its most recent statistics, a full 20 per cent of calls for service were property related, and that represents nearly 10,000 calls for service under the property category, including 4,000 calls for theft, 2,800 calls for property damage, nearly 1,000 residential break-and-enter calls, and over 500 commercial break-and-enter calls.

Now, I should note that these are statistics for the city as a whole, not for Charleswood.

Residential break-ins are a particularly frightening experience for anybody that's gone through that. I have never been the victim of a residential break-in, but I know people who have. And it's an incredibly violating feeling to know that criminals have been in your home, they've been through your belongings, they've taken things, and I know that it's very difficult once that's happened to you to get your sense of safety and security back.

And vehicle theft would also be included within these statistics, and on my street alone there have been three vehicles stolen just in the last few months. And most of the people on my street, you know, myself included, have security systems and doorbell cameras and, unfortunately, they were no help at all in catching the criminals involved with this crime. And I'm told that there have also been catalytic converters stolen from vehicles in our neighbourhood.

So, while I certainly support the underlying intent of the bill, I think what these statistics demonstrate is that it's not enough. It's going to take a lot more than unexplained wealth orders to make a real impact on crime in our province.

And I would be remiss if I didn't also mention crime in the digital age. It's 2024 and criminals are, unfortunately, smart and innovative. They can be quite entrepreneurial and we've seen the rise of grandparent scams, phishing, identity theft. These can be very lucrative for criminals.

And it's more important than ever that we ensure our police agencies have the tools they need to combat this type of crime specifically. Particularly with this type of crime they need to work together with other police services, working across jurisdictions, and we, as legislators, need to make sure that our police services have the tools they need to combat crime.

And that, of course, is one of the ways that we can use the funds made available through criminal property forfeiture, is to bolster our local police services and to make sure that they have the tools they need to do their jobs.

So before my time runs out I want to touch on some of the historical context that's relevant to this bill.

The former PC government took steps to combat money laundering and was among leaders in the country taking action against organized crime.

In 2021, the PC government passed legislative changes that strengthened the ability of the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that investigators believed to be illegally acquired and could be subject to money laundering.

In 2022, the former PC government expanded staffing capacity within the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to combat money laundering. They hired additional investigators and financial analysts to target organized crime.

\* (15:40)

Furthermore, the former PC government distributed millions of dollars from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to various initiatives and agencies. This included funding to Bear Clan Patrols, law enforcement agencies, community safety groups, victims services organizations and services and rural charities doing this important work.

And that's why it concerns me, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that we've seen such significant cuts to Justice in the most recent budget. A bill like this is without teeth if it is not backed up with the resources to do the work.

We saw cuts to several different line items in the Justice budget. We saw cuts to Courts, to Legal Aid, to corrections, to Public Safety, Prosecutions, Judicial Services, Victim Services, Crime Prevention and, of course, as I've already mentioned, the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit.

That's going to make it very difficult for the unit to carry out the intent of this bill, which is to take those proceeds of crime from criminals and hit them where it hurts.

And with that, I will end my remarks and turn it over to others who may wish to make comments on this important bill.

Thank you.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** You know, there's a lot of things I want to talk—there's so much to talk about when we talk about the unexplained wealth criminal property forfeiture act and corporations act amended. There's—I'll talk little bit about some of the things that have happened locally in my hometown in Swan River. I'll talk about some of the different types of corruption and the way that criminals are able to build their bank accounts.

But before I get into that I want to thank our MLA from Steinbach. When he put forth bill 58, that was a good bill, and there's a few little amendments here, but there was the start and the things that our government was doing that really, really helped.

I know that Swan River was able to get a number of cameras in the community, in which they were able to, through the forfeiture act and the retrieving of some of these monies, and I kind of look, and I got to question the fact, when we talk about the members opposite on their, you know, their, well, what is it, \$510,000 for 1,700 cameras, doorbell cameras at \$300 a camera.

And I—when I look at this, I—it's disappointing to know that they're picking and choosing, because this Kinew government, well, what are they going to advertise? Are they going to go ahead and say, okay, you're going to be one of the 1,700 people that get this camera, and we know that those 1,700 cameras aren't going to go very far in this province. And we see a lot



of other things that people are doing within businesses and stuff.

Businesses are investing a lot of times \$3,000 to \$6,000 in security on gates—or the shutters, as they call them. These are the things that make the difference, so—and I wish they would have put these things in their budget to help small business. But we know that small business is not a priority for the members opposite.

But as I go into this, and the court may make an order that requires a person to provide, inform about how they acquired the property, of an interest in property if it appears there's known source of income and assets would not be sufficient to do so. And if the person or a closely related person have been involved in lawful activity.

I—member opposite—oh, one thing I forgot to mention about our member from Steinbach, you know, on his great bill 58—you know, it's kind of gratifying to be in the House and around mentors like the member from Steinbach, the member from Brandon West, who are so knowledgeable on these type of subject areas.

And in a conversation today, we were talking, you know, we see the members opposite, you know, they do a few little tweets on a bill to make it similar so that they can put their stamp on it. But if they really want to play copycat, what I urge them to copy is our PC Party's fiscal responsibility. And we saw that in the last election, that the fiscal responsibility was way out of whack.

I remember, you know, like, what was it? Almost \$1 billion, \$134 million in, you know, in debt service charges. And what I say, you know, what I used to tell the people in my constituency, I'd say, just think if we'd put \$1 million into each community. So that's what happened when debt comes about. And how I relate this to the forfeiture, they made—probably call on some of these funds to try to satisfy some of their election promises that they can't fulfill. So those are some of the things I look at.

Getting back, if a person fails to provide the information required under an unexplained wealth order or provides false or misleading information, the property that is subject to the order is presumed to be proceeds of unlawful activity unless the contrary is proven. So, a lot of times, courts—to presume, unless the contrary is proven, cash is proceeds of unlaw activity.

And we see cash come about in so many ways, and I want to share a story with you that actually happened to me about two months ago. And this deals specifically with targeting these criminals and how

they can—and how it had happened is all of a sudden, I got my credit card invoice, and I had 14 Uber charges in Egypt. These were—you know, and I looked at—

**An Honourable Member:** What were you doing in Egypt?

**Mr. Wowchuk:** I—yes, what was I doing in Egypt? How did it ever happen? You know?

I don't know how that ever happened. I looked back and where I used my credit card, and it just shows you the high, high intelligence of these people and how they can get your credit card number.

And as the member from Morden-Winkler shared yesterday, when she was in a gift shop in Montreal, and she put her credit card, and she said it kind of went in there, you know, where it was—something was wrong. Something up there twigged that something was wrong. But oh, the lady said, no, it's all good. So it shows how these shop people work together with these money launderers and the people who try to get your credit card number.

When I talked to the bank, they said to me, tap is the only way to go. They said that is the safest, and if you're going to use your credit card, make sure you tap. Because a lot of times, they will get somebody who works in this fast food store, and they'll say, hey, can you insert this for me? Every time someone uses a credit card, we're going to let them. This is what your payment is going to be. So that's how vulnerable we are as people on this.

So that's why these kinds of bills are good bills because of the—as we talked previously here, and the member from Roblin talked about the monies they—you know, and it just shows that we are always at risk and we always got to be vigilant. I remember another time. I was in Banff, and somehow, all of a sudden, I'm getting these charges out of Banff, and I'm not even there. And the person went ahead, and they were really cautious. And this is maybe small scale, but a multitude of these people come together, and they went ahead and they would just use under \$50, just to kind of fly underneath the radar on each of the transactions.

And when this guy ended up getting caught, confronted, he says, oh, I thought it was my credit card. I didn't even realize that the name on it was this—you know, so these are the kinds of things—it's a whirlpool of excuses.

Now, we all know that in 2021, that our PC government made legislative changes in the legislation to

strengthen the ability of the criminal property 'forfeiture'—forfeiture unit to quickly act in securing money, money that was believed to be used for money laundering. And, in 2022, our PC government expanded the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to combat money laundering by hiring two investigators and a financial analyst.

\* (15:50)

Now, in 2022, BC released its final report, and here's a funny thing. BC said hey, Manitoba, you got some great things that the PC government put in place, and we want to use them. And then all of a sudden, the members opposite bring forth a bill and said, we want to take a look at BC; they got some great things that they got from the Manitoba government when the PCs were in power. So that's, you know, kind of ironical when you hear those types of stories, so just, kind of, you know.

During the leader debate, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) said they were going to take action to address crime. Well, we're kind of—after, what is it, 190 days, or what is it? Somewhere around there. We're still kind of waiting for that action to happen, and we want to see some of these things help Manitobans.

I, myself, have a mom that's 95 years old. She says, I'm always getting phone calls. They're always phoning; they want this, they want that. She said as soon as I—they start talking, I hang up right away. And I said, that way, don't give them any information. So they target the vulnerable people, and we got to be on the lookout.

So unexplained wealth orders provide much-needed tool to deter the accumulation of wealth from organized crime and other criminal activities. I mean, when we get these huge drug seizures, there is always a large amount of money that comes along with those seizures. And these are the—this is the driving force of those criminals. Tobacco products, when they're seized—I mean, they're robbing our province off of the taxes that we get, that we are able to, you know, put into our health care, into our education.

I know our member from Transcona's a very passionate person when it comes to education, and he works hard. I mean, we have our differences, you know, and things like that, but he was an educator, and he knows what it takes to make the education—

**An Honourable Member:** I think he was a better teacher than a minister.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Well, you know, he was a good—and a good administrator, too. I mean, he—we could share

a lot of stories. Between his 37 years and my 35 years, we're almost as old as the member from Springfield-Ritchot.

So anyways—

**An Honourable Member:** Whatever you say, grandpa.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** No—yes, grandpa, hey?

So—and then lately, one of the biggest organized crimes that we see is dealing—

**An Honourable Member:** Love you, grandpa.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** —is—that's why I'm wearing glasses, is the eyes are getting a little weak here.

Theft of auto. Like, that is such a sophisticated crime, and we see these big containers. And we know that a lot of things—and even in the federal budget were put to put this off.

Like, these aren't small-change people. These are the big—however, the small—or these big-change people lead to the vulnerable people. And these are the people in the communities like Swan River, Rosburn, Roblin and those other different places, that they are hooked. They're on drugs, and they got to satisfy their habit. So what do they do? They engage in community crime.

And in Swan River, they—there's actually doorbells on some businesses in Swan River, where they go ahead, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and they—you have to ring the doorbell to get in. They got a thing called a business app—WhatsApp, it's called—and they know, as the individuals go from store to store, they follow them.

So what I'm saying is organized crime leads to small-town rural crime that people have a very, very difficult time. So those are things that are important and remain important.

So, as I said, we took steps, as a previous government, to combat money laundering, and we are—and we were among the leaders in the country taking action against organized crime. And in 2021, we passed a legislative change in strengthability for a criminal property 'foreiture'—or, forfeiture; 2022, okay, we expanded staffing capacity within the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit. We—the PC government distributed millions of dollars for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to various initiatives and agencies, and this includes the Bear Clan.

And hats off to the Bear Clan in all the communities and in Winnipeg here. They go around, they put their—themselves at risk every day, picking up needles,

trying to keep the community safe, trying to get these people off the streets and into—you know, rehabilitated, so that they are able to pursue, you know, their dreams in their life that they want to pursue.

So there's—just going to talk here also, a little bit—I want to talk about the different types. Now, there's critics, all right, and some of the critics of the Manitoba Unexplained Wealth Act may highlight misuse of the act by the authorities in the following ways.

And they may go and say, well, discriminatory targeting. Critics may argue that the act could be used as a tool for discriminatory targeting of certain individuals or certain communities. They may express concerns authorities may disproportionately focus their investigations on specific racial or ethnic groups leading to unfair treatment and stigmatization.

You know, just because somebody—I've had people tell me that—and when you come—and hats off to our border patrol agencies. I mean, these people—I always watch Border Patrol all the time, and whenever somebody is coming across the border with a huge amount of cash, they're under question. Why do they have that amount of cash on them?

I know a few people that come into Manitoba and they—if they have a large amount of cash, you know, how much cash do you have? These raise red flags for the border agencies. You know, those—the border agencies work tirelessly to patrol our country, our province, you know, to make it a better place and to try to keep these acts of violence out by, you know, cutting these people off at the border.

There's—another critic may say political targeting. Opponents may raise concerns about the act being used for political targeting. They may argue authorities could exploit the act to harass or intimidate individuals who hold different political views or are critical of the government, infringing on their rights to free speech and political expression.

So these are some of the different views that people may have.

Personal vendettas—critics may highlight the potential for personal vendettas or abuse of power by authorities. They may argue that the act could be misused by individuals in positions of authority to settle personal scores or target individuals they have personal or professional grievances against.

And then there's also lack of accountability, transparency. Opponents may question the accountability

and 'transparency'—transparency measures in place to prevent misuse of the act. They may argue that without robust oversight and checks and balances, authorities could use their power and unfairly target individuals without justification.

Unintended consequences—critics may argue the act could have unintended consequences such as chilling effect on legitimate economic activities. They may express concerns that individuals, out of fear, being targeted or having their privacy invaded, may decide to avoid certain investments.

Okay, so, you know—and we want to attract people into our province. That was one of our mandate—or, one of the mandates of our previous government: economic growth. We knew we—you don't have to tax people; you just have to—you grow the economy and you get the revenue and that can pay for many services, and you can really lighten the load.

And that's what affordability is all about. Affordability is putting that extra dollar so that you don't have to live paycheque to paycheque. You know, and you don't save—some family may save up for their \$100,000 truck, you know, and they may have this \$100,000 truck that they saved their lifetime for. Doesn't mean they're a criminal. They're a hard-working individual that wanted to make their life better, and this was my little dream.

It's important to note these are potential concerns raised by critics. And the implementation, enforcement of the act determines whether these concerns materialize or not.

Now, opposition to the Manitoba Unexplained Wealth Act can be based on several arguments: privacy concerns—critics may argue the act infringes on individuals' privacy, and that's one of the things. The act requires individuals to disclose their sources of wealth, which may view as an invasion of their personal financial information.

\* (16:00)

And then there's the burden of proof. Opponents may argue the act places an unfair burden of proof on individuals to prove their wealth is acquired through legitimate means. They may argue that it goes against the principle of innocent until proven guilty by assuming individuals with unexplained wealth are involved in illegal activities.

And growing up, you know what, there was always that stigma out there. Somebody built a new home, got a new truck, had a new Ski-Doo, had a new

quad. Oh, I wonder, they must be drug dealing, you know. Maybe no, they're very hard workers and they've invested their money and this is how they came across it honestly. Lack of, you know—*[interjection]*—yes, exactly.

Lack of clarity. Critics may highlight the lack of clarity in the act's provisions, making it difficult for individuals to understand and comply with the requirements. They may argue that it could lead to unintended consequences and potential misuse of the act by authorities.

Potential for abuse. Opponents may raise concerns about the potential for the abuse of power by law enforcement agencies or authorities. They may argue that the act—you know, how many times do we say, sign this or you're going to get terminated in your position? You know, is that—that's an act of authority. They may argue that the act could be used as a tool for harassment or discrimination targeting individuals or communities disproportionately.

Economic impact. Critics may argue the act could have a negative impact on the local economy. They may contend it could be—'atur' foreign investment. I mean, there's nothing like getting foreign investment in a community. I mean, you take a look at HyLife, you take a look at, you know, some of these big industries. They came in, people from a lot of countries. Simplot. You know, and they—we want to attract people from outside. We don't want to repel them.

Effectiveness in costs. Some may question the effectiveness of the act in combatting illicit wealth and argue that the resources spent on implementing and enforcing the act could be better utilized in other areas of law enforcement or social programs.

I'm just getting a little bit hoarse here, so I'm just going to have a drink of water. *[interjection]* Yes, please. Okay. And—okay, thank you so much.

Effectiveness costs. Some may question—effective the act in combatting illicit wealth. It's important to note, these are potential points of opposition that a person may encounter.

So what I want to do now is I want to look at some of the different acts that may happen, whether it be credit card corruption and bribery—yes, counterfeiting and piracy. Like, we see counterfeiting a lot. Just, hey, two weeks ago at the Legion—Swan River Legion—all of a sudden, somebody tries to push through a hundred-dollar counterfeit bill. The young guy at the desk—or, at the desk—dispenser—he just, you know, he looked at it. He knew something was wrong, but he gave the change.

And thank God it was only one \$100 bill, because you know how things like this, Honourable Deputy Speaker, can crush a little, you know, a Legion that's out in the country that doesn't have a lot of great revenue.

So you know, those kinds of things, it goes from being able to, you know, it can really destroy something local, that's—something that's really good. Because I know we all love to go down to our local Legion to support all those great war veterans that fought for our country, that fought for our freedom. And, you know, they're there and we like to give that support. So taking a little hit sometimes is a little tough on them.

But you know, thank God for meat draws. Thank God for Chase the Ace and all those things, because those things all generate a lot of great revenue and they keep those little things going. So when they, you know, this—it relates to how corruption, bribery, counterfeits can have such an impact.

We talked about illicit drug trafficking, you know. Mass marketing fraud is another one. Mass marketing fraud is an umbrella—you know, when I started reading this, I keep thinking about that Uber—or, those charges that I got in Egypt. But I'm—someday I'm going to figure out how they got my credit card number, because—but you know, they were sneaky. They went ahead and what they did is they, you know, a three-, four-dollar Uber charge, six-, eight-dollar Uber charge, 12-, 14-dollar Uber charge, and they were just testing the waters to see what can we get away with before this guy twigs on to it and finds out.

And that's what they told me at the bank. They said they start small and they get a little bigger, little bigger, and then bang—they hit you hard and they're out of there, you know.

So this is the kind of stuff that we know this is very organized crime when they got something—that they can pull something like that off.

Mass marketing fraud is an umbrella term for fraudulent schemes that use mass communication media, including telephones, Internet, mailouts, television, radio to defraud the victim. Common forms of mass marketing fraud, they could be government services scams, you know, romance scams. You know, some of these poor guys that, you know, they want—they just—they need—they would like a partner, and they get caught up in these mass—and they don't know who they're talking to. And all of a sudden they're forking their life earnings and transferring that money to another country because they are under the belief that this individual

is going to come to visit them and truly does love them.

And does it happen? No. They get 40, 60, 70, 80 thousand dollars—okay; good bye. You served the purpose. I got your money. Now hit the road, Jack.

So those are the kind of stuff that, you know, those telephone ones are really, really scary.

Mortgage fraud—another one. You know, mortgage fraud includes a wide range of deceptive practices relating to the provision of mortgage financing. At its simplest, it includes false, misleading statements made by a borrower.

You know, somebody was telling me yesterday they were on holidays, they came back and they found out their house was sold. You know, and somebody got in there and—[interjection]—yes, there you go. There you have—they—member—you know, and they—so there just shows how sophisticated and good these people are.

And it's—you just—you all have to be cautious out there, and this is why bills like this will help. Bills like this are good, you know, and we've got to—you got to hit them where it hurts, and that's the pocketbook. You take away the money from them and you take away everything they need.

Third-party laundering, we all know tobacco smuggling and trafficking is big. You know, people get cheap tobacco, it's an addiction and all of a sudden we're taking taxes from the province that could be used for a lot of other things.

Currency counterfeiting—I mentioned about locally, you know, at the legion.

You know, somebody trying human smuggling, and that's a sad one, and we heard about that one. When a family wants to come to a country for a better life, and they all succumb to the elements or the weather or something, or they all get on a ship or a boat and the boat sinks and everybody ends up drowning. Like those are—it's so, so sad when that happens. And they think they're going to a better life. They will pay their life earnings to get out of the poverty they are in and move on.

So illegal gaming is another one. Payment card fraud—that's a huge one, and we talked about it. Pollution crime, robbery and theft, firearm smuggling and trafficking and, hey, there's another bill coming forward that will let—hidden compartments so we can talk about those things. Extortion, loan sharking, tax evasion—it's carried out in many different forms.

In Canada, the ultimate objective is to avoid the payment—oops, sorry, okay, I just got that fixed. I apologize for that. I realize that does not sound good in the ears when I drag that paper over that microphone and it just—you know, you got all these papers, you want to say so much. And I would ask for leave. I wish I was the last speaker that could have unlimited speaking, but unfortunately, I got to cut it off at 30 minutes, so I only got two minutes and 20 seconds here to finish.

One wildlife crime—man, that's a huge one. When you talk about rhino horns, you talk about elephant tusks, ivory. You talk, you know, about bear galls, these kind of things. Those are huge, huge—you know, down in Africa, different places like that, they don't go hunting animals; they go hunting poachers, and that's pretty scary when you see that. Shows how organized that kind of stuff is.

\* (16:10)

I mean, that is really, really scary that people would actually risk their lives to be air—you know, to go ahead and think that, boy, if I get that ivory tusk, that's going to bring my family out of poverty and they're willing to risk their lives. You know, so that just shows how dangerous, how—scary stuff, let's put it that way.

All wildlife crime was assessed as having low money-laundering risk and illicit market exists for certain types of species. There is whale tusks, polar bear hides, peregrine falcon eggs, wild ginseng. Black market prices for these species are high and have risen in recent years. This is—

**An Honourable Member:** Bile from bears.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Yes, gall, bear bladders; those are big ones. You know, I remember back in—when I was a child, there was a beautiful bear that visited the dump in Clear Lake frequently. His name was Duke, okay, and he got shot by somebody, and all that was taken is the gall bladder out of him, and that was so sad, a majestic animal like this.

And although Duke died, he didn't die in vain because that's when they were able to implement laws that we can no longer export bear galls out of this province. And when those things happen, and it takes a tragedy like that to make that happen.

**An Honourable Member:** The NDP government brought that in.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** What's that? Oh, the member over there, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) here thinks

he's got the answer here. Could—know what? I could go on and on. I just look forward—

**Some Honourable Members:** More, more.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Unfortunately, the member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Tuxedo.

**Ms. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise—*[interjection]*—in the House today to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 30. *[interjection]* And I know the Minister of Justice is calling across this House because he is—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Stefanson:** —just so intent in listening to—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Stefanson:** —what it is that I have to say with respect to his—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

When the Speaker is standing and calling order, we should be quiet. This also applies to the Deputy Speaker.

The honourable member for Tuxedo.

**Ms. Stefanson:** Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. Order.

The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** On a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Johnson:** Obviously, the Minister of Justice is shouting down our first female premier that we had here. She's trying to do a speech, and I would please ask that, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that you call that member to order. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Justice, on the point of order.

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, there's clearly no breach of the rules, but I would encourage the former First Minister, who is responsible for a deplorable

campaign of division and hate in this province, she can give—take this opportunity to stand up and apologize to the people of Manitoba.

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

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

So a point of order cannot be used to further debate. I'll just remind all members that when someone is recognized—when a member is recognized—we're recognizing an honourable member, and we want to make sure that we can all recognize each other as honourable members based on our decorum here.

So I'd ask that we'd give recognized members the space while they're being recognized.

\* \* \*

**Ms. Stefanson:** You know, Mr.—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** So I—*[interjection]* Order. Order. Order. Order—*[interjection]* Sorry?

I do need to call the Minister of Justice to order; we need to allow other members the opportunity to speak in the Chamber.

**Ms. Stefanson:** Sorry, Deputy Speaker, I was just waiting to hear if the Minister of Justice had anything else that he wanted to shout me down on, which I think is deplorable in this Chamber. It is not proper decorum within the Chamber to be shouting down members across the Chamber.

Certainly, when I started here 23 years ago, it was certainly a much more respectful place back then than it is now. And this act on behalf of the Minister of Justice today unfortunately just shows how the NDP want to, you know, treat people in this Chamber. And I think it's unfortunate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, of course, we are here to discuss Bill 30 today, and I'm pleased to rise and put a few words on the Chamber—

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

#### Point of Order

**The Deputy Speaker:** Sorry; the honourable member for Fort Whyte.

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** You can see the Chamber's very passionate and there's been heckling back and forth. But I will recognize—and everyone will recognize in the Chamber—that the Honourable Deputy Speaker has called the Minister of Justice to order. The Minister of Justice continues to heckle the member from Tuxedo down for the last minute and a half.

The Honourable Deputy Speaker has already ruled on the Minister of Justice. I'm simply asking the Honourable Deputy Speaker to once again see what's happening in the Chamber and the Minister from Justice is out of line in that the member from Tuxedo cannot have her right—her afforded, elected right—as the MLA for Tuxedo, to put some words on the record.

And it is a point of order, because the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is impeding the member from Tuxedo from doing her duties.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Justice, on the point of order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, Honourable Speaker, clearly no breach of the rules. And, in fact, it was simply the member opposite who interrupted the member who had the floor. I don't think the Speaker needs any advice on how to do his job; I think he's doing a fine job in ruling and keeping order here in the Chamber.

What I will say, is that the member opposite interrupted the member who had the floor and was in the middle of speaking. We were all listening and trying to hear what that member had to say, and the member stood up and interrupted her.

I do want to hear her; I'm hoping that she's going to be—take this opportunity to apologize to the people of Manitoba for her deplorable campaign of division, and so now, she has an opportunity to do that.

\* (16:20)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I've heard from both sides of the House on this point of order, and I've heard agreement on the fact that we want to hear this member speak on this bill.

So I would remind all members that we want to model good behaviour for the citizens of Manitoba. We want to be people that citizens can look up to, be role models, and I'd ask that we do that through maintaining decorum here, because I know we're capable of this. We're capable of better.

\* \* \*

**The Deputy Speaker:** So, honourable member for Tuxedo.

**Ms. Stefanson:** I think it is absolutely my right to be and stand in this place today to represent my constituents on the floor of this Chamber. And what the member opposite has been trying to do is prevent me from being able to do so. And that is a matter of privilege, I would suggest. But I will peruse Hansard after and see, Mr. Deputy Speaker—or, Honourable

Deputy Speaker, as to whether or not I pursue that at a later date.

But, Honourable Deputy Speaker, with respect to Bill 30, which is the reason why we are here having a debate in the Chamber—and I know the Minister of Justice doesn't want me to get up and speak on behalf of my constituents, speak on their behalf here in this Chamber today, because he doesn't believe I have some sort of a right to do so.

But I will suggest that I have the same right that he has and that every single MLA has around this room. I have the right to be able to speak on this piece of legislation which is before the Manitoba Chamber, the Manitoba Legislature, for debate today.

So I know, again, the Minister of Justice wants to carry on and talk about other things and shout me down and continue that, Mr. Deputy—or, Honourable Deputy Speaker, but I will say that I'm going to rise above that. I am going to speak on behalf of my constituents in the great constituency of Tuxedo.

So, Honourable Deputy Speaker, when it comes to The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, this is an act that was established here in the Manitoba Legislature, and I'm going to talk a little bit about the history of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act.

And I know, again, the Minister of Justice, shouting down again, doesn't want to hear about the history of this act, and that's unfortunate. But I think it is very important that we hear a little bit about how this act was established in the first place.

And as I recall, it was back in the early 2000s where this was brought forward, and I'm looking to the member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway)—yes, he says yes, it was. He, I think, was here at that time, as well. And I can recall having a debate, perhaps on the floor of the Legislature. I believe it was under Premier Gary Doer at the time, who brought this in, and we had a good, healthy debate on this Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. *[interjection]*

Of course, it has been amended several times since then—*[interjection]*—and I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) seems to be very, very intent on listening to what I have to say with respect to this, because I know as the Minister of Justice, he, too, would want to know what the history is of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, and perhaps he knows already. Perhaps he doesn't know.

I know he was asked a series of questions in the question period, Deputy Speaker, and I know that he

wasn't able to answer some of those questions in the question period with respect to Bill 30. And I think that that's unfortunate, and perhaps maybe if he listens, he could learn and understand a little bit more about the history of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act.

So, once again, it was brought in in the early 2000s, it was amended several times since then; but one of the most recent 'amendments' took place in, actually, May of 2021, under the previous Justice minister, Cameron Friesen, at the time; it was under Cameron Friesen, who introduced the legislation in 2021 as the minister of Justice at the time.

And what that did at the time, under that piece of legislation, was it expanded the unexplained wealth part of that, and it talked about—also later on, talked about money laundering and what could happen in those areas. And these are very important components of this legislation that were, in fact, brought in by our previous government in 2021 under the minister of Justice then, Cameron Friesen.

It was then expanded further where there was the opening of—they expanded the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, I believe, in August of 2022. And that, of course, was by the previous minister of Justice, the MLA for Steinbach, who was part of bringing forward and expanding this unit because of the importance of this unit in the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Again, the Minister of Justice continues to shout down, and he doesn't want to listen to the facts that—of when—of the history of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. That's unfortunate.

But, in fact, this—the expansion of this unit, by putting more money into the unit—and as I understand in the recent budget that was recently introduced in the Chamber—as I understand the budget that was recently introduced in this very Chamber, Deputy Speaker, was that they cut the funding in this area. They cut this area of funding.

And now, in a desperate attempt, they want to bring forward—*[interjection]*—and I know the Minister of Justice loves to bang on his desk, and I'm not going to bang on the desk because I know Hansard really doesn't like that, Deputy Speaker. But I know he loves to bang on his desks—desk and say that he's tough on crime and say that they're tough on crime, but Manitobans know that they are not tough on crime at all.

So to get a little more into the history, because eventually I will get into the impact that the criminal

justice—sorry, that The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act has on Manitoba communities, because it is significant. And then I want to talk a little bit about what impact, if anything, this bill will have on Manitobans and why this legislation is coming forward in the first place.

And again, now the Minister of Justice may want to listen to what happened because, certainly in British Columbia, they introduced legislation—in 2023—they introduced legislation following in the footsteps of the lead, and they even gave us credit for it at the time. For the former ministers of Justice, Cameron Friesen and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), of course, gave them—and that's an NDP, that's an NDP government in BC that was able to give us credit for what we introduced back in 2021.

And so, of course, that's very important. They introduce bill 21, the Civil Forfeiture Amendment Act. The minister of public safety, who was the deputy premier in BC at the time, brought that forward—Mike Farnsworth *[phonetic]*. And so he talked a little bit about how this was modelled off of the changes in legislation in Manitoba that took place, again, in 2021, not under the NDP.

And so, of course, this all came about as a result of the Cullen Commission and, of course, that had to do with money laundering. And it was a report that was commissioned on money laundering.

And I know the Minister of Justice, this was brought up, I think, in the line of questioning, and he was unable to answer what that was, because, of course, that was the—one of the—basis for the BC legislation that took place in the spring of 2023.

And—but also, they gave us credit for having made a move on actually making changes to unexplained wealth that then led to changes dealing with money laundering. So, of course, BC went in this direction and we know that BC—and there were some talk—there was some talk at the time about civil liberties. There were some talk about—there was some talk about, you know, reasonable limits, making sure that this is—that there's a balance there between that and making sure that the police have the tools that they need to be able to fulfil their jobs.

And I know that it's very important on that side. And it's very important—we all agree. If—certainly, we agree on this side of the House, if we can come forward with ways to improve the legislation that gives more tools to police officers to do their jobs and making sure that we put those criminals away and behind bars.



That is, of course, where we are very in favour of that, and we agree with that.

\* (16:30)

So that's a little bit about the history between here and BC. And I'll get back to the relevance of that when it comes to the reasoning behind the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) desperately bringing—and the government desperately bringing forward this legislation to try and fulfill a campaign commitment.

But I, first of all, want to take an opportunity to talk about what The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act does for communities in Manitoba.

And, Deputy Speaker, I look to my friend, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), who, in a previous role, he was the chief of police in the Brandon Police Service. He did an incredible job in his community, and I want to commend him and all of the officers out there right across this great province of ours for the incredible work that they do.

#### *The Speaker in the Chair*

Because we know there was a dark time when members opposite, in the NDP, were in favour of, in fact, defunding the police, which is, you know—and now, all of a sudden, on—they've—now, all of a sudden, they're tough on crime. They were desperate during the last election, but I'll get to that in a few minutes, Deputy—or Mr. Speaker—or, Honourable Speaker, because I think it's important to talk about the impact that these funds have on those communities.

It has helped so many people—first of all, the process. I want to talk a little bit about how this all works.

Obviously, the monies come in to the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit and it then gets—there's an application process that takes place from various police organizations right across the province. They come in and they suggest, because they know what's best for their communities. They know what they're dealing with within those communities. They know where those funds should go within those communities.

And so we accepted—the unit expect—accepted applications from—or, suggestions from police services right across this province of ours, and they came up with what was needed in those communities. And I know in Brandon, there was a number of things that were needed, whether it was vests that were needed for—yes, all of these things—

**An Honourable Member:** Drones.

**Ms. Stefanson:** Yes, drones, you know, there were a number of things that were needed that would help keep the community safe.

And, of course, we listened to the then-chief of police, whoever that was at the time, and of course, those monies flowed to make sure that we keep those communities safe.

I do recall when I was minister of Justice, and that was 2016 to 2018 in the Province of Manitoba, I will say that I had the opportunity to work closely with those in the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, and they are wonderful people who work within that unit. And it's unfortunate that the Minister of Justice doesn't want to hear this either, how wonderful these people are and the incredible work they do to keep our communities safe. But I can tell you we thank them for that.

But I can recall, as the minister of Justice, we went out to—there was monies that was going—that were going to go to Morden-Winkler community, and it was going to go to the K-9 unit. Now, I know the Minister of Justice doesn't want to invest in K-9 units. Maybe he doesn't think that they're worthwhile in the province of Manitoba. That's unfortunate. But we, on this side of the House, know and realize what they do to keep our communities safe.

And so I can recall going out and meeting with the officers who handled the K-9 unit and managed the K-9 unit in the—in that area of our province. And they spoke about the incredible work that these dogs did to help save people within those communities. And we were able to be just a small part of that to make sure that they got the investments that they needed to ensure that those dogs were protected. Because we don't know. These dogs sort of go in first, right, when—and so we want to make sure that those dogs are protected.

So that was—we were able to invest in armour for the dogs to make sure that they were safe going into certain situations in that community.

And so I will say, Honourable Speaker, that that was certainly an experience I had. They were so gracious; they were so honourable. They recognized the importance of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. We certainly did. And the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, and all of this saying—that's just one example of the incredible things that The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act does.

The other area, Mr. Honourable Speaker, is certainly in the areas of 'helting' victims of crime. And

that's another area where monies would go from The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, they would go to those victims who have been harmed out there in the community. And I can think of no better way to support our police officers, but also support those victims of crime. And that didn't always happen before this, but it is very important that we help our victims as well.

And so, Honourable Speaker, I think it's very important as we go through this to talk about what the impact is of this bill. And I want to go back to the question-and-answer period with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe). *[interjection]*

And well, as the Minister of Justice continues to shout me down across the Chamber, I will continue to put things on the record on behalf of my constituents in the great province of Tuxedo.

### MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Midland.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I rise on a matter of privilege. You know, my colleague, the MLA for Tuxedo, has been consistently shouted down and attacked by the member opposite. In order for her to fulfil their duties, members should be able to go about their business undisturbed. Assaulting, threatening and insulting another member and *[interjection]*—yes; insulting another member of this House is inappropriate and unbecoming of a minister, and—including while a member is circulating within this precinct.

I believe that my privilege has been broken. I believe that my colleague, the MLA for Tuxedo's privilege has been broken with the outright disrespect from this Minister of Justice in this House today.

**The Speaker:** Before recognizing any other member to speak, I would remind all members to keep their comments very relevant to the matter of privilege that's been raised.

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** You know, Honourable Speaker, I've sat in this House now, on this side of the House—we all have—since October. We've been, you know, elected in these roles in November, back in the House. And in this role, on this side as government, it's been interesting to not only have endured an election campaign—I say this as not only the MLA for Union Station, but as a Black Manitoban—an election campaign that directly targeted folks like myself.

And Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

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

**MLA Asagwara:** —I'd hoped that that would be left there.

Yet on more occasions than I can count, I have been subjected to—by many members opposite, and I don't know all of whom, because I don't necessarily want to look over there when they're yelling things at me, on this side of the House, in regards to Black Lives Matter, in regards to myself and 20,000 Manitobans coming together during what was one of the most painful times for Black Manitobans in this province, across the country and across North America, when a Black person was killed on camera.

Being a Black member of this House, one of the first few, is something I do not take lightly. It has been incredibly difficult, as a member of this House, to endure many members opposite heckling me, demeaning and mocking one of the most painful times in our recent history, a pain that has endured far too often for Black Manitobans. I have said nothing, nothing, until this day.

\* (16:40)

Members opposite have no idea the harm they cause. None. And so I do find it interesting that that member stands up. I've never seen her stand up and address her members when they're hurling that harmful rhetoric my way, to this side of the House.

And I hope that since she's chosen to rise today and talk about the importance of all members of this House feeling comfortable to do their jobs, that perhaps she might consider talking to her colleagues and ensuring that, moving forward, they realize the comments that they make have an impact, and that all members of this House should be able to stand in their place and know that they're safe to do their jobs.

So I just take the opportunity to reflect on some of what has been consistently happening in this House, and what we have been subjected to, I have been subjected to, Black Manitobans have been subjected to by members opposite, and I sincerely hope things change moving forward.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

This is a very serious matter. I'm going to take it under advisement.

Having said that, the level of disrespect that has been shown in this House today needs to stop.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS***(Continued)***Bill 30—The Unexplained Wealth Act  
(Criminal Property Forfeiture Act  
and Corporations Act Amended)***(Continued)*

**Ms. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** So getting back to, or, trying to get back to the matter at hand here, which is Bill 30, Honourable Speaker, I think it's very important to go back, and I had the chance to peruse some of Hansard's—that had to do with the questioning of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) with respect to this legislation as to why he is bringing forward this legislation and what, in fact, is better in this legislation, what is a change in this legislation from the legislation that was brought in in 2021.

And, of course, the Minister of Justice at—said that he really couldn't answer those questions. And I think that that's very important, and it's important that I have the right to stand in my place here today as the MLA for Tuxedo, something I'm very proud of, and be able to, on behalf of my constituents, express my concern about a Minister of Justice that will not answer the questions that are asked of him in this Chamber.

So let me just talk a little bit about why I think this legislation was brought forward. I think during the campaign, that the NDP was concerned about the, perhaps, soft-on-crime stance that they had taken in the past. They were concerned because they realized the people in Manitoba didn't like that stance.

And so, in fact, what happened was their campaign manager looked at British Columbia. They looked at legislation that was brought forward in British Columbia in spring of 2023 and they said, hey, NDP government in British Columbia has brought this in, so we should look at bringing this in as well. We're going to make a promise here to bring in legislation that will deal with unexplained wealth and money laundering in the province of Manitoba.

So they went out on the campaign trail and they campaigned right across the province on this, saying that they were going to be tough on crime, that they are going to bring in this legislation. But the only thing they didn't tell Manitobans—and maybe they didn't know, maybe they weren't aware, maybe they didn't do their history or their research—they didn't know, perhaps, that that legislation already existed in Manitoba. It exists today as we have this debate on the floor of this Chamber today.

So, Honourable Speaker, I think it's very important that, during the election, they were obviously desperate, wanting to make a change to what the stigma was around the NDP at that time: being soft on crime, and change that page. And so, again, Brian Topp, their campaign manager, looked—you know, I think he's from Alberta. So he looked to BC, looked west of him, and said, well, they just brought in this legislation there, and so let's just copy that.

**The Speaker:** Please, I just caution members about the behaviour in this Chamber. I expect members not to be hollering back and forth at each other when another member is trying to speak. So, please, restrain yourselves.

**Ms. Stefanson:** I think it's unfortunate how many times that you and the Deputy Speaker have had to get up in this Chamber today, but we will continue on, or try to continue on, with respect to the debate on Bill 30 in this Chamber because it's very important that we point out as to why the NDP brought this legislation forward. It's something that they committed to in their campaign, not realizing, or understanding, that the legislation already existed in Manitoba.

In fact, the very province that they looked to as an example of this was British Columbia. And British Columbia, I believe, was also looking at Manitoba and referenced Manitoba when they brought in their legislation in 2023. They referenced the legislation that we brought forward in 2021, in May of 2021, to the Manitoba Legislature, and they referenced us. That was an NDP government in BC that referenced our PC government here in Manitoba as setting the example across the country of what we need to do to ensure that unexplained wealth and money laundering is dealt with in their province. And so they looked at Manitoba as setting the example.

Now, I'm not sure what happened during the election campaign of the, you know, under the leader, now the Premier (Mr. Kinew), but they didn't do their research. They clearly didn't do their research at the time because had they, they would not have come forward to promise legislation that already existed in Manitoba. So, whoops, they made a mistake during the campaign, and then they came forward and says, oh, well, you know what? We made a mistake, but you know what? I think we just got to change the legislation anyway or at least try.

So, fast for—we've come here, the Minister of Justice brings forward Bill 30 and, of course, says that he can't answer any of the questions as to why this is coming forward. And I think the reason is is because

they made a promise during the election. They were not aware that this already existed and they were—they obviously had to move forward and pretend that they were going in a direction that they promised to go in in the election campaign.

And so that's really why we're here today, because I'm not sure, you know, certainly, if this legislation—and, again, I think we asked this question: does this legislation give more tools to police officers to be able to do their jobs because, you know what? If it does, that's great; and we want to ensure that there is more legislation coming forward that will help give the tools to police officers to be able to take those criminals off the street, where they should be. But the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) couldn't answer those questions at the time. And so I think that's unfortunate, and I think, clearly, they didn't do their homework during the campaign and that's the real reason that we're here having this discussion today.

So, really, Honourable Speaker, it's nothing more than smoke and mirrors. But having said that, I think that, you know, there are—we want to support our police officers out there. We want to ensure that we are doing everything we can, as we did when we were in government, to make sure that those police officers have the tools that they need to be able to do their jobs, which is why we brought in the legislation in 2021 to enhance the supports for those police officers in the area of unexplained wealth and money laundering.

We recognized the importance of that, we recognized the importance of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. We recognized the history of that act. We recognized how many communities, right across this great province of ours, that we have been able to help through The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act.

\* (16:50)

We have given more tools to police officers. We've listened to those police officers in those communities. We have given them the monies from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to ensure that they are able to make sure that their communities are safe. And so that—and also a part of this is making sure that there's monies there for victims of crime in Manitoba, and so that's part of where these monies go.

And so, of course, having said all this, Honourable Speaker, I think it's important that in this whole debate, that we understand. And we know, on this side of the House, we are very supportive of any changes to legislation that has to do with strengthening The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, and we're all in favour of that.

But when a piece of legislation comes before the Chamber, and the Minister of Justice cannot get up and stand and say definitively what the difference is between the legislation that we brought in in 2021, and the legislation that he is bringing in and is before this Chamber for debate today, you know, it—there's more questions that come about as a result of that.

And I can tell you that my constituents in Tuxedo want to know why exactly is this legislation coming forward. And if the Minister of Justice could just tell us why, you know, and what is it that strengthens this act in the province of Manitoba. But he couldn't do that in the question period.

And I'm hoping that when, you know, eventually, this gets to—and, you know, because we all have to have our say on this bill; this is so important in all of our communities—that eventually when it gets to the committee stage, that we listen.

And I hope the Minister of Justice listens to Manitobans. And I hope that everyone who comes to that committee, he listens to them when it comes to the changes that he is making because it's very important that they know and understand. You know, if this is enhancing something, well, just let us know what it is. If it's not, then maybe just admit it.

And the other question, really, is, you know, why is this legislation coming forward when the legislation currently exists already in the province of Manitoba? But I think, unfortunately, it was a campaign promise that was made, Mr.—or Honourable Speaker. It was a campaign promise that was made by the NDP in a desperate attempt to try and tell Manitobans that they are tough on crime, when, in fact, those laws already existed.

So it's unfortunate that members opposite and certainly that the—and I'm not saying, you know, that the Minister of Justice is acting alone in this. I'm sure that, you know, perhaps the Premier (Mr. Kinew) came to Cabinet and told him that this is what you have to do. We ran on this in the campaign, so you come up with a piece of legislation that makes it tougher on crime for us in Manitoba. You come up with something that you can introduce in the Chamber to deal with unexpected—unexplained wealth and money laundering because—I know it already exists; we just found that out because we got the briefing from the Department of Justice, which I'm sure they gave them a debriefing on this and told them that.

But what's unfortunate is that, in a desperate attempt during an election campaign, they tried to put false information forward to the people of Manitoba and

suggest that The Unexplained Wealth Act, it—the portion of The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act did not exist when, in fact, it did.

And it did, and it was brought in in March in—or, sorry, May of 2021 under the previous minister of Justice, Cameron Friesen, at the time, and then expanded under the current member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) in 2022 to deal with the Cullen Commission report in expanding in the area of dealing with money laundering.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that we need to be here to have this exchange, where the minister doesn't have any answers to those questions. But I think it's very important to say that on our side of the House, we will always, always stand with our law enforcement professionals right across this great province of ours, always.

And we will always ensure that we support legislation that will enhance the tools that give them the ability to enhance what they do for protecting all Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The Honourable Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Thank you. Interlake-Gimli, because I'm—thank you very much for that warm welcome, to my colleagues, and I want to extend that warm welcome to all the past Justice Ministers on this side of the House that have actually made Manitoba a better place, the efforts that they've done. This current government obviously falls short of that.

And I want to talk a little bit about, you know, thanking the officers that serve in my constituency and of course around Manitoba and throughout the country, of all the hard work that they put forward to make the places safer that we call home.

In rural Manitoba, obviously we don't have the city police force there; the RCMP in my constituency do an amazing job. And in case government, the NDP was not aware, this program has been in place for a while and actually, some of my RCMP stations were—applied to get some funding. So I just want to talk a little bit about that but I'll get into that a little bit later, of all the great work that was done under this government to make this a reality.

Well, I'll start with one example. In 2021—so this goes to show how long that this legislation has been in place already. So this is back in 2021, the Fisher Branch RCMP applied to this fund to put on a four-day domestic violence workshop for at-risk youth. So they were able, successfully put on a course. They got \$20,000 to put this on. And they had that education program in the community.

So that's just one of many benefits in my communities where they have taken advantage of it. And I went and met the officers that put this on and talked to them about the importance of putting this domestic violence workshop forward to the community.

Also, in—another important tool that they were allotted, they applied for, and this is in a separate application for some of the proceeds of crime forfeiture act. Some of the proceeds were given to them for a—it's a little sled that you tow behind a snowmobile. So if they're out on Lake Manitoba or Lake Winnipeg and the snow's too deep to bring out a rescue vehicle, they can actually tow this little sled. It's an enclosed sled.

I'm sure being from, Honourable Speaker—from northern Manitoba, you've seen them often. You know, you see people pile their kids in it and they use it for fun. But they can also be used for rescuing people off the lake, for one example, or anywhere where a terrain is hard to get.

Of course, STARS responds as well and has responded in the past in my communities. But this sled, they were so excited. And again, I met the officers there the day that we did the announcement and it was—they just thanked us over and over and over again for the importance to have this tool in their toolbox.

And it just goes to show that back in—this has been a longstanding program in Manitoba and I don't know if the Justice Minister needs to look back. Maybe reach out to some of the past Justice ministers—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is next before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

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The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**