

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 30, 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 here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, and that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

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

Please be seated.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Acting Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Honourable Speaker.

House Business

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook), on House business.

Mrs. Cook: I seek leave to allow the Opposition House Leader to call Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, to the meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development being held tonight.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the Government House Leader to call—sorry, for the Opposition House Leader to ask for Bill 221 to be called for committee tonight?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

* * *

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, please, could you canvass the House to see if there is leave to withdraw and remove Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace), from the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Is there leave to withdraw and remove Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace), from the Order Paper?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow the member for Tyndall Park to second the motions for all stages of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member for Tyndall Park to second the motions for all stages of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Lamoureux: Please, could you canvass the House to see if there is leave to expedite consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, as follows:

1. At the top of orders of the day today, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, with the sections of the Committee of Supply that meet in rooms 254 and 255 to sit concurrently to consider departmental Estimates whilst the debate is ongoing. The following limited debate provisions will apply:
 - (a) first, the Minister of Justice may speak up to five minutes;
 - (b) then a question period of up to 15 minutes may be held in accordance with subrule 137(5);
 - (c) next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;
 - (d) lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and
 - (e) the Speaker shall then put the question.

2. Once Bill 41 passes second reading, it shall then be referred to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, meeting tonight in room 255.
3. The House shall then resolve into the Chamber section of the Committee of Supply to consider departmental Estimates.
4. Despite subrules 139(12) and 139(13), at the top of orders of the day tomorrow, October 31, 2024, the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 41, with the sections of the Committee of Supply that meet in rooms 254 and 255 to sit concurrently whilst the debate is ongoing. The following limited debate provisions will apply:

- (a) first, the Minister of Justice may speak for up to five minutes;
- (b) next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;
- (d) lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and
- (d) the Speaker shall then put the question.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to expedite consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, as described by the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux)?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

MLA Fontaine: Let's try this again.

Can you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to expedite the consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, as follows:

1. At the top of orders of the day today, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, with the sections of the Committee of Supply that meet in rooms 254 and 255 to sit concurrently to consider departmental Estimates whilst the debate is ongoing. The following limited debate provisions will apply:

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- (b) next, a member from the official opposition may speak up to five minutes;
- (d) lastly, each independent member may speak up to five minutes; and
- (d) the Speaker shall then put the question.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to expedite consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, as described by the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine)?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

* (13:40)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 41—The Provincial Court Amendment Act

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux), that Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, to the Legislature. This bill amends The Provincial Court Act to expand the subjects of continuing education for provincial court judge candidates to include intimate partner violence, coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships, and the experience of Indigenous peoples and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

In addition, the amendments will require judicial justices of the peace candidates to undertake to participate in continuing education or similar specified topics in order to be eligible for appointment. It will also ensure that the funding provided for these continuing education seminars does not lapse.

I was to thank my colleague for Tyndall Park for her important work on this legislation. I'm pleased to present the bill to the House for its consideration, and I hope that we can get this moving.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Tabling of reports? Ministerial—sorry.

Committee reports?

Tabling of reports?

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Will Gault

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): Honourable Speaker, today I rise in the House to honour and recognize an incredible community member and resident of Assiniboia.

Through his own personal story and work, he has proven himself time and time again to be a beacon of light and a symbol of hope for folks who are struggling with addiction and facing hardship and adversity.

Will Gault has become a community fixture here in Winnipeg. After struggling with addictions for several years, he made the decision to turn his life around in 2018. Since then, he has worked tirelessly to prove that change is possible, one day at a time. He hopes that by telling his story, he can help folks overcome their own struggles.

In 2018, Will founded and began operating the iconic hot dog cart, Willy Dogs. Together with his wife Courtney, they serve food to help—to people all over the city and try to bring joy and laughter to everyone.

They put all of their heart and passion into their work and have donated thousands of dollars to various non-profits and charities across Manitoba. Some of these organizations include the Children's Hospital Foundation, the Never Alone Cancer Foundation and the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre.

In the future, Will hopes his legacy will be one of hope, love and passion. He brings all of these elements into his work and aims to continue inspiring people to give back to their community. It is wonderful to have such a dedicated individual in our community, and I am inspired by his commitment to creating change here in Manitoba.

It is wonderful to have—it is my pleasure to have Will in the gallery with us here today. I ask that my colleagues join me in thanking him for the incredible contributions he has made to our community.

Laurent Kerbrat

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I rise today to honour a remarkable individual whose dedication and service has left a legacy. A name synonymous with passion, commitment and leadership: Laurent Kerbrat.

Laurent had devoted 35 years of his life to volunteering at the St. Laurent arena, which in 2020 was renamed in his honour.

For over three decades, Laurent was the heart and soul of this cherished space, making ice, sharpening skates, fixing equipment and ensuring everything was just right for generations of players, young and old.

Laurent's impact on local hockey is immeasurable, and his contributions were rightfully recognized when he received the RBC Local Hockey Leader award. This award celebrates those who give tirelessly to the sport of hockey, and Laurent has done just that, building not only strong ice, but a strong sense of community.

In 2024, Laurent's efforts were further recognized when he was inducted into the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame. This honour reflects not only his service to our local rink, but to the spirit of hockey itself.

Laurent's dedication to community extended beyond the hockey rink. Laurent served as a councillor for the RM of St. Laurent from 2014 to 2020, providing his leadership—proving his leadership extended beyond sports, shaping and guiding the community he loved.

Unfortunately, Laurent passed away in 2020, but his legacy most definitely carries on.

I would like to recognize Laurent's family who joins us in the gallery today: his lovely wife Barb, daughters Cindy and Denise and his grandson Scott.

Please join me in extending our 'sincere'—sincerest admiration for an extraordinary leader, a true pillar of our community and a man whose legacy will continue to inspire us all.

Thank you, Laurent.

Keira's Law

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I rise this afternoon to provide an update on Keira's Law.

On April 3rd, 2024, I had the honour of introducing Bill 209, also known as Keira's Law. A couple of weeks later, on April 16th, it passed through second reading with support from all sides of the House. I'd like to thank the member from Brandon West for seconding this legislation.

Bill 209 went to committee earlier this month on October 10. The lived experiences and testimonies that survivors shared were heart-breaking and moving, and exceptionally telling as to why this legislation is so important.

For those who do not know, Keira's Law is about providing judges and judicial justices of the peace with ongoing education on intimate partner violence, coercive control and sexual assault law. I was so pleased to see the legislation pass through committee, which brings us to today.

Honourable Speaker, the NDP government could have brought Bill 209 to a vote and had it implemented before November 7. However, earlier this afternoon, they introduced bill 41 in replacement of Bill 209.

The main objective is that Keira's Law be implemented as soon as possible, and if the only way this will happen is by the NDP government replacing Bill 209 with bill 41, so be it.

In closing, Honourable Speaker, we need this piece of legislation to successfully pass through this House, at this very late hour, by November 7, and I hope to have the support of all the MLAs for it to pass through.

Thank you.

Louise Chernetz

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Honourable Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour Louise Chernetz, a resident of Red River North, for her outstanding contributions to the Parkinson's community both in East St. Paul and in Manitoba.

Louise, who has Parkinson's disease, hosted her fourth Parkinson's SuperWalk on September 7 in East St. Paul. It was the 13th walk that she has participated in. Louise works to raise funds and awareness through her walk, which have helped her in her journey with the disease.

The money raised goes to ensuring Manitobans and Canadians do not have to face Parkinson's alone. They are—supported the launch of a Peer-to-Peer Support Program that matches trained volunteer mentors with those living with or caring for someone with Parkinson's.

And furthermore, the funds help improve access to the best possible Parkinson's care, the launch of the CareFinder, with—again, the launch of the CareFinder, a user-friendly online directory that connects people with Parkinson's services based on locations across Canada, led by expert clinicians, researchers to the better understanding to cause and all potential treatments.

* (13:50)

Louise has referred many newly diagnosed Parkinson patients to the peer program, and she herself has used CareFinder. Last year, the walkers raised over \$5,600, and over the course of 13 years they've raised almost \$75,000 for Parkinson Canada.

Honourable Speaker, Louise is joining us here today in the gallery with her husband George. I ask my colleagues to recognize Louise Chernetz for her

hard work and dedication to the Parkinson's community right here in Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Gas Tax Holiday

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I rise today to address the current government's decision to extend the gas tax holiday, which is not only misguided, but serves as a tax cut that disproportionately benefits the wealthiest among us.

A tax system should be designed to support those who need it most, yet this gas tax holiday does the exact opposite. The reality is that the majority of the savings are funnelled to high-income earners and corporations, putting working families at a disadvantage. Only 43 per cent of the tax revenue goes to Manitoba drivers, with an average saving of \$15 a month, while 57 per cent, or \$190 million of this borrowed money, goes to corporations and businesses who are not the ones struggling to make ends meet.

It's crucial to recognize that many Manitobans don't own cars. In fact, thousands rely on public transit as their primary means of transportation. Yet, what are we doing for these individuals? Year after year, transit fees continue to rise, and today, a round trip on the bus costs \$7. For many families, this is a significant burden. Instead of investing in accessible public transit, the government chose to extend a tax break that largely bypasses the very people who are dependent on public services.

Imagine if we redirected \$340 million spent on gas tax holiday to improve public transit. We could provide free transit for everyone in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson and Selkirk, truly helping those who need it most. This investment would not only relieve financial pressure on families, it would also encourage greater use of public transit, reducing traffic and benefiting our environment.

We must consider the impact of our overall quality of life. Every dollar spent on effective public services like transit, education and health care, is an investment in our communities.

By prioritizing a tax holiday for the wealthy, we miss the opportunity to uplift those who are struggling, to invest in our future and to create a fairer, more equitable society.

It's time for us to stand up for one Manitoba. We need a tax system that promotes fairness and invests

in the vital services that support our communities. Manitobans deserve better than a temporary tax cut that does little to alleviate their struggles.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to question period, I have several guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce.

I draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Duane Davison, Scott Phillips and Claude Martin, who are guests of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Jackson).

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

Further, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today former MLA for Logan, Flor Marcelino, and sports medallist Justin Manalo and his parents, who are guests of the honourable members for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) and Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino).

Behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

Further, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today the Manitoba branch of young politicians Canada, and they are the guests of the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross).

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

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today former MLA for La Vérendrye, Dennis Smook.

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

And I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Louise Chernetz and George Chernetz, who are guests of the honourable member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bills in BITSA Legislation Public Consultation Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I welcome our former colleagues Dennis Smook and, of course, Flor Marcelino to the gallery, who's joined us today, as well.

Honourable Speaker, the NDP is not being transparent or giving Manitobans a voice. They are instead ramming through five bills, with no transparency, stapled on the back of the BITSA bill.

Can I ask the Premier: Why is he doing that?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, I'd like to welcome Mr. Dennis Smook and Flor Marcelino back to the Manitoba Legislature. It's great to see you again.

The reason why we're passing our legislative agenda is because we were elected by the people of Manitoba to help with making life more affordable, to fix health care and to clean up the mess caused by the Progressive Conservatives under Heather Stefanson.

Now, of course, we're doing many, many things in this year's budget bill, some of them which have put money back in the pocket of people like you are cuts to the gas tax, which I'll remind the member opposite that he voted against. So I'm not sure what the PCs stand for today, but it certainly isn't lower taxes.

On this side of the House, we're making your life more affordable, we're fixing health care, we're working for you.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Premier did not run on ramming five bills through and taking away the voice of all Manitobans on some important legislation.

And what happened, Honourable Speaker? The reason why they ended up having to staple these five bills on the back of BITSA, and the Premier knows this, is because of the disorganization and the missing-deadline House–Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) who is too busy going on New York trips as opposed to representing Manitobans.

So I will ask the Premier: Can he confirm or deny that's actually the reason for ramming through these pieces of legislation on Manitobans and taking away their voices?

Mr. Kinew: Well, I can confirm that it's the member opposite trying to take away the voice of you, the voting public in Manitoba.

On October 3 of last year, you showed the Progressive Conservatives the door, and with good reason. That divisive, hateful campaign is something that PC leadership candidates are running away from, even as they try to lead that party.

One of the candidates, for instance, says, there's a spring cleaning that needs to happen before Manitoba trusts us again with government. This is a direct quote: I'm not disloyal but I'm also not stupid. I want to change the party. We need to throw the garbage out where the garbage is—in the garbage can. End quote.

So I'd ask the member opposite: Does he agree with this PC leadership candidate about the requirement to put the garbage in the garbage can? *[interjection]*

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

I would ask the First Minister if he's quoting from a public—or a private document, if he could table it.

Mr. Kinew: A quote from the Western Standard, a public media publication. So if I do need to table it, I'd be happy to get the subsequent copies brought in. But, again, this is publicly reported on a main—or, on a media outlet.

The Speaker: I thank the First Minister for clarifying that. He doesn't need to table it.

Mr. Ewasko: The only garbage that we're trying to throw out and hold them to account is this NDP Premier, who continuously puts misinformation on the record, Honourable Speaker. I'm not sure if he's doing it on purpose or he's just doing it deliberately.

Honourable Speaker, will the Premier stand in his place today, come clean and just tell Manitobans why he doesn't want them to come into the Legislature and discuss at committee these bills that he has stapled five of them on the back of the BITSA bill?

Mr. Kinew: First of all, I have to put on the record that our Government House Leader is doing an amazing job and so she has our full support. And I can only surmise that the frustration we hear on a given day is because they are consistently being outmanoeuvred by the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine).

Now, we know that the members opposite continuously look to their front bench and they can't wait for this period of PC leadership to be over.

* (14:00)

So they are confronted with a choice. On the one hand, they could vote for the leadership candidate who wants to change the party—direct quote: We need to throw the garbage out where the garbage is, in the garbage can, end quote—or they can go with the other option in their leadership contest who disagrees with that and, in fact, says that that is, quote unquote, really dangerous language. End quote.

So I would put it to the members opposite: Do they want to put the garbage in the garbage can, or are they going to go with the other guy?

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would just caution members that if they've suggested someone has deliberately put misinformation, that that's bordering on becoming unparliamentary. So just caution in how you use your words and how you choose your words.

Mr. Ewasko: I will, Honourable Speaker. Thank you for that guidance, your time.

Basic Personal Income Tax Amount Two-Hundred Thousand Dollar Threshold

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, earlier this week, this minister was unable to answer some very basic questions about his budget.

By be—by creating a \$200,000 threshold to claw back the basic personal amount, he has brought attacks on doctors, engineers and small business owners, all jobs that we're not only trying to keep in Manitoba, but recruit from other jurisdictions.

So I'll ask the minister again this very simple question: How did he come up with a \$200,000 threshold to start clawing back the basic personal amount?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, we know that Manitobans have been struggling during this period of high inflation and high interest rates. We know that the way that we can help Manitobans directly is by putting money back in your hand, ensuring that you can keep it in your pockets and you can spend it on the people that you love, the people that you care about.

That's why on January 1 of this year, we cut the provincial fuel tax, and we brought it to zero.

On the other side of the House, not only did they charge this fuel tax every single day, even when inflation hit record numbers; they voted against this tax relief measure just on Monday night when they

had the opportunity to stand with you, the people of Manitoba, and save you money. But that's okay. They don't have the numbers to stop this important legislative change.

We're moving ahead with our agenda, which is to save you money, to fix health care and to fix Manitoba's future after years of PC neglect.

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

Mrs. Stone: The Premier has no clue how they came up with this \$200,000 amount.

From my own quick research on public disclosure for Southern Health, registered nurses, LPNs, salaried physicians, medical specialists, Manitoba Hydro operating technicians, senior diesel technicians, protection technicians, all making above \$200,000. These are Manitobans that the minister is targeting and taxing.

So I'll give the minister another very simple question: How many Manitobans earn an income of over \$200,000 that will be impacted by his tax grabs?

Mr. Kinew: We know that another of the major economic failures of the former PC government was to listen to you, the people of Manitoba, who want to hear a cohesive vision about how we're going to create jobs, how we're going to build the future economy and how are we going to create a province that our kids want to stay in and build their lives in.

And so we're taking important steps to ensure that affordability measures such as the cut to the provincial gas tax are helping you right now. But at the same time, we're investing in the economic opportunities of the future.

I was very pleased to see in the Winnipeg Free Press this week an article that said, and I quote: The Kinew government has made it clear it is prepared to do what it takes to encourage economic growth in Manitoba, end quote. Again, that is an important review to hear one year into government.

But I would say this: our team, under the leadership of our wonderful Finance Minister, has shown that we can accomplish a whole lot working with you, the great people of this province, and the only thing that we're committing to today that the PCs oppose is the ability to keep working together for a brighter future for all our kids.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Stone: This Premier has no clue how to grow the economy. The best way to do that is to ensure that we are tax-competitive with other jurisdictions.

I've now heard that he has no clue how he came up with \$200,000 income threshold. He has no clue how many Manitobans he has now impacted with this tax grab.

The minister has put Manitoba at a competitive tax disadvantage and a labour disadvantage compared to our other neighbouring provinces. These are people that we're not only trying to keep in Manitoba, but also recruit from other jurisdictions. Either the minister is hiding these numbers or he has no clue what they are.

So why has he tried to not disclose these numbers to Manitobans is how many Manitobans his tax grabs are impacting.

Mr. Kinew: The way you grow an economy is by creating jobs. And that's what this team is doing. Five thousand more jobs created last month, hundreds of more jobs created in Transcona. I'll table the article, so that the member opposite can view some of the background information that was shared. Again, you'll see a contrast in approaches between how we're growing the economy and creating good blue-collar jobs and what they did to make businesses uncompetitive.

That article shows out that in addition to providing a financial incentive to help create new jobs at NFI Group, we're also doing away with the huge interest payments that Heather Stefanson put on to this homegrown Manitoba success story. They wanted to make it harder for businesses to compete by charging high interest rates. We're saying no. We want to invest in you, the blue-collar, the hard-working people who get up each and every day. We're on your side; they keep standing up against you.

Seniors in Manitoba Program Funding

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): We are well aware that the department of Seniors and Long-Term Care was a resounding success. Comprehensive senior strategy was formulated and there's a clear path to better care, a better standard of living and greater respect for seniors and those living in long-term care.

The NDP have not only eliminated that department, but they have drastically cut funding for seniors. From our budget of \$93 million in '23-24 under the PCs to \$39 million under the NDP.

How can the minister justify this \$54-million cut to Manitoba seniors?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we care deeply about seniors across this province. We care deeply about seniors being protected. We care deeply about seniors having housing. We care deeply about seniors having their needs met.

That is an approach and a value that didn't exist for seven and a half years, under the previous government. Under the previous government, seniors lost personal-care-home beds; hundreds of them. Under the previous government, they lost the people at the bedside who provided care to them each and every day. Under the previous government, seniors were not protected when allegations of abuse came forward.

We'll take no lessons from that side of the House. On this side we're going to continue to do the work on behalf of seniors across Manitoba.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Gimli-Interlake, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: The only thing deep from the NDP is cuts. Just two days ago, the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) informed this House that the NDP were now only spending \$21.8 million on seniors and long-term care. The minister attempted to put this in positive terms, but the fact remains that seniors are getting less money and less respect under the NDP.

I'll save the minister some time in formulating their answer. The seniors home modification grant program and the seniors hearing aid program were PC programs.

What is the real budget for seniors and long-term care, because the Finance Minister is saying it's a \$72-million cut?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, let's talk about the PC record when it comes to seniors. A net loss of over 200 personal-care-home beds from across the province. Hundreds of the health-care workers they count on cut and forced out of the health-care system.

Allegations of abuse against seniors dating back to 2019 went unaddressed, ignored by every single member opposite, on that side of the House. On this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, we respect seniors. We champion seniors. And we make investments so they can live in a dignified manner in our province. That is the work we're committed to doing. It's the work we're going to continue to do.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Gimli-Interlake, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: We all agree that any properly funded and executed program designed to benefit Manitoba seniors is a good thing. Since the seniors advocate act was added on to BITSA as an afterthought, I'm concerned that the NDP has not done their due diligent—due diligence in giving it the careful thought and planning it requires.

The minister couldn't give me a direct answer as to the operating budget for the seniors advocate, but I can save them some time and I will table that today. It is \$500,000.

* (14:10)

Does the minister truly believe that \$500,000 is enough to effectively 'protect' the interest of seniors after a \$54-million cut, or is it a \$72-million cut?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the only people in this Chamber for whom the seniors advocate is an afterthought are the members opposite, who stood up in this House and didn't allow for that legislation to be introduced in front of seniors who are here in the gallery on that very day.

These are the same members who have never advocated for a seniors advocate. These are the same members who won't sit down with seniors to talk about their needs. These are the same PC caucus members under the failed leadership of Heather Stefanson, who did damage to the care seniors depend on.

On this side of the House, we'll keep fighting for seniors and their families each and every day across our province, no matter what members opposite's track record encourages them to do right now.

Labour Bills in BITSA Legislation Public Consultation Concerns

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): There was a lot of labour legislation tacked on the end of the BITSA bill, all of which should have been a stand-alone bill and gone to committee for public input.

Can the minister share with us here who was initially consulted in the beginning of this labour legislation?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): You know, on this side of the House, we're proud to stand with workers across the province, 365 days a year. Finally, we've got a government in that's here to support workers, make sure their rights and protections are at forefront and centre and also especially with their safety and health.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Byram: If consultation was done in the beginning of this legislation process, there wouldn't have been so many amendments pushed through in the last minute. The changes to this bill needed public input, and this government failed to allow for transparency and input for Manitobans.

So I ask the minister: Why were there so many amendments made to their own bill?

MLA Marcelino: The legislation that we are putting forth is historic legislation for workers across this province. Never before have we seen this type of movement on behalf of workers in this province since the gains made from the 1919 General Strike.

This is—I am so proud of the work that we're doing here as a government on behalf of workers across this province, and—this is just the beginning, we're going to continue doing this important work for everybody in this province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Ms. Byram: Before the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) lost track of time and needed to staple this bill to BITSA to get it through the House, we all saw who this minister was consulting with. She has a press conference with the Canadian Labour Congress to discuss details of this bill. She didn't do the same with open-shot contractors because this government is picking winners and losers. They've even said as much.

Why did this minister force through a bill that will impact Manitobans' livelihood without public committee?

MLA Marcelino: Let's take a look at the PC record: their last seven and a half years, what was it like for workers across Manitoba? They took out the workers' safety and health advisory council. We are behind on types of workers' safety and health as it relates to asbestos, silica, personal protective equipment. Workers opposite—members opposite thought that that was red tape.

On this side of the House, we care about the workers' safety and health rights and protections, and we're going to fight for that every single day that we are here in government.

Fuel Tax Rate Increase Concern for Agriculture Sector

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, this week, this minister and his entire government showed their lack of respect for farmers and all Manitobans loud and clear. This government gave themselves the power to change fuel tax at the Cabinet table. This Minister of Agriculture didn't stand up against Greg Selinger's PST hike.

Why should farmers think he'll stand up against the coming gas tax? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you for the question from the MLA from Portage. I've been waiting for so long to finally get asked an agriculture question.

Let me say to the farmers that take yearly challenges of putting the crop together, bringing beef to the tables, to all agriculture sectors: I'd like to see a show of response and appreciation for our agriculture producers from the farms of Manitoba.

I'm really surprised that the member who asked the question, or the members opposite, didn't even stand up and showed any show of appreciation for the agriculture producers that take chances every year to bring food to our tables and for the people of the province of Manitoba. I really—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

The government bench needs to calm down a little.

MLA Bereza: We can't let this minister rewrite history, Honourable Speaker, considering it took committee meetings and Manitobans speaking up to get farmers included in this bill. Now producers are scared.

What reassurances can this Ag Minister give our ag sector that gas tax won't go up, considering he couldn't even get agriculture included in the first draft of the fuel tax holiday legislation?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I'd like to thank the member opposite asking the questions.

In the gallery today, we have three representatives that represent a fairly large area in the western part of our province. And we want to talk about the importance of cost saving that this government—that government

there chose to close 20-some-odd offices with the MASC organization.

And they don't want to be held responsible when we want to talk about cost saving for our agriculture producers, that they have to travel numerous more miles, some be-odd decision that was made by that government. Maybe that's why they've been encouraging the gas tax, because they were trying to make the benefit of their decision; our government had to correct for them.

That is a sad situation—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, I think the minister thought that we were talking about how far people had to go for an MRI.

Farmers are running their operations on razor-thin margins. While a couple of cents a litre might mean nothing to this minister, a couple cents a litre to a farm operation buying in bulk can be the difference in profit and loss.

Can the minister at least commit to giving farmers a five-year exemption before his government jacks up taxes? Or is his loyalty to his party and not to our fellow producers?

Mr. Kostyshyn: It is—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable First Minister and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), please come to order.

Mr. Kostyshyn: It is quite ironic that we talk about decisions that we're somewhat being accused of.

Crown lands: let's get into it. Let's get into it.

Honourable Speaker, you know what? If that—if the MLA from Portage has the audacity to sit there with a straight face and hold us accountable for a decision that 'objily' was greater influence a number of individuals in the province of Manitoba, to the point of 300 per cent rent increases to the producers. And yet, his predecessors from the Department of Agriculture and their government—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

* (14:20)

Sewage Spill Along the Red River Community Notification Process

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Hundreds of millions of litres of raw, untreated sewage spills into the Red River, and the NDP couldn't be bothered to notify downstream communities.

Treaty 1 Chief Bluesky said, and I quote: What's their notification process? Because I never received anything and I'm potentially the most impacted community, seeing that the water literally goes by my First Nation.

On behalf of Chief Bluesky and all downstream communities, why does this minister refuse to establish a notification process?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I thank the member opposite for finally asking a question regarding the environment. We know that Manitobans care deeply about their lands and their air and their water, and I'm very happy to get up and talk about our government's track record and success.

It's a very unfortunate spill. Something that we saw. It's something that we took immediate action on. We provided funding to the City of Winnipeg immediately to try to help and repair that infrastructure issue. But, you know, we've also introduced a nutrient target regulation, the first in Manitoba's history that's going to set—finally—finally here in Manitoba, we have targets that both industry, municipalities and the agricultural sector can work together towards.

This issue is something, the issue of lake—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, the need to establish a notification process starts at the top, with the minister being notified. On the day he learned about this massive sewage leak, Chief Bluesky advised he had a telephone call with the minister on a different matter. Chief Bluesky publicly shared that the minister was, quote, unaware of the spill, when he told her about the leakage.

Is this the minister's notification plan, to wait until downstream communities see the tsunami of human waste headed their way and tell her?

MLA Schmidt: Thank you to the member opposite for the question, although the premise upon which it was based was factually incorrect.

You know, when it comes to the health of our waterways, Honourable Speaker, we all want the same things. And our government is proud to work with municipalities, to work with our First Nations partners, to make sure that we are strengthening our environmental protection and making sure that everyone downstream is aware when these things happen.

If the member opposite was familiar with The Environment Act, which I suggest that he is not, he would know that there is a duty to report in The Environment Act currently. That being said, The Environment Act hasn't been open in years. The previous government didn't do a thing with it.

Our government—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, here's another fact. Last time the NDP were in government, the Global Nature Fund recognized Lake Winnipeg with a dubious distinction of Threatened Lake of the Year. Today the minister seems determined to reclaim this distinction.

The NDP's failure on this file has resulted in a \$6-billion lawsuit filed by First Nations communities downstream from Winnipeg.

Why should taxpayers be on the hook? Why should our lakes be threatened because this minister can't be bothered to establish a notification process?

MLA Schmidt: Manitobans have finally elected a government that cares about the environment—not only cares about the environment, but is prepared to act.

We've taken immediate action. We have provided funding to municipalities to help with their infrastructure. We have made long overdue amendments to The Environment Act, something that the previous government failed to do.

The member opposite has absolutely no credibility on this issue, Honourable Speaker. Under his watch, environmental inspections were cut by half. The department was gutted. We will take absolutely no lessons from the member opposite.

On this side of the House, we stand with Manitobans. We stand for the protection for our air, land and water, and we are prepared to act.

School Buildings in Manitoba Maintenance and Safety Concerns

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): In addition to the needed new schools that this government chose to cut, we have an abundance of schools desperately needing repairs. School trustees and superintendents have stated that there are many schools in their divisions in need of repairs, including fixing leaking roofs and replacing aging boilers.

Can the minister share with the House a timeline on when they are planning to provide funds and resources to fix and maintain the schools that need these repairs?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'm glad to provide an update to the House on some of the investments that we're making on—in our school capital projects plan.

So, in Budget '24-25, we've committed over \$53 million on major additions and renovations. We have also committed over \$9.3 million on HVAC replacements; 4 and a half million dollars on roofing projects; 2 and a half million dollars on accessibility projects and over \$3.6 million on structural projects.

Since the time we've took office, in fact, Honourable Speaker, we've already invested over \$21 million on completed projects. I'm happy to provide a further update to the House in my next answer.

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

MLA Lamoureux: According to the Brandon Sun, the Manitoba School Boards Association president confirmed the provincial government has not kept up with the funds necessary to make their timely repairs. She stated: It's like taking one step forward and two steps back. I table this article now.

What immediate steps will this government take to ensure these schools are safe for students?

MLA Schmidt: Again, I'm always glad to get up and speak about our school capital plan. But on this side of the House we believe that the structures that our children learn in are important, but we also believe very strongly that what happens in the classroom is of most importance.

And that's why I'm glad to update the House about the incredible success of our cellphone ban. The media has been covering this story and has been reporting some of the amazing results that we are seeing in our

schools. We are hearing, every day, from school divisions, from teachers, from parents and caregivers in the community, about the incredible success that the ban on cellphones has had here, in Manitoba.

We're hearing about kids engaging with the school community. We're hearing about laughter returning to the classroom—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Lamoureux: According to the Manitoba School Boards Association president many school buildings have become so uncomfortable and so unfit for learning that some parents are choosing to keep their children home from school. The repairs needed can affect one's ability to learn and even the health of many students.

What would the minister recommend we share with parents who are reaching out with concerns about sending their children to schools, right here, in Manitoba?

MLA Schmidt: I'm always glad to hear from parents about their concerns about what's going on in their children's classrooms.

But what I can share with the House is that our government has done something historic, something generational that is going to make sure that students do show up in schools, and that is our history-making, \$30-million universal school nutrition program.

Like our ban on cellphones in schools, the school nutrition program feedback that we are receiving from divisions, from educators, from families and caregivers is unequivocally positive. This is a program that is seeing kids fed. We are seeing kids show up to school that have never been there before—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

U of M Nursing Program Retention of New Grads

MLA Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Over the course of seven and a half years, the PC government went out of their way to make Manitoba's health-care system an unwelcoming place. Front-line workers were fired and disrespected. New grads saw Manitoba's health-care system as a toxic workplace where they didn't feel at home. Under our NDP government, graduates who want to work in health care are staying in Manitoba. They feel welcomed once again.

* (14:30)

Can the minister tell us about the new grads who are hoping to build their careers in Manitoba's health-care system?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleague for that wonderful question, and last week I was honoured to attend the University of Manitoba's College of Nursing pinning ceremony as we celebrated their graduating class.

We welcomed 105 nursing grads to the profession of nursing here in Manitoba; a profession, Honourable Speaker, that you know is very close to my heart. Ninety-seven per cent of those grads are staying in our province.

And I want to highlight the comments made by Vivian, their valedictorian, who took time in her address to talk about the resilience of nurses and about understanding the challenges, but being ready to take them on.

As long as we have nurses like Vivian graduating from our schools, then we can feel very hopeful. And it's my commitment to make sure that all nurses know they're respected, supported and championed by our government—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Border Security Illegal Crossing Concerns

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): On September 28, the RCMP became aware of a border incursion happening not far from Emerson. Six people from Sudan, Chad and Mauritania crossed into Canada illegally, and the driver from Winnipeg was charged with human smuggling. This is far from an isolated incident. Illegal border crossings are up 14 per cent this year.

Has the Premier raised the issue of border security and human trafficking with the Prime Minister?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, I want to, first of all, commend those workers at the border, law enforcement, the RCMP and everybody who works hard to keep our borders safe.

We've worked hard as a government to ensure that, of course, the resources are in place, but also that there's better communication between border services and the RCMP in surrounding areas to ensure illegal

activity—in particular human smuggling, which we see is on the rise—is something that's stamped out.

We're going to continue to work with community to ensure that folks—once they're here—are being looked after, but it's important to ensure that all law enforcement has—knows that we have their backs in the work that they do.

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

Mr. Guenter: The CBSA union has said that nearly half of all those crossing the border illegally have criminal backgrounds. The RCMP have said that crossing the US-Canada border between ports of entry is not only illegal, it is dangerous.

What message does the Premier have for those seeking to cross the border illegally?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Honourable Speaker, I mentioned before in this House that I like to give people the benefit of the doubt, but I am very—I'd like to caution the member, and I'm not sure exactly where he's going with his line of questioning.

What I will say is that for our border security and in terms of our law enforcement response, we place a lot of value on the work that they do and we want to ensure they have the tools necessary. In fact, that's one of the reasons we brought legislation here in this House around hidden compartments in vehicles and that includes sometimes large vehicles that are designed to move people.

What I will say is, is that when folks come to this province, they're going to find a welcoming home and a welcoming place where we want to protect their—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Labour Bills in BITSA Legislation Public Consultation Concerns

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, the NDP have been disappointing Manitobans for over a year now. They rebrand PC programs like my colleague from Interlake-Gimli mentioned earlier, they take credit for other people's work and worst of all, they hope that Manitobans won't notice.

When Manitobans do notice, they act as if it was an innocent mistake and claim ignorance.

My question to whomever wishes to answer is: Did the NDP think that Manitobans wouldn't notice them attempting to slip five pieces of legislation past them without public consultation?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The anti-scab legislation is historic; we've held numerous press conferences about it. The seniors advocate legislation is historic; we've held numerous press conferences about it.

We are delivering on our promises to you, the great people of Manitoba.

I want to say what else I noticed. I noticed Travis Kelce wearing a Blue Bombers jersey today. Travis, you're just like us; we are huge fans of Zach Collaros. Please consider this an open invitation to visit Manitoba at any time to cheer on the Bombers, and if you come, please bring Taylor.

The Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Petitions?

Point of Order

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): I rise on a point of order.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Assiniboia, on a point of order.

MLA Kennedy: During my member statement, I inadvertently said the wrong date for Mr. Will Gault's becoming sober. Instead of 2018, can I have the record to reflect that it should be 2015?

The Speaker: I'd just point out to the member that she does not have a point of order but I'm sure the record will properly accommodate the correct date.

* * *

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): On House business, Honourable—

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

MLA Fontaine: Could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to expedite consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, as follows:

1. At the top of orders of the day today, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, with the sections of the Committee of Supply that meet in rooms 254 and 255 to sit concurrently to consider departmental Estimates whilst the debate is ongoing. The following limited debate provisions will apply:
 - (a) first, the Minister of Justice may speak for up to five minutes;
 - (b) then a question period of up to 15 minutes may be held in accordance with subrule 137(5)

(c) next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;

(d) lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

(e) the Speaker shall then put the question

2. Once Bill 41—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the House to please calm down and quiet down because I can't hear the minister speaking and I need to hear what she's saying when she's asking for a leave request.

MLA Fontaine: 2. Once Bill 41 passes second reading, it shall then be referred to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, meeting tonight in room 255.

3. The House shall then resolve into the Chamber section of the Committee of Supply to consider departmental Estimates.

4. Despite subrules 139(12) and 139(13), at the top of orders of the day tomorrow, October 31, 2024, the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 41, with the sections of the Committee of Supply that meet in rooms 254 and 255 to sit concurrently whilst the debate is ongoing. The following limited debate provisions will apply: first—

(a) first, the Minister of Justice may speak for up to five minutes;

(b) next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;

(d) lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

(d) the Speaker shall then put the question.

The Speaker: Is there leave to accommodate the minister's leave request?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Petitions? Oh, the honourable—petitions?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, in accordance with rule 78(9), I am tabling the revised sequence for the consideration of the departmental Estimates.

Honourable Speaker, can you please resume Committee of Supply?

The Speaker: Been announced that we will now resume Committee of Supply.

As such, will the Deputy Speaker please take the chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)

ROOM 254

HOUSING, ADDICTIONS
AND HOMELESSNESS

* (14:50)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I do.

Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank the critic to their role and to the first Estimates process. I look forward to working collaboratively and answering some questions today.

On behalf of the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, I'm pleased to present the '24-25 financial Estimates. I'm incredibly proud of these investments and supports that we're providing in budget '24-2024 to address the challenges Manitobans have faced with regards to housing, homelessness, addictions and mental health.

For the first time ever, housing, homelessness, addictions and mental health have been consolidated into one single department with the purpose to break down barriers, as we recognize these issues are connected and multifaceted. Our government knows that many Manitobans are personally touched by these issues. People, families and communities are hurting.

Our government understands this and are committed to doing the right thing by taking action.

Much of my work is inspired by personal tragedy. Like others, I have lost family members and loved ones; my father, 22 years ago, and a few months ago, my sister. I know how difficult it is to—it is in supporting a loved one with addictions.

I'm also someone who has lived in social housing both as a child and also as a young parent. I know how important it is to have affordable housing, truly affordable rent geared to income, in order to get an education, to get a good job and live a fulfilling life.

One of our department's first actions when we formed government in October 2022—or 2023 was to begin working with community partners to connect with our relatives who are unhoused and housing with—and house them with wraparound supports to help them on their journey to wellness.

* (15:00)

I am pleased to share with members around the table that as a result of our work with community agencies over the winter, 91 people were permanently housed and another 157 were temporarily housed. In our first year of government, we have provided capital funding for 392 housing units; 118 of those are rent geared to income and 238 are affordable. These projects are in development or under construction.

We look forward to more announcements in the near future, and I am grateful to other levels of government and philanthropic organizations who have partnered with us to bring these—bring forth these much-needed housing projects.

Since forming government, our department has also increased funding to community-based programs that meet youth where they are, including the Indigenous Youth Mentorship and the Sources of Strength programs as well as funding for Manitoba's five health authorities to strengthen regional suicide prevention networks.

In Budget 2024, you will find the department is focused squarely on its mandate. We are fully committed to ending chronic homelessness in Manitoba in two terms, building more social and affordable housing throughout the province, supporting harm reduction initiatives and ensuring mental health and addiction services are available and accessible to Manitobans when needed.

The department's proposed 2024-25 budget reflects a core expenditure of \$673 million, which is an

increase of \$69 million from the adjusted 2023-2024 budget or an 11.4 per cent increase. The 2024-25 Housing, Addictions and Homelessness summary budget is set at \$794 million.

Budget for 2024 delivers the investments needed for our department to act on its mandate and provide wraparound supports to end chronic homelessness, increase safe and affordable housing, implement harm reduction initiatives and enhance suicide prevention and mental health and addictions services here in our province.

We know that ending chronic homelessness in Manitoba has to start with social and affordable housing and supporting folks along their housing and wellness journeys.

That is why our government is committed \$5 million for the delivery of homelessness support services to 285 individuals. These are people exiting homelessness, often who need supports to access housing, readjust to being tenants and maintain their tenancies. These support services will ensure people exiting homelessness are successful in their new homes and can fully participate in their communities.

The department is working to address the homelessness crisis in Manitoba by investing more than \$116 million toward building and maintaining social and affordable housing, including \$70 million in capital for Manitoba Housing, and investing to create 350 new units of social and affordable housing.

Budget 2024 will provide \$20 million for the 2024 capital grant program to increase the social housing supply in Manitoba through partnerships with community housing providers to acquire, renovate or construct new social housing units.

Our new \$10-million affordable housing partnership program will work with municipalities and Indigenous governments to facilitate the planning, development and conversion of buildings, of new, affordable housing units.

Building new social housing is central to our plan to end chronic homelessness over two terms. However it is equally important to preserve and improve our existing social housing. In addition to the capital funding mentioned earlier, our government has increased repair and maintenance budgets for Manitoba Housing by \$4 million.

We have also initiated two pilot projects with the Canadian Mental Health Association to deliver support services to Manitoba Housing tenants who are

exiting homelessness or fleeing gender-based violence. This new partnership is the first step in a long-term plan to establish a Housing First model within Manitoba Housing.

The pilot projects have successfully housed 25 people exiting homelessness and have CMHA support not only their clients, but also other tenants in developing key life skills and facilitating access to health and social services.

Our government is taking a strong approach to harm reduction and the addictions crisis by listening to public health experts and individuals with personal experience and working with community organizations and people on the front lines. This approach is sending us in the right direction to connecting Manitobans with the supports that they need.

Our government is committing \$4 million to deliver on the department's mandate items for addictions support and harm reduction. This includes establishing a supervised consumption site in downtown Winnipeg, providing drug-checking machines to reduce the harms associated with an unregulated toxic drug supply, and expanding the number of detox beds and treatment options for people struggling with addictions.

We are supporting the mental health of young people in Manitoba by committing \$1 million to deliver a province-wide suicide prevention strategy with a priority focus on Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

Budget 2024 is also providing \$1.1 million for increased support for existing integrated youth services with the establishment of two new sites, one in the north and one in the south in Manitoba. These commitments will ensure young people have the supports of their peers, schools, families and communities to thrive.

In addition, \$500,000 will be provided for the expansion of eating disorders programming and services. The department also remains fully committed to working with the Department of Justice to hire 100 mental health workers to work alongside law enforcement and community organizations.

Together, these commitments will ensure Manitobans have access to dignified housing and mental health supports and addiction supports to enjoy a good quality of life and a sense of belonging in their communities right here in Manitoba.

I am thankful to be in this position and support Manitobans, and I look forward to our dialogue this afternoon.

Miigwech.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Appears we're having some technical difficulties with broadcast, so we're going to take a very—hopefully—brief recess while we resolve that. So please don't go anywhere because we have a lot of Estimates to get through, so just pause briefly, please.

Thank you.

The committee recessed at 3:08 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:23 p.m.

The Chairperson: Will the committee please resume.

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

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Oh, yes, I'll say a few words.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you to everybody who is here today.

I just want to tell—just say how much of an honour it is for me to be here today to be able to do this job and to represent our—people in our province, people in my community, as well as the rest of the communities in Manitoba on very important issues that are close to most of our—or all of our hearts, really.

I don't think there's very many people that we can say that they don't have somebody in their family or their life that is going through difficult times, whether that's addictions or affordability and not being able to have that home security or food security. And I think it's really important for us to be here today to consider what we can do as the government or as—for me as opposition too to try to do as much as I can to find out information about how things are going in the province and how the government—current government is doing.

So I find it—I'm honoured to be able to do this on behalf of all of the people that are—or folks that are out there suffering or dealing with situations with family members and loved ones, whether that be housing, social housing or family members who are homeless

and they don't have anybody or anywhere to go and they don't know where they are.

And these are all such big issues, as well as mental health as well. Like, it's just—there's so much in our province that's—and it's devastating to see some of these situations. And that I can be here to help, work together with my minister and to do what we can for the province and for the people that we love. So thank you very much.

I do have a lot of lived experience as well as other avenues of experience, as well, with affordable housing and with Manitoba Housing specifically. I, as the minister mentioned, she's had to—she's used those services, and I can say I've done the same. So it's an important service that we need to make sure we protect and we work as hard as we can to make sure we have housing and that we take care of our loved ones who are struggling with recovery from addictions or, you know, affordability and mental health.

So thank you for having me here today, and I just wanted to say that I appreciate being here and being able to work together.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 24.1(a) contained in resolution 21–24, rather, point 1.

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

Please join us.

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

So I have my deputy minister, Catherine Gates. I also have assistant deputy minister, Carolyn Ryan; acting executive director, Sean Leggett; acting executive director, Vicki Toews; assistant deputy minister, Brian Malkowich, and then my amazing director of Ministerial Affairs, Andrée Forest.

So I want to thank you all for being here and for supporting—and Brian—oh, sorry, Robert—and also my assistant deputy minister and executive financial officer, Robert Cann.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: According to our rule 78.16, during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner with questions put separately on all resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates that questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Hiebert: My first question is about affordable housing and social housing.

Can the minister explain the difference between social housing and affordable units—the social and the affordable units? Sorry.

* (15:30)

Ms. Smith: I want to thank the member for that question.

So, affordable would be like social rent geared to income, so based on your income, 30 per cent of your income. Our Manitoba Housing would be a good example of that, so that's why we made the commitment to put more investment into maintaining our Manitoba Housing.

As you know, the prior government made cuts to that budget by 87 per cent, left a lot of those units boarded up, sold off a lot of those housing units, which left a lot of people unsheltered and put us into a real predicament today because there was a lot of units that could've been used today. So those were really truly rent geared to income.

So we've been able to house over 1,500 people. I know I said in the House a couple of weeks ago that it was 1,200, but it's now 1,500 people we've been able to house since we've come into government, since November, actually. So we're really proud of that because these are folks that would otherwise be homeless or they're exposed to gender-based violence. These are folks that are coming out of care, kids that are, you know, exiting the child-welfare system, and, really, we've made it a mandate of ours to, as you know, in the next two terms, to end chronic homelessness.

So we've really focused on our own housing, but also, we also have an EIA shelter benefit, and that's to provide a benefit to folks so that they can access non-Manitoba Housing. So, if they want to go into the private market or if they go into a non-profit housing, there is a shelter benefit to them as well. So a lot of non-profits will provide social, affordable housing. So, if you go into the private market, let's say a two-bedroom is like \$1,600—that's market value rent. So that's not social and affordable. So what's affordable

to me isn't affordable to someone that's living in a tent or someone that's on EIA.

When we look at affordable or rent geared to income in Manitoba Housing, we really look at your income and it's 30 per cent based on that. So there's a mix that's operated. So there's government-run, which is run by us, so which is the Manitoba Housing, and then we have non-profits and there's several of them. We've also provided some funds to those groups to be able to maintain rents at the rates that they're providing to the tenants.

As we know, under the former government, there was a building, Lions Manor, that was sold off and many folks were at risk of losing their tenancy, and that was a non-profit. And we want to ensure that these buildings that are supporting folks in our province at affordable rent geared to income with some shelter benefits or rent supplements are able to maintain that level of rent of—amount. Because if they go into the—if they sell off that building, those folks will be unable to afford market rent and then they'll be displaced. And often that's their community in those buildings, so that's why we've been able to provide that. We've heard loud and clear from non-profits that they need extra funding to be able to continue to operate as non-profits and provide that level of support to tenants.

We also have the private market, which I've talked about a bit. So Rent Assist will kick in to a certain percentage where people can get a benefit that'll top up their rent so that they're able to pay higher rents in those units. And yes, we've been able to house about 1,500 people and we're very happy about that, and we're continuing to move that needle in terms of maintaining and supporting people here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you very much for that answer to that question.

I just wanted to just bring up a question about, in December, the minister paused the sale of 19 public-housing properties. Can she provide a list of the Manitoba Housing properties these were?

And just to bring a little information up, I am aware that there are some Manitoba Housing units that are sitting empty currently, and I'm just wondering if the minister is aware that, right now, they're sitting empty and they're in need of repair. And there are private investors who are waiting to purchase those—like, those properties, and that they're ask—being asked to sign—and willingly sign—an agreement that they will

continue with the low-income housing amounts for the people who will be moving into those spaces for up to 18 years to—like, after they've purchased and invested in fixing up these properties.

So I don't see how that's not just a win-win for everybody rather than having these properties sitting empty. They're willing to come in and do the renovations and sign an agreement that they will continue the low-income Manitoba Housing amounts that people will be—are paying through the program.

* (15:40)

Ms. Smith: So as the member will know, under the previous government, there were a lot of sales that happened, of social housing. And 185 Smith is one example of one sale that was over 300 units. This, you know, today, would have given over 300 people access to housing. There is currently a need for that in our province. And under the former government there were even more sales.

And when I was, you know, blessed in this position, one of the first things I looked at is we needed to secure this crown jewel and ensure that we had access for folks here in Manitoba to good quality, affordable, safe housing. And the only way we could do that is by ensuring that we, as Manitoba Housing providers, could provide that as an asset in-house.

Under the former government, there was a 20 per cent change in management. So 20 per cent were either sold off or management was changed, so went into the hands of someone else to manage, which really tied our hands as government, in terms of who could access that housing.

So if we wanted someone, for instance, that was in an encampment today, to get into one of those units because it was vacant, we couldn't just go to that housing provider because it's not managed by us, and say to them, we need that suite today for someone who's—needs housing.

We've taken a different direction as a government. We've looked at Manitoba Housing as a responsibility as a government, to provide housing for Manitobans that's truly rent geared to income, that is affordable, that is safe, that is quality and that provides and meets people's needs where they're at.

In 2017, there was \$46 million that was invested by the previous government; 2018-19, it went down to \$25 million; 2019-20, \$36 million; 2020-21, \$31 million; 2021, \$37 million. And then, when you look at what our government's investing today, we're at \$77 million.

So you can see the difference in investments and how we take the responsibility and the—this as a sacred responsibility of housing people. But not only that, but as Manitoba Housing is a crown jewel of investing not only in housing people but also in the staff—the folks that are working on the front lines and in supporting these folks.

I was fortunate enough to go to Dauphin, to Brandon, to Portage la Prairie; all over the province, to many of our housing—Manitoba Housing units—and meet so many amazing front-line staff that are working to ensure that, you know, our most vulnerable folks are staying tenanted, successfully tenanted. And that's not always easy because we know that, you know, this—the landscape in Manitoba has changed, that the way that we house people and the supports that they need have changed in this province.

And I just, you know, I want to uplift and, you know, I can't say enough about the amazing work that our Manitoba Housing staff are doing on the front lines, because they are doing incredible work with what they had. We've continued to staff up and provide more supports because we've been listening to them; we've heard them and we know that they need more supports in order to continue to keep people successfully housed in the units.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you very much for that information. I just want to say that it's unfortunate that, for many, many years, the crown jewel, as the minister referred to, was ignored by the NDP government, and it fell in disarray. And I'm sorry that that happened because now it falls on everybody in, like, in the last—you know, now in the current government and our government in the past that the repairs have to be done, and it's overwhelming, I'm sure.

But can the minister just let me know if she has a breakdown of the 1,500 that have been housed that she mentioned earlier? Can she give me a breakdown where those are—where those housing—or where they been—where they're currently being housed now that—in those spaces?

Ms. Smith: So I don't have the update on the 1,500, but I can give the member an update on the 1,200 that I referenced in the House.

So again, I want to uplift and, you know, just send my gratitude, and, you know, the gratitude from our government out to all of those Housing First organizations—all of those folks that are on the front lines that are working to support all of these folks and getting them housed. Because it takes a tremendous amount

of work to not only support these folks in getting them housed, but also to continue to support their tenancy.

These are, you know, folks that are case managers, these are folks that work at organizations like women's centres, End Homelessness Winnipeg, in shelters and so many other places across our province, whether it's in Brandon or Thompson or Portage la Prairie—like all over our province, there's great work being done by so many organizations. And I just want to uplift and just say, you know, we are very grateful for the work that they're doing because, without the work that they're doing, we can't do the work that we're doing. So I just want to say that, first of all.

So in November to October, there were 141 that were discharged from hospital; there were 126 that were coming out of domestically violent relationships; 811 of them were homeless. And then from November to October, 77 were from the hospital; 120 of them were gender-based violence; 725 of them were from the shelter. And these, again, were—125 of them were from our Housing First teams; 32 of them were provided rent supplements; 129 of them came out of our winter response.

The member would remember—would recall that we brought together a table of folks from organizations who had been working on the front lines with folks that were unsheltered, such as Ma Mawi, Siloam Mission, different organizations. Folks from Brandon came and we came up with a preventative strategy to house people in the winter, and really looking at long-term housing and making sure that people had supports throughout.

So not just, you know, putting people in shelters—that's a short-term, right? But looking at, longitudinally, how do we ensure that people stay tenanted with the wraparound supports because we know that we can't just put people in homes.

All too often, you know, as the MLA for Point Douglas, the three shelters are in my riding.

*(15:50)

I would go time and time again, to the shelter and, you know, I'd see those same faces, and too often they'd say to me—I'd see that face again, they'd be housed and I'd say, why are you back? They weren't getting the supports that they needed.

So this department was created because of that. Because we recognize and we are committed to providing quality, safe, affordable housing with supports that are going to help keep people tenanted. You

know, whether it's mental health supports—we know that there's, you know, folks that whether they have brain injuries or, you know, everyone struggles with mental health, right? And I don't think any person in this province is immune to, you know, struggling, and at some point needs some kind of support.

So we've, you know, enhanced our ACT, FACT and PACT teams—or ACT and FACT teams to provide supports to 300 more Manitobans in this province. And, you know, we're just continuing to support and meet folks where they're at, and this is in support of that. And 725 of these folks actually were housed within Manitoba Housing units.

So again, you know, working on maintaining, turning around units and investing in our own crown jewel has made a real impact and a real difference.

Mrs. Hiebert: I'm just going to let my colleague here ask a question really quick.

The Chairperson: Which colleague?

An Honourable Member: Member from—

The Chairperson: The member for Dawson Trail.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Okay, I'm more going to back up two answers, just because I heard something in your answer that I—kind of tweaked a question in my brain.

You were saying that when there's housing units available, as government, we're now kind of saying who goes into those. Are we considering the safety of the other residents within those facilities already? Because I recall back—I think it was even under our time so it's not really a partisan thing—there was a murder of some kind that had occurred from a tenant that had not been evicted from a housing unit.

And I also know of a single mother a number of years back who was saying that she was in one of these Manitoba Housing units and the safety was—it was out of control because she could not—she almost wished that more single mothers had been placed together.

So that's—just going back to that initial saying that we're just plopping people there or whatever is a little bit concerning to me. I don't know if I just misheard it or if it's something that, you know, is just needing further review. It's not a shot; it just tweaked something with me there.

Ms. Smith: So I just want to disabuse the member of the language that they used around plopping people

into housing because we just don't plopp people into housing.

We ensure that, you know, we're meeting people where they're at and we're providing housing based on what their needs are. That's something that I'm very proud of our team in terms of restructuring the way that we're doing housing. Because that was very evident under the previous government in terms of selling off, you know, not providing the supports that were needed in the buildings that, you know, provide—that were really getting unsafe.

And when, you know, our government, when we took government, we heard that loud and clear from, you know, the co-ordinators, from the managers, that, you know, they were understaffed, they didn't have the supports that they needed, that they weren't feeling safe in the jobs that they were doing. And we were able to hire 10 tenant service co-ordinators, four program managers. We're working on hiring two Indigenous spiritual-care workers to really support and bring together a team of people that are really working on meeting people where they're at.

So what happens is, in order for tenants to come into Manitoba Housing, they have to—it's income tested. So again, they have to qualify. And then they do—they go through an interview where they're assessed based on their needs.

And I just want to uplift Brian, because Brian works a lot on our housing team. And everyone knows Brian by his name. I met with a lot of our tenants, and they speak highly of the work that he does. And all of our, you know, tenant co-ordinators and any building you walk into, they know them by name because they have a relationship with them.

And so it doesn't always work. It's not a perfect system. But we've identified, you know, areas where we need to improve, and we've put in improvements in those places.

We also have four new mobile security officers so—that are able to respond when there's a need. And, again, these tenant co-ordinators are there so that we're not having to have mobile security, so that the relationships are being built, so that proactive work is being done and, you know, fires are put out before they happen, right? And people—if people need extra supports, then we—we're able to find them extra supports. And many of the folks that are living in some of the Manitoba Housing units will have case managers or be working with organizations who also work with our Manitoba Housing staff. So if there is

an issue, they will call them and let them know, and they will come and work with them.

So it's not like, you know, we're like, you know, finger-waving, but it's like, how do we work collaboratively together, to work together for the best needs of the tenant to make sure that they're supported and that they stay successfully tenanted. Because, you know, as you will know, life happens, right? Sometimes something happens in your life where there's a crisis, and, you know, you just need that extra support.

So I'm—you know, we have a couple of pilot projects that I'm super proud of; one in Dauphin and one at 44 Kennedy. And if you're around on Friday, they're unveiling the mural that's on the side of that building. So if you're around to go and see that mural, it's going to be a very beautiful mural. But CMHC is in there, so Canadian Mental Health Association.

And prior to us coming into government, 10 different workers were coming in to support 10 different people. And, you know, our brilliant staff, Carolyn here, identified that and said, you know, we have 10 different workers coming in to support 10 different people. We should do a pilot where we, you know, have everyone supported in this building that needs support. Why don't we take these 10 workers and create a model where we can support everyone in this building that wants to have support. So we converted some of this building so that everyone can come and get support from a team of workers. And it's worked really well. And we've done the same thing in Dauphin.

So, you know, the level of support that people are receiving in Manitoba Housing has really increased, and people are really staying successfully tenanted.

* (16:00)

The Chairperson: A reminder that putting questions and answers must happen through the Chair, just for all members. Thank you.

MLA Lagassé: Okay, so just a bit of a follow-up. It was not intended to imply we're just plopping people. It just was the language that came to mind at that time.

So in these situations, I've heard we're talking to a lot of case workers, all of that. But we're not necessarily—are we talking to the tenants themselves and advising—like, getting their advice?

This may be a separate question, but it's just something that also came to my attention. Was—regarding the bedbug problem. And I know it's a huge problem within Manitoba Housing. And there have

been organizations that have also suggested different ways of dealing with the bedbugs. And I'd be more than willing to talk with the minister outside of this about that.

But it's just—these are the concerns. And I'm just wondering, are we talking regularly with the tenants in each building?

Ms. Smith: So our tenants' service co-ordinators are heavily involved with the tenants. Our staff just did a tour and actually met with residents. I went on a couple of the tours and actually met with residents, heard their concerns. And that was why we hired more staff and more service providers on the front lines to support folks.

We—in all regions of the province, when it comes to pest management, we hired more people to support. Because when I was in opposition, I heard people were getting evicted because they couldn't move their belongings, and so they would get evicted from Manitoba Housing for not being able to move their belongings.

So there's been someone hired; there's been money invested so that that service could be provided. So if a senior, let's say, needs that service—sorry—or if, you know, someone that's struggling with mental health issues doesn't want someone come into their suite. You know, you have someone that can come in and provide support to that person to be able to help them manage someone coming into their suite. There's a lot more services today than there was, you know, prior.

There—the bedbugs, it's actually 50 per cent lower than it was in 2015, so we've seen a significant decrease across the province in terms of bedbugs, so that's a good news story.

And again, I want to uplift and, you know, say—I can't say enough about the people who are working on the front lines to help and support the tenants and to make sure that, you know, those bedbug sprays are being done. Because I know it's annoying when you have to move your furniture every month for someone to come in and spray, but once it's done and, you know, there's no more bedbugs in your apartment and in your building, then you're kind of bedbug free. But it is an annoyance to be able—to have to always continually do that.

So I just want to say, you know, to those tenants that have had to do that, it's annoyance, but at the end, you know, you have a bug-free apartment or unit. And again, we've invested more supports for people to be able to have some—with mobility issues or any other

issues—to be able to have that support to be able to do that.

The other thing that we've ensured that we're doing is making sure that folks have an avenue to provide feedback. So again, our tenant service co-ordinators are that conduit, so—we also have some case managers that work on the front lines. So like I said, they might have a case manager from a shelter, they might have a case manager from let's say a woman's centre, west central women's centre that they worked with, or another organization that provides support for—End Homelessness Winnipeg is another one. And they continue to support them no matter where they live and where they've moved to. And they work really collaboratively with our housing team.

And we look at it as like a team approach, so it's not like this is one organization over here and Winnipeg housing is—or Manitoba Housing is over here. But we look at it as, how do we look—work collaboratively to support this individual, and what do they—what are their needs, and how do we work collaboratively? And it's really been amazing how we've been able to do that. Like I say, Brian has been amazing, Carolyn, really the whole team in terms of providing those wraparound supports to keep people tenanted.

You know, our biggest challenge here in the province right now is building more housing. That's our issue, right? Under, you know, the previous government, there was a lot of housing that was sold off, so now we're, you know, having to play catch-up and really work on getting more housing built, work on maintaining the housing that we have, because it was left unmaintained. So now we're looking at—you know, we did an audit, what could be, you know, fixed in a 30, 60, 90 and get those units turned around quickly.

I did a walkthrough of some of the units, and, you know, Brian showed me what a unit would take to get turned around and how long that would take.

Mrs. Hiebert: Going back to the question about security for the Manitoba Housing units, just a little more information or details on that.

We know that, you know, Manitoba Housing, yes, they—you guys do—like, they do a great job on taking care of their tenants and meeting the needs that they have, and I—and it's just something we can't replace. There's just—it's such an important thing to have that housing for everyone who needs it in our communities. And I've experienced it myself, personally. So

it's important—what an important job that everybody does, and it's so much appreciated.

Which goes back to, again, you just—the minister just mentioned that there were four mobile officers—security officers hired or in that position. And I'm just wondering how, four, how do they cover all of the Manitoba Housing units?

And specifically if there's a Manitoba Housing unit who has tenants who are scared for their safety—and not because of who's living in the building with them, but more who's coming into the building to other apartments.

* (16:10)

Whether there's, you know, people doing illegal practices or things inside these buildings or these apartments and there's somebody who has a disability living next door who can't really defend themselves, for example. Because many people with disabilities live in Manitoba Housing units, people with mental health issues, like you said, seniors.

So how do we—how is—are those tenants being taken care of when there's only four mobile officers? And how do they—who's the intake worker? Who decides where those four officers go to meet the needs of those tenants that are needing safety—that have safety concerns?

Ms. Smith: So when I referenced the four new security officers, I—those are in addition to our 36.9 FTEs that we already have. And those four new mobile security officers are going to be stationed solely in Central Park, because over half our calls were dispatched to Central Park.

So this is going to be a team dedicated just to Central Park so we can free up the rest of the mobile team to be able to—security officers to be able to go and work in other buildings as needed with other tenants.

So they provide security services that improve the safety and well-being of tenants and employees, and that's a key priority of our government. So Manitoba Housing, when we took government, that was something that we committed to. We wanted to ensure that we provided safe, affordable housing for Manitobans, and that's why we added more security officers, but we also added, like I said, more tenants service co-ordinators to be able to support Manitobans.

Manitoba Housing has more than 300—or 3,000 security cameras in service at 77 properties throughout the province. The Housing Communi-

cations Centre operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. And the call centre is in Winnipeg, and there's a number that tenants call and then they dispatch the security officers out to wherever they're needed. So I said that we added those four additional mobile security officers to our workforce and, again, Central Park-concentrated.

We also partnered with cadets in Brandon. So in Princess Towers—so, we had an empty space that wasn't being utilized and we saw an opportunity to have a collaborative partnership with the cadets and for them to build some community relationships with the folks that were living in our Manitoba Housing building. But there's also a park there. Our Safe and Warm Shelter was right across the street. A lot of folks hang out around that area, so we really wanted to support and build collaboration amongst all of us that were in that area.

So that's really been a success. They have a good relationship with the folks that are in—living in the building. The folks that are living in the building have sung praises about the value that they brought to the building, but also the folks that are living in and around that building, and even folks who are unsheltered that live in and around that building—the relationship that they built with those cadets that are housed in that one space within our Princess Towers.

Since 2017-18, 67 front-line positions were cut in Housing, and that included security staff. So we're taking a different approach, as I said. We want to continue to support, listen to tenants and meet them where they're at. And that includes, you know, when we hear Central Park needs more support, adding those mobile security officers, being able to set up a command post there with a bunch of cameras. And again, it's about meeting people where they're at, supporting them, keeping them successfully tenanted.

And sometimes people just need, you know—I know the member had talked about people feeling unsafe, and we want people to feel safe in our Manitoba Housing units. And that's why we're investing more in security and more in tenant services to provide that level of safety and security, and keeping Manitoba Housing as our Crown jewel and continuing to invest so that people can have a place to live.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you to the minister for that.

Can the minister—I know that the minister alluded to this already earlier in her opening statement, but can she—or can the minister please update us on how many mental health workers have been hired to go

alongside law enforcement agencies at this time? But break that down into rural, and how many in the city.

* (16:20)

Ms. Smith: So I was just up in Thompson last weekend, and I was so blessed to be up there for KIM's announcement where they were rolling out their mobile outreach van, which is serving five communities plus the town of Thompson.

I got to meet six of the workers. So there are six in Thompson that have been hired, and they're hiring more. And I got to listen to five folks that have already been impacted by the experience of these folks that are providing services. So they're providing primary health care, and they're providing harm reduction.

And these were folks that were unhoused, mainly. But they talked about how they had never—well, one participant talked about how they had not accessed any health care at all and that when they received health care from this mobile unit, how caring, compassionate and non-judgmental the care that they received was.

There was another individual that talked about meeting them where they're—were at and not, you know, judging them and providing, you know, health care because they had gone to the hospital, then they felt that they were judged. And they didn't feel like that they—they didn't feel that they got the level of care that they should've been given at the hospital.

Another participant talked about spreading the word about the services that this mobile outreach service was providing. And again, like, this is one service that's going to provide services to five communities plus the town of Thompson; that is mobile, coming and providing services to the community where they're at.

And, you know, just to meet the folks that were providing the care—there was six. They were all First Nations. They were all women was the other thing.

And when they talked about, you know, the care—there was one that just talked—the care that they're providing and why they're providing it and it's to connect people with care—long-term care, right? People that may have an illness that don't even know about it, right? And that prevention piece and how do you help people connect to health care in a relational way, in a trusting way, in a way that is going to have a warm hand-off at the hospital so that they can, you know, get further treatment if they need it.

Another one talked about, you know, the harm reduction and receiving care from that mobile unit. And they also connect people with services beyond that. So if they want to get into treatment, if they want to get into detox, you know, if they're wanting to, you know, get other services, that is their—one connection that they can get.

So I just want to, you know, again, uplift and honour the work that's being done in Thompson, in the KIM mobile outreach van as well, because they are doing phenomenal work in their Wellbriety Centre, in this mobile outreach and in so many other programs in Thompson as well.

We also have our FACT and ACT teams. As you know, we made an announcement a few weeks ago, and that's really to support people and meet them where they're at and help them live in the community. So these are folks that would otherwise be hospitalized, and it's a continuum of care.

So, you know, if you need more levels of care, you know, you would be with the ACT team. The less level of care you need, you go down to the FACT team. Correct, okay. And then you can, you know, if you find yourself in crisis and you need more support, you can go back up to the FACT. Like, it's a continuum of care.

* (16:30)

And it's to ensure that people are successfully supported in living in the community. And these are folks that would be incarcerated, that would be living in encampments, that would be otherwise in the hospital because of mental illness.

So again, these are folks—and then we have more, but I'll get to that in next answers.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you very much for that.

And, yes, like the ACT evidence-based service delivery model that's happening, I just want to do a quick shout-out to the mental health workers and everybody who's been doing this. There's a pilot project that's been going on at Eden Mental Health in Winkler, Steinbach and Winnipeg, and just the job that they're doing is such an amazing job for them.

So thank you for setting us all on the right path for—to get that going and to have that model so that we can use that and we can service and take care of those that we need to take of with mental health. So shout-out to that organization for setting the way for all of us.

And I just want to again ask, I guess, of those 100 that you talked about that—the added support for the police services, how many of those have been hired and if—how many are in rural and how many are in the city, specifically? If I could get that information as well.

Ms. Smith: So the ACT and FACT teams, there's 22 workers that will be hired. We have a crisis and consultation staff for youth. Six have been hired of 13. And, again, these are to support youth. We recognize and heard from so many community organizations that were youth-serving that there was a need for more services. That, you know, often these were under-represented, underserved. And our team, you know, started immediately looking at how do we put more supports into the system to support and meet youth where they're at. So I'm very, you know, proud that they were able to support that.

We are working on cross-collaboration across departments so we're working with Families and Justice. So I'm really proud of our government in being able to not just work in silos within our own departments, but to work across departments.

You know, we have an amazing DM that—Catherine Gates, here—that—and many other DMs that have a DMs table that work around looking at how do we work collaboratively together around common spaces, you know, whether it's youth in care, whether it's, you know, kids that are exiting the justice system or kids that are exiting the child-welfare system that need housing or folks that are coming out of incarceration that need housing or folks that are coming out of the hospitals.

And we're working with seniors and—or Minister Asagwara. You know, how do we support in housing folks as well. So we're working across departmentally on so many different levels, which I think, you know, really alleviates some of the pressures in so many areas, because we have so many hands on deck that are doing such phenomenal work in identifying gaps that maybe our department isn't able to, you know, pick up, but another department is able to. And then collaboratively we work together to support and enhance services and deliver those services for Manitobans.

I think about DCSP. I was just last week, during our break week, went for a visit, and we got to see their dashboard and talk with some of the front-line workers. I got to meet with their core team, which is their team that works with housing folks.

They have a group of six, and they work primarily with people who are in encampments that need supports in terms of getting housing. And just the level of support that they provide, the level of compassion, caring and meeting people where they're at. When I was talking to them about encampments, I asked, you know, how many people were living there. And, you know, the relationships that they build with these folks and the understanding that this is their home until they find a home was, like—and that really, it really struck my heart because I was, like, this is their home until they find a home, unfortunately, right?

And we don't want people living in those undignified ways. So we really need to build housing and that—like, we're working on that and supporting and meeting people where they're at. Listening to, you know, some of those folks talk about getting folks housed and how, you know, under the previous government, they really felt like there was nowhere for these folks to go, taking them to shelters and there not being any shelter space because, like, they were being turned away.

And, you know, we really want to work on a long-term solution which is building housing, working on getting our own housing maintained and fixed up, and supporting non-profit housing, so that it stays non-profit, but also building in the supports.

So, you know, I think about Aboriginal Health and Wellness and their mobile clinic. That's another support that's out there and supporting the community and going and meeting people where they're at. They're also visiting encampments and supporting and providing primary health care in places and spaces where people aren't getting out to receive those levels of care.

So I want to just, you know, uplift and honour all those folks that are on the front lines providing so much support to so many of our vulnerable folks that need so much care and so much love and so much unconditional support.

The Chairperson: Before moving on, I just want to remind all members that in the Committee of Supply we need to refer to members by their portfolios or constituencies.

Mrs. Hiebert: I just want to go on to the topic of addiction and recovery for a minute here, before we're almost done. It seems like this day has just flown by here.

Just knowing how important it is for us to be able to provide care and support for those that are mental

health and struggling with homelessness, and a lot of those things are connected with addictions. And just talking about the addictions part of this is that, just to kind of bring a light to how we need to support those that are—we—better here and we love, and that we want to have them in recovery so that they can have a future and a life and experience and stay with us for years to come.

And so, me having experienced specifically with some loved ones in my life, as well, that are, you know, in recovery. And I can't imagine what it would be like not having them in my life and not having them here to celebrate birthdays and to do all the wonderful things that we can do together as a family because they were able to, you know, access recovery.

And so, one of the questions I have is just, with opioid antagonist–agonist treatment–OAT is what we–O-A-T–it's a safe and effective treatment used for 'opoid' use disorders. These prescribed medications provide stable, long-acting relief for withdrawal and cravings, and can improve your healthy outcomes, to help give that extra help to those that are trying to break free from their addictions. And I think it's up to us to do whatever we can to make sure that we can, you know, help them achieve those goals.

How many individuals in Manitoba are currently using the OAT for their recovery, specifically? How much—what does that program look like?

* (16:40)

Ms. Smith: So since the inception of OAT, there's been over 30,000 service episodes. Folks can access OAT through their primary health-care provider now, so we don't have a line of sight on that. But I can tell you in 2019 there were 67 prescribers. To date, there's over 250. So moving towards a more integrated model, less stigma around it rather than going to a RAAM clinic.

We also opened up RAAM Digital Front Door a few weeks ago, which is accessible wherever you're at. So you don't have to go wait at a RAAM clinic to see a physician, you can see them virtually and then if you need to go in, they will let you know where to go in.

There's seven RAAM clinics. So there's three in Winnipeg, one in Brandon, one in Selkirk, one in Thompson, one in Portage. And then across the province, there's anywhere between 117 to 142 people presenting each week. But with the Digital Front Door, that's increased access to a lot more people being able to access it wherever they're at. If they're in the North, if they don't have, you know, a cellphone or Internet, they can go to, you know, a band office or

a community centre, wherever they can get Internet. So a lot of folks are doing that or going to a community centre. So we've heard a lot of that when I was at the RAAM clinic in Portage.

I went to Portage during the break, and I got to visit their RAAM clinic. They talked about the Digital Front Door and how it's changed and how much access it's provided to other folks in that area. I met with the team out there and such an amazing team. Again, you know, I can't say enough about our service providers right across this province, providing such quality, compassionate care, meeting folks where they're at from a non-judgmental place. And, you know, whether people are ready to, you know, move into treatment or not, you know, they are accepting and supportive.

They had a community garden outside of their RAAM clinic. They had flowers along the top; it's inaccessible, so they have a wheelchair ramp. They had potted plants along the top there. And their team was just so amazing, just the level of care, I could feel the love that they put into the design. It's an old house. So if you ever get a chance to go visit it, it's—it was just a—you could feel like the love when you went inside.

And they had balloons on the wall. That was kind of the heart-breaking part, because the balloon represented someone that had lost their life to an overdose. And some of the names were on there twice or three times, but the participants who—or the folks that access their services, when they came in, they were able to put that person's name up on that wall. So even though that person's name is already up there, that person was known and loved by many people. So you could see that up on that wall.

Yes, it was just a beautiful converted house and just the level of services that they provide. And, again, the digital RAAM services, you know, has opened that door to a lot more people being able to access those services and get the care and support that they need where they need it and meet them where they're at.

Mrs. Hiebert: Thank you for that information.

We just—we know how important it is for us to be sensitive and open to hearing what people need and to meeting those needs in addiction recovery, housing, homelessness, mental health especially. Just—we know that there's been such a large increase in mental health needs and just making sure that those needs are met and we have services across the whole province, in rural Manitoba as well as Winnipeg. So important for

us to do to meet those needs of everyone because we love everybody.

And like you said, there's just—or like the minister said, there's a stigma out there, and people are afraid to get help and to look for help. So we just need to let you know that, you know, you are loved and we are here for you to help you in whatever way we can. And that's what I—take what I'm doing very seriously as well as just meeting the needs and advocating for whatever I can possibly do for those in our province and our loved ones.

* (16:50)

So thank you to everybody who does work with our community and our loved ones meeting those needs. It's such a valuable and irreplaceable job that you do.

Unfortunately, I have many more questions, but I don't think I have any more time to ask my questions, so I want to just say thank you and appreciate being able to come here today and ask questions. And hopefully there's an open door where I can continually ask questions because I really think this is such an—all of these portfolios of mental health, addictions, homelessness, housing are all so important. And I will continue to work hard on that for my constituents and for the people in our province.

So thank you very much. So I have no further questions at this time.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions at this time,

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,586,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions Service Planning and Policy, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$239,234,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Housing, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$83,881,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Physician Services—Psychiatry, for the physical year—fiscal year, rather—ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Thanks for more enthusiasm on that.

Resolution 24.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$300,848,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Funding to Health Authorities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$820,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Costs Related to Capital Assets of Other Reporting Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$15,000,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$77,871,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 24.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 24.1. At this point, we respectfully request the minister's staff to leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, I'll put the question for the final—

Resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,840,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply for the—is for the Estimates of Agriculture.

The hour being 4:55, what is the will of the Committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

ROOM 255

FINANCE

* (14:50)

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance. Questioning for the department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Thank you, all the staff in the department, for being here today.

The minister and the NDP government are stringing Manitobans along, three months at a time, for their fuel tax holiday, not allowing Manitobans to budget further in the future. So can the minister please tell me: on January 1, what the new fuel tax rate will be, and will it be returning to 14 cents?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Welcome to the critic to this first day together in committee here. Looking forward to the conversation.

Appreciate the question about our fuel tax holiday, which is something that our government is very proud to have brought forward to help save Manitobans money. We, very shortly after coming into government, took this step, this very important step, as a means of demonstrating our commitment to responding to the affordability challenges that Manitobans were facing.

We know that energy costs were something that Manitobans were seeing escalate in a big way in recent years, and very quickly after coming into government, we took action in response to that with our fuel tax holiday.

And we know that this has just been welcomed in every single corner of the province. When I've had the good fortune of touring the province, whether it was for our budget consultations or whether it was just sort of travelling around visiting communities, meeting with stakeholders, one thing I've heard, maybe more than other areas where, you know, stakeholders have thanked us for actions, but maybe one area more than

in all others, is in terms of our affordability work, and specifically the fuel tax holiday is something that has really resonated with Manitobans.

One—I think one group of Manitobans that's been especially impacted by the fuel tax holiday have been those living in rural and northern communities, communities like the one that I know you hail from, Critic—or that the critic hails from, where folks are really, you know, much more so than folks living in some of our urban areas, are forced to drive very long distances to get to work, to take their kids to sports, practices and otherwise. And so, we know just how much it's meant for rural communities.

And we also know that businesses have benefited in a really big way from the fuel tax holiday. It has had a tremendous impact for many businesses that are forced to rely on their vehicles, and this has really helped them in a difficult time. And businesses are facing a lot of the same challenges that other Manitobans are facing in that their costs of doing business have been going up, and they're experiencing greater challenges just as many other Manitobans are facing, as I'm sure the critic appreciates. And that's why, I think, they're receiving this fuel tax so favourably as well.

* (15:00)

And we are seeing, statistically, in terms of the distribution, we know that businesses are seeing a lot of those benefits and that those are going a long way to helping them to grow, to create jobs and do the important work that they do.

Another group that we hear from that we know have benefitted in a big way are municipalities, who have a lot of fuel costs relating to their operations, and the operations in the services that they provide to their residents. And the fuel tax holiday has helped them to, in a big way, reduce their costs, and those are costs that we would expect that, in many way, those cost reductions will ultimately, in the long run, be passed down. And so those are just some of the groups that we've been able to hear from and to really get a good sense of the impacts, and we've heard that loud and clear from so many.

Something that came up just—it was last week, we heard the Stats Canada data that really reinforced the impacts of the fuel tax holiday. And that Stats Canada data reflected that Manitoba had a 0.8 per cent inflation increase in September, which is among the lowest in Canada. But one of the most exciting parts of that report was that it specifically called out the fact that

zero—we shaved off 0.4 per cent from that inflation rate directly as a result of that fuel tax holiday.

So that has created, again, a huge impact when you're talking about a 0.4 per cent reduction on inflation. We're talking about a huge impact, really moving the needle for so many people across the province.

In terms of the path ahead, as I've said before in the House and in committee with your predecessor, the critic prior, we will be carefully monitoring, you know, the direction of the economy, carefully monitoring CPI data in the months ahead. We're dead set on ensuring we improve affordability and continuing to do that, and we're going to keep a close eye on that data to make sure that we make the right decision on a go-forward basis.

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Stone: Such a simple question and no answer from the minister, so perhaps I'll shift the way I'm asking the question.

What revenue does the minister expect to generate from January 1 to March 31 of 2025 from the fuel tax? I recognize there's varying factors with commodity prices and crude oil prices; however, as the government can forecast losses, they certainly can forecast revenues as well, as has always been the case.

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Before I proceed further, I just want to share that for all questions and answers, I will be indicating when 30 seconds are left so everybody knows to wrap up.

MLA Sala: Appreciate the question from the critic. Now, as I understood it, the question was about prospective costs of the measure from this upcoming January 'til March 31. So appreciate the question, and I'll state we won't be making any announcements today about how we're moving forward.

As I said in my earlier answer, we're focused on affordability and we're focused on broader economic indicators to help us determine how we're going to move forward beyond December 31. So, so far, as the critic will know, we're very proud to have extended this fuel tax holiday many times, and December 31 will take us to a full year, and that's a full year of savings that Manitobans will have gained from that.

We know, you know, the average family, as we printed in the budget, was slated to gain, I think it was about \$250 for an average family over a six-month period. So knowing that we moved this to—we moved to extend it for initially another three months, and then

a further three months to a full year, we know that the average family, thanks to this measure, is going to save approximately \$500.

That is a huge amount of money for an average family in this province. And I know that the critic can appreciate that, the importance of helping Manitobans during this time when we're facing elevated prices all over, whether it's food prices or housing prices. Energy and fuel prices are something that have really been hammering Manitobans for a long time.

And so, you know, the fact that we were able to extend it, and to do that in a way that was fiscally responsible and that we're managing that in a way that reflects our government's focus on, again, good fiscal stewardship has meant that Manitobans are again going to see a significant benefit, more dollars in their pocket, which means more opportunities to take the kids out for, you know, a treat to a restaurant or more opportunities to do things that maybe they couldn't do over the last seven and a half years under the previous government.

You know, further on the fuel tax, one thing that I do appreciate the importance—and I think the member is supportive of this measure overall in terms of the benefits that it's bringing to Manitobans—the one thing that, you know, I want to raise clearly is that we didn't see this type of initiative for seven and a half years. We heard a lot of talk, a lot of talk—and I appreciate the member opposite wasn't there for those seven and a half years so, you know, I'll hold her mostly or at least partly accountable for this with her association with the current opposition crew there, for she wasn't there—but I'll say for that seven and a half year period, we heard a lot of talk about, you know, a desire to make life more affordable, ideas about that. We didn't see a lot of action.

* (15:10)

And so I do find it interesting in the House, you know, to hear talk about what we should be doing or what we could be doing when, ultimately, the members opposite, the opposition, when they were in government, didn't take this action. They refused to do it. They talked about wanting to save people money on energy, they expressed concern about, you know, federal charges that are being brought down, but they've never taken any action. They refuse to do that.

So I think it is hard, you know, it's hard to, I'm assuming for the opposition to be able to square that, that, you know, we came in and instantly took action

on something that they refused to do for a long time. So we're proud of that work.

In terms of the specific question, again, the member's asking for the cost associated with this measure if it were to be implemented at a future date. We won't be talking about that because as I've stated, there has yet to be a determination as to whether we will continue. That will be based on, again, economic data and decisions yet to be made.

But in terms of the costs, I would invite her to look at the budget documents. There's a forecasted cost associated with the fuel tax holiday printed in here which was, of course, for a six-month period, but I think it's fair to say that, in the future, she could get a good, decent sense of what a three-month stretch would cost by prorating the number that we printed in budget.

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Stone: Five minutes for a really simple question yet again, and I will refer to page 10 that the minister's referring to under summary of review and fuel taxes, where they have budgeted \$159 million for fuel tax revenue.

So does that continue to still be the projected revenue for the government on the excised fuel tax?

MLA Sala: Again, I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to talk about the fuel tax holiday, something we know that, again, just continues to help Manitobans every single time they go to the pump.

That is something that, again, I know I and my colleagues continue to hear a lot about, which is the major benefits that families feel every time they go to the gas station. And it's something that I think helps Manitobans not only in just broader affordability challenges, but one of the crunches that we know families are facing are those month-to-month expenses. The bills like on the—those are the day-to-day costs that Manitobans face.

And that's one of the real benefits of the fuel tax holiday, is that it's not just like the benefits that Manitobans are receiving from our tax cuts. Whether they look at the basic personal exemption increase, which is one of our tax cuts that I know are going a long way to help Manitobans or our bracket changes that are going a long way to help Manitobans.

Those are important changes that are putting dollars in Manitobans' pockets for sure. But those tax changes of course help us, typically, you know, at the

end of the year. Of course, there are impacts from those changes on—in some ways for some Manitobans in terms of their biweekly cheques, so there's some exceptions to that. But you've got those big benefits that we've brought in through those tax changes, that help us, you know, at tax time especially.

But this measure is so wonderful because it's every time you head to the pump. Every single time, you get that \$20 bill in your pocket that you can, again, drive off with the family, go treat your kids to McDonald's or whatever it is that you want to do with your family to take those savings. Maybe put it in your savings account. Whatever it is, it's that real day-to-day saving that Manitobans are able to do.

And I think that that reflects one of the main differences between our party and the opposition. And that is a genuine connection and understanding to the realities that Manitobans—working Manitobans face every single day in this province.

I think about my community of St. James, which is a community that I am unbelievably proud to represent. It's a working-class community. It's Manitobans working in high-vis gear. These are, you know, regular construction worker-type folks, people who are building things in this province.

When I talk to them, I know just how important this measure is, and they feel that. They—and I think when they think about the changes that we've brought in such short order, they see a government that understands them. They see a government that is working for them and that is listening, listening very intently to the realities that they're facing. And unfortunately that's not the way things were for a very long time. We had, instead, a government that was focused on, well, first of all, cuts to any number of areas of government, especially, of course, health care, education, municipalities, child care—I could go on and on and on and on.

But one thing we know they weren't focused on in any way was making life more affordable. And there's a very long list of things that I have an opportunity to speak about in the House, where, you know, we can talk about this at length, which is the, really, the decisions that the last government made to make life more expensive. Whether that was raising taxes on renters, whether it was, you know, just continuing to apply fuel taxes during a time when people were facing ever-increasing inflation on energy costs, that was their record.

* (15:20)

So the fact that Manitobans now have a government that they can trust, that they know is listening to them, and that took action here, is something I know myself, my colleagues, Premier (Mr. Kinew) are incredibly proud of. And we're going to, you know, we're going to keep making life more affordable and keep doing that important work.

The question, you know, that was specifically asked, aside from the broader discussion around fuel tax holiday, is what our projected revenues will be, and we're not here today to talk about revenue projections. So that will, you know, be revealed or we'll be able to reveal more information in a future update as government—

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: What took me 10 seconds to figure out, the minister consulted with his staff for three minutes, he took five minutes to respond: It would be around \$80 million. This was a very simple question on projected revenues of what the excised fuel tax will be. So I'm going to just shift gears on that.

In light of the ongoing discussions around personal income taxes and the phase-out of exemptions for those above a certain income threshold starting at \$200,000, I'm wondering if the minister has had an opportunity to review any comparisons of the personal income taxes paid by Manitobans subsequent to his budget '24-25, and what kind of personal income taxes those same Manitobans would have been paying had he followed the same basic personal exemptions the former PCs had implemented.

MLA Sala: Appreciate the question about the impacts of our tax measures, and, you know, this gives me a great opportunity just to briefly shout-out folks who probably will not in any way want to be shouted out, but I just want to thank the amazing team, many of which are sitting at the back and rightfully staring at their phones, waiting for some kind of question or support request, but we've got an amazing team in the Finance Department, and especially the folks that support us on taxation, revenues. It's really an unbelievable group of folks. So I want to thank them and shout them out right now, and just really let them know how much we appreciate their efforts in helping us in doing the important work we're doing of helping to lower costs for Manitobans.

The question that was asked seems to have been focused on, you know, what are the projected impacts of the tax reductions that we've brought in versus,

I guess, the idea is the hypothetical plan that the PCs are saying they were going to bring forward or an idea of what they were going to bring forward. I'm not exactly sure what they were intending.

So I can just speak to what I know we did here, which was to bring forward some really impactful tax changes that have put more money in the pockets of thousands and thousands and thousands of Manitobans.

So one of those measures, which the critic will be very familiar with because I've had so many opportunities to talk about the, you know, the good work, the impacts that it's had, are the homeowner affordability tax credit, which is a \$1,500 tax credit that for a huge number of Manitobans is going to eliminate their school taxes entirely.

And I'm guessing, again, for the critic, in Midland, I haven't studied the data for that particular community, but we know in a lot of rural communities this is a measure that is bound to make life vastly more affordable for homeowners, and again, not just in rural communities but communities across the province.

The straight \$1,500 credit has the benefit of, you know, really helping especially first-time homeowners who are getting into home ownership, maybe they've been facing, you know, growing challenges due to those nasty federal interest rates, those Bank of Canada rates that we're fortunately finally starting to see come down, which will help a lot, and I know I was celebrating along with a lot of others when we heard about that 50 basis-point cut recently; knock on wood, we're going to see another one in the next—is this real wood, Chair? I think it is. We're going to see another one in the not-too-distant future to help, again, reduce the cost of mortgages and financing homes for Manitobans.

* (15:30)

But this measure is something that is really transformational for so many folks in this province. And so that measure, of course, wasn't our only affordability measure that we brought in with the budget. We had a long list of 21 ways to save, but within that 21 ways, we had another set of tax measures. The bracket changes, which we brought in, which increased those brackets for thresholds, which meant that Manitobans are taxed at a lower rate on a greater percentage of their earnings, as well as the basic personal exemption increase.

And I know, you know, the members opposite have tried extensively since the government has changed hands to claim credit for those measures, but, again,

as government, we enacted them. And that's a testament to our commitment to Manitobans, our understanding of the challenges that they face, and, look, we know that, again, finally, there's a government here that's listening, and that recognize those challenges, and I think that 21 ways to save and the specific tax measures that we brought in to lower that tax burden for Manitobans, including responding to the tax hike that the PCs placed on renters, of all people, which are, again, seniors, people with disabilities, people whose incomes generally remain static, they jacked their taxes by 175 bucks.

We took measures to lower tax burden for Manitobans and we're very proud of it.

Mrs. Stone: I invite the minister to come to my constituency and talk to my constituents any time and they would tell you that they would've been far better off sticking with the PC plan when it comes to affordability measures. The PCs reduced the PST by 1 per cent, they introduced the renters tax credit and they phased out the education property tax.

But I think the minister is misunderstanding my question, so I'll just answer it for him. Manitobans would be paying less in income taxes had the NDP followed the basic personal exemption plan that the PCs had introduced and was moving forward with. Many other provinces have been reducing their personal income taxes.

The minister had a choice within his budget in bringing further personal income tax reduction in, but he chose not to do that. And, you know, if we compare amongst our neighbours, the provinces that we often compete with from investment as well as labour, I look at Alberta's basic personal exemption is around \$21,000; Saskatchewan's is just over \$18,000, and actually Saskatchewan increased theirs just over a year ago. Yet this minister is making our province less competitive compared to our western neighbours and less attractive by phasing out the basic personal exemption for those who earn income over \$200,000.

Manitoba, prior to when the PCs came in, had been in the top five provinces for highest tax rate in the country, and increasing the basic personal amount brought us in—more in line with what other provinces were doing, making us more attractive for investment and jobs and people moving into the province.

So I'm just curious if the minister can say at what stage of the budget review process did he start to do comparisons when he knew other provinces were reducing taxes for their citizens.

MLA Sala: Again, I'm grateful for this opportunity to be able to talk about the relief we're providing to Manitobans through tax measures that we brought in, and I'm just unbelievably proud to be part of a government that's doing this important work.

I think that resonates with Manitobans; they're seeing—finally—that they have a government that cares about the challenges they're facing. And, you know, I appreciate the comparisons that were offered by the critic and alluding to other jurisdictions and that's—it's good to look at what's happening next door, of course—but our government is focused on what's happening in Manitoba and how we improve life here and how we make life more affordable.

And I would suggest to the critic that's exactly what we did with our budget; we brought in a significant amount of tax relief. That's not spin, that's just the hard reality of the situation. And I think it's maybe surprising—or it seems to be surprising for the members opposite—or they're still not fully embracing these fantastic changes that we brought forward that are benefitting Manitobans.

And, again, I'll review. I mean, just thinking—starting the gas tax holiday. We had the lowest gas tax in the country, of course, with zero per cent for 12 months—or will be for 12 months once this period that we've committed to is up—and we know that, I don't know, month after month after month, we had some of the lowest fuel prices in the entire country thanks to that. And, you know, that was confirmed and tracked through a number of means; we were able to confirm that those gas tax savings were indeed passed on month after month to Manitobans and put right in their pockets.

Again, going to the \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit, a phenomenal measure that has put—you know, in many cases—homeowners in a position where their school taxes are completely wiped.

Broad middle tax cuts; again, you know, it's one thing to talk about tax cuts in theory that governments wanted to make before they were shown the door, it's another thing for government to actually take that action and to move forward with that.

And we did that for a number of important reasons. It wasn't just simply to, of course, make life more affordable. I have heard the critic allude to the importance of competitiveness and ensuring that we are positioned to be competitive; that is very important. So I agree with the importance of us becoming a much more competitive jurisdiction. And that's exactly

why we took those actions, because we know that there is a broader context in which we're operating; so that is important.

But again, you know, this is about affordability first and foremost, and making life more affordable for people right here in our province.

Of course, the development of, you know, tax proposals and our approach as a government was also integrated into our broader budgetary planning processes, where we are turning the page on seven and a half years of cuts from a PC government. And, frankly, you know, that budgetary development—which, of course, needs to balance making life more affordable for Manitobans with making investments—is something we take very seriously.

Unfortunately, what we saw—and which was sort of confirmed when we saw the release of public accounts not so long ago—was the results of Manitobans having a government in place—the previous PC government—that just did not have the capacity to budget in a way that was responsible. And I've said it many times in the House, I'll say it here again: you know, we as members of different parties make—take positions sometimes that, you know, sometimes are rooted in political—in just the political.

* (15:40)

And maybe there's a skepticism about our claims about their mismanagement, but they don't have to take our word for it. We did a review and—had MNP, rather, do a review, a very respected accounting firm, that outlined the impacts of seven and a half years of PC mismanagement and unfortunately the impacts of that final budget year and some of the decisions they were making and how that led us to being in a fiscal ditch.

Proud we've got a new government here making good decisions around how to reduce costs for Manitobans that are balanced with their needs like improving affordability and health care.

Mrs. Stone: I appreciate the minister's comments about tax competitiveness. However, clawing back the basic personal amount for many Manitobans is not tax competitive, when other provincial jurisdictions, particularly the ones to our western neighbours, when they're increasing those at a time when we're trying to recruit labour into this province.

So I've now asked the minister twice this week, and perhaps he can give me a—doesn't have to be an

exact number, but, you know, around, you know, relatively exact number will do.

How many Manitobans earn between \$200,000 and \$400,000? Are we looking at 50,000 Manitobans, are we looking at 100,000 Manitobans? If the minister can provide me an approximate number, please.

MLA Sala: The impacts of our last budget are enormous, and we see that I think every single day when myself and my colleagues are out in communities. And one of the best parts about this budget is that it's not just helping, you know, middle-income Manitobans or those who are maybe on fixed incomes. It's helping everyone.

And if we look at the package overall of savings that have been put together here, I mean we've got 21 ways to save, as I'm sure the critic loves hearing us talk about all the time, maybe not every day, but this is a long list here that altogether has put, again, a huge amount of money back into the pockets of Manitobans. Again, not just from one income category, across the entire income spectrum.

And when we look at the—that broader package of benefits together, whether you're a high-income earner in Manitoba—you're benefiting from those personal income tax-bracket increases. You're benefiting from that BPA change—BPE change. You're benefiting from that affordability tax credit on your home. You're benefiting from the gas tax holiday.

You might be benefiting from \$10-dollar-a-day child care all year around. Or, you know, maybe you're benefiting from the—if you're trying to expand your family—the doubling of the fertility treatment tax credit. That's one that I know that is just so unbelievably meaningful to so many in this province that have been struggling to grow their family.

So again, all together, when we look at this as a package, we see—what we see here really is evidence of how connected we are to the needs of everyday Manitobans. And we see that altogether, again, it's not just helping people—middle income Manitobans, it's not just helping those who are maybe facing greater income struggles at the lower end of the income spectrum. It's helping everybody. Even those who are maybe doing a little bit better.

With this full package of savings that we're bringing forward, everybody is saving. And so, you know, that's something that, again, that the previous government—you know, we know that they really ignored the needs of lower-income and middle-income Manitobans, generally, in their work, and were focused maybe only

on some—we're focused on everyone. And you can see that in terms of the measures we've brought forward.

Now in terms of, you know, the impacts of our approach and what's happening, one of the things we're seeing is Manitoba is experiencing—as our Premier (Mr. Kinew) says often, as I've said at, you know, in front of microphones here and abroad—that we are experiencing—and this is what we hear from others who are looking to Manitoba and are seeing all these incredible things happening, little old Manitoba, stepping up and just knocking it out of the park, day after day—is growth in our economy. That Stats Canada report that we saw recently spoke to the fact that we're seeing thousands of new private-sector jobs—thousands—like well over 3,000 new private-sector jobs that were created in one month, in September.

And that number, that job growth number, placed Manitoba at the very top of all provinces, in the entire country, in terms of job growth. So, again, we had the fastest job growth of any province in the entire country in September.

So while there's an attempt at creating a narrative about, you know, what might happen when an NDP government is elected, what we're seeing here is the opposite of what the members opposite are trying to put forward, on the record, whether it's in the House or here. It's indisputable. It's not the Manitoba NDP that operates Stats Canada. We're not, you know, forcing them to publish data that's speaking to these—the impacts of our approach to governance—that's real. And, you know, that success we expect to continue, thanks to the good work that we're doing and thanks to the increasingly attractive place that Manitoba is becoming under our government.

Mrs. Stone: Just to correct the record, the former PC government moved—removed more than 50,000 low-income Manitobans off the tax rolls while in government and increased social benefits and rent assistance.

* (15:50)

But I—this was a very, very simple question to the minister that I had asked, and I find it shocking he doesn't know how many Manitobans he has impacted by creating the \$200,000 income tax threshold when he's starting to claw back the personal basic amount.

So I'd appreciate if the minister would take that under advisement to get that information to me.

MLA Sala: Again, I love talking about the savings that we're bringing for Manitobans—huge numbers of Manitobans, the vast majority of Manitobans, who are

saving under the measures that we've brought forward here.

And I think that's what we need to emphasize here is that we're talking about, again, every—first of all, every Manitoban is benefitting from the 21 measures that we brought forward. We're making life more affordable in so many different ways, but the benefits—you know, I think the member is really focusing in on just one aspect of our broader affordability plan here, but doesn't seem to be acknowledging the broader impacts that these savings are going to have.

And I'm happy to just draw their attention, if they would, if they're interested—our budget document, on page 41, puts those savings in—you know, prints them clearly for all to see here. If they're interested, a two-income family with two kids that'd gain access to the affordable child care through our plan: \$6,443; \$6,443 they stand to save under our plan.

Maybe it's a two-income family with one child that are hoping to use fertility treatment to grow their family. They're stand—they stand to save, on average, \$4,982.

And then, maybe it's another family with, you know, two kids, two incomes and they want to buy a new EV. That family would save \$6,109 thanks to the measures that we've brought forward.

So it's so important to talk about these things instead of just looking, you know, with a microscope at only one of the measures we've taken to save costs for Manitobans; to put them together and to see when you look at this as a package, again, it's essentially providing savings to all Manitobans across the province.

And for some, as I've outlined, they stand to save in a huge way by taking advantage of some of those offers, like the EV rebate; or if you've got young kids, getting access to, again, affordable child care; or if you want to grow your family and you're looking to access fertility treatments; again, thousands and thousands of dollars going into their pockets.

And so, you know, this is something that we're proud of. Again, I ask the member to think about things—just, if you look at the whole package that we brought forward here, she'll see it doesn't matter who you are in this province; you're going to have a bunch more money in your pocket thanks to these measures. And we're proud of that.

And I don't—I struggle sometimes to understand why the members opposite don't just want to get on board and celebrate these 21 ways to save, to get on

the affordability train here that's left the station, and they can join us and talk about, you know, how they could share with their own constituents some of these great measures that are here for them to take advantage of. And I know that many folks in the critic's community would be delighted to hear about these measures and to take advantage of them

And, you know, maybe even in their community there's some producers who are reliant on Crown land. It's not just, you know, it's not just regular Manitobans, it's also folks that are producing food for us here in the province.

We've—we haven't left them out either. They, for years, had their costs increase—I think, and I—hopefully I'm getting this number right, but I think it's about 300 per cent increases in the cost of Crown land that were brought forward overall through some of the Crown land lease increases that the last government brought forward. Again, which is having an impact not just on those farmers, on those producers, but also downstream. If they're making it more expensive to produce food, that's going to be just—those costs will just get passed on down the line.

So—*[interjection]* Acknowledge the warning, Mr. Chair.

These are—together, this is an unbelievable package. This is a package that, again, is focused on the needs of everyday Manitobans, the realities that they're facing.

And we're going to continue doing that work. It doesn't end here. We know that affordability challenges continue, and we're proud to continue doing that work to find new ways of delivering on that.

Mrs. Stone: Okay, so I understand that the minister doesn't have the answer to a very simple question, so I expect that that has been taken in—under advisement and that he will get me the number of Manitobans that make an income over \$200,000.

I'll now ask the minister, again: How many Manitobans earn over \$400,000 in our province and, if he doesn't have that number—which he should because these are major tax changes that are impacting Manitobans—if he could also take that under advisement, please?

* (16:00)

MLA Sala: Again, I'm—it's great to have this opportunity to talk about our budget and our revenue measures and the work that we're doing to make life more affordable.

And one of the things that I started talking about in a previous answer, but I didn't have the opportunity to really dig into, was just the importance of, you know, in developing budgets—doing that in a way that's balanced and ensuring that it's—you know, you're not only delivering on the goals and the commitments that you as a government have made to Manitobans but that you're doing that in a balanced way.

And so when we're talking about revenues and we're talking about the work of making life more affordable, as a government, when we make those types of decisions, we make those decisions and we have made decisions in a way that reflected that balance where we do everything we can to improve affordability.

And, again, we balance that with fiscal needs and our fiscal situation. And one of the things that we saw under the previous government was a failure to do that, never mind a failure to actually deliver on making life more affordable through tax measures, through tax cuts, through doing those types of things which we're doing, but they failed to really budget responsibly and to take measures of any kind to make life more affordable, never mind balancing those types of measures with other investments.

And, you know, we—after, again, we'd been in for a short period of time, in recognition of what we saw happening with the previous government's budget that we were left with and the direction of spending, we undertook, as I'd mentioned earlier, to have a review done by the accounting firm MNP, which is a respected accounting firm that I don't think could be accused of being partisan in any way.

And I want to just read a summary from the—executive summary, rather—that they put forward in that review. And I'll just read that here. Quote: From the release of the '23-24 budget to October 3, 2023, budgetary decisions were made that collectively represent high budgetary risk.

And that report went on to conclude that, quote, it was reasonable to expect the government to have understood that all the unique circumstances that led to significantly higher revenues in '22-23 would not repeat in subsequent years.

And then, you know, just going further, the review also found, quote—again, these are not our words; these are the words of an independent consultant, which I'm sure the members opposite really appreciate—the decision to aggressively budget for an above-average net income from Hydro and then fail to

adjust for the significant downside risk to Hydro's net income in the first-quarter update led to additional fiscal pressure later in the year. And then, you know, that's end quote.

And we do know that the report went on to outline that the health human resource action plan funding that was announced in the weeks leading up to the October 3 election was not accounted for in public reporting. And, ultimately, MNP found, quote, that it led to an incomplete picture of the Province's fiscal pressures, end quote.

So I, you know, like many Manitobans, was—I was, frankly, disturbed when I learned about the extent to which the former government distorted, made unclear—I'll try to use parliamentary language here or stick to parliamentary language—all to say what was clear was that when they came to Manitobans on July 28 to provide a Q1 update prior to the last election, they did not disclose the reality of the situation.

MNP made that clear, outlined, you know, the various, I'll say, shortcomings of that Q1 update, where they did not update Manitobans that, while they budgeted \$550 million of Hydro profits, that even though it was a drought year and it was clear that we were headed towards a very difficult place, nothing was reported. And where did Hydro end up last—in that same fiscal year, which was clear at that point? Negative \$150 million.

So that represents a very concerning sort of pattern we saw from them: a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability. Manitobans can expect better from us, and they can expect better while we make like more affordable through the type of work that we brought forward in our last budget.

Mrs. Stone: Again, I find it shocking that the minister has no idea how he came up with a \$200,000 threshold to start clawing back the basic personal amount

He has no idea how many Manitobans actually earn an income of over \$200,000, and he has no idea how many Manitobans earn an income of over \$400,000. So clearly he doesn't know the answers to the impact his tax grabs are having on many, many Manitobans.

So I'm going to switch gears here. On page 101 of the budget, under borrowing and debt management strategy, can the minister please walk me through the Province's long-term and short-term issuances; the number of long-term, the number of short-term and how many will be maturing by March 31 of 2025.

* (16:10)

MLA Sala: I just want to—I didn't get to finish in my last response, because we were limited by the five-minute clock. I could talk about PC financial mismanagement for hours, but I've got to cram it into these five-minute blocks, unfortunately.

The MNP report spoke to those concerns, again, that were outlined at a high level and my—through those quotes I read. But I just want to go back to that July 28 Q1 update that the PCs provided prior to the last election, and just why it was so concerning from a transparency perspective.

And I think we can, you know, just point to—we've talked about Hydro, the fact that clearly, by any measure, there was an attempt in that budget year to really exaggerate potential Hydro profits. Again, they budgeted \$550 million for that—for the '23-24 fiscal year, which by any measure is an exceptional number. And, again, that's a polite way of characterizing it. And ultimately, was likely unachievable.

And even though they, you know, had this—we had this mounting drought situation in mid—or, late July when they went out, July 28. We had experienced one of our worst droughts in recent memory up to that point. They went out to Manitobans on July 28 and provided a fiscal update that did not account for the reality of the situation and glossed over the fact that Hydro was headed for a very nasty result, which they knew about already, but again, which they decided not to reveal to Manitobans.

And, again, I recognize the critic was not necessarily part of that strategy or didn't design that herself, but it is worth mentioning that that's the party that she's part of here and that that was their approach.

Now, I've talked about the Hydro piece there, but there are other very serious things that were, again, not brought forward to Manitobans on July 28 when they did that Q1 update. One example of that was the fact that we knew that year, due to—no question—I think concerns around PC management as a government, but also broader economic forces—tax revenues were changing in a big way. They would have had clarity on the direction of those revenue changes, there's no question.

I know, as the Finance Minister, we receive routine updates about the direction of revenues, tax revenues, and they would have known, going in, that ultimately the numbers that they were presenting to Manitobans were way off. And yet, again, failed to bring those forward in an attempt—and I would argue a rather crass

attempt—at, again, I want to stay within parliamentary tradition here, you know, not fully representative of the fiscal reality that we were facing due to their poor budgeting skills.

And the fact that this happened prior—just prior to an election—speaks to, you know, I think, the concern that we've repeatedly brought forward, which is Manitobans can't feel confident when the members opposite are steering the ship; that the information they're getting is accurate.

And that's certainly what we saw. And never mind the fact that on July 28, when they brought that forward, the day prior they had announced a multi-hundred-million-dollar investment, which was not included in their fiscal update. And so, you know, when we talk about how did we get to a \$2 billion deficit in '23-24, that's how we do it, honourable Chair. That's how you get to that kind of a terrible result, though a mix of bad budgeting, really, and then through that process, even again, seeing the direction of things, a lack of transparency, you know, ended up shocking Manitobans in the end, who realized that things were not as they'd been made to think they were.

Terms of this question about investments and how we manage the Treasury—you know, I'm delighted to talk more about that. I can say that we have an unbelievably strong team in Finance—as I'm sure the critic will agree—incredible civil servants who are doing really great work in keeping our cost of capital as low as possible, and I would delight in an opportunity to talk about investment further in a future answer.

Mrs. Stone: A five-minute answer with not a single answer to one of my questions. My question was about the number of long-term and short-term issuances for the Province's debt-management strategy, and how many are maturing this year.

So either the minister doesn't understand how the Province is managing its issuance and debt strategy, or he doesn't have those numbers, but in his own Budget document—and I already referred to page 101, the minister can look it up himself—it mentions in January 2024, the Province increased its promissory note program to authorize the issuance of up to \$1.5 billion and intended to increase the liquidity available to the Province. It talks about long-term markets, it talks about benchmark-size issuance in 10-year and 30-year terms.

So my question was—is: how many are going to be maturing this year? How many short-term has the

government gone into in the past year? You know, whether the Province goes into long-term or short-term at a period of high interest rates, can significantly affect Manitoba's debt and also its borrowing cost.

So if the minister can please give me a number; and I'll say, this information, not easy to find on the Government of Manitoba's website. It's a very quick Google search for Ontario and they give a list of every single issuance the Province of Ontario has, whether it's long-term, short-term and how many are maturing.

So since I couldn't find it on the Manitoba government's website, can the minister just please answer the question and give me a number of long-term issuance, short-term issuance and how many are maturing by the end of this fiscal year?

MLA Sala: You know, I appreciate an opportunity to talk about Treasury management and debt management, and appreciate the importance of those questions, and the fact that the critic's digging into that; I thank her for an opportunity to speak about that.

* (16:20)

And I can say that as the Finance Minister I appreciate the importance of approaching that debt management, that Treasury management, cautiously, as being just an exceedingly important part about how we govern. And that's something that's critical because we know that in the long term, you know, the rates at which we issue debt will have significant impacts. And so it's very important that we get it right. And I'm confident that that work is being done in a manner that reflects our focus, which is ensuring that, ultimately, Manitoba pays as little as possible for that capital over the long term.

One thing that I am proud to speak about is, when you talk about Treasury management and how we issue debt is how our decisions are received out in the world by those who are, in many ways, responsible for determining our cost of capital, which are credit rating agencies.

And really happy to just speak to—just offer one. There are a long list of great quotes that we had after our last budget and we're continuing to see great—and I'll call them report cards from credit rating agencies about the approach that's being taken by our government.

You know, example here, just one from S&P, a global report that they issued where they stated, quote: We believe the new government is committed to fiscal sustainability in the long term, end quote.

Again, we see another quote here: We expect that following a notable deterioration of budgetary performance in fiscal 2024—which, of course, ties back to the last government's budget and the decisions that they made—the Province's fiscal outcomes will steadily improve as the economy recovers and tax revenues rise, close quote.

So, you know, we're seeing—these are just a couple, again, quotes we saw from S&P. There are many others where we see this, you know, I'll say stamps of approval from these credit rating agencies who are seeing that not only are they pleased with the budget that we released and they're pleased with the way that that demonstrates a commitment to fiscal responsibility, but I think it's fair to say that that extends to our debt-management strategies and our approaches, that they also believe that we are doing that work in a good way and in a way that will help to minimize our debt burden and, ultimately, the costs associated with that debt.

You know, relating to that, I want to talk about, you know, the broader importance of that work and how that extends to relationships with credit rating agencies who, again, who are observing our debt-management strategies and our approaches to budgeting.

And just to talk about how wonderful it's been for me in this role to develop strong relationships with investors and those that are lending Manitoba money. We have placed, and I know the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has placed, an incredible degree of importance, of heightened importance on those relationships and building strong, trusting relationships with rating agencies and investors to ensure that they have confidence in us as a government.

And it's been a really remarkable experience for me; really understanding, you know, that landscape at a deeper level; developing those trusting relationships and really showing that our government is committed to fiscal sustainability in the long term.

And we're seeing that, again, be borne out through the reports that are being issued about our fiscal decision-making. And I suspect that that positive—those positive reviews will continue because we are deeply committed to fiscal responsibility. And that's incredibly important for a number of reasons. It's incredibly important, I think, first and foremost, because it's only through that that we can deliver on those health care and affordability and education investment commitments that we made. We need to do that.

So to the—you know, the member's question, I will point her to the Finance website where there's a PowerPoint there that can be found called the Manitoba Investor Relations Presentation. It's a 22-page presentation that should have the answer to the questions that she's asking. Or she can turn to page 104 of her budget for—again, I'll look at the debt-maturity schedule which will also provide any information she's seeking.

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Stone: Thank you, Minister. And I will look at that. And I know that these—this is getting into the weeds, but it is such a key part of how Manitoba manages its debt-management strategy.

So staying on the topic of debt servicing and borrowing, Manitoba's debt profile and deficits—\$33 billion in debt and over two point—almost \$2.2 billion in debt-servicing costs with a \$2-billion deficit last fiscal, almost \$1 billion this fiscal year. This leaves Manitoba as one of the more highly indebted provinces in the entire country.

And with just over 10 per cent of our revenue that's expected to go to interest costs, how much has the recent interest rate cuts are going to reduce the actual debt-servicing costs from what your department has projected, and when will those interest rate cuts start to impact interest costs? Like, are we looking at 2025-26? Are we looking at 2026-27? If the minister could please answer that question.

* (16:30)

MLA Sala: Again, it's great to have a chance to talk about debt management and the good work that's being done to keep our costs of capital as low as possible by our government and by the teams that are here to support us.

You know, I think it's important, just when we're talking about borrowing, it's, of course, why are we needing to borrow or issue debt? It's due to our financial needs and our needs to operate, but it's also driven by, of course, the member opposite has talked about the impacts of debt servicing, and I think it's a good reminder of the damage that was done through that \$2-billion deficit that we were left at. Those are dollars that are now ending up, again, on that—on our debt and our costs that we're going to continue to have to pay as a result, again, of their mismanagement and their failure to budget responsibly.

Further to that, you know, one of the things I think is worth highlighting here is the importance of respon-

sible capital management. And one of the things I'm really proud of is, first of all, the investments that our government has outlined and that speak to, again, our—the fact that we're a listening government, that we understand the types of capital investments that Manitobans want to see made in this province to improve life, to improve access to the services and the things that they need.

But, you know, again, in relation to that, one of the things we have to ensure is that we're responsible in making those capital investments, and I think that our budget does exactly that, so I have a lot of opportunities to talk about the fact that our core budget itself was, you know, struck a great balance between making life more affordable, investing in health care, while still keeping an eye on our fiscal commitments to balance the budget in our final year of our first mandate.

But we also did, I think, took a similarly responsible approach, a forward-looking approach, a sustainable approach when it comes to capital. And, you know, the budget document spells out that we're making \$1.7 billion in capital investments this year, and it also spells out our approach in black and white for all to see in future years, and so it relates to capital investments, as well.

And one of the things that I think we're—that we did well here was to, again, as a very fiscally responsible government, focus in on fine-tuning that number, 1.7, at a level that we knew was responsive to the needs that we have here in Manitoba, but that, again, was responsible and that would ensure that, from a credit rating agency perspective, from a debt perspective, that we were moving forward in a way that was most importantly sustainable.

And, unfortunately, that's something that we did not see from the former government. We saw, you know, beyond the printed capital numbers, we saw a number of commitments around capital that were never budgeted for, that I think spoke to, frankly, again, that core lack of focus on fiscal sustainability, you know, making promises to Manitobans that were never budgeted—a lot of them—that really, I think, frankly, were setting people up for a lot of disappointment, unfortunately. Because they, at the end of the day, were making promises that they just had no plan to pay for.

That's not how you govern, that's not how you lead and that's certainly not a good way of keeping in good stead with Manitobans, who want to know when a government says they're going to do something, that

they're actually going to deliver on their promises and that they're not going to make unbudgeted commitments that they have no plan to pay for. That's not how you govern.

And so, again, going back, you know, the heart of the question really is around Treasury management, good fiscal management, how we manage debt. That ties back, of course, that debt's driven by how well a government manages its books. We're doing a great job of that.

Unfortunately, the last government did not and they created greater pressures there than were unfortunately desired. So that's—you know, that's a key concern. We're doing that right. We're approaching that debt management in a responsible way.

I do want to point the member to just page 104 of the budget document, the last paragraph: Manitoba's forecasting an average interest rate of term borrowings through '24-25 to be 4.2 per cent. And then it goes on to outline what the impact of a one-percentage-point increase there—I think that could be used as a good sort of measuring stick for some of the potential benefits we might see if things go in the opposite direction in the months and years to come.

Mrs. Stone: As we're running close in time, I'll keep this question short, and I hope the minister can and has the ability to keep his answer short because five-minute answers on essentially nothing from what I've asked, with the exception of a 15-second at the very, very end.

Can—so the NDP has approved \$8.5 billion in borrowing for general purposes, \$750 million in borrowing for Manitoba Hydro, \$710 million in borrowing through a special warrant for health and education spending. That's a whopping \$9.25 billion in approved borrowing.

So can the minister please inform us what the interest costs are on his \$710-million special warrant?

* (16:40)

MLA Sala: Again, I love talking about our—the good work that's happening in Treasury management by our team and, you know, the fact that we're doing everything we can to keep the cost of capital as low as possible. And that's incredibly important.

And that's being delivered on not, of course, only through good overall budgetary management and good management of our capital costs, but just also being driven by, again, great trusting relationships that we're developing with investors through, again, a focused effort by the Premier (Mr. Kinew), by myself, by our

teams, the incredible people working in our Treasury division, and my deputy and the team around him in really building those trusting relationships that help to ensure that those folks that are lending us money have confidence in the leadership of this province; that we are committed to what we say we're committed to, which is delivering on a fiscally sustainable approach.

And again, you know, our commitment around that is clear. We have spoken publicly about our commitment to a balanced budget in our final year of our mandate, repeatedly. And it's something—I know that I can share here—that is of an unbelievable level of importance for the Premier and for our team.

And every day, you know, we make strides towards ensuring that we deliver on those commitments as made and that's incredibly important for a number of reasons, but it's especially important for the reasons I think that the critic is driving at, which is, you know, how do we ensure that we're keeping those costs of capital as low as possible?

Unfortunately, again, it was a challenging period of seven and a half years that we had there under their leadership where we saw, I guess you'd say, just a loosening of the reins or I don't know how to characterize it again, using parliamentary language, but where things just got a bit out of control, if you will, over the last couple years. Especially under the Heather Stefanson government, during her tenure, that's when I think things really took a turn for the worst.

We did see under the—you know, during that seven and a half years, we did see credit rating agencies lower credit ratings under the tenure of the PCs early on. But again, the damage that they did was highlighted there with the public accounts release that really spoke to the way that they approach budgetary management, which was, unfortunately, not with an eye on fiscal sustainability.

And now we had to dig ourselves out of that hole. That created significant challenges, and of course for credit rating agencies who are looking to Manitoba and trying to understand what was happening, really helping them to just get a clear line of sight on how the former government approached things and how we're different.

So we've done that work and I can say with confidence now that I'm proud that credit rating agencies have developed, I think, and continue to develop that trust in us, again, not just due to that relationship building, but also because of the work that they see us

doing, the budget that we put forward, our approach on capital and that's benefiting us day in and day out and will continue to.

And I'll say, you know, overall this question about Treasury management and our approach, I can say for the member, we're very opportunistic as it relates to taking advantage of these opportunities that are opening up. And I'll expect us to continue doing that. That's critical that we do take advantage of these opportunities that we're seeing as a result of these lowering interest rates.

Manitobans stand to benefit from us being very strategic and very, again, opportunistic about leveraging those interest rate drops to the greatest extent we possibly can.

And, you know, in terms of the specifics around debt-servicing costs, I would invite the member to turn to page 7 of our budget document which spells out very clearly information relating to that.

And then also, if they're interested in future fiscal year borrowing requirements, page 103 of the budget document also spells those out and should provide her with some of the insights that she's seeking here today at committee.

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Stone: The NDP government was left with a \$373-million surplus, and they turned that into a \$2-billion deficit because of their overspending.

They're the ones that approved the \$710-million special warrant. They're the ones that approved \$750 million for Manitoba Hydro. They're the ones that approved over \$9 billion in borrowing.

So I'm pleased that the minister has referenced the credit rating document that he did earlier. As I mentioned, with just over 10 per cent of our revenue expected to go to interest costs, our credit ratings are incredibly important. Last year, I believe our ratings were A+ stable from S&P, a high from DBRS and Aa2 from Moody's.

So I ask the minister how confident he is that Manitoba will not be downgraded, and what is his financial management strategy to ensure a downgrade doesn't happen.

That exact document that he referenced showed that Manitoba could return to balance by 2026. Our interest costs and interest ratings will be reflected by whether Manitoba is downgraded or not. And the

minister will know, you know, if you're downgraded two points, then you're now a investor-risk province.

So how confident is he that our ratings will not be impacted this year?

* (16:50)

MLA Sala: Again, I do appreciate an opportunity to talk about the important work we're doing to rebuild trust with rating agencies that were in many ways probably made to feel pretty concerned by the decisions that were being made by the last government that left, I'll say, a trust gap, if you will, with the decision making that was happening here in Manitoba. And, you know, that's certainly something that we had to focus on repairing and was a key priority for us.

We have, as I said, we've been developing these fantastic relationships with investors, and we've had to, to a certain extent, dig our way out of a hole here that had been created by the former government, driven in many ways by the gigantic \$2-billion deficit that they left Manitobans.

So, you know, I know that there's talk at times about some kind of a surplus last fiscal, but I'll remind the member that '23-24 was a budget that was designed by the Conservatives. I recognize that she wasn't there during that time, but that doesn't change the reality of the situation that the '23-24 budget was a budget that was designed entirely by the Heather Stefanson team and that we were left with when they were, you know, unfortunately for them, and I'm sure there's—there was a desire for a different outcome, but when they were shown the door on October 3rd from the Leg. and from the—from government.

And so we continue to do the good work of building those strong relationships with investors.

There are, of course, three key agencies that provide ratings for Manitoba: Moody's, S&P and DBRS. And, you know, just in terms of—I think the critic was sort of asking, well, how are things going and where are we likely to end up here? I'm happy to speak to that.

And what I can say is that in June, we had our most recent, sort of, credit updates from Moody's and S&P, both of whom provided favourable reviews of our government and our fiscal management. And very recently, I know we've been—we had a recent, sort of, discussions, round of discussions, with DBRS, and while we've yet to see the report from those discussions, we are expecting a similarly favourable review from them as well.

And I want to thank my officials and teams that continue to develop those great relationships and ensure that we're showing with transparency what our government is doing and what we plan to do looking forward to ensure we can continue to have their confidence so, again, we can have that benefit of having those good credit-rating agencies—credit ratings, rather, to ensure that our costs of capital stay as low as possible.

You know, and that work is going to—of continuing to sustain those credit ratings will be driven by continued good fiscal management, which I think we've made clear Manitobans can expect and, of course, by extension, credit-rating agencies can expect.

So we're sending that really important signal—a signal that was not sent under the Heather Stefanson government—with clarity. We are committed to balancing our budget. And that signal, I think, is translating into favourable—or access to favourable terms in the market when we go out to borrow money to meet the needs that Manitobans have and to deliver on our commitments. And we're seeing not only good results in the domestic markets—domestic borrowing market—but also internationally.

So what we've seen is a very positive response to our budget. I think that that positive response reflects the confidence that investors have that we are good fiscal managers, and that the plan we put forward is a credible, sustainable one. And I think that's going to benefit us in a huge number of ways and I think, you know, what we're seeing—thanks to, I think, the approach that our government is taking—is continued economic growth.

Those Stats Canada results speak to that. Thousands of new private-sector jobs, lowering inflation. Also, 863 new health-care workers, doctors, nurses. People are coming here because they're seeing that we're having a Manitoba moment. We've got a good, fiscally responsible government that's delivering on better health care, better affordability, and we're making our province better, day after day.

Mrs. Stone: You know, I love these opportunities where I can keep correcting the minister—what he puts on the record—because \$373-million surplus is what the former PC government left him with and he turned that into a \$2-billion deficit.

So, in the credit rating document that the minister, himself, has referenced this afternoon, it says that Manitoba can return to balance by 2025. The minister has flat-out refused to even try to balance. We're

looking at \$800-million deficit this year. He's planning more years of deficits.

If I look at his budget document, the total money forecasted to receive from fed transfers in upcoming fiscal year is \$8.2 billion. That's an increase of almost \$1 billion from previous-year forecast. That's not only a massive increase from the budget, but also a massive increase from the forecast. So if I look at over the three-year projection, revenues are going to be up by \$2.5 billion, plus the \$1 billion from this year from fed transfers. So if the minister is using his own budget and that ends up being accurate, he's going to be taking an excess of \$3.5 billion in revenue. So, because this is their first crack at fiscal management, I think that Manitobans should have no confidence in this government.

And so, again, I'm going to ask the minister—I've asked it in question period; I'm going to ask it again: Will the minister commit to balance by 2026 public accounts, yes or no?

MLA Sala: I guess, you know, it is important. I did speak to this earlier, but I just want to repeat for the critic and anyone who's watching—I know there may be people at home or are just tuning in now who may have missed me highlighting the MNP review that was done that might want to hear about this independent review that spoke to the financial decisions that were made by the previous government.

So, as much as I know there's a desire to talk about, you know, the fiscal conditions that were left to us, unfortunately, there's a very strong report that's been developed by an independent accounting firm that does not agree with the picture that's being put forward by the member opposite here.

And so, again, I'll just repeat for her and for anyone who's tuning in to this committee, just a quote from that report. Again, quote: From the release of the '23-24 budget to October 3, 2023—I'll remind that I'm going to get out of the quote here and say that that's—that budget was not our budget; that was the PC budget.

I'm getting back here into the quote: Budgetary decisions were made that collectively represent high budgetary risk. And that report went on to state, quote: It was reasonable to expect the government to have understood that all of the unique circumstances that led to significantly higher revenues in '22-23 would not likely repeat in immediately subsequent years.

And then again goes on, quote: The decision to aggressively budget for an above-average net income from Manitoba Hydro and then fail to adjust for the

significant downside risk to Hydro's net income in the first-quarter update led to additional fiscal pressure later in the year. End quote.

This is the reality of what the PCs left Manitobans. It wasn't a surplus. It was a \$2-billion deficit driven by bad decisions—

The Acting Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

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

CHAMBER

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:00)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates of Executive Council.

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

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I'd like to introduce Mark Rosner, who is my chief of staff and Sarah Thiele, who is the Clerk of the Executive Council.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'm joined today by Mr. Braeden Jones, my chief of staff.

The Chairperson: As previously stated in accordance with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of the departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Ewasko: I would like to start off by just asking the Premier if he can elaborate a little bit on the fact that the BITSA bill that he brought forward had legislation put into the BITSA bill disguised as schedules. And unfortunately we weren't able to bring forward some of this because in regards to some of it, is going to have—is going to pertain particularly to the budget, in regards to some of the financial implications to it.

And so I'm just wondering if we were able to share with the House why we wouldn't bring it forward, especially when we're talking about budget items with those pieces of legislation, why you wouldn't bring it forward to actually have a good wholesome Manitobans—or wholesome debate with Manitobans so that they can share their viewpoints to the various legislations.

The Chairperson: So generally, in the Committee of Supply, legislation isn't discussed because there are different venues in which to debate and ask questions around legislation.

So I will give the First Minister an opportunity to respond if he so wishes.

Mr. Kinew: Appreciate the commentary that you're providing here. I think that legislative process that we've had, you know, this recent session that's resumed here in the fall sitting has been a busy one. Certainly we've been listening to a lot of the priorities of the people of Manitoba.

And being respectful of the commentary you just made, I'm not going to dive too much into the specific bills that have been brought forward, but I just would like to say that in general, I think we've been trying to strike a balance here, between being able to contemplate legislation and move various bills through the stages of becoming law, while also ensuring that the budgetary process, which is what we're here in the Committee of Supply to contemplate, has due consideration and the necessary time.

So, you know, the opposition, on a given day, may choose not to use all their time to answer—or to ask questions. We saw that several times, including on the day when the opposition had a split caucus and we're not able to present a united front on an important question of human rights in Manitoba.

* (15:10)

But again, you know, that is, I guess, tangential to the broader issue of, we think it's, you know, a useful exercise to come to the Committee of Supply and, you know, be up to the Manitobans to determine, you know, their judgment on what they think the opposition's use of said time is all about.

But, you know, I do think that I've got a lot of respect for our House leader—the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), who has managed to, I think, strike a good balance between ensuring that this Committee of Supply gets its necessary due number of hours for consideration of various government departments. I think she's done a good job of listening to the priorities of the opposition, who have put in their requests for, you know, certain departments to come in this order or that order, have asked for a certain number of hours to be allotted to each of these.

And of course, you know, the business of government continues, so we have to balance, you know, presence here with, you know, the importance of taking,

perhaps, a very serious phone call or meetings or, you know, in some cases, you know, commitments which take us outside of the legislative precinct to different parts of the province.

And yes, I just want to take an—this opportunity to thank the Government House Leader for the wonderful job that she's been doing this session in ensuring that both the legislative business but also the budgetary process of government move forward in an important way and that we do, you know, ensure that the opposition has time for them to bring forward various questions that they have for different government departments, that independent members have the ability to participate.

And certainly you saw a good example of that earlier today, in which the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) extended a warm and hardy handshake across the aisle to work with the independent member from Tyndall Park, to have her second a piece of legislation.

You know, I don't know all the ins and outs of legislative history as to how often that's been done over the years, but having been here for, you know, just a bit over eight years now, I can say that that is fairly rare. And I thought it was a gracious and magnanimous gesture and an important move, perhaps not only to pursue a public policy priority but maybe to just—to send a message to Manitobans that we can work together on, not just across the aisle, but on different sides of the aisle to pursue the public interest.

So, you know, that brings us to the budgetary process that we're considering here. This budget is a good budget for Manitobans. It invested \$1 billion more in health care, and with those new resources, we can see that the health-care system is on the mend.

We have improved staffing levels, which is the first step that is necessary to be able to deliver on a long-term improvement program for our health-care system. And, you know, the 873 health-care staffers that we were able to announce after a lot of, you know, meticulous and careful work to examine what is happening in the health-care system, it was an important piece of good news but certainly just one of many pieces of good news in this budget.

Mr. Ewasko: It's unfortunate that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) took an additional 15 minutes to get in here because I do have many questions and I think reaching across the aisle to the other parties, whether they're independent or members of my own party or members, even of the NDP that have questions for this Premier, I think it's fine and it's historically has happened.

And for him to put it on the record and try to once again put misinformation on the record is unfortunate, but that's just nothing new, honourable Chairperson.

In regards to the way the process works, I can almost guarantee—I shouldn't guarantee it but I should almost guarantee that the Government House Leader is not going to make the 'stame'—same mistake that they made in the last session bringing forward legislation.

Because, absolutely, the Premier doesn't want to admit it, because the Premier doesn't want to admit when he or—well, no, he doesn't have a problem, actually, throwing some of his colleagues under the bus. He actually doesn't want to admit when he's made a mistake.

And the fact is that the Government House Leader actually missed the deadlines, and that's exactly why that legislation, which, again, honourable Chairperson, I take your advice very seriously. I think, though, part of it which is going to impact the current budget and budgets moving forward is the fact on the gas tax hike which is definitely going to happen, you know, January 1.

And we don't know how it's—high it's going to go. We've asked questions today. Some of my other colleagues asked questions in regards to the different costs that various other entities such as farmers, how they're going to have to pay for the additional costs that this Premier (Mr. Kinew) is going to be bringing upon themselves.

As far as reaching across the aisle, we know that this Premier is self-serving. I've known that for—since, I guess the early months of 2016. And this continues, the pattern has continued, the behaviour's continued. And so he is now part of his government going out of his way to try to take pieces of legislation and try to call it his own and his government's own.

So we've got, you know, the breast screening, we've got the AI imaging and now he references Keira's Law, which is the member from Tyndall Park. Basically, what they could've done was they could've just basically amended the MLA's bill and took it forward, but, unfortunately, again, this Premier, trying to trick Manitobans into believing that some of the good ideas are actually his own, which we know it's untrue.

So I've got a question in regards to Manitoba Public Insurance. Basically, it's going to be an example of the NDP's failure to govern responsibly in their first year. Blatant interference in MPI. They're supposed to

operate independently, but under this Premier, that independence has been compromised in a costly way.

Honourable Speaker, I guess my question for the Premier is, how does the NDP justify increasing MPI rates knowing full well it would cost Manitobans more of their hard-earned money during an ongoing cost-of-living crisis?

Mr. Kinew: Yes, Mr. Chair, this is a question for you. I was just wondering if you could repeat your guidance on commenting on legislation here in this committee for my benefit.

The Chairperson: So legislation that is currently on the Order Paper, there are other avenues for debate. And so the idea for Committee of Supply is to allow for a global conversation on Estimates for, in this case, Executive Council.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, thanks. Appreciate you clarifying for my benefit.

The strike at MPI was caused by Heather Stefanson and the former administration of a previous government. And I believe there was a campaign video that was—MBLL was the campaign video, yes. And it was kind of unfortunate to see, like, the various workers used as, I guess, a prop for an election campaign, which objectively didn't really go very well.

* (15:20)

So, you know, that strike was 10 weeks long, and really impacted a lot of hard-working Manitobans. You had the folks who were inconvenienced trying to have, you know, the important work of Manitoba Public Insurance which first was, you know, created under a former NDP government, meet their needs. We also had the workers themselves who were hard-working people, and they were put into a tough situation.

And so, coming in to try and clean up PC mismanagement, there are a lot of very challenging issues that we had to take a look at, and certainly, that was a very, very significant part of it. We're also all familiar, I think, with some of the problems with the mismanagement of Manitoba Public Insurance under the former Stefanson government.

And I know that the former minister, now MLA for Steinbach, oversaw some pretty tough decision making, bad decisions I would say, that led to huge cost increases at this Crown corporation. It also has created a pretty challenging environment in which to try and stickhandle that project currently in flight towards a successful implementation.

So coming into government, we were advised that the strike had real costs. There was some \$10 million in back pay that MPI had to contend with. There's an additional cost with trying to clear the backlog that was created by the strike.

And when we just looked at the board that was to exercise oversight over this important Crown corporation, we recognized that, like, part of the reason why, you know, the tech modernization initiative was having so many challenges under the PCs, is that it would be useful to have strong financial and technological expertise on the oversight, the structure that is the board of directors.

And so that's what we brought in. And we were very happy in October of last year that Manitobans had not just elected our government but had said, let's work together, now that the campaign's over, to make Manitoba a better place.

And so immediately after taking office, we appointed a new board, we resolved the strike caused by the members opposite, we freed MPI to be able to get to work serving the people of Manitoba and we ensured that they were back on the job serving you, the great people of this province.

So it's a good-news story after a tough period under the PCs and, you know, I recognize the member opposite's probably, you know, hard done by to remember the time the PCs oversaw MPI, but I'd just like to reassure him that things are on a solid footing now.

Mr. Ewasko: It's unfortunate that the Premier, (Mr. Kinew), he's asking me to get to some questions. I'm waiting for some answers. He's going on on a diatribe of five minutes; it's unfortunate, and still not really any answers.

And the fact is, honourable Chairperson, is the Premier is talking and blaming this on a strike and trying to point fingers at our previous government, but in fact—and he said it himself, on the record: his board, his management.

This spring, MPI was on track to issue rebates to Manitoba drivers. And then with this Premier—and we heard it here, his board—he put them in; he was working directly with them—decided then to go ahead and instead of giving out those rebates. No matter what he's put on the record today in regards to the misinformation about relating it back to the strike, the fact is, is that this Premier and his minister meddled into MPI's decisions.

And so I would like the Premier to apologize and—to apologize to Manitobans for taking the initial idea of a rebate to Manitobans and then switching that around and increasing MPI rates. How does he justify this?

Mr. Kinew: So the video that Heather Stefanson posted going after people who serve the public in Manitoba, we went back and—nobody wants to watch the video again but we looked at some news articles about it. And it turns out it was taking shots at both Liquor & Lotteries employees and MPI employees.

And I know the member opposite has, you know, has got his important role to play here in the Committee of Supply, but I'm sure he laughed on the day when I did the dramatic turnaround to the camera and said, that's where I draw the line. Because I think we all look back at that, you know, political video by Heather Stefanson, and, you know, amused to the extent of how just offside it was with where Manitobans are, but at the same time, very compassionate to the people in this province who were out on a picket line.

And then to expect, I guess, in the PC campaign that, you know, somehow you'd be able to use those people on the picket line as a wedge issue and then go try to talk to people in rural Manitoba or in the suburbs, just doesn't really make a ton of sense to me, because, like, the picket lines that we visited during the campaign were in southwest Winnipeg, were in northeast Winnipeg, were in Selkirk, were in, you know, Thompson or communities right across the province. And so, like, trying to use the very voting public that you're trying to share your political message with as a wedge, I think, was questionable strategy, at best.

But, you know, that's sort of the PCs' decision-making process shown to Manitobans, and I'm very happy that Manitobans chose not to go in that direction because you probably would've seen more problems at MPI. And who knows how long that strike would've lasted if Heather Stefanson was allowed to form government again?

Thankfully, Manitobans chose to go in a different direction, and so we've been hard at work cleaning up the mess that the PCs caused at Manitoba Public Insurance. And, again, issues that were well known to government had gone unaddressed under the PCs for a long, long time: issues around Project Nova, issues around the executive leading the corporation and then related issues around morale of those people working within that situation. Was difficult.

But I think we have a great executive there, at MPI today. I think we have a great workforce. I hope morale has improved.

* (15:30)

I know that ending the strike and being able to ensure that workers are getting a fair wage, and that the lump-sum payments that they were able to negotiate arrived before the holiday season last year was welcome by a lot of Manitobans who had been on the picket line as a result of the PCs, and had seen their incomes suffer as a result. It's not the reason you do it, but the fact that you're able to put some money in the pocket of people right before the holidays is pretty nice, I think. It's something we definitely would always try to do.

And so, with the people of Manitoba in mind too, yes, like, we're always going to look for ways to save you money. And we've done that in a major way with cutting the provincial gas tax, which also—in addition to helping the average person out there—also moved macroeconomic indicators in the province and brought inflation down, and that helps everybody. So that's been really edifying and educational to participate in.

Again, we heard that frustration caused by the strike goes beyond dollars and impacts on operation; it had a real impact on the morale of the people working on the front lines. And the fact that, you know, the people speaking on behalf of MPI under the PCs were doing so from Arizona, I believe it was; pretty tough to take for Manitobans who are walking on a picket line on Gateway in northeast Winnipeg, or near the University of Manitoba.

So we'll stand up for the folks in Manitoba and we're very proud to do so.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, once again, honourable Chairperson, the nice thing with that little diatribe is that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) actually just proved, on the record, that it's actually—was due to his own mismanagement. So he either really didn't know, or he did know and he just chose to do it that way. So it's unfortunate.

We know that—you know, when we had the Wall report dealing with the crowns, we saw that there was billions in debt for future generations caused by the NDP—direct result of NDP mismanagement. And now we see when the NDP continues to interfere with MPI, they're not just playing politics, they're affecting the bottom line of Manitobans, making it less affordable for Manitobans to participate in the economy.

And the nice thing is the Premier—once again, on the record—just proved to all Manitobans that it's—it was actually due to his own mismanagement.

I would like to ask the Premier on building new schools. I'd like to know what his plan is for building new schools, because we're hearing loud and clear that schools are crowded—overcrowded. They came in after seven and a half years being in opposition and have no plan.

The PCs, myself as Education minister—former Education minister—helped provide the new spaces for new educators and, as he knows, he's trying to pick some of that low-hanging fruit. But it does take five, six, seven years to produce an educator, a teacher. So he can't take any credit for that.

So I want to know what his plan is to build the new schools to help alleviate the overcrowding. And, you know, he'll go down in history being labelled the Premier who came up with hallway education.

Mr. Kinew: I know you're an educator so you'll probably be happy to hear this, Mr. Chair, but you know what we did with all these graduates coming out of the bachelor of education programs? We hired them.

We hired them, and you know what they told us? Amazing; I used to think that there might not be a future in my profession under the PC government, but now I know that there's a bright future here in Manitoba, and there's a chance for somebody like me coming out of school to get a job in this province that I love so much.

It's a wonderful news story. And is it about making news and a headline? No, it's about teaching kids; that's the real priority. So, 630 more educators working in the classroom today. And a new agreement with teachers that ensures that that bright future is backed up with a real plan to retain these teachers in the classroom. I think it's awesome.

Schools? Yes, we're building them. We're going to build more in the future. We build things. If the PC government was in power for the last 40 years we never would have had a downtown arena. They voted against it. We never would have got the NHL back. They voted against it.

So again, like, this is a government that builds things. And so we're really, really proud of all that. And I do just want to, like, you know, have a bit of fun with the member opposite, too. He says, again, as the recent Education minister in the final days of the

Heather Stefanson administration, he says, and I quote: Schools are crowded. End quote.

What a legacy. If you wanted a school online this year you should have been building it during his time as Education minister. That's the legacy. What a legacy. Anyway, I say that with a little bit of sarcasm, obviously.

But I do want to just ensure that we—before moving off the topic of MPI, we just highlight the irresponsibility of the Heather Stefanson administration.

So one of the big events that happened with MPI, and this did have a significant financial impact, to the tune of \$150.4 million in the last fiscal year; it resulted in 15,000 claims—was a major hailstorm in August of 2023. You know, MPI in their internal history, their internal reckoning, they say that this is one of the largest claims events that has ever happened in the history of Manitoba Public Insurance. So you're going back some 50 years, some five decades.

And this is one of the biggest claim events. Happened in August, 2023—15,000 claims—eventually \$150.4 million in impacts financially to the corporation. Just for a point of reference, that's a 1,354 per cent increase compared to hail claims the year prior, the prior fiscal year. So this huge, dramatic event happens in August 2023. This Heather Stefanson administration sees this happen. They understand that Manitobans are starting to file a huge amount of claims.

What was the reaction of the Stefanson administration? They started the strike four days after that.

This huge financial impact, a huge surge in the amount of Manitobans who need to access the services of MPI, and that is when the former PC administration decided to push workers out on strike. Not only was there a huge financial impact, but again, the impact on the consumer, the average ratepayer, seeing, during a time of need when it comes to accessing insurance services, the Stefanson administration causing a strike.

And, you know, I think I've already catalogued some of the challenges that that's caused. But the PC administration was very, very irresponsible in causing a strike at that time. Perhaps they could have even had like an interim arrangement to keep claims getting serviced and to keep Manitobans, you know, driving. But on the flipside, maybe they had that great video all planned, locked and loaded, and they just wanted to trigger that strike so they could go post that video online.

I would really, really hope that that wasn't the case. But again, looking at some of the other decision-making points that they executed, we can't rule it out.

Mr. Ewasko: It's unfortunate the Premier (Mr. Kinew) sits there and tries to rewrite some history. Matter of fact, just recently a few of his union boss friends actually went on the record and talked about how the unions, in regards to any type of negotiating, they actually negotiate with the employer, not the government.

* (15:40)

So it's unfortunate that once again, this Premier sits in his chair, puts misinformation on the record and, again—I don't know. I don't really know if he's doing it on purpose or deliberately. I don't know that.

So I'm sort of just asking that question. I can technically ask that question—

The Chairperson: I'll just caution the member to ensure that he is not implying that another member is lying.

Mr. Ewasko: I'm actually not questioning whether the member's lying or not. I'm actually asking whether he's putting misinformation on the record deliberately or not, and that will be a question to him to answer, and he will have to answer that to Manitobans in 2027, if not sooner.

But I will ask him, even though he gave a diatribe of over—you know, over five minutes—page 63 of the budget document, it shows here a hundred-million-dollar cut to Education. Can he explain that?

The Chairperson: Before I recognize the First Minister, I'll just encourage members not to reflect on the rulings of the Chair.

Mr. Ewasko: I thank you for the guidance. I won't challenge any rulings of the Chair.

But that being said, again, a hundred-million-dollar cut to Education. I'd like to know what is his plans? And I'd like to challenge him to answer the question in under a minute.

Mr. Kinew: On the question of negotiations with the representative of workers, I would say this: The video that I'm talking about that Heather Stefanson posted during the campaign and tried to raise in the televised debate—the same topic as, like, some sort of, you know, political winner, I guess—she said, like, verbatim in the video: That's where I draw the line. She was saying that she was the one making the decisions about nego-

tiations with the people at MPI and the people at MBLL.

So again, you know, the member opposite is, you know, free to, you know, put his comments out there, but I just want the record to show that Heather Stefanson said, that's where I—emphasis added by me—that's where I draw the line.

Seems pretty clear that Heather Stefanson, whether the member opposite agrees with it or not, was saying that she was making the decision to cause the strike. There is also the Liquor & Lotteries employees who are being swept up into these statements. So again, the video that just continues to speak to that decision taken by Heather Stefanson and the Stefanson government to cause a strike at MPI.

So again, \$150 million—over \$150 million in damages to, you know, vehicles and basically to the impact on the livelihoods of people in Manitoba; that happened in August of 2023. Four days later, Heather Stefanson—the Stefanson government, if you're to believe her own words that she said—said, hey, that's where I draw the line.

And what I'm saying and suggesting to the member opposite is that choosing to precipitate a strike four days after this major hailstorm was irresponsible. It's irresponsible because that is a time in which there would've been great stress on MPI as an organization; that there would have been a lot of stress being borne by the ratepayers, drivers across the province, and it would've been good to just keep the lights on and keep people working and ensuring that people in their time of need would be able to have those needs met by the public insurer.

There's always been like, you know, some suspicion about what the PCs really think about having a public auto insurer. I remember in our time in opposition, one of the member's colleagues mused about—or actually, I think that was after the election defeat. Actually, let me modify what I just said.

Actually, after the election defeat, one of the member's former colleagues mused about privatization when it came to the public auto insurer in Manitoba. Certainly, I think that's a mistake. I think that the political courage that was shown by Howard Pawley as the then-minister to bring in Manitoba Public Insurance, to stand on the steps of these Legislature—this Legislature and to communicate with people who had shown up to voice their views. I think that was an important public service.

The steady hand of then-premier Ed Schreyer to move in this direction I think has been assessed as being a very positive move because again, Manitobans pay lower auto insurance rates than in many other parts of the country. And along the way, you get to create good jobs in communities across the province. It seems to be a very, very positive approach to public investment.

Of course, I've been spending a lot of time talking about, you know, the public servants who work for MPI directly, but let's not forget that, you know, insurance brokers employ a lot of people in many different communities, including in some small towns and including in other cities outside the perimeter, including in different regions of the province—all regions of the province. Until you have, again, that industry that has been, I guess, encouraged and shepherded because of public auto insurance.

So we're always going to stand up for the public auto insurer and that means ensuring that it's in good financial health and has strong oversight and good management, and I'm happy to say we've done so.

Mr. Ewasko: Didn't quite make it under that minute, and didn't deny the hundred-million-dollar cut.

Honourable Chairperson, I am going to turn over for some questions to the member for Fort Garry for 10 minutes.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has previously indicated that he did not support search of the landfill for the Skibicki victims' remains. He had indicated to this committee that—on December 8, in a Global News interview, that he asserted his support for that.

Now, I think the Premier misspoke. Watching the video, his exact quote was: I think it was important we make an effort. He never says in that interview what that effort is. He doesn't indicate any full support for the search of the landfill. And he never promised to pay for the search for the landfill at that time.

And there seems to be a disconnect between the Premier's position and that of the victims' families. They have been very clear from the beginning: they want a conventional search of the landfill. They want an excavation with a forensic anthropological dig, which would sort through the debris and recover the remains.

Now, the Premier did not make another public statement in relation to the landfill search until July 10, 2023, eight months later. And that was five

days after former premier Heather Stefanson said the province wouldn't search the landfill.

He made no statement in reaction to her claim. In fact, was at an unrelated press conference and he was asked about it. And this is the quote from the Winnipeg Sun on July 10. Quote: I know a lot of folks are saying \$180 million is a lot of money. It's too much. End quote. So it's very clear that when he did commit to doing something, it wasn't to actually do a conventional search of the landfill.

And I'm wondering, and I'll give him a fifth opportunity to answer the question: Why was he opposed to searching the landfill? Did he think it was not feasible? Was it the cost?

And in July 10, he still seemed opposed to it but was open to doing something less than that, and I'm wondering what did he have in mind in July 10 other than an actual conventional search of a—of the landfill?

* (15:50)

Mr. Kinew: This is a very emotionally charged issue. And when you invoke it—like, the thing that I always talk about with our team is that, like, you have to keep it sacred. And that's what we've done throughout.

We've talked to the families, listened to their desires. We've spent time with them. And so, in November of '22—or was it December? *[interjection]* In December of '22, I said—you know, not verbatim, but what I said is we have to make an effort.

Subsequent July, issue becomes a subject of media fodder. Prior to making public comments, we sat with the families. We prayed with them, smoked the pipe, heard the frustrations that they were experiencing. Issue had already been politicized. And then I said we have to try.

So there's consistency from the comments made some six or seven months prior.

The election. We know how the PCs tried to turn this into a wedge issue. I would like to hear the PCs weigh in on whether they support the Prairie Green Landfill search now. I think, at the very least, their leadership candidates should weigh in on the matter.

But notwithstanding the way that they chose to conduct themselves during last year's election; again, think back to the TV debate: Heather Stefanson could have chosen any topic to raise in her first question. She could have chose to raise health care, which was the first priority for Manitobans. She could have chose

to talk about affordability, which is another top priority of Manitobans. Could have even chosen to talk about more traditional PC issues, like, say, you know, I don't know what it is that the leadership candidates are running on, but she could have chosen any of those.

Instead, she chose to try and raise the Prairie Green Landfill search as her lead-off question. I wonder why, I say with rhetorical affect, because I think Manitobans' vote intention, as expressed in the count of the ballots on October 3, 2023, expressed as a fact that Manitobans know the reason why.

What did I say in response when that came up during the campaign? Can't guarantee success, but we have to try. So whether you say we have to make an effort; we have to try. We can't guarantee success; we have to try. This is all consistent.

Our team prevailed. We brought the families down to the Legislature. We prayed with them again. We were able to hear the impacts that the campaign had on them directly. The Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) was there; the Minister of Housing, Addictions, and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) was there; Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations (Mr. Bushie) was there; the Attorney General was there, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe). They heard these words.

What do we tell them? We can't guarantee success, but we have to try.

And then, throughout a good chunk of the year, the judicial process, the core process, was being pursued. The verdict was delivered, and I believe on the—well, the earliest opportunity that we had, we invited the families down to the building.

And we brought them up to speed on the plan to search Prairie Green. We prayed with them again. We spent time with them again. What was the message that we delivered? We cannot guarantee success, but we have to try.

Last week, we were at Prairie Green. Search facility, construction is well under way. The topsoil, for lack of a better term, is being removed in—overtop of the target search area. A ready-to-move building to host the families during this process is on site. And we did a public event with the families. It was a very difficult day for them.

And what did we say? Sorry for everything you've been through. Your loved ones deserve value and dignity. Cannot guarantee success, but we have to try.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) has one minute remaining for questions.

Mr. Wasyliw: Okay. So on August 9, when the Premier (Mr. Kinew) made the public commitment during the election that he would do something, he was quoted by Global News saying: Whether it involves a search or another approach. We know from then that there was no sort of further discussion about it.

January 16, 2024, there was a human rights complaint. March 8, 2024, 300 people protested against the Premier on the steps of the Legislature for failing to act. And then finally, on March 22, 2024, the government committed to a conventional search of the landfill.

So I'd ask this Premier why it took 15 months for him to finally commit to an actual search of the landfill? And in August 9, during the election, was he only committed to doing a cadaver search and not an actual conventional search?

Mr. Kinew: The families involved are always first and foremost in our thoughts. Before talking about this issue, I talk to them. I check in with them. I work with them.

I want to put on the record that the chief of staff to the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) just made a money sign with his hands across the aisle. Sort of did the finger-rubbing thing. I'd ask whether it's appropriate for the staff members who are invited here to participate in a back and forth across the aisle and just leave that—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Mr. Kinew: —comment on the record.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Point of order, from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko).

Mr. Ewasko: I think the fact is, is that we're asking questions from this side. The independent member from Fort Garry has been asking questions and just looking for some answers from the Premier (Mr. Kinew).

And as far as staff that may or may not be in the Chamber, I think let's just exclude it and can the Premier just get down to it. I know that he gets a little high in anxiety when he's sort of pushed into a bit of a corner and having to have to actually answer some questions.

So if the Premier can just please answer some questions, honourable Chairperson.

* (16:00)

The Chairperson: So there was, in fact, no point of order. I am not—the Chair is not reflecting on the content of answers or can rule on the quality of the answers.

And as I've ruled in the past, I ask not to be brought into debate, which would extend to staff, but staff should also be respectful in this space and not engaging in the debate, and behaving in an appropriate manner.

* * *

Mr. Kinew: So like, we're talking about two dead women—two dead women that are believed to be in the Prairie Green Landfill. These are real people with real family members, right? And just—what we've just witnessed this afternoon, like, this is not a political game.

So we take the time to talk to the families, and we've taken the time to listen. We've taken the time to act in a respectful manner. And we've amended and adjusted plans for the ready-to-move building. We've delayed public commentary. We've, you know, done all sorts of things to show flexibility for their desires.

But I would say this: People of Manitoba are good people. People of Manitoba do not want to see their fellow Manitobans treated in a cavalier or disrespectful manner. Manitobans are smart, and they know when an issue is being exploited for political purposes. And when it comes to such a sensitive topic as the victims of a serial murderer, engaging with that in the way that the PCs did last year—and unfortunately, we can't say that that behaviour has stopped—is beyond the pale.

So what did we do? We went out and we contested this issue. This was a tough issue for us to talk about on the doorstep. And yet, we adopted the moral high ground. We won the election, in part, on our stance on this issue and being able to outmaneuver this wedge that had been deployed by Heather Stefanson. And if she tries to ever dodge her culpability and responsibility for using this as a political wedge, then I say, why did she pose this as her first question in the televised debate?

And we earned a mandate from the people of Manitoba to search the landfill. And you know what I say to that in terms of what our team did? It's the least we could've done. What else would somebody who's been asked to lead want to do other than to help these families?

The premiers from across the country were welcomed here, I think in July 2023, right, 13, 12 visitors from other provinces and territories. And what did they see? They saw the families of these murder victims protesting on the side of a road. A national disgrace.

Somebody that I respect very much—and I don't want to say, you know, the name, because I don't want to invoke them in this partisan context, but they said, you know, politicians, at a bare minimum, have a moral responsibility not to amplify divisions in the society. I agree.

Heather Stefanson and the PC team that were elected under her name failed to uphold that basic expectation that we should have of people who put their name on a ballot.

But Manitobans have rendered their verdict on that one and so, you know, what else is there to say, other than we are searching the landfill. There's no longer a call to search the landfill; we are now searching the landfill.

Stage 3, which involves material being pulled off the top of the landfill that allows us to get into the target area, is well under way. Construction of a very sophisticated search facility, which includes an impressive array of environmental protections and considerations around the health and safety of workers, is well under construction. Some 100,000 tons of material have been moved onto the site to stand up this facility.

We are making good on our word to you.

Mr. Ewasko: We'll give the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) five more minutes.

Mr. Wasyliv: My concern with this issue is how it has become politicized, and with the greatest respect to the Premier (Mr. Kinew), he has been grandstanding on this issue.

And I think he owes a debt of accountability to the families. They wanted a specific type of search to occur. The record is very clear that the Premier was opposed to that, and it took him 15 months and a lot of lobbying and protesting and human rights complaints and 300 people showing up on the steps of the Legislature to get him to move his position.

I think he owes them, again, the respect and the dignity to explain that why, during the election, he was not committed to doing an excavation search of the Prairie Green Landfill, and when did he change his mind. Was it in March of 2023?

And the other concern I have here is that he—it's a—very clear that the Premier has met with the victims' families multiple times, and he should be commended for showing that kind of empathy and leadership. However, I am also concerned that there are other victims in Manitoba that do not have this Premier's attention.

I met with the Reimer family that tell me that they have sent eight emails to this Premier's office seeking a meeting and have just got an auto—out of—like, an auto reply, and did not even get a tailored letter to them explaining why the Premier would not meet with him.

So I'm also wondering, what criteria does the Premier use when it comes to meeting with victims? What victims will he meet with? What victims will he ignore? And how is he going to do this going forward?

And again, implore the Premier to stop politicizing the justice system.

Mr. Kinew: I feel compelled to point out to the committee the fact that the PCs are awarding time during their Estimates afternoon here to talk about the Prairie Green Landfill. And so I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition posing me questions about the Prairie Green Landfill, and I look forward to having a fulsome debate in which we hear the perspectives of the PC caucus on the Prairie Green Landfill.

I hope that the PC leadership candidates who appear at an event later today talk about their views on the Prairie Green Landfill. I believe one of them has come out and clearly said that he does not support the ads that the PC campaign ran in 2023, and I would assume that, you know, that same person, as much as I might disagree with their various positions on certain matters, I'm just guessing that since they took a stance against the ads, they'd probably take a stand on the search proper.

* (16:10)

I wonder whether the other candidate who is currently in the PC caucus will do the same. Will he answer questions about the ads, stand firm ads? Will he answer questions about his view on the Prairie Green Landfill search today?

And I think it is a relevant public policy question because, you know, one of the things that has occurred to me since we see the PCs—other than this afternoon in which these questions are coming up during their committee time—we see them pretty studiously avoid saying anything about the Prairie Green Landfill

search. You know, and there's quite a bit of media attention on this topic, and yet they don't weigh in.

Just as an aside, of course, there was no issue on weighting in against protecting trans children. But for whatever reason, the PCs' 2023 class, if you will, avoid sharing their position on the Prairie Green Landfill.

Why is that a public policy conversation in 2024 and going forward? Well, I would suggest to you that there is a possibility that the PCs are just trying to avoid taking a position right now, including whether they support the calls of the families, and at some future date will re-emerge to try and criticize again.

And so, you know, questions about consistency on our side—we can satisfy them. The PCs cannot say the same, unfortunately. I think they should. If they still oppose the landfill search today, they should say so. They opposed it last year. If they are again, perhaps in the lead-up to the next election or some time after that, going to make a criticism of us doing a humanitarian search of the Prairie Green Landfill, I think they should exercise the moral courage and state their position today. I personally suspect we won't see that.

I'm just pausing for a second to confer with my staff.

The Chairperson: Sorry. Your mic was cut during the pause.

Mr. Kinew: Yes. Thank you.

So the Prairie Green Landfill search is a humanitarian initiative to recover the remains of two women and to show two families that they are respected and valued. It is an issue that has a ton of public policy implications, touching on many different aspects of government. It is one that has received a lot of media attention.

And yet, in spite of the fact that the PCs seem to want to chase media attention on many other issues, they refuse to weigh in on this one. I wonder why that is. I think that they should state their position clearly. What is the current caucus view? Do they support this government's search of the Prairie Green Landfill?

I encourage them all to weigh in. Let the people of Manitoba know their thoughts, as they do on many other issues.

Mr. Ewasko: I think the Premier (Mr. Kinew) will have his time to ask questions in question period in a short amount of time here, especially when we call the

next election, and he will be one of the shortest-running premiers in the province of Manitoba.

So I do believe that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) asked some questions. Premier, as usual, dodges the questions. I think the member for Fort Garry knows, possibly, some of the answers that he's asked the questions to. I mean, we know that this Premier has had a record for quite some time on picking winners and losers, and that's why he picks and chooses who he wants to actually respond to, the majority of the time deleting his emails, I'm sure, or passing it along to a spokesperson in government.

Honourable Chairperson, we've seen that the sunshine list has grown immensely under this Premier. You know, more staff, higher wages. So I'd like to ask the Premier—and again, I'd like to challenge him for that one-minute answer thing, but we know that he actually can't do it.

But I'd like to ask the Premier: Is there any of his staff that are getting paid over and above the orders-in-council that have been publicly submitted?

Mr. Kinew: So, two things in under a minute.

One, interesting question coming from a member who just said to leave staff out of it.

Two, all the time in the world for the Prairie Green Landfill search just a few short seconds ago. And now no ability to touch on this important topic with a ton of media attention. So I would like, in under a minute, the member opposite to tell this committee whether he supports the Prairie Green Landfill search.

Mr. Ewasko: So—again, so we've got confirmation that the Premier's not denying of the hundred-million-dollar cut to Education. He's also not denying—I haven't quite heard an answer on the whole compensation of some of his orders-in-council that he has passed as the Premier getting higher wages.

We know that there's over 700 more staff hired under this Premier, and we're hearing and seeing evidence of various departments that are actually—staff's quitting, and I wonder why?

I mean, we see the independent member for Fort Garry sitting asking some questions—well, because he challenged the Premier. What happens? Premier gets rid of him. There's some pretty serious allegations of toxicity, dysfunction, abuse. I don't know. I see some nervous laughs over on the NDP caucus side.

But I would like to point out—and since the member for Fort Garry was asking some questions—

and it's sort of interesting because I do have one of the staff that I believe—I don't know what media outlet it was, honourable Chairperson, but one of the NDP staff had been given—who actually had been—was seen actually carrying boxes and a photo—carrying boxes for the now-independent member for Fort Garry out of the office when the Premier kicked the member for Fort Garry out of caucus due to the serious allegations that were brought against him.

But it is interesting that there's a disclosure of contracts with the Department of Agriculture for one of his staff and—was a direct award for over and above, and I believe that staff is making—the starting salary was just over 92 and a half thousand dollars. And now there's another disclosure of contracts, a direct award, to the Department of Agriculture for another over \$15,000.

And so I'd like to ask the Premier, you know, how many more are there of his staff that are getting sole-sourced contracts, direct-award contracts over and above their orders-in-council?

Mr. Kinew: You know, the question was put directly to the member opposite and he refused to answer.

Does he support the search of the Prairie Green Landfill? He saw fit to raise this topic at committee; I would like to hear his position on the matter.

What is the current view of the PC caucus? Do they support the search of the Prairie Green Landfill?

* (16:20)

Mr. Ewasko: I do believe that the independent member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) had some questions and he didn't get any answers. I've asked some questions. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) wants to, you know, pretend once again that he's in opposition in question period and all—myself and our PC team will kindly oblige him in the next short amount of time when we take back over government. And then he'll have an opportunity to ask a lot of questions.

So, okay. So he's confirmed that there's a hundred-million-dollar cut to Education. He's not building any schools, and the schools that he is building, he's trying to take credit for the ones that we actually are building. He's not doing it. He's taking off—the low-hanging fruit off the various different professional trees that have been grown over the last four or five years, patting himself on the back for that. You know, in regards to education, I mean, he's coined the phrase hallway education now, which is sad.

I'm fairly certain that the Premier really doesn't know what is happening in the other—in the various

different departments. We know that the Parks budget has been cut by considerable amounts. I know that the Whiteshell—West Hawk, Falcon—has been cut considerably. We saw, you know, washrooms getting locked up. We've seen excessive garbage. We've seen bears getting into the garbage cans. Why? Because this Premier's inaction.

And because, again, the member for Fort Garry is independent member now, because he was actually calling the Premier out on some of the dysfunction and toxic behaviours of the Premier; and then turned into abusive behaviour. Honourable Chairperson, I mean, that's just not behaviour becoming of a premier.

But this is definitely the signs that I've been seeing since, I'd say, probably January of 2016, when I saw that self-serving attitude back then, prior to the 2016 election; prior to the time he was the star candidate of his mentor, Greg Selinger, who then, later on—the now-Premier, the MLA for Fort Rouge, actually stuck the knife in the former premier Greg Selinger's back; continued to throw him under the bus.

And then there was the—of course, a respectful workplace policy and a report on the NDP misconduct and then the Premier, the member for Fort Rouge obviously didn't read the report because then those other serious allegations that come out about the environment in which he is leading.

And that's why, I guess, he is paying direct-award contracts on top of the orders-in-council wages to try to really desperately save some of the staff. Because he knows they're jumping ship. They don't want to work in that toxic environment they call the NDP government.

So, honourable Chairperson, would the Premier just answer the question: How many staff is he paying over and above on a direct-award contract, over and above the orders-in-council that are public records?

Mr. Kinew: This talk about bathrooms and bears and any number of topics, but no answer on the Prairie Green Landfill search. Do the PCs currently support searching the Prairie Green Landfill?

Mr. Ewasko: It's unfortunate that the Premier comes in today—more than 15 minutes I had to wait for him. Then he goes on this diatribe about asking questions and whatever else. Not getting any answers.

So, honourable Chairperson, I'm going to concede 10 minutes to the MLA for Fort Garry to ask a couple of questions.

Thank you, honourable Chairperson.

Mr. Wasyliv: I have some questions for the Premier about True North Real Estate Development.

The Province is committed to rent this facility for 35 years. The operation of that tower is estimated \$106 million a year, including a lease. True North claims that it's tens of millions of dollars in rent. Over 35 years, the Province is going to spend \$3.75 billion in provincial money, which doesn't even take into account inflation. The Province could buy a building or build a building for a fraction of that amount of money.

So my question is—because the Province hasn't come within the upfront money for this development, obviously their contribution is paying inflated market rents for the lease. And so I'm wondering if the Premier can tell this committee what the Province is paying over and above market rates for a lease every year, and how many tens of millions of dollars will be going to pay a lease to a private landlord that the Province could essentially build its own building.

And, of course, before the Premier attempts to avoid this question by saying, well, this is a commercial, you know, contract and I can't disclose it, because other, you know, landlords do business with the Province, that simply is not on. That doesn't apply to government. That is something in a commercial context. Governments set their own prices, because they're large economic actors, and I believe the Premier took an intro to economics course once upon a time, and I'm sure he understands that.

Mr. Kinew: You know, we're very excited about Portage Place 2.0. It's a significant example of economic reconciliation.

One of the important developments recently was the partnership created between the Southern Chiefs' Organization and True North Real Estate Development. I believe that the name of their joint enterprise is SCO-TN 92. The 92 in the name of that entity refers to the 92nd Call to Action of the truth and reconciliation committee of Canada.

And I don't have my TRC booklet that illustrates and lists all the 94 Calls to Action, but I can summarize in a general term that Call to Action No. 92 calls on the business community to work with First Nations and Métis and Inuit and all Indigenous nations to advance their understanding of the true history of Canada and to work together to create a brighter future for everybody.

And so they have put that reference to that Call to Action at the centre of this new joint enterprise that

they're pursuing together to signal the fact that not only are they working together, not only do they have a shared partnership, but that they also want to tie directly that joint undertaking with the work of the TRC as spearheaded by Murray Sinclair and Willie Littlechild and Marie Wilson and really brought to the forefront of the national agenda by residential school survivors.

And so when you look downtown, you see this great opening of revitalization initiatives that are coming forward and, you know, this partnership between SCO and True North, I think, really stands as an exciting example.

You know, really, it's one joint project, but we can think of it as a few separate pieces. You know, you have The Bay, Wehwehneh Bahgahkinahgohn project. You have the health tower on the east pad of the current Portage Place site, and then you have the housing tower on the current west pad of the Portage Place site. And then you have—I believe it's been re-christened the bridge to reconciliation, which connects the current Bay site with the Portage Place complex.

* (16:30)

And so what is the role of government here? What are the investments that we are seeing fit to make? Well, by and large, we are a catalyst to help ensure the financial viability of this exciting new era of economic reconciliation.

There are many approaches that our government is pursuing to be able to expand access to health care and access to housing. We are proceeding with many, many projects in these areas in the public approach. Of course, schools that we're building, that were the subject of conversation earlier, will be built with the public approach. But there's also room for us to use our need for more space and more buildings.

There's room for us to use that need to act as a catalyst for exciting partnerships like this. And so, I don't have the exact dates in front of me but an early-stage step was the partnership being committed to as an MOU and then a signing of a formal agreement, at which time the government also issued a letter of intent, and then most recently we signed onto the actual agreement proper.

And with us stepping in as a partner who will be renting this space over the long term, it then allows SCO and True North under this new partnership to finance the construction stage of this exciting development.

The Chairperson: The honourable leader—or, sorry the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) has three minutes.

Mr. Wasyliw: So I hope the Premier (Mr. Kinew) isn't suggesting that without his intervention, that this deal wouldn't have happened. We're talking about one of the richest men in Canada that owns this company, an out-of-province billionaire. I think he's doing just fine, actually.

The Province isn't a business. It has huge market power and it basically can dictate the commercial terms of a lease to a private landlord. And again, the Province could build its own building. It could buy a building. In fact, for these eye-popping numbers, it could buy the entire mall.

So, the government's obviously giving a sweetheart deal to True North, to this out-of-province billionaire, and the people of Manitoba are paying above-market rates for this lease and that's the Province's contribution.

And I'm wondering if the—you know, the Premier needs to be open with Manitobans about how much more money they're going to spend on this corporate welfare than if the Province had just simply bought the building outright, or even had bought the mall.

Mr. Kinew: You know, I'm very respectful of the Southern Chiefs' Organization. Got a very strong team with a lot of horsepower. Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, somebody I've known for many, many years, we've been very lucky to be able to work together but to also have, you know, a lot of laughs together here and there. And they've got a lot of institutional horsepower in their organization.

The ability for government to encourage the partnership between Southern Chiefs and True North, I think is something that's been very well received. There's a lot of excitement about what this represents for downtown. There's a lot of excitement about what it means for the broader economy. And there is of course the impact on the health and social and community needs of people in the area.

And the credit for this, you know, initiative certainly doesn't belong with me. The credit belongs to Grand Chief Jerry Daniels and to, you know, the team at True North.

By the way, they're, like, the same players who got the downtown arena built. And the PCs opposed that, including, you know, voting against it in this very Chamber. And then, you know, who's to say what could have happened had they been in power at the

time, but luckily they were not. Gary Doer was the premier, got the arena built. And that's a very proud, pivotal moment in Manitoba history.

So we're hoping that this project will be able to shepherd in another new exciting time in Manitoba history. The agreement that we signed onto sees that there are, I guess, many, many topics on which we agree, a few specific commitments from us, in terms of where we want to head in the future.

We talked about this publicly. There have been multiple press conferences about this, numerous signing ceremonies and, you know, our team takes very seriously the responsibility we have to the Manitoba public. It's a responsibility around the finances, which had clearly been left in a very bad state by the Heather Stefanson administration. We also have a responsibility to the health and social and community needs of Manitobans, including in Winnipeg's downtown, which is Manitoba's downtown.

And while it may not be thought of traditionally as a responsibility, I would argue that when there's the opportunity to catalyze and to encourage, you know, different partners to come together and do exciting things, it just makes sense for government to play a role in helping to bring those things to fruition.

So Portage Place 2.0 hopefully will signal the realization of the dreams of many people, including the Southern Chiefs' Organization and their staff and True North and their team, but also the people of Manitoba, who are feeling a lot of optimism these days, who are feeling very positive about where we live and really want to see that optimism translated over the long term into investments that make this province a better place for our kids to grow up in.

And so that's a very important perspective. Calls to mind, perhaps, the work of philosopher Charles Taylor, who talked about empowering, you know, the average person out there to realize their dreams. Or you could just simply think about it from the perspective of working for you, getting things done.

Mr. Ewasko: So the Premier (Mr. Kinew) talks about respecting responsibility to Manitobans. We know that he really doesn't. I mean, he shuts out Manitobans' ability to voice their opinions on very important legislation topics in regards to finances, future ongoing here in the province. So, really, we know, honourable Chairperson, the only one that he respects—because as I've said, since early January of 2015—or '16, sorry—this Premier has—is only self-serving. Seen it time and time again.

No matter what type of showmanship and photo ops he's trying to portray to Manitobans, he knows it, his caucus knows it, his Cabinet knows it. But unfortunately, many of his caucus colleagues and Cabinet colleagues are too worried that what happened to the MLA for Fort Rouge would happen to them.

And they're holding on to that possibility of getting into Cabinet, even though I know there's an acting Education Minister right now with a caucus full of teachers. Did anybody get tapped on the shoulder to come and, hey, want to be acting Education Minister? Nope. Why is that? Because I do believe that a lot of those teachers in that NDP caucus; pretty smart individuals.

* (16:40)

And they might call the Premier out on some of the things that he's been doing, much like the MLA for Fort Rouge. And then what would happen? They'd have yet another independent member, or multiple, because just like his mentor, Greg Selinger, who lost control of his caucus, I can see that the Premier's going to lose control of his. And it's not going to take that long.

So, talk about the finances. We looked at nearly a quarter-billion-dollar surplus. Then, due to his \$3-billion election promises, ran the debt to \$2 billion—to almost \$2 billion in a non-COVID year.

We know that in the first year, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) cut the nine schools. He's not building any. He's going to try to take credit of the things that we started doing and started building, and we already had built; matter of fact, we opened many of them. More than a hundred dollars—\$100 million cut in education. Daycares: cut daycares. Nothing announced; only in Fort Rouge, though.

Closed the Starbucks in Fort Rouge, by the way. Summer programming for kids, he cut. Parks budgets, cut. Roads budgets, cut. Forest firefighting budget, cut. Economic development efforts, cut. Surgical options, cut. Task force that reduced wait times, cut. Anything that the NDP has not yet cut, they have proceeded to take credit for.

We know that the Progressive Conservative government grew the rainy day fund, attracting—we attracted businesses and jobs, delivered \$373-million audited surplus in 2023. NDP have chosen deficit spending instead of a balanced budget because they know they over-promised and, as usual, much like his predecessor, his mentor, Greg Selinger, they're going to definitely under-deliver; over-promise, under-deliver.

I'd like to ask the Premier (Mr. Kinew), what is the cost—I've taken a look and read through the Manitoba Affordable Energy Plan. I sort of had a bit of a chuckle considering, I don't know, it's a pretty thin document. Not much of a plan, as usual, with this Premier and his government.

What is the cost right now, per kilowatt hour, they're paying for wind?

Mr. Kinew: Okay, so my learned colleagues and I, who is less learned than they, shall we say, are having an interesting discussion about whether said information is proprietary. And so what I'll do for the member opposite is undertake to ascertain an answer to said question about disclosure of these—the price per kilowatt hour paid for wind energy is proprietary or not.

And I will, you know, for clarity's sake, just venture to say that, you know, it is very unclear from the 'rambly' manner in which the member posed the question, referring as he did to the Affordable Energy Plan, whether he's talking about future state wind development in Manitoba or whether he's talking about the wind farms just south of us on highway—along Highway 75, I should say. But I'll assume he means about the current wind facilities in operation here in Manitoba. And so, yes, I'll endeavour to undertake and get an answer as to whether that is proprietary information.

What I can say with absolute confidence is that in his preamble, the member opposite mistakenly used the word debt when he meant to use the term deficit. He also purposely glosses over the period from the end of the previous fiscal year, when the budget was tabled, and when the election was actually had.

So again, we know that the end of the fourth quarter for that year, and then there were basically six months until the election. And my, oh, my, was Heather Stefanson and the former PC government able to cause a lot of financial damage in that six-month window. We went out and retained expert advice from MNP to help us take a look at this fiscal mess that had been created in the lead-up to the members opposite losing their offices in government.

And one of the quotes that really stands out to me, again from this period earlier in the spring of '23 to when the votes were cast in '23 is, and I quote: From the release of the 2023-24 budget to October 3, 2023, budgetary decisions were made that collectively represent high budgetary risk. End quote.

And again, the member opposite can go argue with our shared friends over at MNP, but we'll just

accept their word as a given and agree that, yes, there's a lot of fiscal risk, to say the least. The unfortunate thing is that now Manitobans have to pay for that and, again, all the debt that was accumulated under the PC time in office.

But we're a steady hand. We've been getting good reviews from the rating agencies thus far. We have been seeing positive economic indicators, and we were very, very proud to announce an investment in NFI last week, which among other things, in addition to providing an incentive to this great job creator, we also decided to take the really, really high interest payments off that had been implemented under Heather Stefanson.

So members opposite, you know they want to charge job creators and, you know, make it more and more difficult, and we said no, we'd rather see that money going to put people to work in the province. We love the blue collar. We love the hard-working folks at manufacturing plants right across the province, and we'd like to invest rather than to make life more difficult.

So that's been very, very encouraging to see. Also want to share that the broad view of the affordable energy plan is Manitoba is in a position to be a major winner for the low-carbon economy and where the economy is headed over the coming decades. We have these amazing building blocks that the people of Manitoba have very smartly invested in—Manitoba Hydro being a very, very crucial piece of that—but also the work to bring critical mineral developments online in not just northern Manitoba, though there are significant activities up there, but also in the eastern Manitoba and many other parts of the province.

We also have a strong manufacturing base here, and so the affordable energy plan is all about making sure that energy costs stay affordable for the average person so that you out there can keep your head above water first and foremost, make the most of your lives, but also contribute in a very virtuous circle to growing that clean economy.

Mr. Ewasko: So obviously, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) doesn't know the answer, and you know, we're looking at the energy plan that this Premier is trying to bring forward, which is pretty thin. And he doesn't know the answer to something that he is banking on moving into the future.

* (16:50)

So at this time, honourable Chairperson, I don't have any further questions. I've got lots of questions but no further questions at this time.

And so I move that line item 2.1(a) be amended so that the minister's—so that the Premier's salary—okay. I'm going to restart that, honourable Chairperson.

I move that line item 2.1(a) be amended so that the Premier's salary be reduced to \$300.

Motion presented.

The Chairperson: The motion is in order.

At this point, we request that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of this motion.

Are there any questions or comments on the motion?

Mr. Ewasko: The reason for the—asking for 2.1(a) to be reduced to \$300 is that the Premier has failed you, Manitobans. He's failed you. His government has failed you on keeping you safe, being good stewards of your taxpayer dollars.

And so the reason for the \$300 is because he has announced on more than one occasion a certain amount of money, has not rolled the money out. None of that security rebate program is really helping out businesses, it's barely helping out any homeowners. Matter of fact, what it is helping out with homeowners is so that they can actually video the people coming onto their property and then watch them leave with whatever the criminals are stealing off the individual property.

And I know that the member, the MLA for Waverley wants—or not Waverley, for Wolseley—would like to ask the Premier a few questions. And maybe they are worried that in caucus, they're not able to ask those questions because of what we saw happen with the independent member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) with the very serious allegations to the toxic workplace, the dysfunction and the assaults that are happening.

And—but then maybe that member, the member for Wolseley (MLA Naylor), was one of the ones that protected the Premier to make sure that they hold on to their Cabinet position.

We've seen, honourable Chairperson, the fact that many businesses in the Premier's own constituency has closed down, and this will be part of his record. Crime and safety in Manitoba has declined dramatically under this Premier. Just recently, we have heard of yet

another stolen automobile, automobile theft, whereas then that individual had used it as a weapon to the person who owned the automobile.

So with that, honourable Chairperson, I know that many members in here agree that the Premier's salary should be dropped to \$300, the equal amount to a camera that—to a doorbell camera that many people aren't able to even get.

Mr. Knew: Just want to say the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure is doing such an amazing job. We were talking about the work that she does.

One of the things that a lot of industry folks were saying is that she might be the first woman to serve in the role in the history of this great province. And she's making all of us proud about the amazing job that she's done. And we know that not only is she building so much across the province, she's not done there. She's got a second portfolio as well, too. And so on CPGS as well. Just a wonderful job being done all around.

And with just that few seconds on the clock, I just want to show my praise to her.

The Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the motion pass?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Motion is accordingly defeated.

Mr. Ewasko: On division, Mr. Chairperson.

The Chairperson: On division. It is defeated, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: So resolution 2.1—okay, we will now consider resolution 2.1.

Resolution 2.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,170,000 for Executive Council, General Administration, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

And this completes the Estimates of Executive Council.

The hour being 4:57, the committee will recess until 5 o'clock.

* (17:00)

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, October 30, 2024

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