

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

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 11, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: Before we get into introduction of bills, I have a statement.

I'm advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) and the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) indicating that the member for Tyndall Park has identified Bill 209, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Expanded Training for Judges and Judicial Justices of the Peace), as their selected bill for this season.

As a reminder to the House, rule–bill–rule 25 permits each independent member to select one private member's bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote, and requires the Government House Leader and the member to provide written notice as to the date and time of the debate and the vote.

I have therefore been advised that Bill 209 will be debated at second reading on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, starting at 10 a.m., with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m. Note that, in accordance with rule 24(7), any recorded vote requested would be deferred to Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 11:55 a.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 300–The Winnipeg Foundation
Amendment Act

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Seine River, that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation's amended act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation », be now read a first time.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross), that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

MLA Loiselle: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act. This bill contains amendments to this act

that will support The Winnipeg Foundation board in updating their act to support changes in their method of governance.

I am honoured to sponsor this amendment to support The Winnipeg Foundation's mission in being a catalyst for strengthening community well being by promoting philanthropy, creating partnerships and supporting diverse charitable organizations.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

Any further bills?

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Daffodil Campaign

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I rise today to mark the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Campaign.

I would like to introduce Andrea Seale, who is with us today in the gallery, the chief executive officer of Canadian Cancer Society, and an incredible team of staff and volunteers who are joining her in the gallery today.

Thank you all so much for being here.

I want to thank these folks from the bottom of my heart for the important work that they do and for joining us today.

The Daffodil Campaign takes place this spring as it has for more than 65 years. Since the late 1940s, the Canadian Cancer Society has shown its commitment to the cause—to cancer cause by funding research and supporting those affected by the disease. They offer a support system that helps Canadians live their lives as fully as possible by helping them manage life with cancer. They provide community and connection and build wellness and resilience throughout the cancer journey.

Honourable Speaker, most people, almost everyone, is touched by this disease. We all know someone who has or has had cancer. An estimated

two in five Canadians will be diagnosed at some point in their lifetime.

Now, the good news is that progress is being made. Thanks to investments in prevention, early detection and in treatment, the overall cancer survival rates have increased from about 25 per cent in the 1940s to 60 per cent today.

I ask all of us to take a moment today to remember and reflect on the people who have passed, who are living with cancer and the loved ones who support them in their journey. To all of you on this difficult journey, know that you are not alone.

Our goal as a government is to have more Manitobans hear those important words: you are cancer-free. As one of many steps, our government has committed to a new CancerCare facility so cancer patients and their families can get the best care on their cancer journey.

Our government is committed to supporting the research and expertise being developed here in Manitoba, and supporting innovation across the province.

I'd like to recognize the president and CEO of CancerCare Manitoba, Dr. Sri Navaratnam, who is also here today, as well as members of her team, and as well I want to recognize the work the CancerCare Manitoba Foundation does in realizing this important milestone.

As part of the budget that we introduced last week, Budget 2024, we are also making important investments in new cutting-edge cancer drugs through the Provincial Oncology Drug Program, companion testing to better match patients with appropriate cancer drugs and new—a new CancerCare headquarters.

So, in closing, Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Canadian Cancer Society, all of your amazing volunteers, for everything that you do to support families and communities who are touched by cancer. I encourage all members of this House and Manitobans everywhere to show their support for those affected by cancer by supporting the Daffodil Campaign.

And I'd ask all members of this House to join me in standing up and thanking these folks for everything that they do.

Thank you.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The month of April is daffodil month, where all Manitobans can show their support for cancer research and for loved ones

fighting cancer by wearing a daffodil pin and supporting the important work of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Just earlier today, many of us in the Chamber had the opportunity to attend a lunch-and-learn downstairs, hosted by the Canadian Cancer Society. And I just want to extend my sincere thank you to Andrea Seale, to Susan Russell-Csanyi, from the Canadian Cancer Society for joining us here at the Legislature today. As well as many of the other stakeholders that joined us, as well, including Palliative Manitoba, MANTRA, the Manitoba Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Pharmacists Manitoba and CancerCare Manitoba.

I'd particularly like to thank Sonie, a nurse and a cancer survivor, who shared an important story with us over lunch. Sonie practices at Mount Carmel Clinic, and she serves patients for whom the social determinants of health are a very real consideration. She shared how, while every cancer journey is unique, a cancer diagnosis can be particularly difficult for those experiencing poverty and other challenges. It was a very moving story, and I just want to thank Sonie again for sharing that with us today.

I'd also like to express my sincerest gratitude to all of the health-care workers in our province who provide excellent care to Manitoba patients. I'd like to acknowledge caregivers, whose lives are also impacted by cancer, and volunteers with organizations like Palliative Manitoba, who are also a critical part of many people's cancer journeys.

I'd like to thank cancer researchers and all of those who support cancer research in one way or another. Your contributions to the fight against cancer are incredibly important and inspire hope to all those who have cancer or know someone who's fighting it.

I'd like to echo the comforting words of the Princess of Wales, who, upon disclosing her recent cancer diagnosis, said, for everyone facing this disease in whatever form, please do not lose faith or hope. You are not alone.

Honourable Speaker, I'd ask for leave for a moment of silence for those who've lost their lives to cancer, and to those who are currently fighting.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence at the end of the member for Tyndall Park's comments? *[Agreed]*

* (13:40)

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

The Speaker: Does the member have leave? [*Agreed*]

MLA Lamoureux: The Canadian Cancer Society has been committed to uniting and inspiring Canadians to take control of cancer since 1938. Through their efforts, significant progress has been made in reducing cancer incidence and mortality. Because of the Canadian Cancer Society we know more than ever before about what causes cancer, how it develops and how to best prevent and treat it.

Yet despite the progress, the number of new cancer cases continues to increase as a result of the growing and aging population. In Manitoba the projected increase in all cancers going forward to 2025 is as high as 9.7 per cent. It was estimated that an average of 655 people in Canada would be diagnosed with cancer and 238 people would die from cancer each day in 2023.

The most common cancers are prostate cancer, which accounts for 20 per cent of all new cancer cases in males; breast cancer, which accounts for 25 per cent of all new cancer cases in females; lung cancer is the second most common cancer, and with the significant sources of radon in Manitoba, this is a growing concern for everyone.

Honourable Speaker, cancer poses an enormous burden on both the health of Canadians and the health-care system. Promoting cancer prevention and providing targeted support to help people with cancer and their families and caregivers is all part of the important work that the Canadian Cancer Society does and why donations are so important. These—they use these funds raised to accelerate innovations to bring the most promising solutions forward in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship. Educating people on how to reduce their risk of cancer and how some types of cancer can be found early is critical to preventing tragedy, improving lives and changing the future of cancer forever.

Thank you to the Canadian Cancer Society for all the work that you have done, and continue to do, to unite and inspire all Canadians to take control of cancer.

Thank you.

The Speaker: All members rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to members' statements, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today from the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Cancer Society staff: Susan Russell, Angeline Webb, Matt Pacard [*phonetic*], Bonnie-Lee Lambert, Kelly Zorich, Andrea Seale; from the Canadian Cancer Society volunteers: Carole Vivier, Adoracion Flores-Rose (Sony), Victoria Lehman, Deborah Rodewald, Mark Olfert, Christine Smith, Karen Dobbin, Sandra Perrault, Anita Lebleu, Rhianna [*phonetic*] Angel Lynn Frost, Allan Pamiona, Amanda Schmidt.

And CancerCare Manitoba: Dr. Navatranam [*phonetic*], president and CEO; Dr. Arbind Dubey, chief medical officer; and Ken Borce, chief clinical—chief of clinical operations.

They're all here as guests of the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), and on behalf of all members, we welcome you here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Keewatin/Inkster NRC for Seniors

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I rise to speak on the exceptional work of the Keewatin/Inkster Neighbourhood Resource Council for Seniors. Located on Logan Avenue, the KINRC's mission is to support independent living for older adults through programming and services. The KINRC supports Weston, Brooklands, Tyndall Park, Shaughnessy, Garden Grove and Meadows West.

The resource council connects seniors to community aid and agencies through their information and referral programs. And for those who may need additional supports to live comfortably at home, home-care aides and Handi-Transit service referrals are made available.

When older adults no longer have the capacity to maintain their homes, KINRC offers home maintenance referrals. During tax season, the KINRC hosts a no-cost Community Volunteer Income Tax Program for older adults with modest incomes. And, for those who seek legal aid, last will and testament and power of attorney documents are provided at lower rates through the council's legal clinic.

Volunteers prepare nutritious meals at low costs to their members through the Men and Women in the Kitchen congregate meal program. And, in their commitment to safety and well-being, KINRC hosts a call-in

program and their technology 101 program provides older adults a space to learn their devices.

The KINRC has proven to be always willing to assist older adults, regardless of their unique needs. Following the flood at Westlands Non-profit Housing Cooperative, KINRC provided tenants with supports like emergency hotel arrangements, temporary housing assistance and swift insurance claim submissions. Through their services and support, many residents of Westlands were temporarily rehoused.

I would like to thank Harvey Sumka, the senior resource co-ordinator, whose passion for community and supporting older adults is undeniable—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

The Speaker: Is there—leave has been granted.

MLA Marcelino: And another resounding thank you to the staff, board of directors and extraordinary KINRC volunteers, many of which join us in the gallery today.

You are truly the embodiment of community leadership and a testament to what communities can accomplish when we ensure that nobody is left behind. Thank you so much for all your efforts and for coming in today.

I would like to add the names of my guests to Hansard, and a special shout out to my favourite Conservative, Gord Farley.

Board of directors: Shannon Cecotka, Lila Knox, Faith Kopisky, Anne Love, Shannon Milks, Ruth Neskar, Wanda Randell, Dawn Ziemanski

Staff: Kathy Alli, Harvey Sumka

Volunteers: Lois Coulson, Gord Farley, Pat Farley, Felicia Gislason, Terry Hendrickson, Vi Iwankow, Doreen Johnson, Harold Kuchenski, Betty Leronowich, Bev Lindstrom, Conrado Lopez, Judy Loxton, Darcie Luzny, Scott Macauley, Audrey MacPhee, Dan Monchak, John Muir, Emile Paul, Doris Pchajek, Barb Pruden, Jack Ryan, Olive Tarapaski, Al Wirth

Big Brothers Big Sisters Central Plains

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, today I am honoured to talk about a very special organization in my constituency of Portage la Prairie that has truly made a difference in the lives of young people.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Plains is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, which is an incredible milestone.

Big Brothers Big Sisters creates mentoring relationships between adults and youth who are facing adversities in their lives and helps them live up to their full potential. This benefits not only the youth mentees, but the entire community. Youth who have a strong role model in their lives have higher self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Many young people find themselves in vulnerable situations and facing adversities, such as mental health issues, family violence or poor living conditions, which put these youth at risk.

With the guidance and support of a mentor, these risks can be avoided and these young people can gain the confidence to achieve more: higher incomes, happier lives and contributions in their community.

Organizations like the big sister—Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and the individuals who are devoted to them, are really the glue that holds our communities together.

I am so pleased that the executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters Central Plains, Dawn Froese, is here with us today. Dawn has been in this role for an astounding 28 years and is a well-known leader in our community.

Joining Dawn today is Laura, a mentoring co-ordinator, as well as Shay [*phonetic*] who is a Big Sister and soon to be board member. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Plains board of directors, are to be commended for their leadership—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

The Speaker: Leave has been granted.

MLA Bereza: For their leadership and impact their efforts have had on the countless young people in Portage la Prairie and surrounding area.

Please join me in a huge round of applause to celebrate Big Brothers Big Sisters Central Plains' half a century of mentorship.

* (13:50)

Sikh Heritage Month

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, happy Khalsa Sajna Diwas, happy Vaisakhi and happy Turban Day in advance.

The time is 13th April, 1699, and on the special occasion of Vaisakhi, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh guru, initiates the Khalsa Panth in Punjab, India. The Khalsa is a community of saintly soldiers, tasked to uphold the principles of Sikhism, defending righteousness, serving humanity fearlessly and believing in the fundamental equality of all human beings.

Now the year is 2024, and we are celebrating Sikh Heritage Month to raise awareness about Sikhism and the turban. For over a century, Sikh Canadians have made invaluable contributions to Canada's multicultural fabric. From farming to serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, from entrepreneurship to public service, from fine arts to politics, from health sciences to education and research, a Sikh wearing a turban is visible in every single field.

Manitoba Legislature is currently the only legislature in our country with two turban-wearing members proudly serving the people of Manitoba.

In the early 20th century, turbaned Sikh immigrants were often denied public services, faced employment discrimination and hate crimes. Young Sikh children faced bullying, name-calling and exclusion based on their appearance, which continues as I speak. We continue to stand together against this discrimination.

Bill 227, The Turban Day Act, was unanimously passed in this Chamber in 2022. I want to say thank you to my colleagues for their support.

Now we have an event dedicated to encouraging dialogue and education about the turban. This year's event—

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

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Brar: Now we have an event dedicated to encouraging dialogue and education about the turban. This year's event is scheduled for tomorrow, Friday, April 12, 1 p.m. onwards. This is an opportunity for us all to experience wearing a turban, learn about its significance and promote mutual respect and acceptance. I invite everyone to attend.

Miigwech and Sat Sri Akal [*truth is God*], Honourable Speaker.

Mukhtiar Singh Bassi, Jasmail Singh Brar, Kaur Singh Dhaliwal, Gulwant Singh Sandhu, Kirpal Singh Sandhu, Jasdev Singh Sran

4th Canadian Rangers Patrol Group

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I rise today to recognize a special group of men and women in my constituency, the 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group.

The Canadian Rangers are a sub-component of the Canadian Army Reserve who live and work in remote, isolated and coastal regions of Canada. They provide light-equipped, self-sufficient, mobile forces to support Canadian Armed Forces, national security and public safety operations within Canada.

Recently, Swan River, Manitoba, was named the best patrol in the 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group for 2023, of the 47 patrols in the fourth territory located—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC.

This prestigious award, the Honorary Canadian Ranger Mors Kochanski Cup, has only become available in the last four years, with Swan River being the second to receive the honour. The recognition acknowledges participation in local community events, ground search rescue, running local patrols and exercises, working with other patrols across the 4th CRPG to expand skill sets and acting as representatives for the Canadian Rangers on various tasks, including international deployment to Australia to train within the Australian Army in the Northern Territory.

There is a deep respect for the great men and women that are involved with the rangers, and achieving this award shows competency, professionalism and the ability to deploy quickly and efficiently in any conditions to meet the needs of the Canadian Armed Forces and their community.

Honourable Speaker, whether assistance is required with ground search and rescue, support during natural disaster or emergencies, support to the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Rangers are there to answer the call of duty whenever needed.

Congratulations to all Canadian Ranger groups for their dedication and service to all of Canada.

Ethan Lyric

MLA Mike Moyes (Riel): Today I'm pleased to recognize the exceptional achievements of Ethan Lyric, an accomplished young Indigenous singer-songwriter from our Riel community. Having found a home in Manitoba's indie folk scene, Ethan has brought his guitar and his voice to venues across the province, including the Winnipeg Folk Festival.

His most recent EP, Saskatoon Berries, has gripped The Indigiverse, an Indigenous music channel on Sirius XM. The station has given *Messing Things Up Again* and other songs from the EP considerable air-time. He is also recently featured by Manitoba Music's Indigenous Music Development Program on their Talking Stick music video series.

Ethan's music has been an avenue for self-exploration and has brought him closer to his Anishinaabe roots. He channels his culture into his art and learned basic Anishinaabemowin to express himself more fully.

Music has also presented an opportunity for the Indigenous community to reconnect with him as just last fall he joined the Fire Keepers Indigenous Song Circle tour alongside Don Amero and the Calgary duo Scarlett Butler.

Having advocated for Indigenous language revitalization on the federal scene, Ethan is planning on attending the University of British Columbia to study linguistics and Indigenous languages alongside his music. He has already been recognized for numerous awards and scholarships and was even a finalist for the prestigious Loran scholarship, which celebrates students from across the country who work to make the world a better place.

Ethan hopes to continue using his musical abilities to create positive change and foster Indigenous knowledge, language and ways of being in himself and those around him. Riel is fortunate to have youth like Ethan who dedicate themselves to their passions and use them to lift others up.

Please join me in congratulating Ethan Lyric on his incredible career thus far and in wishing him well on the road ahead.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Carbon Tax Government Plan

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): This new NDP government similarly promised not to raise taxes. Now, because of cuts they made to education, they think they can get away with raising property taxes on middle-class Manitobans.

But worse, they think Manitobans will believe anything they have to say, like when this Premier says he's not planning a Manitoba carbon tax; Manitobans don't believe him. The Prime Minister said, it can't be free to pollute.

The Premier isn't credible on this issue because of his many, many, many, many flip-flops. Much like Greg Selinger, this NDP leader says one thing and will do another.

Will he come clean about his carbon tax plan?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, I encourage the member opposite to mind his elocution, because it sounded like he was saying I—is incredible, but we'll leave that to him to sort out later on.

Again, we know that Manitobans have been dealing with the rising cost of living for years under the Progressive Conservatives. Every single day that they were in office they charged Manitobans 14 cents a litre at the pump.

At the same time, they left money on the table, because they would rather pick fights with other levels of government instead of bringing home the goods for the people of Manitoba.

The good news is, there's a new administration. It's a new day in Manitoba. On January 1 of this year, we cut the provincial fuel tax so that you save money at the pump. At the same time, we're repairing the relationships with the federal government, with municipal governments, with Indigenous governments.

We know that the people that we serve are you, the people of Manitoba. And we're taking real steps to make your life more affordable each and every day.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Premier continues to pat himself on the back for his temporary tax relief, whilst raising permanent taxes on all Manitobans.

That's why—and that's one way to lose credibility, Honourable Speaker. Breaking your promises is another way. Greg Selinger learned that the hard way. In politics and life, your words matter.

Manitobans are quickly learning this Premier's flip-flop tactics. He has the opportunity here in the House to change that today.

* (14:00)

The Prime Minister's challenge to provinces is essentially to replace the—his carbon tax with another. No so-called net-zero plan or talk from this Premier can change that.

Why is the NDP leader not sharing his carbon tax plan with Manitobans?

Mr. Kinew: I think it's really important to encourage the next generation of Manitobans to pursue their dreams. I also think it's really important to encourage the next generation of Manitobans to stand up for their principles and to stand up for what they believe in.

I do have to contrast that, of course, with what the member opposite is recommending. He says, as soon as somebody else says something, you're supposed to just meekly turn away and go along with whatever they direct you to do. Whether it's Mr. Trudeau, whether it was the edicts of the Stefanson government, they don't seem to show the courage to stand up for their convictions.

But, they should ask themselves, what did that do to the credibility of the Stefanson government? They want to criticize the federal government? We've been clear. We don't need a federal backstop.

But was—whereas as they charged a gas tax of 14 cents a litre every single day they were in office, what did we do on January 1 of this year? We brought it to zero. That saves you and your family money each and every day.

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

Mr. Ewasko: We'll see if for—the third time's the charm, if the Premier has the courage to answer this question.

The Premier claims he has a very credible path to net zero. The Prime Minister has made it clear he sees no path to net zero that does not include a carbon tax. It can't be free to pollute anywhere in the country, the Prime Minister said.

So what is on this credible path? Agriculture? Industrial use? Manufacturing? Municipalities? Transportation?

We're asking about the carbon tax, because no matter how you slice it or what he might want to call it, there's going to be a cost to Manitobans because of this government's agenda.

I'm asking on behalf of all Manitobans: What will that cost be under this NDP?

Mr. Kinew: The member opposite should read the budget. The cost on Manitobans is zero; zero cents a litre, because of the steps that we've taken on this side of the House under the leadership of our Finance Minister.

I'd add that the minister—the member opposite doesn't have credibility on this. He criticizes the carbon tax, and yet, he has voted twice in favour of

the PC carbon tax here in Manitoba. We were the ones to block them from bringing that in. And, again, who wants to criticize a measure that is putting money back in the pockets of the working class, of the blue collar, of the middle class. Well, he can go ahead and try and square those circles.

We're going to keep coming to work each and every day, to save you money and make life better in this great province.

School Divisions and Universities Funding Concerns for Brandon

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I want to pick up where we left off yesterday, Honourable Speaker.

The member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) was in the process of making up really good news stories and avoiding the facts. He said that Brandon got the highest school funding increase in the province, but that unfortunately just is not true.

I table this government's own document that shows that River East Transcona, division 'soclaire' franco-Manitoba and the Winnipeg School Division got higher increases, as well as Kelsey School Division got a larger increase by percentage.

Why did this minister misspeak and mislead Manitobans?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Always happy to stand up for the people of Brandon, who were ignored far too often during the two terms of the failed PC administration.

We were really happy that our first pre-budget announcement was at the hospital in Brandon, where we committed to a new minor injury and illness clinic. That's going to improve health care for people in the city of Brandon, but also across the entire Westman region.

Now, when we talk about education funding, I want to read to you a quote here about the Brandon School Division. It says—it's from the Brandon Sun: Keep in mind, in its latest budget, the Brandon School Division was forced to contend with a \$1.2-million budget deficit, which prompted trustees to cut programs and staffing positions. And thus far, the Province has not yet shown evidence of any new plan to properly fund education. End quote.

Do you know when that was from? That was from April 2022, when they were in power.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Look at that, Honourable Speaker. It's amazing that this government loves to talk about Brandon increases. It's just unfortunate that they can't bring themselves to actually follow through on their words.

All of the promises for Brandon have come from our government. So I asked this minister yesterday about the false information that was reported to the Brandon Sun and all this minister could do was talk about himself.

So did this minister advocate for ACC and Brandon University, and are institutions facing enrolment cuts because he didn't try? Or is it because his government is ineffective?

Mr. Kinew: Did this member speak up when the Stefanson government was putting up ads attacking the family of murder victims? Did he say that that was a good idea, or did he just go along with the plan? Did this member speak up when the Stefanson government was putting up ads attacking trans children, or did he just go along with the plan?

What we have on this side of the House, with the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) and a whole team of community leaders, are people who will stand up each and every day to do the right thing. That means we're investing in the community of Brandon with a new minor in injury and illness clinic, because we know that the important part of returning the province to a good footing after years of the PC administration has to start with health care.

Our plan for health care includes Brandon, and unlike the PCs, it includes all of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, I'm left to ask, did this minister speak up when that false information got to the Brandon Sun?

University of Winnipeg clearly has a vocal advocate at the Cabinet table. Not only were they spared from international student cuts, they were actually given more to grow. I'm sure that Brandon University and the Assiniboine Community College would have loved for that consideration.

This minister said Brandon is at the forefront. I guess what is meant is that our community is taking it on the chin to shelter Winnipeg. Brandon is getting \$200,000 of the \$52 million this government has introduced. Our fair share by population is just shy of \$2 million.

So I ask the member for Brandon East: Can our—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Just a reminder to the member that when the Speaker stands up and says your time is expired, it's time to sit down.

Mr. Kinew: We know that our government is serious about making investments in the Westman region and in Brandon. That's why we're committed to a new minor injury and illness clinic, as well as staffing up the health-care system. That's why the Westman is going to start to see doctor training come to the region as part of the commitment to a hundred new doctors that the Minister of Health shared today.

Under the PCs, there were strikes at Brandon University; there were potholes on 18th Street; and the cuts to operating funding led to cuts with law enforcement. I will read a statement from the Brandon Sun, March 11, 2023, that illustrates the impact of PC cuts to municipal funding. The police chief at the time said, and I quote: "It's never great for me to come forward and say that we have a budget deficit." End quote.

Do you know who that was? It was the member for Brandon West. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

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

Surgical and Diagnostic Services Wait-Time Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Yesterday, we revealed that over 1,300 surgeries were cancelled in just the first three months of this NDP government. And now after months of waiting once again, the NDP have finally updated surgical diagnostic wait-times data online.

So what's happened since the NDP took office and cut short-term surgical capacity? Wait times are up. Since October, wait times for knee replacements are up eight weeks, cardiac wait times are up 45 per cent and MRI and cataract wait times are up significantly across the board in Winnipeg.

* (14:10)

How much longer do the NDP expect to patients in pain to continue waiting for care?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our government has reduced the number of postponed or cancelled surgeries from what it was under the previous PC government. The previous government sent millions of dollars out of province. They sent patients out of province: San Francisco, North Dakota, Toronto, Cleveland. They did nothing, actually, to reduce wait times.

On this side of the House, we're investing in improving capacity. We're repairing our relationships with the very doctors we depend on for that capacity, and we're going to continue to make health care better for all Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Cook: What the Minister of Health actually did is let dozens of agreements signed by the task force with clinics to increase surgical and diagnostic capacity lapse.

Yesterday, they refused to be transparent with the number of surgeries cancelled so far this year. Now, today the data is showing that surgical wait times are trending up thanks to this NDP government. This is the direct result of the NDP putting politics over patients.

Why has this Minister of Health failed to put forward any immediate measures to help Manitobans who are waiting in pain today?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our government, from day one, did what the previous government refused to do. We started repairing the relationship with front-line health-care workers. We started investing in improving capacity here in our own province.

We've taken steps to address what they didn't do. They didn't actually do anything to address wait times. We are trending in a better direction under this government. Fewer surgeries have been cancelled this time this year than they were under the previous government this time last year.

So, Honourable Speaker, we're going to continue to invest in capacity here in Manitoba and repairing the relationships that they tried to break for seven and a half years.

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

Mrs. Cook: Let's review the facts. Upon taking office, the first thing this NDP government did was cut the

task force. They took away the ability for Manitobans to get care out of province when the wait times here were too long. Then they waited 'til after the eleventh hour to maybe, possibly, extend agreements made with private and public clinics to boost surgical and diagnostic capacity. Nobody knows for sure.

Now they put forward a budget with no plan to address surgical wait times in the short term, and they're refusing to be transparent about cancellations. As a result, wait times are trending up. So it's their third answer, so I hope the minister tries answering the question and doesn't resort to unhinged personal attacks today.

Why has the minister offered nothing more than vague promises of help somewhere down the road to Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, some might argue that it's unhinged to think that sending millions upon millions of dollars out of the province instead of investing in improving capacity here at home—Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we are going to continue to make sure that Manitobans have improved health care in their own province.

Beyond the \$50-million investment we've made to improve surgical capacity, we're investing in diagnostics. We're investing in retention and recruitment. We're investing in strengthening relationships. We're investing across the health-care system with a province-wide approach.

Honourable Speaker, you don't have to trust me or take my word for it. You could talk to Dr. Buchel, who's leading surgical capacity development with our government in this province. You could talk to the front-line—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Municipal and Government Relations Funding and Consultation Concerns

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I spent yesterday and part of this morning meeting, listening and learning from municipalities at the AMM conference in Brandon. When I heard the Minister of Municipal Relations speak, I heard a different message about municipalities than members in this House heard from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) at the same time. We heard nothing about the funding the Premier spoke of.

So I ask the minister: Did he forget to mention it, or is that just another one of the things the Premier (Mr. Kinew) says in the heat of the moment when he makes government policy up in question period?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I'd like to welcome the critic to his new role in a portfolio. He has not spoken up for municipalities at all across that way, not a once.

And I was privileged to be out at the meeting with AMM and hearing. And I'm sure the conversation that the member had at AMM was about the lifting of the freeze and what that meant for them, and what that meant as a positive way going forward.

And I'm sure the member failed to mention the impact that the seven years of freezes had on municipalities. I'm sure you heard that conversation, because I heard it time and time again throughout my time at AMM.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, this commitment was not in the budget, nor was it mentioned by the minister when speaking to AMM. In fact AMM bemoaned the lack of the multi-year funding in this budget. This means that even if the minister simply forgot to mention it, that his government is introducing it without even consulting with municipal leaders.

This is quite a bad form, Honourable Speaker, especially since many remember the days of the last NDP government forcing amalgamations and calling them howling coyotes.

I ask the minister: Why does his government insist on carrying on Greg Selinger's disastrous policy of dictating to municipalities and not consulting with them?

Mr. Bushie: I know the conversation that the member must have had out at AMM was about seven years of freezes and what that meant for municipalities, and how much they suffered, how much they hurt and how much they've stepped backwards from that.

So when we talk about that, did he mention the fact that when he was out at AMM, did he mention the fact that he voted against a 2 per cent increase for municipalities, he voted against investments in municipalities and he wants to go back to the freezing of the former PC government?

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, instead of real policy, this Premier is making things up on the fly, and Manitobans are paying the price. Just look at this minister who eliminated the greatly appreciated Building Sustainable Communities funding, robbing municipalities and Manitobans of hundreds of millions in project funding.

Instead of real, tangible action, they get smoke and mirrors. Municipalities like Brandon have 8.6 million reasons not to trust any promise from this government. The Premier avoided the question and his colleague from Brandon's east—Brandon East was more interested in talking about himself than his constituents.

So I ask this minister of municipal relations: Will he restore any of the \$8.6 million that his government pledged and then clawed back from the City of Brandon?

Mr. Bushie: The only mirror they're talking about is the mirror that they broke, giving seven years of bad luck for Manitobans.

Increasing municipal funding by 2 per cent, increasing operating funding to municipalities by over \$58 million; \$52-million increase in operating grants; \$7-million increase to all capital grants; four—millions of—invested in strategic municipal funds—permanently, not a one-off like members opposite.

What they failed to do in seven years, we've done more in less than seven months. [*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Debate on a Private Member's Resolution Request for Families Minister to Apologize

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): This morning, we discussed a very serious issue of children and youth in care. I want to thank my colleague, the member from Morden-Winkler, for sharing her personal and powerful experiences.

As my colleague was pouring her heart out, this Minister of Families shamefully turned her back and walked away.

Will this Minister of Families stand up and apologize to my colleague from Morden-Winkler for the blatant disrespect that she showed her this morning?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): Unfortunately, and some of your colleagues, or the

members opposite colleagues, can attest and affirm, we had LAMC at 11:30 a.m., and so I had to attend that to deal with the legislative affairs to make sure that things keep running here.

So no, I won't apologize.

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

Order.

Safety of Children in CFS Care Call for Public Inquiry

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): It's unfortunate that this Minister of Families refuses to apologize for the blatant disrespect that she showed the member from Morden-Winkler. Protecting children is the responsibility of all of us members in the Manitoba Legislature.

And I do want to thank the Minister for Housing, Homelessness and Addictions for the kind and respectful words that she put on the record this morning.

We, on this side of the House, know that we can work together for vulnerable children and youth in care. We believe a public inquiry is the best, most transparent and accountable way to do this.

* (14:20)

Will the Minister of Families commit to a public inquiry today and make the entire review public and transparent for Manitobans?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): As I shared this morning, and as I have shared multiple times in this House, our priority is jurisdiction. Our priority is to reinstate the care and concern of children to the communities that they belong, to the families that they belong to and in the nations that they belong to.

As I've shared previously, we've never had the federal legislative framework in which to pursue jurisdiction and decolonize child welfare.

Us, on this side of the House, have the courage to decolonize child welfare and to reinstate the care of children where it rightfully belongs—with our people, in our communities.

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

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, there are children and youth in care right now, and they desperately need

the support and the resources from this NDP government.

A child's call for help went unanswered, and two months later she tragically passed away within my constituency. This is unacceptable, and a review should have immediately been called by this NDP government.

Myah's mother has been demanding public accountability. The community of Carman has demanding public accountability and Manitobans are demanding accountability from this NDP government.

Why is the Minister of Families refusing to be accountable to Manitobans?

MLA Fontaine: Again, as I stated this morning, and as I've stated repeatedly in this House and in media, one of the first things I did was call an immediate review of what happened, the tragic situation that happened in Carmen.

I shared with the member this morning, in her resolution, that that's exactly what I did. We've ordered a departmental review. There's a police investigation going on right now, and I also shared in the House previously that we're hoping to have the departmental review by the end of the month.

So, Honourable Speaker, I seem—it seems that I have to continue to correct the record this afternoon with all of the erroneous facts that the member opposite puts on the record.

Hog Barn Moratorium Reinstatement Inquiry

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): When speaking to the Humane Society of Winnipeg, the member for St. Johns stated that the NDP would not reinstate a hog moratorium.

To be clear, Honourable Speaker, this is one issue that the member and I agree upon. Unfortunately, given the NDP's history of flip flop, I'd like to confirm that their position still stands.

Can the Minister of Agriculture confirm to us today that they stand by the statement at—that the NDP will not reinstate the hog barn moratorium?

Thank you.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Let me first and foremost, that I don't really get a chance too often to get up and respond to questions from members opposite.

The most important thing today is there are agriculture producers in the province of Manitoba that are

fruit basket—to service to people on the importance of production.

I want to ensure that producers—and, in fact, tonight, I'm very honoured to attend the pork—the 59th pork convention, and I was invited to attend the—and be glad to speak on behalf of the importance of the pork industry in the province of Manitoba. And I'm sure that there will be some members opposite.

But I want to know that this government does believe in added value of the pork industry in our province of Manitoba and will continue to work with the industry for the betterment of the population in Manitoba.

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

MLA Bereza: I am excited to work in the breadbasket of Manitoba here.

Just a quick reminder: the NDP hog barn ban was at first a temporary moratorium because the NDP blamed—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza:—our farmers and turned them into scapegoats. Rather than trusting science, they trusted their gut and Manitobans paid the price.

Will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt) commit to never instituting environmental regulations that become a de facto hog barn moratorium?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Well, let's confirm, there is no moratorium on hog barn productions in the province of Manitoba, and I think the member opposite is quite aware of it.

But I think it—more importantly, if I may share this—and I've got some documentation I'd like to share with the—agriculture group praises provincial budget. It's a lot of good thing—announcements for agriculture. Let's put the good place moving forward with the current government.

Producers were concerned about the number of MASC offices closures that happened in the past. Jill Verwey from the Keystone Agriculture Producers is very happy, and I'm glad to share this documentation for the great stuff this side of the House—

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

MLA Bereza: This evening, I will have the good fortune to dine with several hundred of the 22,000 Manitobans

employed by the hog sector. These farmers and this entire industry remember life under this NDP government, where they were portrayed as villains and denied the opportunity to build our province and our economy.

Keeping in mind that I'm not asking about ag Crown lands: Will this Minister of Agriculture ever reinstate the hog barn moratorium, yes or no?

Mr. Kostyshyn: May I—now that you mention Crown land—Honourable Speaker, obviously the members opposite are even concerned, but they keep bringing it up. Every time I stand up, they're conscientiously being somewhat guilty of the choices they made going back a number of years ago.

And I want to assure members opposite, it's going to be a challenge for the young producers, and they will never be forgotten. The government next door will never be forgotten—the choices they've made, besides closing 15 MASC offices.

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

Early Childhood Educators Workforce Strategy

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Prior to the budget, the Manitoba Child Care Association made a prebudget submission asking for this government to create a comprehensive workforce strategy for early childhood educators. A strategy was promised by this government in their election platform, but it's nowhere to appear in their budget.

Can the minister share with us why they promised a comprehensive workforce strategy in the election, but for whatever reason did not include it in their budget?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I want to thank the member for Tyndall Park for bringing up that important issue. As you know, in the budget that was just recently released, we do have a strategy clearly outlined that deals with wages.

Wages are going to be the No. 1 issue that will keep the sector going, and we're going to ensure that not only are we going to have the training places in place, but we're also going to have wages that will keep the child-care workers working with our youngest learners in their locations.

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

Wages and Benefits Framework

MLA Lamoureux: The funds towards increasing wages do not support a provincially funded salary scale, nor a workforce strategy. Since the budget made no mention of recruitment and retention of ECEs, they, along with child-care experts, have expressed the concern of stable and predictable funding, and the lack of a provincially funded salary scale.

Can the minister share with the House when ECEs can expect a framework for wages and benefits to be released?

MLA Altomare: Again, I want to thank the member for that important question. It's an important one because one of the very first things that I did as Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning was go out to Brandon. And once in Brandon, I met with the early child-care providers in that sector, the wise, especially where they're showing leadership, not only around training and retention but also wages.

* (14:30)

This is going to be critically important as we move forward, and I do share the concern with the member from Tyndall Park. We do need to make sure that we have not only adequately trained professionals, but also professionals that are going to be kept in the sector.

Early Childhood Education Request for Number of Spaces Created

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): When the federal government partnered with the Province, the original promise in 2021 was 23,000 child-care spaces.

The Manitoba Child Care Coalition came to the Legislature last November and explained that it took over two years for the government to implement 1,500 child-care spaces.

How many child-care spaces has this government created since November 2023?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Again, I want to thank the member for that question, because it does allow us to give an update to the House as the path that we're heading down right now.

Right now, we've created up to 8,500 spaces, and towards the end of fiscal year, we will have 13,500 spaces created right here in Manitoba for hard-working families.

Again, the member brings up a very good point, because not only is child care important to the children, but it's also important to our economy, because it releases people to get to work, go out and add more value to what we're creating here.

And, with this government, they're going to have a true partner in getting this done, and I look forward to the member for Tyndall Park to join us in supporting not only our budget, but what we want to do for child care—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Plan to Hire New Doctors Government Announcement

MLA Nellie Kennedy (Assiniboia): Honourable Speaker, we are working to rebuild Manitobans' trust in our health-care system. After years of cuts and firing and mass staff resignations among health-care workers under the PCs, we can finally say it's a new day in Manitoba.

Today, I had the honour of joining the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Health Minister as they announced a plan to help with staff shortages in health care.

Can the minister tell the House about our government's plan to hire new doctors here in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, earlier today, we announced our plan to add 100 new doctors to Manitoba this year.

Our budget invests to make this happen. It will increase medical residency spots by 40 per cent. It restores the rural doctor recruitment fund, which the PCs cut. It adds new medical seats. It adds 30 new clinical assistant positions. It makes it easier for health-care recruitment and retention to happen in Manitoba. It reduces administrative burden for doctors and much more.

But, importantly, it will do what the opposition never did in government: it respects physicians, attracts them to our province and makes it easier for them to work in Manitoba.

While they accuse doctors of creating chaos, we're giving them jobs. While they send patients out of province—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Chief Medical Examiner's Office Funding for Staffing

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I'm hearing from constituents that the government delays are making the—it impossible to appropriately say good-bye to loved ones. It is reported that there is a several-week delay for release of loved ones from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and this minister is making it worse with budget cuts.

Will the minister reverse this budget cut today and insist—instead hire staff to—that need—to make things more appropriately quickly for Manitobans?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I want to thank the medical examiner and all the staff for the amazing work that they're doing. I know that it's, you know, hard work, and I know that there's a lot of families that are—that rely on the work that they're doing. And they're doing such amazing heavy lifting.

And I can ensure that member that there is no cuts to that office and that they are doing incredible work.

And under that government, families were waiting far, far longer than any other—than they're waiting now. So this government can, you know, get up, but I assure that member that there is no cuts, and we are working with the medical examiner's office.

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

Mrs. Hiebert: This is a non-partisan—this is non-partisan, Honourable Speaker. We are talking about basic dignity.

For families, this causes additional stress and grief as it limits the traditional practices that can be observed. Everyone deserves dignity, and families deserve closure.

Why is this minister cutting staff when Manitobans are unnecessarily suffering?

Ms. Smith: Again, I can assure that member that there've been no cuts to staff.

We are working with the medical examiner's office. Families are having—we know that families are struggling, and we know that when medical examiner is working with families that they are taking the utmost sacred responsibility.

And we know that, you know, as Indigenous people, that that is a sacred responsibility. We as Indigenous people, like, when we have ceremony with our loved ones, it's four days. So we sit with our loved ones and—like, it is such a sacred responsibility.

And I know our medical examiner takes that responsibility so—as much as we do—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Hiebert: We have a responsibility in this Chamber to serve Manitobans to the best of our abilities. We have the responsibility to do better. This minister cuts funding to the medical examiner when families are waiting weeks for remains to be released and are unable to say goodbye to their—on their own terms.

Why is this minister cutting staff when the system isn't working already?

Ms. Smith: I have already told that member that there have been no cuts to the medical examiner's office. There are some staffing challenges, I will tell the member that, in terms of hiring people, but that was under that government.

We know that the medical examiner takes that responsibility very sacredly, and when they are dealing with families and working with families, we are making sure that the information is getting to families, something that that government didn't do.

I know that when they were in government, when families asked for information around overdose deaths, that they tried to hide those numbers. That's something that our government isn't doing. We are going to be transparent with those numbers and make sure that those numbers are—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has ended.

And I have a couple of things I'd like to bring forward.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: First off, I'd like to acknowledge Chief Maureen Brown from Opaskwayak Cree Nation, who is joining us in the gallery as a guest of the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin).

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: Secondly, I'd like to make a small statement. There were several instances today throughout question period where we're starting to go down a path towards unparliamentary language. We didn't cross the line, but I want to remind members to let's not cross the line. Let's try and be respectful of each other. Let's keep it a little calmer.

There was a couple of times when things were said such as—where is it here, just one second. Well, I can't find it now. So anyway—[interjection] No. Order, please. The Speaker is still standing. Order, please.

So I just caution members to try and pay attention to their words. We make our living in this place with words, so choose them carefully in the future.

* * *

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

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families, on House business.

MLA Fontaine: Or Government House Leader.

Honourable Speaker, can you please see if there is leave for the member of the Burrows to provide Hansard with a list of names of his guests that are in the gallery, and for those names to appear immediately following his member's statement in the Hansard transcript?

The Speaker: Is there leave for the member for the Burrows to provide Hansard with a list of names of his guests who are in the gallery and for these names to appear immediately following his member's statement in the Hansard transcript? [Agreed]

* (14:40)

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background to this petition as follows:

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

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the

average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Cheryl Dawson, Duane Strecker, Arnie Pescitelli and many other fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: Any further petitions?

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices. Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

The Speaker: Petitions?

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

The Speaker: Further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call the continuation of second reading debate of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, criminal property forfeiture act and corporations act amendment; followed by second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act; followed by the second reading of Bill 33, The Change of Name Amendment Act (3);

followed by second reading of Bill 31, The Captured Carbon Storage Act.

* (14:50)

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume debate on second reading debate of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended); followed by second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act; followed by second reading of Bill 33, The Change of Name Amendment Act (3); followed by second reading of Bill 31, The Captured Carbon Storage Act.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

The Speaker: We will now resume debate on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), with the debate standing in the name of the honourable member for Borderland, who has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It's unfortunate that—but it is the way it works—that sometimes debate gets interrupted and so when the—you know, one has to begin again and pick up those various strains of thought and try to tie them together again on the second day of debate, which is where we are today on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, the Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended.

And I've appreciated the debate on this act and learned a lot and also have some contributions to make today, as well.

But I, in particular, appreciated the questioning—the line of questioning and the comments of the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who is someone that I admire and respect greatly and whose wealth of experience, I think, elevates this Chamber. And who I think would appreciate the opportunity to get back into the debate if he could, but has spoken, and I think has put some very useful things and very important insights on the record, and I think provoked some thoughts that I think worth—are worth fleshing out further. And so I hope to get into that a little bit more in my remarks today.

And just by way of understanding the act, The Unexplained Wealth Act enables a court to make an order that requires a person to provide information

about how they acquire property, or an interest in property, if it appears that their known sources of income and assets would not be sufficient to do so, and if the person or a closely related person have been involved in unlawful activity.

If a person fails to provide the information required under an unexplained wealth order, or provides false or misleading information, the property that is the subject of the order is presumed to be proceeds of unlawful activity unless the contrary is proven.

And so, in terms of presumptions, the court is to presume, unless the contrary is proven, that cash is proceeds of unlawful activity if it is mailed or shipped with no information or false information about the sender, or a building is—and a building is an instrument of unlawful activity if a controlled substance is found in the building in a quantity or in circumstances consistent with the trafficking of the substance.

I find that interesting. I'll read that again. A building is an instrument of unlawful activity if a controlled substance is found in the building in a quantity or in circumstances consistent with the trafficking of the substance.

Now, this is a serious debate, but I just have to wonder, as a sideline, whether the White House would be considered a building that is an instrument of unlawful activity after cocaine was found there last year, but I won't get into that.

An Honourable Member: No, it's something to talk about.

Mr. Guenter: But I do think—yes, it may be worth talking about in another jurisdiction. Certainly, we don't—we have, I hope, higher—and I believe—higher expectations of our politicians here.

But, as I said, this is a serious debate, and this Unexplained Wealth Act is a piece of legislation that deserves debate and deserves to be scrutinized by this House.

My friend and colleague, the member for Steinbach, yesterday, in his line of questioning, asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), what does this bill do that is new or different from what—from the existing legislation that is already in place in Manitoba?

And I didn't feel that the Minister of Justice properly answered that question. And I think it remains an open question. That's not to say that this piece of legislation shouldn't be passed. That's not to say that this piece of legislation sends us backward in any way. It's

just a question that should be perhaps explored a little bit further.

And my friend and colleague, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) reminded members of this House—now, not all of us are—were here prior to October 3rd, 2023. There are many new members both on this side of the House and on that side. And I think I have to say I appreciate the tenor of the House and the lively debate and the different perspectives, and the contributions from the diverse array of members.

It's good to be part of a House where you have a lot of fresh, new, incoming members. But for those of us who were elected prior to 2023—and not that I've been here for any length of time, but I was elected in 2019. And we did vote on amendments in 2021. We voted on amendments.

Colleagues say I'm not old enough. I am—I'm not yet 30, but I will be turning 30 this month. But I was here in 2021 along with several other members both on this side and across the way and we voted on a series of amendments in this Legislature to allow for unexplained wealth orders, and those amendments spoke about the process under—under-explained wealth orders in the 2021 amendments.

And so, again, so the—already in Manitoba, under the Criminal Property Forfeiture Act there is the ability—as the member for Steinbach pointed out, that ability already exists for law enforcement, for a court, to make an order that requires a person to provide information about how they acquired property or an interest in a property if it appears that their known sources of income and assets would not be sufficient to do so, and if the person or closely related persons have been involved in unlawful activity.

And so those mechanisms are already in place. The member for Steinbach—I found it interesting—pointed out that the amendments that were passed in 2021 allow the Criminal Property Forfeiture director and the mechanism within that area of government, to explore an individual's finances to see if there is an explanation for their wealth.

And that's significant power. That is very, very significant power and underlines why the debates in this House are so significant because the impact of government on our liberties and on the freedoms of the people that we represent is—often goes understated, I believe, and is—the ramifications of what we do here are felt far and wide within the boundaries of

this province. But they have a major impact on the lives of the—Manitobans, of all Manitobans.

And so that is why debates like this are so important and why it's important that every member be given the opportunity to fully scrutinize legislation, to ask questions of government and in this case questions of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), and to speak to legislation such as we are debating that is before the House at this very hour.

* (15:00)

And so, again, back to my point that in 2021, these amendments brought forward by the minister of Justice at that time granted government, through the Criminal Property Forfeiture—through government, to the Criminal Property Forfeiture director, gave—created the mechanism to allow for government to explore an individual's finances to see if there is an explanation for their wealth. And, again, that is something that has been in place since 2021.

So that line of questioning by the member for Steinbach I thought was interesting, and it is a point that was borne out in his remarks as well.

And I also appreciated listening to the insights of the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), who I've really enjoyed working with. And I guess we're not allowed to comment on the absence or presence of a member, so I won't do that, but it is always good to be able to chat with him in the House and to have conversations about legislation like this.

And to—and I think it helps us in our debate and in our insights and our perspectives, as legislators, to make sure that the legislation that is before this House, and that eventually does become law, is crafted in such a way that it does the job that it is intended to do, while, at the same time, being minimally invasive in terms of its impact in the lives of Manitobans. And so I think that that's very important.

But the member for Portage la Prairie brought forward some important points. and one of them was—one of the statements he made was, make sure crime doesn't pay. And I think that is a mantra, a theme that everyone in our caucus subscribes to.

And while I think we generally are supportive of this legislation, I don't know that it—that this is a mantra that we necessarily—we may hear it from the government opposite, but we are disappointed at the inaction thus far, almost seven months in into government, at the inactions thus far and, in fact, even a little bit of

regression, if we can say, on the part of the government in terms of defunding some of the important initiatives within the Justice department that are critical to combatting crime.

And we are at a place where, in our province and across the country, where crime is increasingly a very real problem, and it's manifesting in new and various ways, and there's various causes for the crime. You know, organized crime has always been a reality to a greater or lesser extent, and then there's the crime of opportunity, I think was the phrase—I might not be getting that right—but those folks who take advantage of an opportunity that suddenly becomes available to them to commit crimes.

And it's been a concern, even in southern Manitoba, to hear and to read reports of some of these crimes and some of the scams, frankly, that are happening and that apparently people are enriching themselves by. And it's an area of concern for myself and for my constituents, and I think something that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) must, as well, be aware of, or should be aware of.

And within his department and that law enforcement is grappling with is the vast array of new and creative ingenious ways that these criminals have of trying to scam people out of their hard-earned savings. One of them is the electronic scams. With the onset of technology, and the Internet has been with us for some time now, but with all of the apps and the—so much is done—online banking and e-transfer is one of those things that's done through our online banking apps that we—many of us have on our cellphones, and is something that we use perhaps on a daily, or a weekly, or a monthly basis. Many of us do.

And that is one area that has been in the news recently, as there have been folks that have found a creative way of scamming people out of their money by sending them false links to—saying that they—via email—saying that they've been sent an e-transfer with money that they need to claim and log in to their bank account to claim.

And by clicking on that link and logging in with their password and their confidential information, their username, the hackers or the criminals are then able to steal that information and use that information to gain access to the poor, to the hapless, unsuspecting individual's bank account—the victim's bank account—and thereby enrich themselves through those ill-gotten gains. And that's, you know, something that's very concerning.

And these folks, as I say, they're getting more creative all the time, and it's becoming more and more difficult to catch these things, as often we're busy and perhaps, in a moment of where we're not suspecting anything and we happen to miss a couple of details and we have, you know, we find ourselves a victim of the scam.

So the Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, helps to clamp down on folks that are enriching themselves through scams like this and allows government to go after them. And that's all fine and well. It's always important to ensure that our law enforcement have the tools that they need to go after the bad guys, and that's all very important and I think something that the public would broadly support.

One of the concerns that I have about this is not that there is any abuse on the part of government, on the part of the courts in terms of the great power that this bill gives them to force an individual, to compel an individual, to explain their unexplained wealth or their assets. It hasn't, I trust, happened today—to date.

The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) pointed out, and I thought it was useful to know, and I think all individuals would appreciate knowing that from a civil liberty perspective, that when an order is given under The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act that the vast majority of them, the vast majority of these orders, up to 70 per cent or over, in the estimation of the member for Steinbach, who was, for a time, the minister of Justice. So in his words, in his estimation, up to 70 per cent or over are never contested by the individual.

So it's just important, from a civil liberties perspective, that if the government is going to—you know the presumption of innocence is the bedrock of our—is a part of the bedrock of our democracy, of our free society, and every—you're—this is the concept, the idea that you are innocent until proven guilty.

And, in fact, this is an idea that goes back to Magna Carta, perhaps even further back, but I believe began to germinate around the time of the Magna Carta, or the Great Charter that was signed by King John and his recalcitrant, if I can say that, or the nobility who—in 1215.

And, by the way, that absolutely profound document back in 1215 forms a part of our heritage as Canadians. It's a part of that common law heritage, that rich heritage of freedom, of the freedom and rights of the individual, of democracy, and of the rule of law.

* (15:10)

That rich heritage that we lay claim to as Canadians, and through that British tradition and—of parliamentary democracy and that—the—and so I think that that's something to be proud of, and something that we ought to be reminded of from time to time.

Because it is the job of government to secure, to always be securing the rights of the individual. It's not up to government to give individuals, or take rights or give rights; we don't get our rights from government. But it is important—we get our rights from God—but we—but it is the job of government to ensure that the rights and freedoms of individuals are all protected and that we are all treated equally under the law.

That is absolutely paramount in our society. And so from a perspective of civil liberties, it is important that when the government is transferring the onus from the government—which is where it should reside, and normally does—but in this case, the government is transferring that onus onto the individual who is being asked to explain their gain—their unexplained wealth or assets.

It is very important that we be very diligent in making sure and that there are—that, as I said earlier, that this law is minimally invasive and that we're not creating a burden on those—or that we're not going after innocent Manitobans. We don't want that. We want to go after the bad guys.

And so, as the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) did say though in yesterday's debate, that it appears to date that the individuals within the Justice Department and those that prosecute this act, this legislation, are very diligent, and so that is good. But I would still underline the potential for abuse that, should circumstances change and a government, perhaps, have political motivations for going after an individual, that becomes very problematic.

And so, again, I do not want to understate the potential for abuse, but I do think generally as long as government is diligent—and again, the concern is that we're yielding considerable power to the government to do this—but as long as government is diligent and going after just the bad guys, well that's all fine and well.

But this power becomes a—very problematic when innocent Manitobans who have done nothing wrong and perhaps don't have the receipts and can't explain their wealth, or don't want to, simply because what right does government have to compel them to say anything. And perhaps they are innocent, or when they

are innocent, you know, that creates a very tricky situation where their rights are then being trampled on. And we don't want that.

So, again, I just—I think as long as the focus is on going after the bad guys, that is exactly what we want to see. And I think that is where the public is at. We read about the drug industry, and it really is an industry, the drug lords, you know, the—

An Honourable Member: Controlling so much money.

Mr. Guenter: Absolutely. The control of vast amounts of money. And the money laundering, and the taking advantage of children and seniors. And my friend and colleague, the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), spoke at length about how abhorrent it is that some of these individuals are particular—are explicitly exploiting the vulnerable.

You know, and isn't that the way it always is, you know, with criminals? I mean, they're these heartless people going after the most innocent and the most vulnerable. And those being our grandparents and our children. And so, of course, that's very problematic. And so anything we can do to combat money laundering, the drug trade, and things like sports betting and any kind of illicit activity that people enrich themselves by, that is important—it's important that we do that.

And so—but just while we're on this topic, I do want to say I always appreciated and—you know, and I hope it continues; I understand there's been a change in government and that's all fine and well—but I always appreciated being able to take, in years past, having been elected in the fall of 2019, to take the minister of Justice—it happened a couple of times when there were organizations in my constituency in Borderland and the constituency that I represent, that I have the great honour of representing, would—organizations within my constituency would be recipients of funding through the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund.

And so I recall one year Cliff Cullen was then the minister of Justice, and he came down to Altona and it was Youth for Christ Altona that received a \$25,000 grant towards a van that they used to then pick up young children, teens, youth, and help them in their lives, all the benefits, all the things that they do. And I know Sheridan Sawatzky and Marty Falk there at YFC Altona do just incredible work engaging with young folks, giving them things to do and helping them in their interests. And so that funding was so well placed.

And I—and so I had the great honour of being there with Cliff Cullen and helping to advocate for that money. And I think that that's very important money that—you know, it's money that's been—that was once used by criminals to do bad things that has been—you know, that was seized by government and given to individuals that are helping to do good things in our community, to help our youth, you know, to help keep the—give the young folks in our communities things to do and keep them off the streets and out of a life of crime, and show them a hand up; show them a better way, you know.

And we all need that. We all need that at different times in our life, folks to come on in our lives, you know, an individual to come along, give us a hand up, give us help, give us a boost, you know. We're all human beings and we all struggle at various times, and that's so important to have that mentorship and those folks that come along and say, hey, you know, come along with me and let's go do something—let me show you something, here, what are you interested in, and let's do it together, so—and in a productive way that advances the interests of our youth and young people.

So that was a real pleasure to be able to be there for that and to be a part of that process as well.

And then I think of Oak Bluff colony, and let me tell you, Honourable Speaker: wonderful people. Jack Maendel, Paul Maendel, Manuel Maendel and I'll tell them later on, perhaps show them this, but I just want to say thanks to them. They formed the Hutterian aquatic—emergency aquatic recovery team—I'm going to get this—HEART is the acronym. I'm struggling a little bit and I apologize to the Maendels and to all those on the team, but it's HEART. And I—and you folks do exceptional work and have for years and are wonderful people.

And, you know, Honourable Speaker, they came to me shortly after I was elected, if I recall, and they had fundraised extensively for a sonar side scan. They actually worked with the Winnipeg Police Service and the RCMP. And they were just—they had—I mean, they were scraping the bottom of the barrel, trying to get—trying to buy this sonar side scan ROV, this camera that they could use that would search—scan the bottom of lakes and rivers, waterways, to search for drowning victims, things like that, and do recovery of bodies.

And so they needed about 50 per cent more funding to actually acquire the device, and I was able to work with Cliff Cullen again at the time and get them \$38,000 through the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, and they've since gone on to add additional equipment

and they're always fundraising. But they were so appreciative of that support, and they have gone on to do many great things with that technology, to bring closure to so many families.

And so I can't speak highly enough of the benefits of this program, and I trust that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will continue with that—the good work that is done within this program.

And I—seeing that my time is about to expire, I thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak, and thank you.

* (15:20)

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on this bill. A bill that supports law enforcement is an important bill not only for Manitoba, but also Canada.

I'd like to have the opportunity, though, to speak to the effects that crime has on all of Manitoba and it affects every household, unfortunately, and it affects every community and it has a trickle-down effect to our social services and the economy.

So I represent a corner of Manitoba—the southeast corner—La Vérendrye constituency. I grew up my entire life in this constituency in the same community, and I'm proud of the community, proud of the people of the community, multigenerational community where people stay and people come. It's a region of the province that right now is one of the fastest-growing. We have some of the fastest-growing towns. We have the fastest-growing municipalities, so the community is one that people stay and now we've attractively been gaining new people to the constituency.

The problem that I'm seeing as the representative provincially for that corner of the province is we never used to have what may have been considered the big-city problems. We never had large drug crime, we never had large property crime, we never had petty property crime. Things have drastically changed and they're changing everywhere so whatever us as legislators are able to do to combat the effects that crime has on everybody in the province is welcome.

So we 'shwould'—we should never allow crime to creep further into our communities, and the issues with property crime that we're seeing in different jurisdictions across this entire country are very concerning. And we're seeing those very similar in our province, throughout our province in the larger centres, Winnipeg, our larger cities and also our smaller rural communities, very similar to the rest of Canada. Toronto has been making

the forefront of news coverage in recent months, showcasing the effects that vehicle crime has in many of those communities and the network that is associated with organized crime.

The problem is that the networks of crime are changing from the traditional large-scale organized crime led by large gangs, limited numbers of large gangs or organized groups of crime. And that's changing to more of an unorganized, ground-level crime where we see that not only being in theft but also in drug distribution.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So it was many years ago, as the drug crisis of our country and the rest of North America for that was run by one or two large-scale rings of organized crime and it was significantly easier in some aspects to come up with legislation like this, the forfeiture of proceeds of crime, to discourage that type of activity.

So at that time several years ago this type of legislation and amendment to legislation like this to increase the ability of law enforcement to fulfill their jobs and duties, it would have been more welcomed and more valued because you'd be able to identify the organizers of that crime and through an act like this, through legislation like this, you'd be able to punish them by taking the proceeds of the activities that have done harm on others throughout the community, the province or the country.

Now, what we're seeing is rampant crisis of ground-level crime, whether that be distribution of the drugs—we've got an issue of drugs, of the methamphetamines. Yes. So these are the drugs that are ruining people's lives and the effects are far-reaching.

So what I've been seeing in my community is constituents of mine, which are also my neighbours, which are also my friends; these are people that run businesses in the community, these are people that just reside within the community or these are people that have recreational properties within the communities, and they are all affected by the issue of petty rural property crimes that we're seeing now.

And I've got many questions around this bill and what it's able to do for that. So I'm part of—so, group chats, community group chats, multiple community group chats that I've been included in because myself as not only the MLA, the provincial representative, I own businesses and I farm within my communities, so I've got my ear to the ground and I'm affected by this rural crime as much as anybody else may be throughout all of Manitoba.

So what we're seeing is, on a daily basis, our law enforcement not having the tools necessary to combat the crime. And I've got countless stories of examples of where law enforcement has tremendous challenge in fulfilling their duties as law enforcement and passing on punishment to those that deserve it.

So, right now, throughout all of rural Manitoba—and the coincidental part is since I've been getting more and more involved with the situation within my community, word has gotten out that I'm a provincial representative and I've been getting calls from constituencies throughout all of Winnipeg. And we've exchanged stories and all of the stories are very similar.

And I'm proud and I offer my services as an effective voice for all Manitobans, so whether that be my constituency or a constituency that feels that they aren't effectively represented by their elected official, I have no issue with extending my helping hand.

So these stories are very similar. These are petty property crimes that truly affect people and affect their safety. So these are people that have been targeted numerous times, have had their cars stolen, have had their sheds broken into, have had people break into their house.

And they see that these aren't people driving Ferraris that the cops are following. These are people that are riding up on a bicycle, breaking into a shed while somebody's at home watching out their window and they're calling law enforcement but, unfortunately, law enforcement, you know, is subjected to the limitations of our legal system right now. So they may arrest the people but many times it's not worth arresting those people.

And they just—it's the revolving door that these people continue to function within our communities and, you know, before someone's able to fix the lock on their shed, the offender is back again, you know, threatening their safety and definitely threatening the protection of their home and their personal property.

* (15:30)

So these are issues that are widespread across the province and, like I've said, I welcome legislation that's able to give more tools in law enforcement's tool box to combat the crime issue that we have in Manitoba.

So I've got one example that, you know, is true to me. This only was two months ago now that I was coming from the Legislature to—on a Thursday evening, going back to my constituency and stopped for a meeting along the way, close to my constituency office,

and continued on to the curling rink in my hometown of Vita.

And along the way, I noticed a car, a car of a friend, that's driving suspiciously. So I phoned my friend, and sure enough, that vehicle was stolen. And I see it, so, you know, start to follow the vehicle, and this was a real eye-opener to the limitations, unfortunately, that the dedicated men and women have in law enforcement across our province, and specifically in the RCMP.

So I followed to make sure that I didn't lose sight of this vehicle in the time that the RCMP were able to respond. And these are examples of the type of crime that is really affecting my community, so this wasn't an organized drug lord that was driving a Ferrari and I picked up the phone and I told the local RCMP that I think I see the local drug dealer driving a new Ferrari, it's got to be a \$100,000, plus, and if you nab him, you'll really, really be able to put a damper on his operation.

So this was a stolen car, followed by another stolen car, followed by people that are reoffenders in petty property crime. And, so, like I say, it was an eye-opener. So I continued to follow the vehicle while I'm waiting for the RCMP, which the RCMP had told me on the phone that, you know, there's no point pursuing. Unfortunately, you know, they would talk to me when I'm there, but there's nothing really to do about it.

But I figured I'd at least make sure that I knew where my friend's car was going because I'm sure they would appreciate to have their car back or know where the car is, so I continued to follow the car while waiting for the RCMP to respond. And that's in rural Manitoba. So just to make everyone aware, this community that I speak of is over an hour from the closest RCMP detachment, so, you know, you can appreciate that law enforcement is very limited on response time.

But while I was doing this, you know, they felt that they were being pressured, and so I had somebody get out of the vehicle, the person that had stole my friend's car, and they came towards me with a gun. So I had a gun brought forward to me, and, yes, that really makes you think about the decisions that you have now in a small town where, in years past, you wouldn't feel scared whatsoever approaching anybody in that particular community, and now we've got people coming at each other with guns.

So, yes, it was a sawed-off shotgun that the person came at me with. So, you know, this ramps up your

adrenalin definitely and makes you think, why would you need to be in this type of a situation; I don't deserve to be in this type of situation, driving to a curling game on a Thursday evening. But this is where crime and the petty drug trafficking has gotten us in, not only this province, but it's across the country.

And it's something that we definitely need to give more authority and more control to the RCMP. Because I had the RCMP meet up with me after—I was on my phone, on Bluetooth, of course, and called everybody in the community that I knew. And we had probably 10 people involved trying to keep an eye on who exactly this was.

So, sure enough, we followed them right to the homes where they had hidden out. So I thought, well, this is great. The RCMP, they're able to pick up the bad guys and put them in jail and, you know, we're going to have resolution to this situation. My friend's going to get their car back. This, you know, outside of feeling threatened, I thought that, you know, we had accomplished something. Later to find out just how limited, in these situations, our law enforcement actually is.

And that's why I support giving the law enforcement any additional abilities to fulfill their position. Because when the RCMP got there, they had said that, you know, there's nothing really to do. So these people don't own anything, you know, they don't have a home, they don't have an address.

Just because they pulled a gun on me and threatened my life doesn't warrant going into the residence to get the people. It doesn't warrant them getting the property back. And they were hand-tied in getting the property back. And I could see the frustration in the officers' eyes and their reactions, that they were genuine. These are genuine concerns that they have in fulfilling their roles for law enforcement.

And further to that, I said, well, you know, we pursue the vehicle that was stolen and, you know, we'll make sure that we keep an eye on, you know, these places and call the RCMP to come and be able to catch these people later on. And I further found out that the RCMP, it is against their policy to pursue vehicles, to pursue stolen vehicles.

So we've got tremendous work that needs to be done, and this is a multi-'jurisdictional' issue. This is something federal; it's a federal jurisdiction. And we really, really need to work harder at changing that legislation at the federal level to give RCMP, law enforcement—because that's who we're covered with in

Manitoba, outside of the cities and a few other—a couple municipalities and towns that have their own police force. But outside of that, you're dependent on the RCMP and their ability.

So these are the people. These are the people that I had this situation with, and the community continues to have that situation with. These are the types of criminals that have realized the limitations of the system and are exploiting those limitations in the system.

These are the same people that I've had residents of the city of Winnipeg call me and say, we know who the people are; we know that they're a low-level criminal committing petty property crime. But it's threatening the safety of myself, it's threatening the safety of my family, it's threatening the safety of the neighbours. And we know who it is, but we're not able to act on it.

So when I look at legislation brought forward like Bill 30 today, I have questions on whether or not it's going to do anything. Like I say, I'm in favour of giving law enforcement any additional capability to fulfill their job, because I couldn't imagine being in the shoes of those officers that came to meet with me that night after; I would like to think of myself as a respectable community member, had a gun pulled on them, blatantly, in my face from only a few feet away and threatened my life with a weapon.

* (15:40)

And having that done to me and, you know, the look at—in that officer's face, not having the ability to act on those actions that were put forward to me, I feel for the position of these men and women in law enforcement.

So when I heard commitments through the campaign by this now-government and our now-Premier (Mr. Kinew), this NDP government, I didn't take it too serious. You know, the NDP haven't notoriously been well-known for being tough on crime, so I didn't give it much consideration.

But, now that they have formed government and are leading this province, I expect this government to take action on making whatever legislative changes that they can to protect us as Manitobans.

It shouldn't be that in rural, remote communities like the one that I live in and have always lived in, it shouldn't be that people coming from other communities and areas of this province are going into these communities as a safe haven, because they know that they're not able to be touched in the larger centres. But

they do have the pressure within those larger centres, and they realize that in the smaller communities they don't have that pressure.

Again, like I say, our closest detachment for the RCMP is more than an hour away from us. So we're sort of at the mercy of the people that are at the makeup of our communities.

And, yes, it shouldn't be myself, it shouldn't be my family. I have a wife at home with two young little boys. She runs a store in our local community. She runs a store that has all sorts of people come through the door every day. It shouldn't need to be that my wife, in our community made up of good people, needs to feel unsafe.

So, getting back to the bill—because, surprisingly, time is expiring—we look at commitments that have been made by this government. So we see that the NDP government, during the campaign, had campaigned on an Unexplained Wealth Act and indicated that they would be following what has been done in BC.

So, at face value, I thought, you know, this is something that maybe is unique to BC. And, just because I felt that, possibly, this government was out of touch of the root of the true crime that we're seeing in our communities, and not believing that large—large organized crime is what is threatening and downright just annoying and discomfort residents of our province, I knew we needed to do more to combat that crime. And I wasn't convinced that this is going to be the answer to a solution for the issues that I've experienced and that other Manitobans are experiencing every day.

So, as I have done more research on this bill, I realize that—did some reading and so, the BC government—so, I'll go back, and so the campaign promise by this current government was they campaigned to do more for an Unexplained Wealth Act, to create an Unexplained Wealth Act, and indicated that they would be following what BC had done.

So then, in my research, I read that in 2023, March of 2023, when BC announced their new law in March of 2023, the Attorney General was quoted saying, there is a similar piece of legislation in place in Manitoba.

So 2023 was last year, and BC brought in this great legislation, and they brought in the great legislation modelling the legislation that we have in Manitoba; and then at the end of 2023, our current Premier said that he's going to create legislation that's just like BC's.

So I immediately got even more confused, and I'd like to think that I can walk myself through these situations of confusion. But I had to read further, because we were going to copy BC because it's great, and BC the year before copied us because we were great, so where exactly do we end up?

So I had to draw it out, actually, and in the description, the physical description, we came back to Manitoba. So if Manitoba copies BC, which BC copied Manitoba, we end up at square one, we—which is that we have legislation around proceeds of crime forfeiture, and this was expanded on under the previous PC government. So the former PC government took steps to combat money laundering and was among the leaders in the country taking action against organized crime.

So I guess this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this NDP government was copying the great work that our previous Attorney General had done, so, unfortunately, we're ending up with debating today legislation which we already have.

And so in 2021 the PC government passed legislation making changes that strengthen the ability for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that investigators believed to be illegally acquired and could be subjected to money laundering.

In 2022 the PCs expanded staffing capacity within the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, the CPF, to combat money laundering. They hired two investigators and a financial analysis to target organized crime.

So this is already happening, which brings up new concern of mine. Like I say, I support any additional capabilities that we give to law enforcement because I see the effects and the limitations that we have on law enforcement.

But I'm really concerned what the intent of this legislation being brought forward right now, because when I read through the bill, known sources of income and assets would not—that aren't sufficient for the person, or a person that closely related to that person, is assumed to be unlawful activity. Then, forfeitures do not rely on criminal prosecutions. They do not create findings of guilt or innocence, and they're technically initiatives against the property, not the person. It is a civil court process.

So this starts to really concern me, and alarms start going off when we've got this legislation in place in Manitoba already. It's been copied by BC, who we

want to copy. So they've copied what we have, now we want to copy what they have. It doesn't line up.

So when I dig deeper and I want to know what is hidden here, or potentially hidden, it doesn't really seem to have any clause on combating the crime that we have.

This is something that you need to prove your innocence and not the other way around, and it doesn't lock up anybody. So, basically, any additional amendments that are made to this legislation, the only thing that they do is make it easier for the government, through the extension of law enforcement, to—for forfeiture of personal property that someone isn't able to explain.

* (15:50)

So, with this government being at the helm, I have certain level of concern.

Thank you.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I have an opportunity today to stand up and speak on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, and how it relates to me.

I represent the people of Selkirk, but most importantly, I represent my family and my values in this Chamber. And, as I look to my role and how I perceive myself, I like to think I'm on the side of right, when we know right from wrong. And, although in this House we all represent our values as well, and we may disagree on certain aspects of our values, I'm certain we all agree on what is right and what is wrong.

To have criminals amongst us prospering and generating wealth from crime that comes from the backs of hard-working people and hard-working families in our communities is despicable. These are members of our communities that have worked very hard for what they've had, who've done the right things, who've went to work each day. They taught the lessons to their families, to their children, supported their neighbours and been on call for the community to step in and do what's right.

And other members of the community decide what you have is fair game. They're able to steal that. They're able to steal your money, steal your identity, steal your possessions, steal your livelihood and with no regard for how that will affect that person. People are forced to lose tens of thousands of dollars and tremendously more if they're not insured. And people are given the opportunity to continue this.

So when we have an opportunity to make sure that crime does not pay, I am for that. I am for the fact that we want to strengthen our police departments and take the opportunities away from the criminals and to ensure that every person in our province is protected and the funds that they earn on an honest living stay in their pockets. And people have the right to go out and purchase things.

So when I take a look at Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), I have a number of questions to make sure that we are protecting the people we want to protect and that government doesn't have too much of an overreach.

We need to make sure that legitimate situations where people have earned property, that they don't have to explain that in detail when they haven't been accused of a crime. And we also want to make sure that the people who are committing crimes do not get away with it and the proceeds of those crimes are taken away from them and brought back to the people or to the society that needs them.

Now, I look at a few things on face value. One of them was, if somebody sends money and it's not addressed properly and you can't confirm what it is for, that it is perceived a property of crime.

And as funny as it—my argument is about that, I have an aunt who is 85 years old and, for far back as I can remember, every year she will send \$5 or \$10 by mail. There's typically not a card; it's just your name on an envelope and a little bit of cash. And she's got—she does this at the beginning of the month every single month, and it's really a sweet thing, and she sends this money out. And, you know, you get this envelope and you open it up, and it's from my dear aunt who lives out in St. Claude, Manitoba.

So, according to this, she's a criminal; she's sending money by mail. And as a recipient, all of us nieces, nephews, grandchildren, great grandchildren, are also receiving ill-gotten gains. And I'm certain this legislation is not going after my sweet aunt who's sending birthday money out to everybody, but we have to make sure that we are not doing things that will harm innocent people.

We have—in my family business, I've had the opportunity to travel all across North America putting up buildings. I have stayed in different communities. I've been in countless hotels. I've been in countless communities talking to people, staying with the owners of the houses, staying on First Nations properties. And

sometimes communities conduct business a little differently.

When I was at the Deer Lake First Nation putting up a building that we sold for \$30,000, as soon as I arrived on the community, the chief, who had me stay in his house through the duration of the installation of the building, immediately gave me and paid me \$30,000 in cash.

I immediately wrote out a receipt for the money, and I put it on the table along with my bag of clothing, and I was told by the chief's son-in-law, do not leave that money there; lock it up in the room that we provided you in the house. I was a little shocked that somebody would actually go into the chief's house and possibly take the money, but to err on the side of caution, that's what I'd done.

Upon return into Selkirk by plane from Deer Lake, I would've been deemed a criminal. Getting off the plane with my bag of \$30,000 in cash after arriving from a First Nation, somebody could've possibly put a connection that maybe that was ill-gotten gains; maybe that I was on the First Nation property for nefarious reasons.

I can assure you today that we were there, we worked with the members of the community, we did a beautiful job, we received amazing hospitality, where the chief's wife, who refers to herself as Kokum, cooked for us, told us stories of the community and welcomed us in her house. We were very early risers while we were there. I got a chance to meet some of the children as they were waiting for the bus.

And we want to make sure that Bill 30 protects these people, protects our neighbours, whether they're on the First Nations or next door to us, protects our family and it supports the values that I tell my children, that, don't wait for someone to give you anything; you go out and earn it, and you earn it with respect.

My children, at seven years of age, would come down to the shop with me as I would work, and they would ask if they can do anything to help out. So we'd give them small token jobs that they would make a little bit of money. And they have a phenomenal work ethic. I hear from so many people how they cannot believe how my son and my daughter work so hard for people of their generation.

But importantly in our business, we need to understand that when we have wealth, when we have property that can be claimed at any time if you can't explain it, we have to make sure there's some real facts

put on the record here that if you've earned property, and you're not a criminal, that should be out of reach from anybody's touch.

* (16:00)

But, Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the criminals who think that Manitoba is open for their enterprise to take advantage of our citizens, we need to get stronger. We need to call war on them, to their organizations, to the recruitment of the young people here.

If the people of the young generation would realize that crime doesn't pay, that when you go out and you sell drugs or steal from people, we're going to claw that back from you and we're going to take that away. We don't even have to go to trial and send you to jail. We will—if you cannot prove that, as a student in high school, that you're driving a fancy car and you've got a whole bunch of money, you better explain yourself. So we need to make sure that we're protecting the people of our province.

As I mentioned, I've had the opportunity to travel a lot of places, and some of the communities I've gone to have just been amazing. I had the opportunity a number of times to be up in Snow Lake, Manitoba, and that is a community built as a mining town. Most of the homes when I were—was there about a decade ago were unlocked. The people in that community watched out for each other and the crime was extremely low.

That is a sense of where we should be today. As a child growing up in Tyndall Park, I remember, only after we were broken into and somebody ransacked our house did we start locking the doors. People would think we'd be foolish today to leave your house without locking the doors. That's because the criminals got away with it.

When you take a look at the criminal enterprises, we have to take a look at what is happening with the money. Now, there's a lot of TV shows out there, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that show crime happening, whether it's drug lords or anything else, and I just finished watching *Breaking Bad*. And one of the biggest problems that people have is how to launder that money. And it's very evident in the show that—how this happens.

Now, there—in trying to figure out this bill, and I know that when I take a look at my other colleagues on this side of the House, and my—and I mean really brilliant colleagues—I had the opportunity to talk to the member from Steinbach on this, and I said I don't understand where this bill is coming from. I think we

have this bill already. And he says yes, yes, we do. This bill was created here in Manitoba. It was copied in BC, and we've copied BC's bill back here.

And I can understand that as members of the legislator—Legislative Building here, we want to go out and we want to put laws into effect that protect all of our members in our community. And when I sit down and I take a look at some of the legislation I could bring forward, and I talk to the members on my side of the House and I talk to them about what I want to bring forward, often I find out that it already exists and I just wasn't aware of it.

So I'm not going to fault anybody for trying to bring forward a bill that's going to—they think will help Manitobans. I would just hope that somebody would have done the homework or asked somebody else, hey, I'm thinking of going ahead with this. Can you put some eyes on here, look at it with your knowledge and let me know? And hopefully we can move forward and maybe change some legislation that exists to make it better, or create something brand new.

But when I sat down I wanted to understand why we need this bill. What happens in our communities, what are these criminal enterprises looking at? And there's many different things that happen. They take a look at the ability to get wealth into the hands of the criminal and make it look like it's there legally. So we take a look at different things.

And there is a commission report that was done. And we want to sit—I wanted to sit down and look at that report on a detailed basis and try to figure out how does this happen, because I don't understand. I come from Selkirk. I trust my neighbours. I trust the people going on. And, as I take a look around, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I looked at this and I found out corruption and bribery is one of the ways that stuff happens.

So a criminal enterprise can persuade and force, through bribery, false documentation, of making money seem whole, like, transfer of funds into bank accounts and other ways. Now we've heard from other places that one of the common things for these criminals to do is to take a load of cash, go down to the casino, they spend a few hands, gather a bunch of chips and go cash it in as winnings. Well, that is clearly a blatant direction to make money whole.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we have a lot of things that go on on a daily basis that maybe we don't know about and how this affects what we do. But there is a counterfeiting and piracy of goods and services

that criminal organizations will copy the work—the copyrighted, patented products of another organization—and sell them. And they'll sell them on the Internet, they'll sell them at trade shows, they sell them at fairs and they sell them as if they're the authentic product and they sell them for a fraction of the cost and they make millions of dollars.

But upon receiving those funds, they need to get this money back into their cash flow, and they need to clean this up, so they launder the money. So, if we take a look at what's going on, we need to shut down on the products that are showing up in our great country that aren't manufactured under licence or under trade for these companies. We need to protect these companies from losing their trade names, their products, their sales, their profitability to people who are doing the counterfeiting.

One of the largest opportunities for criminal organizations, it is to be in the illicit drug trade. The amount of money generated in the illicit drug trade is an amount that we can't measure, because we haven't caught all the criminals. If we had an ability to catch the criminals and collect those funds and make sure that they weren't rewarded for going out and reselling drugs and harming our communities and creating a spiral downward effect in our mental health with homelessness and addictions. If we could stop the drug problem and stop making it lucrative for people to sell drugs, we wouldn't need this bill.

Well, that is not the reality that we're in, Honourable Deputy Speaker. We know that the illicit drug trade is increasing, not just in our province, but it's in our country, it's in our community, it's on our streets.

I personally know people who have died from drug overdose. My cousin has died of a drug overdose. The pain and harm that caused his family through his entire addiction and now, in his subsequent death, is a pain I could never understand because I don't go through it, but I certainly would have the empathy to feel for them.

And, if we have a bill like this go forward, we need to make sure that that money is being used for the right purposes, that we're using it for victim services, that we're getting it back to the police departments.

I have a good friend who's a sergeant of police here in the city of Winnipeg, and he worked at one period at his career undercover. And the biggest downfall for continuing and actually catching the criminals was they weren't able to work overtime.

* (16:10)

And the crazy system they had between the unions and the negotiated days and the times—and I leave all that stuff up to them—but there wasn't enough funds in the budget for them to work overtime.

When the criminal activity happened from midnight 'til four in the morning on average, they would find that they needed to be off work at midnight. So they would watch everybody as they're just coming out of their slumber at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and they'd start going about their daily business, and midnight, when things were getting hot and juicy, they were off shift, and the next shift started at 8 o'clock in the morning.

If we could take these funds and aggressively go after the criminals, the large enterprises who are blatantly harming our society, grabbing money and sticking it in the faces of hard-working people, if we could take those funds and use those funds against the very same people who are destroying our society, we would have a chance.

We have mass marketing fraud. Just yesterday on my phone, the government texted me that my carbon tax refund is available; I just have to click this link.

An Honourable Member: Oh.

Mr. Perchotte: Yes, oh. I couldn't wait. I couldn't wait to get those funds. I've been the victim several times of people taking my money. And travelling across North America, it happened so innocently. I go check in a hotel, the guy skims my card and says, sorry, that machine didn't work, I'll try this one. He's got all my card information; within hours that credit card is compromised.

I was the victim of, recently, somebody getting a hold of my banking information. And through my personal accounts, my credit card account, my corporation accounts, they grabbed \$85,000, right? That was about a year ago. It took me three months after that to generate all new accounts and secure everything I had. It didn't come out of my pocket, because it wasn't my error.

Unfortunately, we're seeing these type of cyberattacks happen all over the place. The University of Winnipeg was recently the target of a cyberattack. Now the University of Winnipeg is doing their part to try to stop any further damage happening to the students there. They're giving them two years of credit monitoring.

But you know what? My daughter went to that school for several years, and as parents we were proud

to pay for her education. Our credit card information is compromised, and we have not received any two years of free credit checks. We were—our credit and payment system—our information is in their payment system, which was compromised.

So we need to make sure that this is a deterrent, that we go after the people who are taking our funds. We go after the people, and we use it to deter them from ever doing it again. That, along with strengthening our judicial system to actually have some real teeth, and not saying—not tell them, don't do it again, or we'll tell you, don't do it again, and then we'll tell you, don't do it again.

We need something that stops people from heading down this path. It's a learned behaviour. The people that I went to high school with who were good, decent, hard-working people, now have good, decent, hard-working children. The scumbags that were in the schools that I went to, their offspring are now scumbags. The drug dealers created new drug dealers.

I hope we can change that. I hope that as we work together to bring people out of poverty—and as a society, I find too many times when we turn a blind eye, that someone says hey, I got a deal for you; I have got something you could buy. It's stolen, so I'll give you a really good deal. We say that's not acceptable.

In our organization, our family business, we have worked very, very hard. And one winter I wanted to take my family out for a vacation to Hawaii. I was very excited that the year before I put up buildings in Hawaii at the Hickam Air Force Base, and I worked with the members of the POW/MIA and gave them two buildings to bring back remains of fallen soldiers across the world where they can identify those fallen soldiers through DNA. And I was so proud of that, I wanted to take my family out to Hawaii and take them for a tour, a guided tour, and show them where I had an opportunity to put up these buildings.

We arrived on a Saturday morning, and Monday morning I called back to work to see how things were going, and I found out that somebody had broken into my shop that night and they stole a tremendous amount of equipment. They stole generators and post hole augers and ladders and tools and hand tools and power tools. And I couldn't believe it. And I'm a little naive; I just think that as a community we should look out for each other. And then I hear people said, well, big deal; you're insured, you're going to get new stuff. Big deal.

And that's how the criminals look at it. Here's a company, they've only employed people for—last 25 years. They've created about—a bunch of wealth, but who cares, you've got insurance. Well, we reinvest in our company, and we reinvest in our people, and when our deductible is \$5,000 I care, and the people who work for me care because we didn't have the money to replace that equipment.

So when we have an opportunity to capture those criminals who steal our livelihoods and make things more difficult for all the members in our community, we need to jump up and say as a community, yes, this makes sense. We need to take the money out of criminals. But we need to make sure that we're doing it the right way.

Last week, when I started looking at this bill I seen something there that said human trafficking. Just last week I dropped off my colleague from Morden-Winkler at the airport, and as we were going up the ramp I could see a lady running, being chased by another individual. And as we passed, it didn't really register at first what was going on, but quickly we looked at each other and said something wasn't right. Something wasn't right and I needed to go investigate.

She got out of the vehicle and I did another loop around at the airport. When I pulled up, the lady was being forced down the ramp that vehicles drive down, away from the airport. I pulled up, I asked her if she needed any help, if she was in distress, and she was forced to say that everything was okay. The person holding her whispered something to her, and then she said, I'm fine.

I immediately called 911, got on the phone with an operator, and at this point needed to do another loop around. And I pulled into where you wait for people to give you a call at the airport before you pick them up. And as I waited there I explained what was going on, what they looked like, what was happening. And I was certain, in my heart of hearts, this lady was in trouble. And I couldn't help but feel that she was being trafficked, that she's a victim of human trafficking, and we need to know that we need to stop these victimizations from happening. Our police need to have the resources available to them.

* (16:20)

We need to make sure that when we put legislation forward it's for the betterment of everybody in our society and that we can go after these criminals and let everybody know, especially our youth, that

crime doesn't pay, and this not a path they want to go forward on.

We need to put that money back in the hands of our police department and ensure nothing nefarious happens any longer.

Thank you.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Deputy Speaker, it's an honour to stand and rise in the House and for the first minute I'm just going to ask for a little bit of leniency from the Deputy Speaker. I wasn't here yesterday so I do just want to take 30 seconds and acknowledge that yesterday was Eid al-Fitr. It was the celebration of the end of the month of Ramadan, so I was absent from the House to the pleasure of the members in here—oh, sorry; I can't say that. I apologize, Deputy Speaker.

Yesterday was the day of Eid al-Fitr and it was a great celebration for the community, for myself, and then my son, and friends and family going on and eating. You know, I do want to thank the members in the House for their patience with me speaking for the last month, being very dehydrated, taking pauses regularly. And now I will say that I am blessed to have a glass of water where, if I do get tired, I can take a sip, and it is really—the month is—of Ramadan is really to be grateful for everything we have.

And it is a blessing to be here in this building today. It's a blessing to live in Manitoba and Canada, and it's a blessing to have a drink of water afforded to us whenever we are thirsty.

So, with that, I thank all the members for putting up with me over this last month, and eid mubarak [*have a blessed Eid*] to everyone and the member opposite, away—as well, the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) as well, eid mubarak and eid mubarak to everyone on that.

So thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Oh, man, it feels good to be given some water and get right into this, right.

So, Honourable Deputy Speaker, as we speak about, you know, it is a blessing, it is a privilege to live in a country like Canada and a province like Canada and to live in a society that has rules and legislatures that put forward laws to protect us and make us better as a society. It is a blessing to have that.

It is a blessing that we shouldn't take for granted when we get to stand up and talk about bills and debate laws that are going forward, and I will try to

say some original thought that my colleagues have not, you know, one after one another, really articulated the points on this Bill 30 that is brought forward. So I'll try to go a little bit of a different way.

But before we get to that, I think it's really important to acknowledge the great work of everyone in this House, and I want to thank the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) for bringing this forward.

But if I'm going to thank the Minister of Justice, the credit really goes to the previous minister of Justice. I want to thank the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for the decades of work that he's put into this building, for his blood, sweat and tears and the legislation that has passed, to the effort and sacrifice that he has done years over years and years, to put good pieces of legislation forward.

Now, last week I stood in the House and I said, you know, the greatest form of flattery—this is a quote that I'm going to butcher here because I don't have it in front of me—but one of the greatest forms of flattery is imitation. Imitation. And imitation's the greatest form of flattery, and it doesn't come as any surprise that this current Minister of Justice is copying the previous minister of Justice. That is clear as day. And that is really, you know, a testament to the great work the member from Steinbach has done over the decades and decades and decades of working in this building.

So the Minister of Justice really is just thanking him for the work. And why he's doing that is when you look at these bills—well, why you say that—I can hear, you know, members opposite are heckling and chirping and go, well, why are you saying that, and that's crazy talk.

Well, it's okay. Well, let's take a second and actually look at the bill because I don't know if the members opposite have actually read the bill. And not only that, the historical importance of what happens in this building, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

The member from Steinbach, the member from Springfield-Ritchot, the member from Swan Lake; the—Swan River? Swan River. Swan River. Sorry. Lake, river—apologize. Even members opposite actually—sorry—there's been members here that have been here for years as well, and they have the historical institutional knowledge that a lot of us new members don't have, and that cannot be discounted when it comes to talking about laws that are brought forward.

Now, when it comes to the Minister of Justice and the former minister of Justice, I say well, he's just copying him. He's copying the great work he's done.

And I'm going to make a case for how that is when you look at the legislation brought forward.

In Bill 30 that is proposed, in explanatory notes it says: changes to the Criminal Property Forfeiture Act include the following: unexplained wealth orders. The court may make an order that requires a person to provide information about how they acquired property or in an interest in property if it appears that their known sources of income or assets would not be sufficient to do so and if the person or a closely related person have been involved in any law-unlawful activity. Okay?

The Speaker in the Chair

So that makes a little bit of sense when you look at the bill title, Unexplained Wealth Act, Bill 30. You would say, okay, so what are you getting at? And I say, okay, well, let's go back and look at the bill. And again, I won't go over the history of this. All the members have spoke about this, that in 2021, piece of legislation was brought forward that covers exactly what Bill 30 is talking about. It, almost word per word, is what Bill 30 is talking about.

And it's unfortunate, because I know the members opposite are new. I know they've had a couple stumbles when it comes to the legislative process this year, when it comes to deadlines, when it comes to dates, when it comes to getting bills forward for first readings. I also understand that they're forcing bills through. The same thing was apparent in the gas tax stunt that they pulled that they had to amend it and other amended bills. This is another one.

So I read Bill 30. Now it looks like a bill—let's call it bill 58—and this was done in the Third Session of the 42nd Legislature, and I will read here: This bill amends the Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. The keys—changes are as follows—and members opposite might want to take a listen to this because they'll understand that it's literally almost the exact same thing: Currently, forfeiture proceedings must begin before a person can be required for answer questions about property believed to be instrument or proceeds of unlawful activity.

Much more concise way of saying exactly what this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has copied in Bill 30, paragraph 141. Don't see the difference. Acquired property requires a person to provide information about how they acquired property or interest in a property, required to answer questions about property believed to be instrumental proceedings of unlawful activity.

I really don't see, you know, why this NDP government is bringing forward legislation that we have

to spend days and days debating when it's the exact same thing that was brought forward in bill 58.

When you go further into that, you know this bill—you read on Bill 30, if a person fails to provide the information required under unexplained wealth order or provides false or misleading information, the property that is subject of the order is presumed to be proceeds of unlawful activity unless the contrary is proven. And I'll be getting into the presumptions.

Let's take a look here. This bill allows the court to make two new orders before forfeiture proceedings begin: a preliminary preservation order, which prevents a person from disposing of a property of the court to satisfy that there's a serious issue to be tried in forfeiture proceeding.

Oh, so actually, this bill that they amended actually leaves that out.

So I would say bill 58 is a better bill. It doesn't—this is a—Bill 30 is a lot of adage, a lot of verbiage to say what was been said in two sentences in the previous bill. A preliminary disclosure order, which requires a person to answer questions about their acquisition of property believed to be an instrument of proceeds of unlawful activity—exactly what their explanatory note says. The only difference is, Honourable Speaker, is they're about three and a half years late.

So, why would they bring this forward? I mean, you have to ask yourself, and I'll get to that a little later, why would they bring it forward? Why are they bringing the exact same legislation forward?

The only thing you think of is they are not ready to be in government. They are scrambling for ideas, as my colleague, the member from Borderland, eloquently said; the member from Steinbach has said; the member from Brandon West has spoken about this; the member from La Vérendrye; the member from Selkirk. They all spoke at length of how this was done in this province in 2023, that bill 58 came forward and was put into implementation. It had ascended and it was law in this province and it was benefitting Manitobans.

* (16:30)

Now, don't take my word for it. Don't member—the members opposite would do that. So how do we know it is? Because BC, as the member from Borderlands had said, publicly stated in 2023—that's last year—that they're going to copy, who, Honourable Speaker? Manitoba. They're going to look at what Manitoba has done in legislation in bill 58 that was done in 2021 by the member from Steinbach. The BC

provincial government came out and said that, and they copied what was done here. They took it to BC; they've implemented it there.

So this new NDP government comes, says, oh, my god, we've got to do something, what do we do? Let's look at what BC is doing. And we can see they want to copy BC and they want to try to be like the BC government maybe; I don't know why they would want to do that; they have their own problems. But they said, let's get this legislation through. They brought this forward in 2023; let's get it done in 2024, not realizing that this was already done here.

When you look at the presumptions in their bill it references the court is to presume, unless the contrary is proven, that cash is proceeds of unlawful activity if it is mailed or shipped with no information or false information about the sender. So we can look at this. The bill adds new presumptions concerning cash, vehicles and other property. The court is—presume, unless the contrary is proven, that cash found in close proximity to a 'constrolleds'—to a controlled substance or bundled in a manner that is not consistent with standard banking practices, is proceeds of an unlawful activity. Basically the same way, Honourable Speaker, of covering off the same idea, the same concept, the same spirit of the law.

And that is what we here are talking about. Why are we moving forward with the exact same piece of legislation that's already done? It's already there. Why does this government, does this NDP government not have original ideas of their own?

It's evident we've seen that with this latest budget. With this latest budget and the tax breaks, they are doing the budget—and the cuts which I'm going to get to, in this budget, which really go opposite in how they say they want to combat crime in this province. They want to bring it down, and yet they have had sweeping cuts across that department. It is seen in the budget that they have no original ideas because their best announcement, by their own will, by their own admission, by their own advertising in the province, is the previous government's tax savings for Manitoban families, the previous government's work, which had nothing to do with them other than the fact that they voted against it. They voted against those changes; now they want to take credit for the changes.

We can go on and on ad nauseam at the bill here, but I think that covers basically the 'explanatory' note. There's two more pages here. I won't get into all the details, but I think it's pretty clear that when you look at bill 58 that was done in 2021, and you look at

Bill 30 that's proposed by this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), it's really just a form of flattery to the member from Steinbach, to the member from Springfield-Ritchot who had been here for decades working on legislation in this building, to the members who have experience and wisdom and who have gone around the carousel a few times, who understand how legislation works.

This minister is simply copying what was done before. There are no changes. And further to that, Honourable Speaker, you say, okay, well just, you know, explanatory note isn't enough, let's get into some details, and why don't you give the minister an opportunity to explain himself, because those sound like very reasonable questions.

Those sound like very reasonable questions, so let's give the minister an opportunity to explain those. I think that's logical. There's a question period that happens before debate goes up, and lo and behold, Honourable Speaker, you know what happened? We asked the Minister of Justice those questions. We asked them over and over and over again, and not one answer. Not one answer, and that is running par for course when you look at this NDP government. They refuse to answer any questions. No accountability, no answers.

Whether it's the Minister of Health (MLA Asagwara), Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) with increase in taxes to the tune of \$148 million, Minister of Justice on this. Minister of Justice goes on—and I'll read from Hansard here—that under Bill 30, proposed amendments to The Corporations Act would require Manitoba's corporations to disclose their beneficial ownership to law enforcement, to regulatory bodies, to the director of Criminal Property Forfeiture.

If passed, these amendments will help law enforcement across our province to investigate serious criminals and will specifically impact drug traffickers and money launderers—all very important things that were done by the previous government. All of those were laid out in bill 58. So when it comes to Bill 30, there is no new substance. There is nothing new in this bill.

And, to be clear, I think one thing we do agree on—and we might argue, ah, it's different, it's not—we would all agree that fighting crime in this province is important. It is, you know, along with, you know, many other issues in this province, fighting crime, fighting organized crime—drug dealers, traffickers, money launderers—is all of utmost importance. That is a non-partisan issue that I think we can all get on board with.

And there are numerous subjects that come up in this House where we could all get on board on the same page. This one you'd think we would as well. And we are. Bill 58: bill 58, that was done before, goes on to do exactly what this minister claims that he wants to do. If he wants to do it, then he should just remove his bill and put more resources into enforcing bill 58.

Now, when you want to enforce a bill, you would have added costs to that bill. And a simple question to the minister was, what are going to be the added costs of this, from—the MLA from Portage la Prairie asked. Very reasonable question. Will there be additional staff needed in the Criminal Property Forfeiture branch for this, and if so, what are the costs?

Minister's response, well, as I said, Honourable Speaker, we're supporting the work of the staff in the departments. I don't know what that is. That is an embarrassment, if that's an answer from—minister. Now that was one of the first questions, so—minister might have stumbled. Let's give him another opportunity. And it goes on to ask more and more questions, and the minister, the—sorry, the MLA for Steinbach asked the question, would the minister like to explain why this is different than those things that have already appeared before the courts?

Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), again—and I encourage everyone at home who has any questions to look at Hansard from yesterday. Look at Hansard, reference April 10, 2024, page 1160—it starts a little bit before that—but you get to the question period. Previous minister of Justice, the one who brought the bill forward, asks, would he—this minister like to explain why this is different than those that have already appeared before the courts?

And the minister says, but reality is, that if they think that things were the status quo was okay and the crime's going up, then that was just fine; maybe you should go back and look at the results of the last election. I don't know why this Minister of Justice lowers himself to cheap shots, when the minister simply asked a question on why it's different.

So he'll go again, member from Steinbach, I'm not trying to embarrass the new minister; I know this is a big file. I know there's a lot to digest. Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, there's lots to explain. He needs to explain what the difference is than the powers currently existed by bill 58.

Minister responds, so now I know they're trying to get some sort of the, you know, sweep out the old,

spring cleaning right now. They're trying to sweep out the old carpet and clean up the caucus over there. It's time for some new blood. We expect some real questions in this 'legislature' as we can get passed today. If the member—the former minister—would just like—let us get to work.

I mean, not only is that not proper English, or grammar, it is an embarrassment to the question. And the Minister of Justice should be appalled by his answers, when legislatures on this side of the House are simply asking him to say what is the difference between bill 58 and Bill 30? Now, that's two questions. Three questions. Four questions. I won't read them all, because I think members opposite get the point.

They refused to answer any questions on legislation they want to bring forward, which tells us they don't understand the legislation. Well, maybe they just didn't want to answer those questions; maybe they actually do have an understanding. And that's a big maybe, Honourable Speaker, because I will ask you another round of questions.

The member know that—the—it's from the member from Steinbach, says the member will know that the Cullen Commission in British Columbia brought forward a number of recommendations as it comes to criminal property forfeiture. Can he explain how the recommendations from the Cullen Commission fit into this particular piece of legislation? Because if you're going to bring legislation forward, you want to understand the history of it, the impacts of it, especially in a province that came out and publicly stated they're going to copy what Manitoba is doing.

The minister's answer: Wow, a blast from the past here in the Chamber today. It's interesting the former member—I guess current member, former member—now decides he wants to get up and put some words on the record. You know, it's surprising, during the campaign all we heard was, we don't need this, why are we doing this, and I guess maybe, sheepishly, the former's—minister may be admitting privately, saying yes, we didn't get this done.

* (16:40)

Well, this government is getting done. We're taking the good work of the Cullen Commission, we're taking the people of Manitoba's direction and we're getting to work on unexplained wealth orders.

Complete non-answer.

The simple answer, if the minister actually understood, he would say, thank you for the question opposite. The Cullen Commission was in regards to A, B, C and D. He doesn't know.

If you asked me what five plus five is, Honourable Speaker, I'll tell you it's 10. If you ask me a question I know the answer to, I answer it. If I don't know it, I would make up a long-winded answer saying, well, you know, if you want to ask me that question, we can look at the roots of where math and calculus actually came from, and if you go back to the time, the Middle East and the Egyptians is where they made math and, oh, and time's up. Okay. Great answer.

Five plus five is 10. Why won't the minister tell us what's different about this bill? He doesn't know. Why won't the minister tell us what the Cullen Commission is? He doesn't know. How would this make a difference in Manitoba? He doesn't know. How can you ask legislatures in this building to pass legislation when he has no idea what he is talking about? It's flat out embarrassing.

Now, you want to say, okay, well, give him another chance. He might have stumbled the Cullen Commission comment; he has to look through his notes and find that red folder.

So, minister—Steinbach would go—MLA from Steinbach comes back and says, from what I gather, the member doesn't know what the Cullen Commission is. I am asking him if he can just maybe put aside the partisanship—I can drink now; fasting's over—put aside the partisanship, if that's possible, and just explain how this particular bill fits with the recommendations from the Cullen Commission. And, again, another very reasonable question, I think we can all agree, and the minister's answer is a non-answer.

I won't get into reading, because we only—I only have eight minutes left. I feel like I could go on and on forever. But it's clear in reading Hansard, this member has no idea what he is talking about. This minister is simply regurgitating legislation that was done before under the previous PC government, just like they've done time and time again, and take credit for it. Whether it's the PCH homes, where they were announced before and then they cancel and they bring back to life. Well, why did you cancel them in the first place? Whether it was the Portage Place announcement—oh, we're going to cancel it; oh, we're going to bring it back to life. Or whether it's anything else, really, under this sad excuse for a government right here. And I know members will be upset the way I said that, but really, when you look at the legislation

that they've brought forward, some of it really needs to be questioned as to what they're doing on that side of the House.

Honourable Speaker, again, to be very clear, we all agree we have to fight crime. We all have to fight organized crime, money laundering. These are things that put our society at a risk. We need to put in resources to handle that. How do you put in the resources when you are making cuts?

I'm going to quote here the member from Waverley. So Brandon police services, but—sorry, I'll skip ahead, no need to get into that; *[inaudible]* but they also highlight a stark contrast to the approach previously taken by members opposite and their long freeze of municipal funding.

And yet, when you talk about funding, let's look at this recent budget by this NDP government. And I want to thank the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) for bringing that forward.

It's a long list of cuts this government has made. It's a long list of cuts. It might take the whole seven minutes to read them off here. So let's look at all the cuts they've done in their budget here, Honourable Speaker. Everybody says, what have they cut?

Community Corrections, cut. Court Operations, cut. Sheriffs Services, cut. Family Resolution Service, cut. Victim Services, cut. Provincial Policing, cut. Policing services, cut. Public safety, cut. Law Enforcement Review Agency, cut. Manitoba Police Commission, cut. Independent Investigation Unit, cut.

You think I would be done now, but the list goes on, Honourable Speaker. Crime Prevention branch, cut. Security intelligence branch, cut. Manitoba Criminal Intelligence services, cut.

And what's the real kicker? Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit cut funding.

How can you bring forward a bill, for the love of God, saying you want to enforce it, when you are cutting their funding?

When asked, how you're going to pay from the member from Portage la Prairie, how are you going to pay for your resources? Are you going to increase staffing? Are you going to increase the budget? The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) gave a non-answer.

It is embarrassing that they give non-answers. I've read this Hansard because I wasn't here—I read this Hansard as I like to take in all the information, you know, reading it and then also watching it. And when

you read it, it is embarrassing at—the lack of knowledge and information that this minister puts on the record.

The member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) is far better equipped to answer these questions, and yet he is resigned to the third row for some strange reason that blows our mind. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) did not answer one question, and yet, sweeping cuts across the board for Justice, and they talk about how they want to support the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit. And they have sweeping cuts.

It is one of those conundrums, Honourable Speaker, that I will never understand to this day, how you can say you want to support something and yet cut the funding from a dozen branches, a dozen units, within that unit itself. Within that department.

Members on this side of the House have talked about the civil liberties and what this means to civil liberties, what this means versus a criminal offense versus the civil liberties, and that is something that needs to be addressed that this Minister of Justice did not answer, that this Minister of Justice has no answers for, that he's not properly prepared for, to understand what the far-reaching implications of this act are. And yet he wants to force legislation through.

These are things for Manitobans—need to be concerned about. It is a simple matter of this government not being ready to govern, a government in waiting that's been waiting and waiting and waiting, and still is waiting to do something to make a difference in Manitoba. When you look at why they had done this, you would say, okay, well they ran on a campaign to say bail reform, we're going to do it even though, again, just shows you, Honourable Speaker, that this Minister of Justice has no idea what he's talking about.

We're going to come up with a bail reform system. We're going to change bail. We're going to come down on criminals. How? In a hundred days, he said. To top it off, he said, a hundred days. How many days has it been since the election? Honourable Speaker, 190 days. What have they done? Nothing. What have they done to make Manitoba streets safer? Nothing. What have they done for bail reform? Nothing.

These are concerns Manitobans have. They will say something and have no plan for it. We have not seen a plan on anything on that side of the House. Oh, sorry, \$300 cameras for businesses; \$300 cameras to combat crime.

How about instead of putting a \$300 camera in, you keep the criminal away? How about you putting your resources into catching the criminal and making sure they don't get out? How about you put your resources into actually doing something that makes a difference instead of signal 'virtuing' like this side wants to do. Instead of pandering to what they may think is a base, a vote that they think they can scare up and get on board with their side, and saying we're going to combat—we're going to change bail reform in a hundred days.

In 190 days they have done nothing. It is simple smoke and mirrors as members on this side of the House have said, and Manitobans are seeing this now with this government. It is smoke and mirrors. Whether it comes to the minister for municipalities or the Minister of Sports, Culture and Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Simard), smoke and mirrors with their announcements. Say one thing to the municipality and then change it the next day.

Say you love parks, and then vote out a resolution or a bill brought forward to support parks, get more money into parks. Whether it's to combat crime and actually not do anything about it, there is a reoccurring pattern here where these members simply want to signal virtue. They want to pretend like they're doing something. In reality, they have done nothing.

Our member on this side of the House pointed out another great example today, our critic for Health, that they have no plan for Health. Over 1,300 procedures have been cancelled by this government as of January 1. Nothing, no plan. No plan on how they're going to implement Bill 30 here, the criminal property forfeiture. Now, this may just be a bill where they want to do no harm and they just want to bring forward a piece of legislation to look like they're doing something. Exactly what they've done the last three months when, in reality, they have done nothing. They have done nothing.

It's embarrassing that I have to stand up here for half an hour and talk about how this bill is nothing, and how this—and members on that side of the House won't even stand up to talk about this because they know it's nothing. They know they have nothing to stand on here, other than we're going to combat crime. Great. We all want to combat crime. What are you going to do? We're going to copy you guys.

It's really unfortunate. It's concerning. Manitobans need to be concerned about what's happening here.

* (16:50)

I want to thank all the members on this side of the House that have spoken so eloquently about why this legislation is a form of flattery for the member from Steinbach, why it's merely just copying what was already done. It was already in place.

How about this government get to work and implement good legislation that is already in place that other provinces are copying, that other provinces have enacted, that we have enacted here in this province. It would be nice for them to actually do something, to actually make a difference for the people of Manitoba, instead of just pretending like they're doing something, instead of acting like they want to make Manitoba a better place, when, in reality, they really don't.

Honourable Speaker, thank you for allowing me the time to stand and speak, and I hope Manitobans' clear picture, smoke and mirrors with the NDP; on this side of the House, we'll actually get some stuff done for you.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, I am proud to stand in this House as the representative for Agassiz constituency, and also the opportunity to speak to Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act), introduced by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) here recently.

The unexplained wealth orders are currently being used in over 100 different jurisdictions. This bill allows law enforcement, Criminal Property Forfeitures office and regulatory enforcement agencies stronger tools to build cases against assets used in organized crime, drug trafficking and money laundering.

The Unexplained Wealth Act is the issue of individuals acquiring assets or wealth that cannot be reasonably explained by their own sources of income. It provides authorities with the necessary tools to investigate and seize assets that are suspected to be the result of illegal activities, such as money laundering, corruption, and organized crime, like I mentioned.

Having key people, a dedicated unit within law enforcement agencies to investigate such cases of unexplained wealth, is imperative to capturing and holding criminals accountable. This would give the proper authority opportunity to gather evidence, trace financial transactions, and collaborate with international counterparts to identify and seize assets that are connected to criminal activities.

Again, it's very important that we look at this legislation and its aim to combat illicit financial activities and organized crime. By targeting unexplained wealth and

combating financial crime ensures that our province is not a safe haven for those who seek to hide their ill-gotten gains. It serves as a deterrent for individuals involved in illegal activities and helps to protect the integrity of our financial system and the protection of all of us Manitobans.

Furthermore, the act enhances the ability of law enforcement agencies to recover the proceeds of crime and redirect them towards programs and initiatives that benefit our communities. This can include investments in education, health care, infrastructure, social services, ultimately improving the quality of life for all Manitobans.

In Manitoba it's important to note that money seized under this forfeiture act is subject to court order and controlled by the director of Criminal Property Forfeiture.

Under the former PC government funds from forfeiture programs were—from the 'fortch' program—were distributed to a variety of initiatives throughout the province. Organizations like Bear Clan Patrols, combatting cyber crime, reducing catalytic converter theft, providing Internet in northern areas for court appearances.

I would also like to acknowledge the great work of those that volunteer and contribute to Bear Clan. This organization does a lot of fantastic work on the front lines and providing conflict resolution and, in some cases, prevents further criminal activity.

The PC government, when in power, took great steps to combat money laundering and was among the leaders in the country who took an initiative and action on this front.

It was British Columbia that looked at what Manitoba had done and then adopted a similar model in their province.

It's clear we can all agree, no matter what side of the House we are on, crime and the property and monetary assets obtained from crime should be and needs to be addressed.

Community safety is of key importance in all our communities right across our province. It's a growing concern for many Manitobans and leaves many feeling vulnerable and unsafe right in their own homes. I know in my rural riding and surrounding areas, many have been subject to break-ins and theft. Unfortunately, rural crime is not new and it's existed forever just like the other—same in other jurisdictions and communities in Manitoba. Not one specific place

has not had this challenge. It does, however, seem to be growing in boldness and time of day, along with growing number of thefts.

There's just as many—or drug seizures and increased trafficking in our province. There has been drug and weapons seizures in my own rural community. Last year, the RCMP responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in a parking lot on Main Street in Neepawa. Officers arrested three adults and one youth. They also found a second vehicle linked to the suspects in the same parking lot. And during the search the—of the vehicles and the suspects, the RCMP seized four firearms, 64 grams of crystal meth, a small amount of cocaine, bear spray, weapons and other stolen property. They all faced multiple drug- and weapon-related charges.

Another situation in rural Manitoba just this last February, where RCMP conducted a traffic stop on Highway 16 in the rural municipality bordering Agassiz. In that stop, the RCMP noticed a Ziploc bag containing a quantity of dried cannabis. The occupants were placed under arrest and were requested to exit the vehicle, and officers—as officers were securing the suspects, one of the males fled the scene on foot, heading towards the community. RCMP officers from the surrounding area were contacted, and they responded to the situation. The suspect was arrested without incident, and the search of the vehicle and the suspects led to seizure of drugs, cocaine and a cutting agent as well. Officers also seized weapons and the bear spray and other paraphernalia. One of these individuals was found to have outstanding warrants.

You know, a number of years ago, I myself was a victim of crime. I was shopping at a mall in the city, and I had my young daughter with me at the time and parked in front of the mall, right in front of the door, close to to the door. So I—right in broad daylight, I was—went in for just a short moment—well, for 20 minutes; it was a short shopping trip. It was a quick in and out, and when we left, I exited the front of the mall to find out that my vehicle was not there, and I tell you it's an overwhelming feeling when you have your young child with you and your vehicle has been

stolen in broad daylight, leaving you without transportation. I had to go into the store and make several calls to seek rescue and report the stolen—or the theft. The vehicle did turn up weeks later and—in a ravine with contents stolen and some minor damages.

And I do want to commend the great work the RCMP officers and the related supports on the ground do in providing safety and keeping drugs off the streets, weapons out of the hands of criminals and working to keep our communities and our province safe from the acts of these criminals. Also, thank you to the officers, you know, the city police, Brandon and Winnipeg, who work on the streets to make them a safer place. Living in rural Manitoba, our nights may be quieter and are safe from the sirens most nights, and we may not bear witness to some other antics and obvious criminal behaviours that may be more prevalent in larger urban centres on a day-to-day basis.

I have to say last night and other nights I hear first responders, fire trucks, police cars, et cetera, sirens going through throughout the night, but last night especially seemed an endless night of sirens.

Now, granted it could've been me, but there seemed to be a significant—more of them. Clearly, emergency situations were happening, and you can hope that all turn out well for those involved and pray for those that seek further help and rescue. Having said that, I have to say thank you to those who respond every night continually to those emergency calls. They go out in the middle of the night, perhaps several times a night, to disturbances and often dangerous situations and at times risking their own lives to protect us here in Manitoba.

Crime does exist, and it does exist everywhere. There is no boundaries to this existence and no easy solution to combat this, and many get—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 21 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 11, 2024

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