

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

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**The Speaker:** Introduction of bills?

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Social  
and Economic Development  
Fourth Report**

**Mr. Tyler Blashko (Chairperson):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

**The Speaker:** Tabling of reports—no.

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Fourth Report.*

## Meetings

*Your Committee met on April 15, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.*

## Matters under Consideration

- *Bill (No. 207) – The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended) / Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine islamique (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs)*

## Committee Membership

- *Mr. BLASHKO*
- *MLA CHEN*
- *MLA KENNEDY*
- *Mr. KHAN*
- *MLA LAGASSÉ*
- *MLA MOYES*

*Your Committee elected Mr. BLASHKO as the Chairperson.*

*Your Committee elected MLA MOYES as the Vice-Chairperson.*

## Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 207) – The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended) / Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine islamique (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs):***

*Shahina Siddiqui, Winnipeg Islamic Social Services Association*

*Albert El Tassi, Al Hijra Islamic School*

*Mian Hameed, Manitoba Muslim Seniors Association*

## Bills Considered and Reported

- *Bill (No. 207) – The Islamic Heritage Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended) / Loi sur le Mois du patrimoine islamique (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs)*

*Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.*

**Mr. Blashko:** Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Riel (MLA Moyes), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker:** Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## Adult Epilepsy Monitoring Unit

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** March was Epilepsy Awareness Month. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that impacts 23,000 people in Manitoba. It is a serious disorder that needs awareness and support across our province. That is why, on March 26, wear purple day, the Health Sciences Centre Foundation, along with our Minister for Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, announced a new adult epilepsy monitoring unit.

This work would not be possible without Seine River residents Pat and Phil Trottier, their family and the executive director of epilepsy seizure association of Manitoba, Sara Bettess. Thanks to Pat's dedication, from being on the association's board to advocating

for her son Tom, Winnipeg now has services for adults with epilepsy. Tom was unable to join us here today, as he is actually in the new adult unit this week.

After the former government shut down the specialized unit in 2020, Pat and her husband Phil rallied the support of friends, family and then-opposition NDP members to present a petition to the former government. With over 600 signatures, the petition pushed government officials to finally increase services for epilepsy patients in Manitoba.

Dedicated individuals like Pat, Phil and the Trotter family are essential to our great province. Even though Epilepsy Awareness Month has passed, we must continue to advocate and bring awareness to such difficult disorders.

Please join me in thanking Pat, Phil, Tom, the Health Sciences Centre Foundation, Sara Bettess and the epilepsy seizure association of Manitoba for their service and dedication to epilepsy patients in Manitoba.

Please join me in congratulating Pat and Phil and Sara.

#### **Selkirk and District Services to Seniors**

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, I'm always proud to rise in this Chamber and direct attention to the extraordinary organizations that make life better for citizens of Selkirk.

Today I'd like to introduce an extremely important organization, the Selkirk and district services to seniors. This is an organization that services the 65-plus community of St. Andrews, St. Clements and Selkirk. Their annual 400 volunteers are directed by three employees. They help over 3,000 individuals with their services and programs for independent living. These volunteers with extraordinary hearts provide their gift of time to listen, to help, to inspire, to teach, to grow and to learn.

Their programs include Meals on Wheels delivery, helping our seniors have a nutritious meal on a reliable basis.

They offer friendly visiting, where they sit and visit with our seniors. There, they share stories and uplift each other's spirits. The group offers driver escorts to medical appointments, helping our seniors get to and from the appointments that they need to sustain independent living.

The Selkirk and district services to seniors provide lifeline installation and support which helps keep our seniors a moment away from help if it is needed.

Last year, there was more than 3,600 volunteer hours donated through this wonderful organization.

Today, we are joined by Howard Shiels, Alleson Sandwell, Ann Dixon, Henry Fast, Linda Kuber, Yvonne Oxer, Melanie Shumilak, Gerry Hamm, Helen Brosowsky, Jayme Anderson and Colleen Larocque.

Please welcome me—help me welcome them here today.

#### **Grace Ledoux Zoldy**

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Honourable Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge Grace Ledoux Zoldy. She is watching today—session virtually from her residence at the Winnipegosis Personal Care Home.

Grace is a Michif language keeper and a teacher of the oral traditional and knowledge throughout the Métis nation. She is fluent in Southern Michif, Plains Cree and Saukteaux languages.

Grace has been a leader in the Métis social justice movement for a number of years. She has provided lifelong leadership on women's issues and support for survivors of the day schools across Manitoba. Grace has volunteered with the Manitoba Métis Federation since 1960.

She was mentored with Michif Language programs, initiated the mentor-apprenticeship pilot project in Camperville, a model used to teach language in homes, communities and in one-to-one settings.

I would like to acknowledge the adult leaders from the master-apprenticeship program joining us in the gallery today, who are reclaiming Michif language into their lives.

In 2003, Grace wrote the book *Michif prayers*. Grace recently received the order of the Gabriel Dumont to recognize her lifetime services. On top of her volunteer work, she held long-standing careers with Northern Affairs as a house adviser.

Grace is a mother, grandmother and a great-grandmother. Please join me in thanking Grace for her timeless work in her—keeping traditional language alive.

Thank you so much.

And I will also ask if we could include the guests in the gallery today, Honourable Speaker, in Hansard.

Thank you so much.

*Kathleen Anderson, David Delorme, Mira Kolodka, Talula Schlegel.*

### Charleswood Legion Branch 100

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Honourable Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the Chamber today to recognize members of the Charleswood Legion branch No. 100.

Members of the Charleswood Legion are a remarkable, hard-working group, and some of them have joined us in the gallery today.

The Charleswood Legion has been a fixture in our community since 1932. Today, anyone can become a member. The Legion has many activities and events happening throughout the week. Whether your interest is playing darts, curling, bingo, shooting pool, playing cribbage, meeting and visiting with friends or participating in the weekly meat draw, the Charleswood Legion has it all.

If you have ever driven down Roblin Boulevard, you will notice the Sherman tank which sits in front of the Legion doors. The Sherman tank is the official symbol of the Charleswood Legion. The tank was built by the Fisher tank division of General Motors in Detroit, Michigan, in April 1945. The tank is 79 years old this month, and it is not only the official symbol of the Legion, but a landmark in Charleswood.

Over the years, the tank has required updating and refurbishing. The Legion, recognizing maintenance is an ongoing expense, have developed a program to ensure the tank is maintained and, at the same time, recognize service members, past and present.

The Legion is selling plaques for a memorial wall that will both honour members of the Canadian Forces and raise money for future maintenance of the tank. This initiative has been very well received and supported by the community.

\* (13:40)

The Charleswood Legion's goal is to honour Canada's veterans, preserve its military heritage and support the broader community. For example, the legion is involved with Beauchemin Park Place, a non-profit seniors housing complex in Charleswood. The legion is also a long-time proud sponsor of the 60th Winnipeg Scout Group. As someone with two boys in the program, I know I speak for families across Charleswood when I thank the legion for their continued support.

I want to commend the members of the legion for all they have done and continue to do to support veterans and our broader community in Charleswood.

This is a group of problem solvers who simply get it done. For example, throughout the challenges of the—

May I have leave to finish my statement?

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave

**The Speaker:** Leave—is there leave for the member to finish her statement? [*Agreed*]

Leave has been granted.

**Mrs. Cook:** I would like to recognize the members of the Charleswood Legion who are joining us today in the gallery: president, Brian Rodgers; chairman, Tom Crew; the former head of the Sherman tank restoration, Mr. Bill Brown; first vice-president, Mavis Enokson; and past president, Phil Otis.

Thank you for joining us in the Legislature today.

### Fort Garry/St. Norbert Healthy Child Coalition

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** I rise to honour the Fort Garry/St. Norbert Healthy Child Coalition who are celebrating their 25th anniversary and who join us in the gallery today.

Since 1999, the coalition has provided parents and children with a safe space to learn, play and grow. The coalition offers families free drop-in programs Monday to Saturdays for ages one to four. And for families interested in crafts, rhyme time, stories and free play, family centre drop-in programs in Parc La Salle, Waverly Heights and Fort Richmond are free to attend.

For more active toddlers and preschoolers, the coalition offers Wiggle, Giggle & Munch program at Fort Richmond Jumping Gym Time.

And little ones are always accompanied by their parents or guardians at the drop-in centre, providing an invaluable opportunity for bonding and connection. And for parents, the coalition also builds a sense of community as families have a space to come together and connect with their neighbours on the joys and challenges of parenting.

Recently, the coalition opened a family centre drop-in location at ACCESS Fort Garry, a new addition to our neighbourhood that is warmly welcomed. It brings me great joy to know parents and kids in Fort Garry will have access to fantastic programming close to home.

During their 25th anniversary, the Fort Garry/St. Norbert Healthy Child Coalition will be hosting an

end-of-the-year party in the third week of June. Program participants and service providers will come together to celebrate this milestone and share resources for families to use over the summer.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking the Fort Garry/St. Norbert Healthy Child Coalition for the dedication to child welfare they've shared with Manitobans, and I sincerely look forward to supporting future endeavours and continuing to celebrate the milestones to come.

And, Honourable Speaker, I ask that the names of our guests in the gallery be included in Hansard.

*Audra Anderson, Sheila Baziuk, Priya Chavan, Tracy Dueck, Cindy Nachtigall, Tricia Robinson, Jennifer Sinclair, Val Stade, Sharon Walters, Amanda Younka*

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before moving on to question period, I'd like to introduce some guests that are in the public gallery with us today. We have seated in the public gallery from Laureate Academy, 25 grade 7 to 9 students under the direction of Jennifer Clark, and they are guests of the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross).

We also have seated in the public gallery from Children of the Earth High School, 15 grade 9 students under the direction of Michelle Arnaud. They are guests of the honourable member for Point Douglas, the honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith).

### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** I have one short statement before we proceed to oral questions, and that is that we need to be cautious of words we say even when we're not the one that's recognized to speak, because mics around you will also pick up those words; and if they are inappropriate, the Speaker may caution you for such words.

So just—I'd advise us all to watch what we're saying and to try and be respectful for each other.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Community Safety

#### Justice Funding Concerns

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, after six months it's already clear. The NDP had no intentions of improving public safety. We've seen this NDP leader

would say absolutely anything to get elected, and improving public safety has fallen by the wayside.

They all went door to door and they knocked and they said they would solve crime, but Manitobans can tell things are worse than ever.

Honourable Speaker, the Winnipeg police just responded to four weekend stabbings, and our thoughts are with the victims.

Why has this NDP government abandoned their promises and abandoned Manitobans when it comes to keeping them safe?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Honourable Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. We recognize, on this side of the House, that public safety and community safety is a priority for Manitobans. It is so important that no matter where you live across the province that you are and you feel safe in your neighbourhoods.

Our government, you know, talks to families on a regular basis, community leaders on a regular basis, Winnipeg police, et cetera, to figure out ways to work together to improve safety in our communities across Manitoba, and our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is doing a very good job on this front.

I have to say our partners have made it clear they haven't had this level of engagement from government in over seven and a half years under the previous government.

It's a new day in Manitoba. We're taking public safety seriously.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, the NDP abandoned their promises and abandoned Manitobans when we're trying to keep them safe.

And how did they break those promises? They cut; they made deep cuts to courts. They cut legal aid. They made cuts to corrections, cuts to public safety, cuts to crime prevention, cuts to intelligence units, cuts to prosecution, cuts to judicial services, cuts to family resolutions, cuts to victim services and cuts to criminal property forfeiture funding.

Why is this NDP cutting Justice funding at a time when crime is getting worse, Honourable Speaker?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, for over seven and a half years under the previous PC government, crime, safety issues got worse year over year over year

under their failed leadership. Our government is taking real action to invest in making our communities safer.

I want to highlight something members opposite know nothing about, and that's addressing the root causes of challenges that families face. That's why our government is investing in a universal nutrition program across Manitoba—the first time in our province's history. Because, Honourable Speaker, when you give kids a good start and you feed hungry children, which members opposite said years prior was a terrible idea, which is shameful—

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

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, ministers in this NDP government, including this Deputy Premier, had said many times they called for reduced Justice funding.

When they were in opposition they stood with and spoke to defund-the-police rallies. They even introduced private members' business to take criminal property forfeiture funding away from the police.

Now they're in government and they're acting on those ill-advised plans. Things are worse than they've ever been, and the consequences of reduced government funding could be dire.

Honourable Speaker, will the NDP restore the Justice funding that they cut?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our record on this side of the House is investing \$20 million in new funding for policing and public safety and prevention, a \$300 security tax credit for families and for small businesses. We're hiring 25 mental health workers to be on the front lines of our communities, keeping our neighbourhoods safer.

\* (13:50)

What's their record? Honourable Speaker, 40 per cent increase in homicides in 2022, 44 per cent increase in attempted murders, 39 per cent increase in firearms offences, 8 per cent increase in assaults, 26 per cent increase in vehicle thefts.

We invest in safety; they make crime worse.

### **Support for First Responders Programs for Mental and Physical Health**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Honourable Speaker, I learned at committee last week about a recent tragic event in our community and there are

many other incidents across the country that have unfortunately emphasized the urgent need for increased supports for mental health and wellness for our first responder community.

Can the minister share with this House today what steps they have taken to put in immediate supports for those individuals impacted by this tragedy and the community of first responders at large?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I want to thank the member opposite for the question. It's an issue that is near and dear to our—I think every member of the Legislature, in particular, members of the first responder community in both caucuses. I think this is an important issue.

We are committed as a government to not only support our front-line workers, our law enforcement and all first responders, but we also want to ensure that the mental health workers that we committed to in the campaign are rolled out quickly. That's why we committed in our budget 25 new mental health workers that work alongside law enforcement, will work alongside first responders to ensure that we're giving the proper response to the calls that are coming in in those important situations.

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, I graduated from the police academy in 1990 and a short few months later, one of my friends and classmates very tragically took his own life.

The work undertaken by first responders, law enforcement, EMS, dispatchers, firefighters, correction officers, military personnel can take a significant toll on both the physical and mental health of individuals. The stress and exposure to trauma these individuals bear comes at a very critical cost.

Can the minister share with the House what long-term initiatives they are pursuing to end the stigma around mental health for first responders and provide more comprehensive supports?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, thanks to the member opposite for the important question and the important attention to this issue.

We, as one of the first orders of business when I was appointed Minister of Justice, we ensured that we met with folks at WPS, folks with Brandon Police Service, met with the National Police Federation and the union representing workers here. And it was one

of the first items that they raised about the support and the supports for their members.

That's why, as part of Budget 2024, it was important for us to ensure that funding, not only to law enforcement here in the city of Winnipeg but across the province, would be increased. And so that's why we—

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

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** I'm glad that the Justice Minister took the opportunity to meet with people from Brandon, because in Westman we have a program called Project Resilience 911.

A number of agencies have come together to provide peer support for first responders, front-line and military personnel. It's a platform to share resources, initiatives, funding, training opportunities and the like for these same personnel in the area of personal trauma and mental health to end the stigma. I can speak first-hand to the value that this has provided not only myself, but my former colleagues.

My question is whether the minister will commit today to investing further in initiatives like Project 911 Resilience—

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

**Mr. Wiebe:** Yes, Honourable Speaker, I commit to the member opposite today that I'm happy to work with him going forward. This sounds like an important initiative and I'm happy to work with this initiative to see that it moves forward.

As I said previously, this is an issue that affects all sides of the House. I know the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz), as our representative, our special envoy for military affairs, has done a lot of work reaching out, meeting with people, meeting with those who have dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder and other impacts from their work on the front lines and other service.

I know that he's bringing forward a bill on firefighter recognition, and this is an important way to—for us to come together as a House, support that. And I look forward to working with the—

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

### Health-Care System Management Health Minister's Record

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Last week, the media revealed that institutional safety officers were walking

into HSC unarmed and unequipped to do their jobs protecting staff and patients. And now, after several rounds of questions on the topic, the minister is still being unclear about what protection measures will actually be provided to ISOs.

Under pressure, they said yes to pepper gel, but no word on other equipment, like batons or security coverage for parking facilities. Unfortunately, the NDP minister was too busy pointing fingers to be proactive and get these tools in place on day one.

When will the minister start reacting to problems before the media reports on them?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Honourable Speaker, if it were up to the member opposite and her caucus and their approach, previously in government, there wouldn't be a single institutional safety officer at HSC or anywhere across the province. They had over two years to make that happen, and they didn't make it a priority.

Our government committed to health-care workers that institutional safety officers would be on-site this spring, and they are. Our government is committing to making sure they're equipped with the tools they 'need'—they need; they are going to be, immediately.

Our government is committed to making sure health-care workers and patients alike are safe at our hospitals.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Similarly, the media reported hip and knee physiotherapy patients were left in limbo regarding coverage for post-operative therapy sessions. A pilot program, brought in by the PC government, had paid for those sessions.

And what did this NDP minister do? They let the program lapse, and did not communicate with patients or physiotherapists until yesterday, when again, they were exposed publicly.

No patient would've been left in limbo if this minister had been proactive on the issue. We are seeing a pattern form where this minister doesn't deal with emerging issues until a negative story forces them to.

When will this minister start paying attention to our health-care system and start being proactive about problems before someone else does the work?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, physiotherapy services were disrupted in 2018, when the previous PC government cut it from our public health-care



system. In 2018, the previous PC government cut physiotherapy services for Manitobans.

As a result, 11,000 less Manitobans get access to physiotherapy services. That is their record, and that is shameful. Our government has made sure that physiotherapy services are ongoing—ongoing across our province, and they will continue to be.

And our government will continue to clean up the mess made by the previous government, who cut health care, closed emergency rooms and disrespected health-care workers.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** In a similar vein, late last year, after cutting the task force, the NDP deleted surgical wait-time data from the government website. Then the media reported on it, and then suddenly that was an accident, and it was put back up.

In February, we called on the minister to update that same data, which had been stagnant for months. Later that day, the data was updated, and according to this minister was all a big coincidence. This month we revealed that agreements signed to increase surgical capacity in Manitoba had been left to expire by this Minister of Health.

Somehow the budget had delayed their ability to talk to health-care providers. And now, after being questioned here in the Legislature and by the media, they're saying all those agreements have been re-signed.

Why has this minister so utterly failed to be proactive about what's—

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we are committed and focused on Manitobans' top priority, and that's strengthening health care across our province.

That is fixing the damage done by seven and a half years of closing emergency rooms, disrespecting health-care workers, forcing health-care workers to leave their jobs and firing them, and taking an approach that didn't put people first. I'm not going to get pulled into the rhetoric and the distractions of the member opposite.

\* (14:00)

I'm focused on Manitobans. I'm focused on their health care, and every single day, our government is working with Manitobans and health-care experts to

move health care in a better direction and clean up their mess.

### **Education Property Tax Rates Increase Concerns for Homeowners**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Honourable Speaker, this minister is once again using smoke and mirrors to mislead Manitobans. Just the other day, this minister and Premier (Mr. Kinew) cherry-picked more winners and losers on a street in the riding of Riel, where they stood in front of a house valued at \$360,000 but just one block over, the average house was \$500,000. Conveniently, they left that house out of the analysis.

I table this article that shows both houses will be paying more in education and property taxes.

Now, before the minister reads—

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

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:**—his 21 reasons why not to trust NDP, can he please for once, just once, answer the question. But I will provide him the answer to from his own budget.

Why is the minister increasing education and property taxes to the tune of \$148 million?

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

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Member's wrong. Our plan is making life more affordable for Manitobans.

They don't want to believe us. Maybe they'll believe the Manitoba Real Estate Association who said: We are pleased to see the government introduce the \$1,500 homeowners affordability tax credit for those who need it most. This credit will make home ownership more affordable for Manitobans, likely eliminating the education tax portion for an average-priced home and leaving homeowners to pay the municipal portion of the tax bill.

That's reality. They're bringing forward false information. We're making life more affordable for Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Khan:** Honourable Speaker, I'm glad that the Minister of Finance said that we bring forward false information from his own budget, page 122, which I table; false news from his own budget.

I table now the City of Winnipeg document showing the real education and property tax rates Winnipeggers

will be paying, not cherry-picked by this minister when in his budget he picked 11 as the mill rate.

Well, let's look at homeowners in Seven Oaks, 15. What about Winnipeg School Division, 14.

This minister knows that the numbers he picked are cherry-picked and untrue. He knows that Manitobans will be paying more under this NDP plan.

Why did this minister deceptively use lower education and property tax rate forecasts that was—and when will he simply come clean that he is increasing—

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

**MLA Sala:** Well, I thank the member opposite. I can assure him that we've read our own budget, and that budget contains an unbelievable amount of great news for Manitobans, specifically—

**An Honourable Member:** That's right.

**MLA Sala:** That's right.

Not only does this budget bring forward the new \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit that's going to benefit Manitobans across the province; it's also bringing forward a long list of 20 other ways that we're saving Manitobans money. Again, happy to remind the member opposite of a couple of those here, but an important one: a broad middle tax—middle-class tax cut; we're extending the gas tax holiday for another three months; increasing the renters tax credit, increasing the seniors top-up; free prescription—

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

The honourable member for Fort Whyte, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Khan:** Honourable Speaker, proof right there. The minister misled Manitobans right there. He purposely left out the words, up to \$1,500. And I table here, from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the minister, where they have purposely left out the words, up to \$1,500. They are misleading Manitobans by saying \$1,500 for all Manitobans, when the reality it is up to \$1,500.

Why won't this minister come clean and admit that he is misleading Manitobans and he is increasing their property taxes to the tune of \$148 million?

**MLA Sala:** Look, the math is simple: 83 per cent of Manitobans are going to do better—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The member for Fort Whyte should quit hollering across the way, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko), I will call to order as well—*[interjection]*  
The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

The honourable Minister of Finance.

**MLA Sala:** Look, we know why they're sensitive here. We know why they're feeling upset, concerned, because they know that for seven years they made life more expensive for Manitobans. And what did we do with this budget? We brought forward 21 ways to reduce costs for Manitobans across the province.

Look, again, the fact of the matter is 83 per cent of Manitobans are going to do better because of our homeowner affordability tax credit, right? And we're bringing forward a whole list of other measures that are making life more affordable, and I got more good news that I—

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

### **Apprenticeship Ratio Changes Loss of Employment Concerns**

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, Manitobans need to know what this government's plan for apprentices are. They have announced intentions to eliminate the two-to-one ratio and are ignoring calls from Manitobans that the—show this decision will end with current apprentices being fired.

Will the minister commit today that no Manitoban apprentice will lose their job over this decision?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Thank you to the member for this very important question that affects a lot of skilled workers, apprentices and lots of businesses across our province.

Our government has recently announced that the apprenticeship ratio will be changing to one-to-one. Manitoba currently has a two-to-one apprentice-to-journeyperson ratio for all apprentices except those in the final year for trades that require three or more years of training. And these apprenticeships' supervisory ratios have been put in place to keep workers safe when learning new skilled trades in high levels of risk.

Safety and all these types of precautions, making sure that everybody gets to come home safely, this is going to be our No. 1 reason why we're shifting back to the one-to-one ratio.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member from Selkirk, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Perchotte:** Industry and this government clearly differ on this, unfortunately. It's nothing about safety. Honourable Speaker, 65 per cent of Winnipeg Construction Association members have indicated they will need to lay off apprentices to comply with this mandate. That is basic math. If a journeyman has two apprentices, under this regulation, they need to left-to let one go.

Does—what does the minister expect these fired apprentices to do?

**MLA Marcelino:** Our budget, past couple weeks we've announced that we are going to be adding \$1.5 million to improve these apprenticeship ratios because Manitobans deserve to be safe at work and that they deserve the supervision needed to safely learn the skilled trades.

We are prioritizing a high quality education and safety above all else. We will always stand up for these workers and for safe workplaces. Our government is committed to addressing the skilled trades labour shortage and creating jobs for Manitobans for their families to support good lives. And—

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

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

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Speaker, that's just not true. There's not enough journeymen in the workforce right now. Empty seats don't create journeymen.

This system is putting years of schooling and training at risk for employees in the trade.

What will this minister do to make sure that everybody can continue with the education that we've asked them to be a part of?

**MLA Marcelino:** This former PC government consistently put workers' lives at risk by changing these apprenticeship ratios. They currently weakened workplace health and safety protections across the board, and we know that these PCs don't respect working Manitobans.

This former PC government disrespected public servants and front-line workers. They fired hundreds of workers at the start of the pandemic. The PCs implemented heavy-handed and unfair wage freezes which led to lengthy and costly cost battles for taxpayers across Manitoba.

They interfered in labour negotiations, causing several unnecessary strikes and they refuse to listen to front-line health-care—

\* (14:10)

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

### **Aquatic Invasive Species Clear Lake Water Testing**

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** I have asked this Minister of Environment and Climate Change to commit to increased testing of the water coming out of Clear Lake in my constituency of Riding Mountain. To date, she has refused to address this highly important issue. My constituents will not take no answer as an answer.

This minister needs to stand in her place today and commit to this testing. Will she?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** I thank the member opposite for the important question. We know that Clear Lake is top of mind for many Manitobans, including the member, who represents the area.

Our government has been really pushing the federal government on their response to the issue of zebra mussels in Clear Lake, which I assume is the topic at hand right now when he's talking about testing. We are pushing the federal government. We—and I'm happy to work with the member opposite on this very important issue.

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

**Mr. Nesbitt:** This isn't about the NDP or PC or Liberals. This is about doing all that we can in this Chamber to ensure that Manitobans have the support they need to battle aquatic invasive species.

In this case, this means regular testing of the water leaving Clear Lake to ensure that the Assiniboine River basin is protected. This is not a partisan issue.

Will the minister commit today?

**MLA Schmidt:** On one point I couldn't agree more, that absolutely this is not a partisan issue. I'm happy to work with the member opposite, and I appreciate that he may have asked me in the House.

But I will point out that I haven't heard from the member outside of this House. I'd be happy to work together on this issue. I'd be happy to work together to push the federal government to increase their testing.

I can share with Manitobans that the most recent testing that we've seen coming out of the federal government shows no presence of zebra mussels. That being said, we are very committed to stopping this

aquatic invasive species in its tracks. And, again, I'm happy to work together.

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

**Mr. Nesbitt:** Today I'm asking for a firm commitment from this minister, but I—certainly be happy to bring this to her attention out of the Chamber as well. But I need her to take the most basic steps in combatting aquatic invasive species and commit to regular water testing.

This is even more important because her colleague, the minister of Natural Resources, has refused to commit to additional inspection and decontamination stations in the area.

Will the minister do what her colleague refuses and commit to protecting our waterways?

**MLA Schmidt:** There are few issues more important to my department than the quality of water across Manitoba and the protection of our waterways. That's why in Budget 2024, I am so proud that we have promised an additional \$500,000 specifically on the issue of aquatic invasive species to beef up the inspection of watercraft and the decontamination of watercraft.

And, again, we encourage all Manitobans to do their part on this important issue. And that is if you have a watercraft on any waterway across this province this summer, it's to clean, drain and dry your watercraft and make sure that we can all do our part in protecting Manitoba's waterways.

#### **Protections for Persons in Care Office Request for Update on Action Plan**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** On one of the first days back to the Legislature in November, I asked the Minister of Health to provide an update to the House on the severe abuse of seniors and vulnerable Manitobans under the Protection for Persons in Care Office.

New documents, which I table now, obtained through FIPPA, show that the department was instructed to provide an action plan by January 24.

Can the minister update the House on when members can expect to see an action plan to protect seniors and vulnerable Manitobans?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** I really appreciate that question from the independent member. The safety and protection in care of seniors across this province is an important and sacred responsibility.

It is something that our government takes with the utmost seriousness.

I've had the opportunity to meet with folks in our department who have been working very, very hard to make improvements to that work done by the PPCO. We know that under the previous government there were concerns brought forward about the backlog, and that was never taken seriously nor addressed.

They are working very, very hard to not only eliminate those waits, but to also make sure they've put in protocols and procedures to ensure that, moving forward, we don't see that happen again in our province.

That work is ongoing, and I look forward to providing a more comprehensive update to that member.

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

#### **Case Investigation Backlog—Timeline to Clear**

**MLA Lamoureux:** When an audit was conducted of the Protection for Persons in Care Office, it not only found severe instances of abuse and neglect of seniors and vulnerable Manitobans, but it also showed a serious investigation delay and backlog of five-plus years.

Can the minister provide an update to the House on how many investigation files are currently pending and when they can expect the investigation backlog to be completed?

**MLA Asagwara:** I thank the member for that really important question and for asking for specifics that Manitobans understand and we want undeserved clarity around.

What I can say to that member is that special commissioner William Burnett is working toward a proposal that I look forward to sharing more broadly beyond that point. But in—specifically to the backlog, I can say that in late October, 2022, the backlog for investigations was at 204 files.

As of November of 2023, so just this past fall, the backlog was reduced by 170 to three—to 34 files, and I can say that the backlog has been further reduced to that since that time. I can provide an exact number for that member later on today.

But this is an area we take very seriously. The care and protection of our seniors is exactly why we tried to bring forward independent bill for the seniors' advocate—

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

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

#### **Implementation of AG Recommendations**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Manitobans are counting on greater accountability and transparency to replace the failed Protection for Persons in Care Office to investigate allegations of abuse of those in care.

How many of the 12 Auditor General's recommendations has this minister implemented to date?

**MLA Asagwara:** Thank the member for that question. I can say that the PPCO is actively working to address all 12 of those recommendations. They're all very strong recommendations that deserve the care and attention of the PPCO and our government.

What I can also share is that special commissioner Burnett is working on a report that will address the establishment of an independent investigation office. I look forward to getting the results of that report.

But more broadly, you know, our government made a commitment to Manitobans to introduce and to establish an independent office of the seniors advocate. We're committed to following through on that for Manitobans, and it was disappointing that when we had seniors and advocates for that in the gallery, the members opposite, the PC caucus, shut that down.

#### **Provincial Inflation Rate Manitoba Rating**

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Honourable Speaker, today our province received some excellent news from Statistics Canada. Our government got to work on our first day prioritizing affordability measurements for Manitoba families.

We know the PCs made life less affordable. Can the Finance Minister please update the House on how our government is making life more affordable for Manitobans and share the details on how Manitoba has the lowest inflation across the country?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I want to thank my colleague for that excellent question, and I'm very happy to be bringing forward good news for the Legislature and share with the members opposite and everyone in this House that Manitoba has had the lowest inflation in Canada for now three months in a row. Our inflation rate: 0.8 per cent year over year, compared to 2.9 per cent nationally.

Our plan is working, Honourable Speaker. Not only that, gas prices declined by 10.6 per cent year over year, compared to an increase of 4.5 per cent nationally.

Our work of making life more affordable with our fuel tax holiday and our other measures—

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

#### **Chief Medical Examiner's Office Funding for Staffing in Budget 2024**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, last week I asked about staffing cuts to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

I ask the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for the office, why he introduced a budget that cut medical examiner staff?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, the member's just wrong. There are no cuts to staff in the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

\* (14:20)

I encourage her—I know she's new to the Legislature and new to this process, and I simply want to offer to her that during the Estimates process, which I understand we're going to be moving into very shortly in the Legislature, that I invite her to come and join with her colleagues, the critic and others. We—happy to walk through the numbers and ensure her that there are no reductions in staff in the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** I can read just fine. I tabled copies of the budget showing that the budget of—for the medical examiner's office was clearly cut. It's written in black and white.

Why has the minister cut this budget for medical examiners?

**Mr. Wiebe:** No, and I, Honourable Speaker, didn't want to imply in any way that the member didn't understand the budget, but maybe just that she could get more information in a different format, rather than here in question period.

I am, of course, happy to answer the question and be very clear: there are no reductions in staff or service that is being provided by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

And, in fact, under the previous government, year over year over year of vacancies that were allowed to fester and grow. And instead, this government is reducing those vacancies across the department and

supporting important work, like—that's happening in the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, families are being denied the opportunity to properly say goodbye to—because of—say goodbye, because loved ones are not being returned in an acceptable timeframe.

Will this minister reject this budget and hire the necessary staff to give the families closure they deserve?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, very, very important issue and important to ensure that families have closure that we're fully supporting. And, again, I'll just reassure the member that we are fully supporting the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

What I will say is that Budget '24 does more. It builds on the good work that we've already started to do, and it's started to build on some of the important initiatives I mentioned earlier: 25 new mental health workers that will be deployed throughout the system to support families and support those who are going through some very difficult times; half a million dollars to sobering centres in Brandon and Thompson; a 52 per cent increase to \$1.1 million for integrated youth services to help youth get equitable access to mental health—

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

### **Municipal Amalgamation Government Intention**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Last week in Brandon, AMM gathered and allowed us, as legislators, to really understand the needs and concerns of the municipalities throughout Manitoba. It was an opportunity to listen, and instead, all I heard was this minister talk and insert the opinions of this Premier (Mr. Kinew) gave him to present.

If the minister really listened to Manitoba municipalities, will he denounce Greg Selinger's forced amalgamations and commit it won't happen again?

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** Here we are in 2024, and what I heard at AMM last week was the seven years of cuts that this former government instituted on municipalities.

And I know the member was there. He was walking around the back, hoping not to get recognized, probably hiding a PC membership card, hoping

he didn't get acknowledged. But the fact of the matter is seven years of cuts.

So what I clearly heard at AMM: the freeze and how detrimental that was to municipalities and how much they appreciated the 2 per cent that we put into our budget.

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

### **Municipal Funding Government Intention**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Honourable Speaker, I see disdain for our RMs is still alive and strong on the NDP benches. That's really unfortunate. I was hoping that the mindset of Ron Lemieux was gone, but who knows what other things Lemieux was known for are still alive and strong over there.

Why did the minister not to commit to the 2 per cent annual funding at AMM that the Premier spoke of? Was that another question period special?

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** What's alive and well over there is the memory of Brian Pallister, and that's clearly what they bring forward.

Municipalities increased by 2 per cent, increasing operating funding to municipalities by over \$58 million, that's increase—that's \$52 million to operating grants. Over \$70-million increase in capital grants, initial \$4 million to be added—Water Services Board.

Honourable Speaker, time and time again, after seven years that's all they did is cut, cut, cut, freeze, freeze, freeze. We've done more in seven months than they did in seven years, but we're just getting started.

**The Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

### **PETITIONS**

#### **Medical Assistance in Dying**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Claudette Bournier [*phonetic*], Michele Bouchard, Nathaniel Bésisle [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** Any further petitions?

### Louise Bridge

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

\* (14:30)

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each

direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction; and

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

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

### **Medical Assistance in Dying**

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom metal-mental illness is the sole condition, and

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

This petition has been signed by Tina Reddecopp, John Wolfe, Nancy Wolfe and many, many more Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counseling instead of suicide assistance.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:



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

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

This position is—petition is signed by John Howson, Ruth Howson, Victor Clemente and many, many other Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** No further petitions? Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### House Business

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** On House business first, in accordance with rule 78(8), I am pleased to table this sequence for the consideration of departmental Estimates.

\* \* \*

**MLA Fontaine:** Can you—could you please call the continuation of second reading debate of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended); followed by the second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will resume second reading debate on 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.

## 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), standing in the name of the honourable member for Lakeside, who has one minute remaining.  
*[interjection]*

\* (14:40)

Order, please. Apparently, I didn't recognize you first, so, the honourable member for Lakeside.

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Again, thanks again for the last minute of opportunity here to get some words on the record for The Unexplained Wealth Act, Bill 30, the Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended.

And, thank you, again, to the member opposite for bringing this PC initiative forward with the amendments so we can—so I talked quite a bit yesterday about The Unexplained Wealth Act. As much as I'd like to use the rest of my time to talk about the explained unwealth act that the 2024 budget maybe should have been called for Manitobans here, because we're all going to be somewhat unwealthier after this budget is passed to Manitobans.

So instead, we'll finish off by, again, thanking you for the opportunity to put some of these words on the record, and I'll pass it on to some of my colleagues to say some things.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity today to put some words on the record of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act.

And, you know, I just want to take this opportunity to say how much I have learned from my colleagues that have come before me that have spoken at length of the importance of law enforcement and ensuring that they have the necessary resources and adequate supports to continue to do their job.

And I'd specifically like to call out my colleague, the MLA for Brandon West, and just thank him for his years and years of service with the Brandon police. He's truly an inspiration. And, you know, I'd also just like to say I'm really sorry for the death of your friend that you spoke about earlier in this House today. I can't imagine—to begin to imagine the tragedies and the hardships that you saw in your line of duty. And just thank you for those years of service and that incredibly, incredibly difficult work. So thank you.

Now, I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my other colleague, the MLA for Steinbach, for his years and years of wisdom. Years and years of wisdom; many, many years of wisdom on this topic. And, you know, it was very interesting listening to him put some words on the record as it relates to this bill and the amount of amendments that have been discussed over the years and years that he has been within this Chamber. Many, many years.

You know, but he did talk about criminal forfeiture and the supporting legislation thereof. And I

think he specifically spoke, back in the early 2000s, about the work that was done on this file. You know, this is something that affects all of us in Manitoba. It affects my constituents, affects Manitobans, affects Canadians and really affects people all over the world. You know, I am a new member of this House, going on seven months, but, you know, very grateful for the experience like the member from Steinbach has with topics such as this.

You know, so what is Bill 30? The Unexplained Wealth Act enables a court to make an order that requires a person to provide information about how they acquire property or interest in a property. If it appears that there are 'norm'-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.

So I believe that some of my colleagues have spoken at length, you know, the general support for this type of legislation. However, you know, they've also talked about, and I believe that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) didn't answer this question when it was posed to them, but what does this legislation do that legislation before it does not?

And, you know, I believe that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), in his line of questioning, asked this Minister of Justice exactly that. You know, what does this do that existing legislation does not?

Now, it is my understanding that we have voted on a series of amendments in—here in the Legislature, over a significant period of time, to allow for unexplained wealth orders. And those amendments spoke about the process of unexplained wealth orders. And I believe the most recent one—and, hopefully, my colleagues can correct me if I'm wrong—but was back in 2021.

So, you know, under The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act, there's already the ability of law enforcement for a court to make an order that requires a person to provide information about acquired property or an interest in property if it appears 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 activities.

So, you know, it's certainly my understanding, with legislation that already exists, that these types of mechanisms are already in place.

Now, that's not to say that, you know, we don't want to give additional supports to our law enforcement officers. I certainly believe that, on this side of

the House, we want to ensure that our law enforcement officers have as many supports and resources as possible in order to do their job, you know.

But it is my understanding that the criminal court 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 does already exist, you know.

So as I've already mentioned, none of us on this side of the House have an objection to making this legislation stronger. In fact, I think if you look at the history of this legislation and, as I've mentioned, it has been amended several, several times, but that has always been done in a non-partisan way. And I believe my colleagues have spoken at length about that. My colleague, the MLA for Steinbach, certainly did that with—when he gave us that history lesson when he first put some words on the record.

And, you know, I did learn a lot from my colleague about the Cullen Commission. You know, this was something that was new to me, but I did find it quite interesting, and I do think that we all received a lot of information on this for those of us that were listening and in the House that day.

And, you know, I would encourage all members when the MLA for Steinbach speaks, to listen because he is certainly full of information for us all. We're very lucky to have him on this side of the House.

You know, so my colleague, the MLA for Steinbach, spoke at length about the Cullen Commission and how, in British Columbia, you know it did a significant study into criminal property forfeiture. And it did speak specifically about unexplained wealth, but also about money laundering. You know, the MLA for Steinbach spoke about the issue of money laundering in casinos, and, you know, I understand that that's actually why the Cullen Commission was actually brought forward, which was very interesting and certainly an interesting topic that I had the pleasure of learning from my MLA for—from the MLA for Steinbach when he spoke, you know.

So it does sound like criminal forfeiture has been amended significantly over the years and, you know, when BC brought in the Cullen Commission they actually looked at legislation that Manitoba already had in place. You know, Manitoba has long been known for having extensive legislation that other provinces look to for guidance, and, you know, we're certainly a leader in a lot of those files.

You know, my colleague, the MLA for Steinbach also brought up a really interesting point, and, you know, something that, you know, I'm quite passionate about, and that relates to victim services. And he basically said, you know, regarding the standing amounts of funds that flow to victim services under this fund, you know, what was concerning within this budget, Budget 2024, was that victim services has been cut, you know.

And certainly this is concerning when we see less and less funding for those who are victims of a crime. You know, we certainly need to support those victims, you know, who are innocent and have, unfortunately, become a victim of whatever crime occurred to them.

And, you know, it was really disappointing to hear that the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), in speaking to this particular fund when she was the critic for Justice, specifically she said she didn't believe any more money should be going to law enforcement.

Now, you know I'm sure that my colleague, the MLA for Brandon West, when he heard that, was very disappointed in that, having spent years and years in law enforcement and ensuring that, you know, he's keeping people safe and that his officers are keeping people safe.

And to hear members of the NDP government stand up and put on the record that they don't believe any more money should be going to law enforcement is incredibly disappointing.

\* (14:50)

You know, I certainly see within my own community, you know, I live in La Salle. I live there with my husband and two children. We're a bedroom community of Winnipeg about ten minutes away from the South Perimeter, so not very far, and we're seeing a significant amount of crime over the past few months, specifically property crime.

You know, we have security cameras at our house, like I'm sure many others in Manitoba do, and we see people on the cameras in the morning. They come up and they check our doors, see if they're locked, see if they can get into them. You know, see what kind of property they can steal.

My brother-in-law lives on a farm. He's a grain farmer just south of where we live, and he had his snowmobiles stolen this past winter. He's had quads stolen. He's had tools. He's had farm equipment stolen. You know, we see individuals, you know, they come in, they maybe steal a truck from another driveway,

they take it to the farm, they load it up with personal property, and then they drive off.

And, you know, we have these individuals on camera, you know, and, unfortunately, we need the police to have more—fortunately, we need the—have the police to have more resources so that they can catch these individuals and return the property to the owners that is rightfully theirs.

But, you know, just going back to the Minister of Families' comments about, you know, no more money should be going to law enforcement. It was a—certainly a pattern that we have seen with this NDP government and members from the other side of the House. You know, we certainly saw the defund-the-police commentary that the Minister of Health attended through a rally.

And, you know, I can certainly say for myself and for members on this side of the House that we support jail and not bail for violent criminals. You know, we want to ensure that we're supporting our law enforcement and that they have the necessary resources and supports to be able to do the job.

So when NDP ministers have stated they don't want law enforcement to have additional dollars, that is incredibly concerning, and I think we have certainly seen in the media and here in Manitoba the increases in crime and terrible and tragic situations that are happening to innocent Manitobans.

You know, so now is the time, like we need to give law enforcement and our first responders and our police officers the resources they need to protect innocent Manitobans.

You know, so, back to the victims—the criminal forfeiture fund and Victim Services cut, you know, so certainly one of the reasons why we're going to be watching this fund very closely and what the distribution of it will be.

You know, I do want to say, you know, as it relates to this legislation, that, you know, not all criminals are violent, but they are certainly still criminals. You know, I spoke already about the property theft that we're seeing in my home town of La Salle, and that we're seeing in our surrounding farm communities.

You know, but I also want to acknowledge a key part of our Charter, and that is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law beyond reasonable doubt. You know, so, certainly critics, I think civil liberties from BC brought this up when BC strengthened their legislation, but, you know, what measures are in place

to protect innocent individuals from being unjustly investigated?

You know, this is certainly formal—formalized within our Charter. It's a key part of Canadian democracy, innocent until proven guilty in a court of law beyond reasonable doubt. You know, it's certainly a key part of many democracies across the world, including the US, where it's formalized within their Fifth Amendment rights.

You know, and I'm sure the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) certainly agrees with this Charter right, you know, being a defence lawyer. I think there might be a couple other lawyers on the government's side of the House, you know, as we have lawyers here. And this is a key part of democracy.

You know, and I want to go back to a comment that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) did make when he spoke about this during the election. And I believe his quote was, when taking action to address crime by introducing The Unexplained Wealth Act, that will mean that if a gangster is driving a \$100,000 car, we're going to ask, how did you get it.

Well, I think we've all seen what the price of cars and trucks are right now. You know, we're—my husband and I—are looking at a new vehicle to expand our growing family, and, you know, cars are expensive. You know, you have four kids, you have to get a seven-seater. You have three kids, you know, I'm sure my colleague, the MLA for Borderland, you know, he has a few kids and certainly needs a decent-sized vehicle. Those do not come cheap.

You know, certainly, see a lot of pick-up trucks in the parking lot of this Legislature. You know, I would bet that a few of them are over \$100,000. So, you know, just because you're driving a \$100,000 vehicle certainly doesn't make you a criminal, Honourable Speaker, and would certainly caution the unintended consequences that this legislation could have when it comes to individuals who might be driving a car or a vehicle over \$100,000.

Now, I also believe my colleague, the MLA for Lakeside, spoke about farm equipment. Now, as I mentioned, my brother-in-law is a farmer just south of Winnipeg, and farm equipment's pretty expensive right now. You know, was it three-quarter of a million dollars for a brand new seeder or combine these days.

You know, certainly wouldn't expect the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) to go from farm to farm asking if farmers are criminals as they're growing our food. But, you know, I'd be more than happy to take him for

a drive outside the city of Winnipeg so he can actually see a farm, and I'm sure my colleagues on this side of the House would be happy to do that as well.

But, you know, farmers are good people. We support our community. We also live in very small communities, you know, we know our neighbours. And if we see, you know, the brand new GMC pickup, we're certainly not assuming that that truck was acquired with criminal dollars. So that's just something, you know.

And oftentimes, we see this with legislation. I've dealt with 'legistaslation' for a long time from business, and intent is usually good. You know, and I'm sure the members opposite have brought forward this legislation with good intent. But, like I said, you know, there's often unintended consequences with legislation. And, you know, you certainly hope that legislation like this doesn't get abused, you know, but certainly we need to think about that and consider that when developing legislation like this.

You know, under the former PC government who introduced this fund, including distributing dollars to various initiatives, it supported groups like Bear Clan Patrol or supported combatting cyber clan—or, cyber-crime. You know, this is pretty important, and this fund certainly, you know, we talked about dollars that flow to Victim Services to help support victims of crimes, well, you know, these are other areas that the fund has helped support as well.

And so, you know, as we keep a close eye on this fund and the distribution of dollars and where they'll go, you know, I think it's important to recognize that the dollars going into the criminal forfeiture fund does a lot of good things and helps a lot of really important organizations.

And, you know, I think my colleague, the MLA for Portage la Prairie, he did speak at length about cyber crime. You know, and we want to ensure that, you know, legislation, you know, does—that kids are not taken advantage of under this act. You know, we've certainly seen cell phones, social media, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and kids are—can be targeted, you know, they can be targeted by criminals, you know, promises of a better life.

You know, I know that my nephews are really into video gaming, right, and they're gaming across the world with individuals. And, you know, certainly concerning when, you know, people might take advantage of them and ask them to do things that they

might not otherwise do for whatever promise that that criminal across the world might make to them.

You know, so, you know, we see kids with, yes, computers, instant messaging at their fingertips. And I certainly think that that's something to consider. You know, these children are certainly not criminals, but have, unfortunately, you know, been targeted by criminals, and so that's really concerning. So we certainly need to look at what types of education supports are out there for children when it comes to online activity.

And, you know, my kids are three and five, and I certainly am terrified of the thought of them on social media and essentially living in this world that, you know, we never had to live in, that my parents never had to deal with. And that's certainly a scary thought as a parent, definitely.

\* (15:00)

You know, and it's not just through online. We certainly see drug traffickers targeting kids and youth, you know, for a promise of money, a better life, safety, protection, you know. So let's make sure that when we're putting this type of legislation together that we're taking criminals off of the streets.

You know, seniors; I think one of my colleagues spoke at length about seniors, as well, and how they are also the target criminal scams. And we need to make sure our seniors, who've spent their lives earning and saving, we have to educate, you know. And I think that some of the money that's obtained through this criminal forfeiture fund can certainly go to some of that education.

And, you know, I've certainly had a couple of scams this week, as I'm sure many members have. I believe it was specifically, can you do me a favour? And, you know, it was an online email scam, comes from a name that you know; email address looks, you know, pretty good, you know. But from my knowledge and education, I know that this is a specific scam that, you know, asks for gift cards or money and—or an e-transfer. But, you know, unfortunately, seniors are certainly targets of these types of scams, you know, telephone scams too. But, you know, criminal scammers have certainly gone far and wide beyond telephones, and they're certainly getting into the online world now and we're certainly seeing that.

You know, I want to talk specifically about, you know, drug traffickers. And, I, you know, I will admit there's—I watch quite a few documentaries on Netflix about drug traffickers and drug trafficking and, you

know, terrible, terrible stories. And many of them are true stories that, you know, that they've interviewed individuals that have unfortunately, you know, fallen victim and become part of the drug world and the drug trade and underground drug market.

And, you know, there's one that I watched recently, and it was a young girl, and she went over to Ibiza and, you know, unfortunately, yes, was promised more money, a better life and, you know, eventually became a trafficker for a very, very, very large global drug trafficking organization. And, you know, you hear stories like that and that's sad, and, you know, those are the people that we certainly want to protect and ensure that they don't get into those types of criminal activities.

You know, my colleague, the MLA for Lakeside, talked about the Canadian Border Services Agency Boissevain seizure. I think it was over \$50 million of meth. So I want to thank the CBSA for the work that they do, and I believe—

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

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes. These are horrible, horrible products that are hitting the streets, horrible drugs.

And, you know, the MLA for Lakeside gave quite a few statistics on this yesterday, and I pulled those from Hansard because I couldn't write fast enough; my hand was getting a little sore. But he had said by 2016, fatal overdoses from fentanyl exposure increased to 8.4 per cent per 100,000 in Canada. And then by 2018, the rate of fatal overdoses from opioids reached 12 people per 100,000; approximately 85 per cent of the province's fatal overdoses.

This is terrible, Honourable Speaker, and, you know, our drug addiction—or addictions crisis and mental health crisis that we're seeing in Manitoba right now is absolutely terrible. And we want to ensure that, you know, we're supporting the community organizations that are helping people. We want to ensure that we're supporting law enforcement, that our first—and our first responders, you know.

And, unfortunately, I'm sure there is many members throughout this House that know someone or have a loved one who have addictions and who unfortunately have overdosed or at least have come close to, myself included. And it's really terrible. You know, it's a terrible situation that we're dealing with, and, you know, we do need to ensure that we have the mental health supports in place.

And I believe my colleague from across the aisle, the MLA for Seine River, spoke at length about this, and, you know, I do agree that we need to get to the root causes, right? We need to get to the root causes of crime because this is really terrible stuff that's going on. And, you know, certainly, you know, new member of this House, new MLA, but I don't want to see this keep happening. I really don't.

And I don't want my children to grow up in a world where they see this continuing to happen as well, potentially to one of their friends or loved ones.

You know—so, you know, yes, opioids and fentanyl, meth, heroin. You know, I think my—the—my colleague, the MLA for Lakeside said that fentanyl is more potent than heroin. It's really sad. This is really, really—real terrible products.

You know, I actually just got a text today from a good friend of mine, and I think there might be a couple other members in the House that did, as well. There was a drug seizure last night at an apartment block on Waterfront. And you know, certainly good to see that, you know, like I say, you know, there's legislation that exists to allow for those orders. And, you know, they seize. They seized meth that was about to hit the streets, and these individuals have now been charged with plan, or attempt—I'm not sure what the legal terminology is—but attempt to traffic these drugs.

So, you know, thank you again to those law enforcement officers who work diligently to seize those drugs, and, you know, that just happened within the past 24 hours. Happened within my friend's building; my friend was sitting at his window watching the police come in and seeing the seize happen. So, you know, it's certainly happening in many, many of our communities.

And you know, I think I spoke already about a Netflix documentary that I watched with the young girl from Ibiza, but, you know, I also—and maybe some of the members have watched this as well, it's a pretty recent one—but there's a new one about a drug scandal in the US. You know, and this was an individual who worked in a lab to test drug products that have been seized and confiscated by law enforcement and, you know, in order to test that in court, they have to ensure that the drug is, in fact, a drug.

And, you know, unfortunately, this individual became addicted to the drugs that she was testing and, you know, it just shows the—you know, the pathway of addiction and, you know, how it can start with one

little thing. You know, cocaine and, you know, ensure that she can do her job, you know, keep her up, keep her going, that addiction continued to eventually smoking crack cocaine, and her life really went downhill. And then she was criminally charged because of what she was doing within that crime lab.

You know—so, you know, these are stories, you know, they're true stories. And like I said, we're seeing them in our community. Maybe something not quite as global and to the forefront as that Netflix documentary, but, you know, we certainly read about in the papers, we're certainly hearing about it from our friends and family. And, you know, this is certainly an issue that we need to tackle.

You know, so to go back to the legislation at hand, you know, when I spoke at the beginning of my remarks about BC, you know, and how BC looked to Manitoba when they were looking at amending some of their legislation. And, you know, I will say that the PC government distributed millions of dollars from the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund to various initiatives and agencies. I think I already spoke about Bear Clan Patrol. Law enforcement agencies were included in this, community safety groups, victim services organizations and services and rural charities.

But, you know, when BC announced their new law, which I believe was in March of 2023—so not that long ago—the Attorney General was quoted saying, there is—similar piece of legislation in place in Manitoba. So, you know, as I mentioned in my earlier comments, you know, we've been at the forefront of this. You know, and that's why I think my colleague, the MLA for Steinbach, was questioning the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) at the time as to, you know, what—why this new legislation? Like, why does this need to be expanded? What doesn't exist within the current legislation that has been a model for provinces across the entire country?

\* (15:10)

And, you know, unfortunately, the Minister of Justice was unable to answer that question. And, you know, it goes back to my comment of talking about, you know, unintended consequences of legislation or ensuring that due diligence is done before legislation is brought in. You know, certainly we don't want to create extra work for the Department of Justice or to have legislation contradict one another, and so, you know, that's why it's important to look at that.

You know, why do we need this new legislation? What does it target or what does it advance that existing

legislation certainly does not? You know, and I didn't really hear an answer, and that's too bad because, you know, I'm a bit of a policy nerd; I love to read legislation. It's one of the reasons that I've focused my career on doing different legislations and advocating for different legislation and regulations and things like that, you know.

So I'd like to know, you know, I'd like to know why this legislation's being brought forward now and what it accomplishes that previous legislation did not, you know.

So I really do appreciate the opportunity, Honourable Speaker, to put a few words on the record as it relates to Bill 30. And, again, I just want to thank my colleagues who had spoke before me. I learned a great deal from them. Like I mentioned, the MLA for Steinbach as well as others, and, again, you know, thank you to the MLA for Brandon West for his years of experience in this type of work, in this field.

Thank you.

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Good afternoon, Honourable Speaker. I would like to start by thanking the member opposite, this Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Keeper of the Great Seal of the province of Manitoba, Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation; the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), for bringing this bill before the House, Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act.

Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, as I understand it, will enhance law enforcement so our police officers and RCMP officers, the criminal property 'fortures' office and regulatory enforcement agency tools that will help build strong cases against assets used in organized crime, drug trafficking and money laundering, using these unexplained wealth orders.

Bonjour, Honorable Président. J'aimerais commencer par remercier le député, le ministre de la Justice et le Procureur général, le Gardien du grand sceau de la Province du Manitoba, le ministre responsable de la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba, le député de Concordia (M. Wiebe), d'avoir présenté ce projet de loi à la Chambre – Projet de loi 30, Loi sur les richesses inexplicées.

Le Projet de loi 30, la Loi sur les richesses inexplicées, tel que je le comprends, donne aux forces de l'ordre, donc à nos policiers et nos agents de la GRC, au Bureau des confiscations des biens criminels et aux 'orgasimes' applicables de la régulation, des outils qui aideront à monter des dossiers solides contre des actifs utilisés dans le crime organisé, la drogue de

trafic et le blanchiment d'argent, en utilisant ces ordres de richesses inexplicées.

### **Translation**

*Good afternoon, Honourable Speaker. I would like to start by thanking the member—the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Keeper of the Great Seal of the Province of Manitoba, Minister responsible for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, the member for Concordia—for introducing this bill to the House: Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act.*

*Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, as I understand it, would hand law enforcement—so our police and RCMP officers, the Criminal Property Forfeiture Bureau, and applicable regulatory agencies—tools that will help build strong cases against assets used in organized crime, drug trafficking and money laundering, using these unexplained wealth orders.*

### **English**

We all know how vital it is to work together collectively to support any and all efforts that are being made to deal with unlawful wealth in our province and support the efforts being made to manage organized crime in our province.

Honourable Speaker, organized crime prevention should be a focus for everyone in our province. Organized crime is incredibly difficult to control. Operations by criminals have completely transformed in the ways that make it substantially harder for law enforcement to define and/or to combat the great risks they pose.

Organized crime has always had a vast consequence for our society. Today, organized crime has significantly more impacted—impact on our society and is much more far-reaching than before. We now live in a world where organized crime has morphed and adapted to the digital age, making the webs of organization crime much more 'intricately' weaved together.

Nous savons toutes à quel point il est essentiel de travailler ensemble pour souhaiter tous les efforts déployés pour lutte contre la richesse illégale dans notre province et 'soutiendre' les efforts déployés pour générer le crime organisé dans notre province.

Honorable Président, la prévention du crime organisé devrait être une priorité pour tous les habitants de notre province. Le crime organisé est incroyablement difficile à contrôler. Les opérations des criminels sont complètement transformées de sorte qui est 'concernment' plus difficile pour les forces de l'ordre

de définir et de combattre les grands risques qu'elles représentent.

Le crime organisé a toujours eu de vastes conséquences sur notre société. Aujourd'hui, le crime organisé a un impact bien important sur notre société et pourrait être bien plus grand qu'auparavant. Nous vivons désormais dans un monde où le crime organisé s'est transformé et s'est adapté à l'ère numérique et rend les réseaux du crime organisé beaucoup plus complexes.

### **Translation**

*We all know how vital it is to work together to support all efforts to fight illegal wealth in our province and to support efforts to manage organized crime in our province.*

*Honourable Speaker, organized crime prevention should be a priority for everyone in our province. Organized crime is incredibly difficult to control. Operations by criminals have completely transformed, making it considerably more difficult for law enforcement to define and to combat the great risks they pose.*

*Organized crime has always had vast consequences for our society. Today, organized crime is having a great impact on our society, and it could be greater than ever before. We now live in a world where organized crime has transformed and adapted to the digital age, making organized crime networks much more complex.*

### **English**

So while Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, is before the House, I wonder if all the consequences of organized crime—if all of the consequences of organized crime were taken into account to come up with this amendment in the act. The consequences of organized crime to our society affects everything.

There are environmental impacts, which would include wildlife trafficking, illegal toxic waste dumping. There are health risks, the risks that counterfeit drugs pose to the public's health. There are endless social disruptions, families suffering immensely when loved ones fall victim to addiction or exploitation. The corruption that infiltrates so many institutions, the destabilization that causes—that it causes in regions where the very heavy crime—and on communities where crime thrives. These are just some of the many detrimental consequences of organized crime.

I do know that the former PC government took great steps and strides to combat money laundering in

Manitoba. When those steps were taken, the former government was amongst leaders in the country that were taking significant action against organized crime.

Now that Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, is before the House, it definitely serves as a reminder for everyone of the great work our former PC government did against organized crime. In 2021, the PC government actually passed legislative changes that strengthened the ability for Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that investigators believed to be illegally acquired and could be subject to money laundering.

Ainsi pendant que le Projet de loi 30, Loi sur les richesses inexplicables, est devant la Chambre, je me demande si toutes les conséquences du crime organisé ont été prises et comptées pour proposer les amendements de—à la loi.

Les conséquences du crime organisé sur notre société affectent tout. Il existe des impacts à l'environnement qui incluent le trafic d'espèces sauvages et de déversement illégal des déchets toxiques. Il y a les risques sanitaires, les risques que les médicaments contrefaits font peser sur la santé du public.

\* (15:20)

Les perturbations sociétales sont sans fin : les familles souffrant 'envernement' lorsque leurs proches sont victimes de 'dépense' ou 'd'exploitation', la corruption qui infiltre tant d'institutions, la déstabilisation provoquée dans les régions à très forte criminalité et dans les communautés où la criminalité prospère. Je ne—sont que quelques unes de nos conséquences—du crime organisé.

Je sais qu'un ancien gouvernement 'conversateur' a pris de grandes mesures, de grands progrès, pour lutter contre le blanchiment d'argent au Manitoba. Lorsque ces mesures ont été prises, l'ancien gouvernement faisait partie des dirigeants au—du pays qui prenaient des mesures importantes contre le crime organisé.

Maintenant que le Projet de loi 30, Loi sur les richesses inexplicables, est devant la Chambre, il a certainement rappelé à toutes l'excellent travail accompli par l'ancien gouvernement conservateur contre le crime organisé.

En 2021, le gouvernement PC a fait adopter des modifications législatives qui ont renforcé la capacité de l'unité de confesse—'confiscation' des biens 'criminels' à ajouter rapidement pour sécuriser l'argent



que les enquêteurs pensaient avoir été accueillis illégalement et pourrait être soumis au blanchiment d'argent.

**Translation**

*So, as Bill 30, the Unexplained Wealth Act, is before the House, I wonder if all the consequences of organized crime have been taken into account in proposing amendments to the legislation.*

*The consequences of organized crime on our society affect everything. There are environmental impacts that include wildlife trafficking and illegal dumping of toxic waste. There are health risks, such as those posed by counterfeit medicines.*

*Societal disruptions are endless: families who suffer immensely when their loved ones fall victim to addiction or exploitation, the corruption that infiltrates so many institutions, the destabilization caused in high-crime regions and communities where crime thrives—these are just some of the consequences of organized crime.*

*I know that a former Conservative government took great steps, great strides, to combat money laundering in Manitoba. When those measures were taken, the former government was among the leaders in the country taking significant action against organized crime.*

*Now that Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, is before the House, it has certainly reminded everyone of the excellent work done by the former Conservative government against organized crime.*

*In 2021, the PC government pushed through legislative changes that strengthened the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit's ability to act quickly to secure money that investigators believed had been acquired illegally and could be subject to money laundering.*

**English**

Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, also serves as a reminder to all folks of the changes the PC government made in 2022. In 2022, the former PC government expanded staffing capacity within the criminal property 'forfeiture' unit, also known as the CPF, to combat money laundering. Two investigations and in-financial analysis joined the unit and were hired to specifically target organized crime.

The millions of dollars that get seized and go to the criminal property 'forfeiture' 'frun' from these organized crime rings were then distributed to different agencies and various different initiatives.

One of those initiatives that received funds was the Bear Clan Patrol, and also to law enforcement agencies, victim service organizations and services, community safety groups and rural charities.

Projet de loi 30, la Loi sur les richesses inexplicables, servait également de rappeler tous les changements adoptés par le gouvernement PC en 2022. L'ancien gouvernement PC a argumenté la capacité en personnel de l'unité du confisque- 'confiscation' des biens criminels également, connu sous le nom CPF, pour lutter contre l'argent blanchiment.

Deux enquêteurs et deux analystes financiers se sont joints à l'unité et ont été embauchés pour cibler spécifiquement le crime organisé. Les millions de dollars s'est été versés au fonds de confiscation de biens criminels 'provant' de ces réseaux du crime organisé ont été—ont ensuite été distribués à différentes agences et diverses initiatives.

L'une des initiatives qui est—à reçu des fonds était la Bear Clan Patrol, ainsi que les organismes d'application de la loi, les organisations et les services de services aux victimes, des groupes de sécurité communautaire et des organismes de bénéfices rurales.

**Translation**

*Bill 30, the Unexplained Wealth Act, also serves as a reminder of all the changes passed by the PC government in 2022. The former PC government increased the staffing capacity of the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, also known as CPF, to combat money laundering.*

*Two investigators and two financial analysts joined the unit and were hired to specifically target organized crime. The millions of dollars subsequently added to the criminal asset forfeiture fund from these organized crime networks were then distributed to various agencies and initiatives.*

*One of the initiatives that received funding was the Bear Clan Patrol, as well as law enforcement agencies, victim service organizations and agencies, community safety groups and rural benefit organizations.*

**English**

When Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, came before the House, it was a bill that was surely existing, and one of the former PC government put it into place.

I also recall, not long ago, that British Columbia brought in amendments to the civil forfeiture act to allow the province to pursue ill-gotten gains more efficiently. The amendments they made would compel people to explain how wealth was acquired, whether there was any sort of suspicious—suspicions about criminal activity. BC would then redirect funds to the crime prevention and community safety initiatives.

And I do also recall when British Columbia announced their new law in March of 2023 that their Attorney General made a comment about a similar piece of legislation that was already in place here in Manitoba.

While Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, is intended to help, there are many questions that are important to be considered when bills such as this are brought forward.

One that I wonder about is how this amendment—or how this bill will change what was done under the previous PC government.

Lorsque la loi—Projet de loi 30, Loi sur les richesses inexplicées, a été présenté à la Chambre, c'était un projet de loi j'étais sûr qui existait déjà qui avait été mis en place par l'ancien gouvernement. Je me souviens également, il n'y a pas si longtemps, que la Colombie-Britannique avait adopté des modifications à sa loi sur la confiscation civile pour permettre à la province de poursuivre plus efficacement les gains mal accueillis.

Les amendements qu'ils ont apportés obligerait les gens à expliquer comment la richesse a été acquise chaque fois qu'ils auraient le moindre soupçon d'activité criminelle. La Colombie-Britannique redirigerait ensuite les fonds à des initiatives de prévention du crime et de la sécurité communautaire, et je me souviens également que, lorsque la Colombie-Britannique a annoncé sa nouvelle loi en mars 2023, son procureur général a fait un commentaire au sujet d'une loi similaire qui était déjà en vigueur au Manitoba.

Bien que le Projet de loi 30, Loi sur les richesses inexplicées, vise à aider, de nombreuses questions devraient être prises quand-lorsque des projets de loi comme ceci sont présentés. L'une des questions que je me pose est la suivante : comme cet amendement—comment ce projet de loi changera-t-il ce qui a été fait sous le gouvernement PC précédent ?

#### **Translation**

*When Bill 30, the Unexplained Wealth Act, was introduced in the House, it was a bill I was sure that*

*already existed; that had been put in place by the previous government. I also remember, not so long ago, that British Columbia passed amendments to its civil forfeiture legislation to enable the province to more effectively pursue ill-gotten gains.*

*The amendments they made would require people to explain how wealth was acquired whenever they had the slightest suspicion of criminal activity. British Columbia would then redirect the funds to crime prevention and community safety initiatives. And I also recall that, when British Columbia announced its new legislation in March 2023, its Attorney General commented on similar legislation already in place in Manitoba.*

*While Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, is intended to help, many questions have to be asked when bills like these are brought forward. One of the questions I have is: How will this bill change what was done under the previous PC government?*

#### **English**

We all know that legislation was put forward by the PC government to help deal with money laundering and unexplained wealth. I went into the history of that above and shared the great legislation that was put forward years ago. And when the bill went through second reading, which last week, Wednesday, my colleague of the—honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) also questioned regarding this.

\* (15:30)

The member from Steinbach questioned, and I quote: The Cullen Commission sort of did recommend things around the unexplained wealth and money laundering and, in fact, the government brought forward in legislation specifically around unexplained wealth and, in fact, the member might remember because it was before the House a couple of years ago. And I don't remember if he supported it, but he certainly was aware of it.

So he's now suggesting that this is a result of the Cullen Commission, yet legislation was passed in the House regarding that.

Why is he doing something that was already done?

Nous savons tous maintenant que l'ancien gouvernement PC a présenté une mesure législative pour lutter contre le blanchiment d'argent et la richesse inexplicée. J'ai retracé l'histoire de cette situation ci-dessus et j'ai partagé l'excellente mesure législative qui a été présentée il y a des années.

Et lorsque le projet de loi est passé en deuxième lecture – soit la semaine dernière, mercredi – mon collègue, l'honorable député de Steinbach (M. Goertzen), a également posé des questions à ce sujet. Le député de Steinbach a interjeté, et je cite : La commission Cullen a, en quelque sorte, recommandé des choses autour de la richesse inexplicée et du blanchiment d'argent. Et en fait, le gouvernement a présenté une législation spécifiquement autour de la richesse inexplicée. Et en fait – le député s'en souvient peut-être, parce que la Chambre a été saisie il y a quelques années – et je ne me souviens pas s'il a appuyé, mais il était certainement conscient.

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

Il suggère donc maintenant que c'est le résultat de la commission Cullen, mais une loi a été adoptée à la Chambre à ce sujet. Pourquoi fait-il quelque chose qui a déjà été fait ?

### **Translation**

*We all know by now that the former PC government introduced legislation to combat money laundering and unexplained wealth. I retraced the history of this legislation and shared the excellent legislation that was introduced years ago.*

*And when the bill went to second reading—which was last week, Wednesday—my colleague, the Honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), also asked about it. The member for Steinbach interjected, and I quote: The Cullen Commission sort of did recommend things around unexplained wealth and money laundering. And, in fact, the government brought forward legislation specifically around unexplained wealth. And, in fact, the member might remember, because it was before the House a couple of years ago, and I don't remember if he supported it, but he was certainly aware of it. So now he's suggesting that this is the result of the Cullen Commission, yet legislation was passed in the House regarding that. Why is he doing something that was already done?*

### **English**

The member of Steinbach then went on to say, and again, I quote: But I'll try again for him. There's already been before the court orders under The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act that deal with the unexplained wealth. If he wants the legislation to pass, if he wants the Legislature to pass legislation quickly, he needs to explain why this is different than the powers that already exist within the branch.

As folks sitting on this side of the House are very grateful to have an incredible array of experience and knowledge in all different fields, we on this side of the House do value any and all knowledge that is shared with us when we get the opportunity to work—or, with—or chat with someone that we can learn from.

We on this side of the House are incredibly grateful that we have the member for Steinbach and the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) to have conversations with and listen to when bills like Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, are brought forward.

Le député de Steinbach a ensuite ajouté, et encore une fois, je cite : Mais je vais réessayer pour lui. Il y a déjà eu, devant les cours, des ordonnances en vertu de la loi sur la confiscation des biens criminels qui traitent des richesses inexplicées. S'il veut que la Chambre adopte une loi rapidement, il doit expliquer pourquoi cela est différent des pouvoirs qui existent déjà au sein de cette branche.

Nous, les gens ici de ce côté-ci de la Chambre, sommes très reconnaissants d'avoir un inventaire incroyable d'expériences et de connaissances dans tous les domaines.

Nous, de ce côté de la maison, valorisons toutes les connaissances qui nous sont partagées lorsque nous avons l'occasion de travailler ou de discuter avec quelqu'un dont nous pouvons apprendre. Nous, de ce côté 'deci' de la Chambre, sommes incroyablement reconnaissants d'avoir le député de Steinbach et le député de Brandon West (M. Balcaen) avec qui discuter et écouter lorsque des projets de loi comme le Projet de loi 30, Loi sur les richesses inexplicées, sont présentés.

### **Translation**

*The member for Steinbach then added, and again, I quote: But I'll try again for him. There's already been before the courts orders under The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act that deal with the unexplained wealth. If he wants the Legislature to pass legislation quickly, he needs to explain why this is different than the powers that already exist within the branch.*

*We on this side of the House are very grateful to have an incredible array of experience and knowledge in all areas.*

*We on this side of the House value all the knowledge that is shared with us when we have the opportunity to work or chat with someone we can learn from. We on this side of the House are incredibly grateful to*

have the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) to discuss with and to listen to when bills like Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, are introduced.

### **English**

The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) served as the minister of Justice for some time, and in that role he sat down with countless individuals and organizations and community groups that have been heavily involved in dealing with all aspects of crime, those who work the front lines to stop criminals, those that investigate criminal activity and those who deal with criminals in the system, the rehabilitation of criminals and those who have fallen victim to certain types of crimes and criminals.

The member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), the shadow minister for Justice, as a former police chief, brings a wealth of experience to all of us in this Chamber, as he served our province for many years on the front lines of crime. The member for Brandon West is very familiar with the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, as he has stated, and has a great relationship with them and their investigations.

A question that was asked by the member for Brandon West last Wednesday during the second reading of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, was, and I quote: My question on this is reality. And so my question is: if we're increasing Criminal Property Forfeiture and the workload that they will be doing, obviously The Unexplained Wealth Act is something new, The Corporations Act is something new.

Why has the Justice Minister cut the funding to the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit? There are concerns with the lack of answers being provided by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and—the Minister of Justice.

Ma question à ce sujet est la réalité. Ma question est donc la suivante : si nous augmentons la confiscation des biens criminels et la charge de travail qu'ils vont accomplir, il est évident que la Loi sur les richesses inexplicées est quelque chose de nouveau. La Loi sur la société est quelque chose de nouveau. Pourquoi le ministre de la Justice a-t-il réduit le financement du système criminel—de 'l'unité' de confiscation des biens. Le manque de réponse fournie par le député de Concordia, ministre de la Justice, suscite des—  
inadequate.

### **Translation**

My question in this regard is reality. And my question is: if we are going to increase criminal property forfeiture and the workload that will be done; obviously, The Unexplained Wealth Act is something new. The Corporations Act is something new. Why did the Minister of Justice cut funding for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit? The lack of response from the member for Concordia—the Minister of Justice—is cause for—inadequate.

### **English**

The question the member for Steinbach had already indeed—had are indeed important to be able to determine what these amendments to The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act are changing. And as the member for Brandon West questioned and pointed out, funding has been cut to The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. If funds have been cut, I think it's completely warranted that the member who brought forward Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, let us know how less funding—with less funding they intent to support the efforts that the CPF unit has and will continue to do.

The Minister of Justice, when asked about the funding cut, did not speak to that, but instead stated, and I quote: Really, what well—be 'enable'—we'll be enabling them to do is to use more tools and to be more efficient in the work that they do.

\* (15:40)

It is of the utmost importance that we do give the tools, the training, the supports to our different law enforcement agencies to ensure they do have everything needed to efficiently and effectively do their jobs.

And I will say I am certainly waiting—or, wanting to support all bills that positively impact our justice and law enforcement areas in teams—bills that make our community safer and crack down on organized crime of all types.

The most important thing, though, is to ensure all information has been gathered, all appropriate consultations have been done, and that there is a future—full transparency on all new legislation before the House.

We really do need to know for Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, what tools are going to be used. Is there not a cost associated with this? Would there not have been a minimum training for these folks? And maybe, most importantly, who was

consulted in the creation and development of Bill 30, the unexplained wealth.

At this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Honourable Deputy Speaker—I'm not sure where to go with this one—I would just like to take a moment to thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk to this bill, and although I did—you know, struggled a little bit with my French, I appreciate you bearing with me because it's—practice will make perfect, and I really do appreciate the patience you had with me on this.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North):** After, again, eight years of serving the constituents, not only of Red River North, but also Gimli in 2016 through 2019, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we certainly look forward to getting up in this House every opportunity we have to again provide—they provide us the strength to continue to work for them, and we will continue to do that, certainly on this side of the House.

It's also a pleasure to step up today and talk about Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act. But before we get into some of the details, I just wanted to again thank the great constituents of Red River North for the opportunity to be here. And also I would like to also thank the members that spoke before me, Honourable Deputy Speaker. The member that just spoke, from Dawson Trail, obviously has some concerns and certainly brought forward some great points today that I'm also going to elaborate on too, as well.

Just to make sure that this important bill gets the attention that it rightly deserves, as we know this has been before this House on a number of occasions through past governments as well, including us, which I'll touch on—the former PC government—I'll touch on a little later in our discussion.

But I also wanted to thank the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) for speaking to this bill as well today and providing some, really, some local examples of why this is so important, particularly in Manitoba, and as we move forward with this bill, Bill 30.

And again, I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the member from Brandon West as well, and thank him for all the work that he's done as the chief of police in Brandon, and I know that he's spent the majority of his career working for the great folks of not only Brandon, but of Manitoba, so I thank him for that, and he's a wonderful addition to this great PC team.

Also, just before I get into some other points as well, I wanted to point out the four, and thank the four past ministers of Justice as well, for the record. We've had—when we were in government in 2016 through 2023, we had the—we had four great Justice ministers, and I want to put them on the record: the member from Tuxedo, in 2016; the member from Spruce Woods in 2018; the member from Morden-Winkler in 2021; and, again, the member from Steinbach in 2022 and before that as well, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

And the member from Steinbach, of course, had spoke so important issues about this bill and, obviously, he's had the ability to work in Justice as the minister, the Keeper of the Great Seal, and understand the importance of this bill and the bill that we brought forward, again, which I'm looking forward to speaking more about.

For the record, I wanted to just put a couple of other areas that Bill 30 talks about. And one of them is The Unexplained Wealth Act, of course also known as the Manitoba government Bill 30, is legislation that aims to address and combat unexplained wealth and money laundering. This act, again, focuses on identifying and investigating individuals who possess significant wealth that cannot be reasonably explained by their own income or legitimate sources. Now, certainly a good step forward to ensure that happens.

But I just want to remind the House, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that the former PC government did move towards that. And this sounds like a bit of an amendment to it, but it's very similar, and I'll just point out the former PC government took steps to combat money laundering and was among the leaders in the country taking action against organized crime. Again, that was back in 2021, so I'm pleased that the new minister has adopted that in Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act.

Also, the main objective of The Unexplained Wealth Act is to provide authorities with the necessary tools and powers to seize and forfeit assets that are suspected to be derived from criminal activities or unexplained wealth. This act empowers law enforcement agencies and financial intelligence units to investigate and take action against individuals who are suspected of acquiring wealth through illegal means.

Again, another good step in Bill 30—and I'll just remind the House again and put on the record—under the former PC government, in 2021, the government—PC government—passed legislative changes that strengthened the ability for Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that investigators

believed to be illegally acquired and could be subjected to money laundering.

So there is definitely, Honourable Deputy Speaker, a theme here. And, again, I'm pleased that the current minister has adopted many of the areas that our government put in place with respect to ensuring that The Unexplained Wealth Act moves forward in a non-partisan way and to protect Manitobans, of course.

Another area under The Unexplained Wealth Act, government Bill 30: under this act, authorities can obtain court orders to freeze and seize assets suspected to be linked to criminal activities. The act provides a framework for conducting thorough investigations into the source of wealth, including the power to compel individuals to provide information and documentation regarding their financial affairs.

So great. Wonderful again. Glad the minister was listening and paying attention when he was in opposition and adopting our former PC government's initiatives when it came to this particular bill. And in 2022, the PCs expanded staffing capacity with the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit, or CPF, to combat money laundering. They hired two investigators and a financial analysis—an analyst to target organized crime.

I'm going to talk a little bit about that particular statement a little later on in my address, Honourable Deputy Speaker, because there is some concern about the two investigators we hired back in 2021. And I believe there's some information that we're going to put on the book here pretty soon that'll tell you that this NDP government, particularly this minister, has decided that hiring two investigators to work and target organized crime are not necessary under 2024 budget of the NDP. So we're looking forward to getting some of those—that information on the books as well.

The Unexplained Wealth Act also establishes a reporting system for financial institutions and professionals, requiring them to report any suspicious transactions or activities that may be indicative of money laundering or unexplained wealth, provisions that aim to enhance the detection and prevention of illicit financial flows—flows and promote greater transparency in the financial sector.

Again, a good opportunity there to compare what we did as the PC government as well. And back in 2021-22, under then the leadership of the minister at the time, the member from Steinbach, the PC government distributed millions of dollars from the crime

property forfeiture fund to various initiatives and agencies.

\* (15:50)

And Honourable Deputy Speaker, one of those agencies included dollars to the Bear Clan Patrol, law enforcement agencies, community safety groups, victims and services organizations and services, and rural charities.

Now, we know—and I had, as the minister at that time in municipal relations—I had the opportunity of meeting the then-executive director, James Favel. And we had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Favel, the director, in my office back in 2017. And the work that the Bear Clan were doing, and really, the work that James did to really reinvigorate this Bear Clan, this group of volunteers coming forward to help with local crime in Winnipeg in particular and then, of course, expanding that outreach across the province, too, as well. We know that the work that he did and the money that we were able to partner with helped support folks in community, helped support the Bear Clan and Mr. Favel's work, along with the board of directors, of course, we had the opportunity to meet as well

And they certainly were great partners, and we were glad to be able to partner with them for that wonderful initiative, because, quite frankly, they are literally the front lines. They are the boots on the ground, and they have connection to folks out there that need help, need support. And certainly our government put in place a number of opportunities to ensure that those folks, once they were met by the Bear Clan, would get the support and services that they required to ensure that we could set them on the right track. Not us, but the Bear Clan and the folks at—the front-line workers that could do that.

We just simply help enable the process, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and then we—government should just move out of the way and let the professionals handle it so that the folks that need the help the most will get the help that they require. So very important as we move forward.

Additionally, the act provides a protection for whistleblowers who come forward with information regarding unexplained wealth or money laundering activities. It includes provisions to safeguard the identity and the confidentiality of individuals who report such information, encouraging more people to co-operate with authorities and assist in combatting financial crimes.

Take you back on a little bit of a journey, back in 2012, Honourable Deputy Speaker—actually, no, it was before that. It was 2009. I remember it now like it was yesterday. And we own a trucking company in Winnipeg and in Brandon; we have a couple of offices and a compound, and we actually had a fenced compound for security reason. We were situated in the Weston industrial park. Most people know that area as the old—near the old dump site, the old Garbage Hill, they call it.

Well, we had a wonderful office and warehouse there, down on Spruce Street in the Weston area. And we put in a six-foot chain-link fence. And the reason why we did that is because we had some minor break-ins and some issues with crime activity at the time. So we did put in the—we made the investments to not only protect, you know, our equipment, but our staff and the surrounding areas.

And we came into the office on August 30th of 2009 and noticed that the gates were wide open, and we suspected we had a problem, Honourable Deputy Speaker. And so what we found out during the process of doing the yard walk was that every single truck was damaged. They actually went in and they poked every tire, they flattened them all, and that's six tires per straight truck. That's a lot of rubber going flat, let me tell you.

And then they also—also what they did was to put us out of commission for that day, and I'll tell you the story, it took almost two weeks to get back up and running in full, getting all those—all 20 trucks fixed—they actually punctured the radiators. They had a plan. They had a plan.

But they also stole our equipment, and that's the key, and that's where I'm going with this. They stole our—all our equipment that—on all our trucks and likely used it to help benefit their crime initiative.

So we were devastated. We obviously made a claim through MPI. We made a police report and, in the long run, we ended up, of course, being a victim of tens of thousands of dollars in damages. As a small business owner, that was a very difficult time for us, my wife and I, as the owners—principal owners of the company, and our team of management team and all our staff, our front-line workers, all 150 of them at that time. So it was very difficult.

But we—you know what, we had great partners as—like James Favel in Bear Clan. We had great partners in industry that were able to come out and bring rental units to us, because we had a full slate of moves. It

was month end, it was the busiest time of the year for a moving company in Winnipeg and in Manitoba and across the nation, actually, because we were an international company as well. And they came together, and we were able to get the schedule done in a couple days, and I'll tell you, it was a real true testament of Manitobans and Winnipeggers working together for the betterment of all Manitobans.

So, building on that, we actually had to put in a new system, because MPI suggested that we purchase a large security system. So we did; we made those investments at the time and to the tune of about \$30,000 to ensure that we had the proper camera coverage, motion detectors, you know, failing short—falling short of actually putting dogs in the kennel; we decided that that wasn't the way to go. We wanted to make sure that we're getting this on film, and we can have it if we ever get tackled again.

So those were some tough times for us, but we can see that the crime certainly, at that time—you know, we're talking a number of years ago—was still happening and continues, as we know, today.

Now, I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) made an announcement up to \$300 for security doorbells, et cetera, and cameras for up to 1,700 homes, based on the just over \$500,000 investment. Well, that's certainly a good start, but certainly, it's really, really just like a needle in a haystack when it comes to if we're going to try to support Manitobans, Winnipeggers, business owners with this kind of initiative, we really need to take a deeper dive to ensure that we're covering off these areas so that Manitobans are protected.

Certainly, it's nice to see that investment, but, you know, at—on first-hand experience of what it costs to actually, unfortunately, have to protect your home or your business or your family or your staff, you're—you know, you're talking thousands of dollars investment in order to accommodate that and to ensure that the folks that are doing the crime not only do the time, but they get caught, quite frankly. And cameras are great for that. And we were certainly happy to have them, because we did have another incident, but they were able to arrest two folks that were—that broke into our compound. So it was definitely a good investment for us as we move forward.

Some of the—again, on—back to the—Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, some of the areas that I just wanted to touch on were The Unexplained Wealth Act is a significant step forward, strengthening the anti-money laundering framework in Manitoba. Well, it—

Honourable Deputy Speaker, it aligns with the international efforts to combat money laundering and illicit financial flows, ensuring that the Province remains 'viligant' in preventing the inflow of illicit funds and preserving the integrity of its financial system.

Well that, again, the former PC government had that in place to ensure that these funds were tracked, obviously, and made sure that they were—when they were caught, that those funds were put to good use. Like supporting, as we talked about earlier, the Bear Clan Patrol, victim services organizations and services and rural charities.

We can't forget about rural Manitoba. There's not only crime in Winnipeg, but there's crime outside the Perimeter. And sometimes, well, you know, I know this side of the House understands rural, but sometimes members opposite forget that there is life outside of the Perimeter Highway. So let me just remind them that crime does happen out there, and a lot of it, actually, is drug related, you know.

There's incidents of drugs—people—grow ops in rural Manitoba, for instance, Honourable Deputy Speaker, where they're not found. But they—guess what? They get—they finally get found and people—the RCMP and all—police move in and they actually, they stop it in rural Manitoba. Guess what? They can actually stop crime from happening in rural Manitoba. Yes, and certainly it's a big deal.

\* (16:00)

So I can tell you that about six years ago, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I was—my wife and I were in our house in the Winnipeg Beach area, and it was 3:30 in the morning, it was very early; of course, we were asleep, in bed. And we heard these awful noises. We weren't sure exactly what they were, so I got up to investigate. And, as a matter of fact, this incident—and I'll talk a little bit more about it—is actually on the record here—the Legislature, with police services and security services.

We had a couple of folks driving a stolen vehicle. And we have a little bit of acreage; we have about an acre and a half in Winnipeg Beach at the time. And what they did was they drove into our yard and tore up our yard. They smashed through our garage. They stole some property from us from our garage. And I did what most Winnipeggers and Manitobans would do, I went out to see what was happening and, fortunately—they tried to run me over; I got out of the way, fortunately. And I have five grandkids, and I'm glad I'm here today, because it was a very scary

moment for not only me, but for my wife as well and our two girls, at the time.

So, certainly, we've had those incidents happen, and I think almost everybody in this Chamber and a lot of Manitobans have had some kind of a run-in—not a run-in, but a—certainly, a crime incident happen, whether it be on a large scale or a small scale. So, again, we need to pay special attention to that as well.

Overall—again, back to the bill—overall, The Unexplained Wealth Act serves as a crucial tool for Manitoba government to identify and target individuals who possess unexplained wealth derived from criminal activities. Well, we know that. And we did that, and that's what we brought forward back in '21-22 under the then-minister of Justice, the member from Steinbach. And that hard work was carried on by our colleagues as well.

By—again, Bill 30—by implementing this legislation, the government aims to protect the economy, deter money laundering and promote transparency and financial transactions. Well, that's great; don't disagree with that, because that was in the former bill, bill 58, that we introduced back in 2021. So, you know, I understand that, you know, a new government comes in, they want to put their own stamp on legislation.

Well, again, the NDP government is—has been doing that. There's a number of incidents and a number of areas where they've simply adopted not only our legislation, but our ideas, our—whether it be in Justice, whether it be in Finance, whether it be at the Crown corporations, you know, whether it be in Economic Development—oh, wait, no. They didn't adopt anything Economic Development. They fired the board.

**An Honourable Member:** Cut them.

**Mr. Wharton:** That's right.

So, certainly, we know that they're all about cuts, and that gives me a great opportunity to talk more about some of the areas that are a real concern to Manitobans, for sure.

And bill—in Budget 2024, we know that the Justice cuts are large, to say the least. They pretty much went through there with shears and literally cut it all down. Community Corrections, Honourable Deputy Speaker, gone. Court Operations, gone. Sheriffs Services, now, this is an interesting one, because I remember the minister at the time, in opposition, the critic, was saying—the member from Concordia—and he would say, we need to hire more Sheriffs Services; we got to get more 'sheriffses.'



Well, you know what? We did. It's exactly what we did. And he would stand up and howl at us and say, yes, now you've got to hire more 'sheriffses'. And guess what? We did. He claims to be a listening government. Well, we listened too. And we definitely listened to Manitobans, and they said, we need more support. We need to make sure that these 'sheriffses' are supported when they're running criminals from Stony Mountain or Headingley or the Youth Centre, you know, make sure that they've got the right resources to protect them and in this case, you know, even ensure that the accused is being protected as well.

So, unfortunately, the new minister has cut that service as well.

Family Resolution Service, cut. Victim Services, now, this one really, really is strange. *[interjection]* Yes, Victim Services.

**An Honourable Member:** Come on, no, don't—say they didn't.

**Mr. Wharton:** You know, I—they did. They did. Yes. Yes. The member—no, they cut that. Yes. So, you know, provincial—not only Victim Services, but also provincial policing. Hello? Provincial policing? My gosh, what the heck? Law Enforcement Review Agency. Law Enforcement Review Agency; can you believe what they did with that? What did they do with it? They cut it. They cut it. It's gone. Yes.

The Manitoba Police Commission, oh boy—

**An Honourable Member:** Oh, no.

**Mr. Wharton:** I know. I can tell that my colleague, the member from Brandon West, is fuming right now, looking over at—*[interjection]* He would be, because when he hears that the Manitoba Police Commission, law enforcement agencies, cut, cut, oh boy. Let me tell you, he's not happy about that.

And again, the—we've got such a great class of 2023. I just, you know, wonderful, wonderful, great colleagues, and I'll tell you, they're all doing a wonderful job, so thank you. Thank you for the work that you do every day to keep this government in check, absolutely.

Another—here's another good one. And Manitobans, you know what, this isn't funny. This is a reality. This is what they've done. They've cut, cut, cut. And here's another one. The Independent Investigation Unit. Guess what? Cut.

**An Honourable Member:** IIU's been cut?

**Mr. Wharton:** Yes, gone. Can't believe it. The IIU has been cut. Crime prevention branch. Crime prevention branch Well, here we are talking about Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, and what does the new minister do? He cuts it. He cuts it. It's gone. The crime prevention branch. Gone. What kind of support—or, what—better yet, Bill 30 needs the resources—they're trying to provide the tools, but they're cutting the labour. I don't understand that.

I mean, I'm pretty sure that that's going to have a detrimental effect on Justice, and I know the minister is going to hear more about that, I'm sure, in the coming days, weeks and months.

Manitoba intelligence services. That's correct. Cut. Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** Tell us it isn't.

**Mr. Wharton:** No, I'm telling you. You know, the minister would know. He's—was sitting around the Cabinet table when they were talking about what they were going to cut. And they're cutting, they're cutting it all, and he had an opportunity to advocate for Manitobans and protect Manitobans on a go forward and he chose not to protect Manitobans. He's made many, many cuts.

So, Honourable Deputy Speaker, again, bill 58, the former PC government's bill, has, and has dealt with, under four wonderful colleagues, ministers, during our tenure in government, has dealt with these issues. I understand that this was a promise that the NDP made during the campaign. However, again, it's proof that every bill and every part of every bill, that the NDP have introduced are bills that this side of the House worked on and put forward.

So Honourable Deputy Speaker, we know there's a theme here. We know that there's no—there's nothing new over there, and we certainly are here, and thankful to be here on behalf of Manitobans again to ensure that we keep the NDP government, and in this case the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), keeper of the seal—

**An Honourable Member:** Keeper of the Great Seal. Where's he hiding it?

**Mr. Wharton:** It's somewhere. I'm sure it is. It's next to the money tree in the basement.

So we want to make sure that this bill, we support the initiative, absolutely, Honourable Deputy Speaker, because we helped write it; based on the input from everyday Manitobans, whether you be in the south, east, north or west of Winnipeg, whether you be outside the Perimeter, in the Interlake, in the Parklands,

in southern Manitoba. Each and every Manitoban we reached out to, to help formulate this bill and also introduce some past bill 58 that we had in the Legislature.

\* (16:10)

That's what the PC government did at the time; that's what this team does on a regular basis. We continue to engage Manitobans where it matters most. And again, that's safety—public safety, that's affordability, that's health care, that's education, that's social services, and every other area that Manitobans care about. It's exactly why it is such a great honour to be here in this House every single day with—with—the class of 2023 newly elected, and welcome back to newly elected officials from NDP.

And I can tell you that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is not a bad guy—he's not a bad guy, sometimes a little off base—but I can tell you—I can tell you—that I've talked to the member from Justice. He can, and he will, Honourable Deputy Speaker, listen to Manitobans if, and only if—and this is a big if for the minister, yes—if he listens to each and every Manitoban as he goes out and tries to keep his seat in Concordia in 2027.

I thank you for the opportunity.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Good afternoon, Honourable Speaker. I would like to start by thanking the member opposite, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Keeper of the Great Seal of the Province of Manitoba, for bringing this forward.

Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, will enhance law enforcement so our police officers and RCMP officers and criminal—the criminal property forfeit office and regulatory enforcement agency tools will have tools and will—that will—sorry, I'm just, like, stuttering now—that will help build strong cases against assets used in organized crime, drug trafficking and money laundering, using these unexplained wealth orders.

Unexplained wealth. There are many different ways that people can see that someone has money or wealth that they did not have before. It draws attention to the person when they have not—when they have a lot of money, of objects such as houses, cars, different things that really draw attention to someone and their lifestyle. For example, and it's in the—it can be in the simplest basic form of drawing attention to yourself or others around you so that people think and wonder where you got that money or wealth.

It can be as simple as a situation that happened to my son when he was six. Afternoon of playing with his friends, they all went home to their houses, and I got a call from one of the mothers, saying that her and her child needed to come back and talk to us.

Well, the mother of the child down the street noticed her son had a pocketful of money. [*interjection*] Yes, he was six. This drew attention to the situation of this child. Why would a child have unexplained wealth in his pocket, which is a lot of the situation that happens to many people who have things that they shouldn't have and draws attention.

So as they came over, she asked the—her child where he had got the money, knowing that he, himself, had not—have this money in his possession on his own. He then proceeded to say that his friend, Taylor, who was my six-year-old son, down the street, gave it to him.

**An Honourable Member:** Wow.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Yes.

The mother then insisted that the child bring the money back, which is something we should do, which is what we are trying to do with unexplained wealth.

In our discussion, we realized that Taylor had broken his piggy bank open and had decided he wanted to share his money with all of his friends. It was very sweet. But this, in the end, ended up drawing attention to Taylor and to his friend because the friend had unexplained money and wealth in his pocket, drawing attention to those around him and his friend but did not originally have the money.

This is an innocent, sweet gesture on a child's part. This is not the stereotypical situation that happens with unexplained wealth many—in many situations. And I would like to say, most situations happen because of illegal transactions or crime of some kind.

Let's take a look and see how this happens to loved ones, to our friends, in different ways, and to many that are victims and have the organized crime benefits from unexplained wealth in our province and in our country.

What is unexplained wealth? Let's talk about what it is and how people are able to illegally acquire wealth and different ways that we can combat that illegal activity. Under an unexplained wealth order, a government seeks a court order to require a person to explain how they lawfully acquired properties suspected of being linked to crime.

The property is then usually frozen or seized. In this case, with my son and his six-year-old friends, the wealth was—they drew attention to this money and the parents saw this and said, this isn't right. We need to return the money to where it goes. This is just an example, in a simple form, of what we need to do to help our law enforcement teams and inspectors and RCMP, who are in—are investigating different crimes.

The property is then usually frozen or seized from the person with the unexplained wealth. If the person fails to comply with the order, the property may be subject to civil forfeiture proceedings. In using the order, the jurisdiction need not convince anyone of a crime connected to the property or item of wealth.

However, information gathered under the order can be used in a criminal proceeding. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and Ireland already have unexplained wealth laws, as well as many places—or, provinces in Manitoba as well. In a notable case, the UK used an unexplained wealth order to target the UK—whatever—property of a wife of a jailed banker. The UK Supreme Court turned down the wife's final appeal in December.

There's many cases across Manitoba, Canada and the world of situations where people have been taken advantage of and they have possessions and wealth from others that they have taken. Unexplained wealth orders became a tool after changes to the civil forfeiture act last year. These orders compel individuals suspected of crimes to explain how they acquired their wealth and allow for confiscation of property without proving criminality by reversing the burden of proof.

Transitional organized crime is estimated to generate \$870 billion in a year, more than six times the amount of official development assistance and close to 7 per cent of the world's exports of merchandise. That's a huge number.

\* (16:20)

Every year, countless lives are lost as a result of organized crime, drug-related health problems and violence. Firearms deaths and the unscrupulous methods and motives of human traffickers and immigrant smugglers are all part of this organized crime.

These are all organizations that benefit from illegal crime at the cost of many people around us. Lives are taken. For example, close to where I live, there was—there's an area where a lot of people come in back and forth over the United States; then there's lots of human smuggling happening there. And two years ago, a family was walking across the border and

they didn't make it all the way and they froze, just close to where I live, close to the border. It's very devastating, and money was paid by that family to smugglers.

Wealth—they retained the wealth, and this family didn't end up—didn't make it through, and it's devastating.

So this is a very important conversation to have. It's very important legislation to continue to work on and we need to continue to make it better so that those situations don't happen to people, that it's hard for people to take people's wealth and use it in an illegal way like that.

Organized crime is not stagnant, but it is an ever-changing industry adapting to markets and creating new forms of crime. In short, it is an illicit business that transcends cultural, social, linguistic and geographical boundaries, and one that knows no boundaries or rules.

There are many activities that can be characterized as transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, smuggling of migrants, human trafficking, money laundering, trafficking in firearms, counterfeit goods, wildlife and cultural property and even some aspects of cybercrime.

It's devastating to read the newspapers and you see all these stories about people having—seniors specifically—that are getting—that are targets of crime, that they're getting talked about and they're getting convinced that they need to send money to a child that they have that's not doing well or in jail. And meanwhile, it's just somebody trying to take all the money from the senior. And many seniors fall victim to that crime, and those are the things that we need to make sure we brought—draw attention to.

The main ways that organized crime seize the wealth—the legal wealth—corruption and bribery is one of the ways; counterfeiting and piracy, illicit drug trafficking, just to name a few more. Mortgage fraud, third party money laundering, tobacco smuggling and trafficking, and that happens within our—or from province to province across the—from province to province.

Currency counterfeiting, human smuggling, as I mentioned earlier, human trafficking—devastating effects on our communities and our children and our families.

Identity crime is another one that hits a lot of people that you don't hear about very often, but people stealing your credit card information and then taking your money. Illegal gambling, payment card fraud. So that's one I've experienced personally, one of them. I

went on a trip to Montreal and I was in a shop buying something at a store, and I put my credit card into the machine, and as I—I thought, oh, this is strange; I had to push the card in pretty far.

Well, I was in my—on a trip, and within 24 hours my bank account had been seized and closed, and I was stranded because I had no access to my money because they emptied my bank account out that same day. And it happens all the time to people.

Pollution crime is another one. Robbery and theft, which is probably one of the ones that we see the most in our communities. Firearms smuggling and trafficking. Extortion; you hear a lot about the cyber extortion of these children online, and they're making kids, you know, they're—kids are getting—falling into a trap and becoming victims online, and these—they're using extortion in many cases for people online.

Loan sharking is another way that happens. We've all heard stories about that where, you know, you find somebody who's really in trouble and needs some extra help, and then you borrow—somebody comes along and borrows them money at incredibly high rates, which isn't—which is illegal.

So those—some of the things that happen to us and to our families and our loved ones. Crime is something that we're all—there's no respect to our persons when it comes to crime. Often, you're just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and things happen to you.

So I want to say thank you to the police officers and the RCMP, the different, you know, parent patrols that walk around neighbourhoods, to the people who are riding the bus and keeping the bus safe as the people are commuting back and forth to work. Everybody that keeps us safe, thank you so much for what you do to—for us. *[interjection]* Yes, yes. Thank you.

So thank you for—thank you to first responders and for—to the firefighters. They work hard for us. So I just want to acknowledge that we are able to do our—be, you know—future, we can look at our future, because we know we'll be safe and we can continue on on our lifetime—of our—of what we do in our life.

I just want to talk about a few of these specific things that are used for crime, what they use, so that we can educate each other and know the things that are happening, and what our fire—what our first responders, what our police officers and our RCMP officers are dealing with. And that's why it's so important for us to have legislation that we can continually

seize different things that are illegal, seize that car that you know is worth way more than what that person can afford, and that are—things that are not explained.

We need to know how they're doing these things and how they're getting these—what they're doing to get these funds and buy these items that we know are being purchased and used. So, for example, currency counterfeiting. Large-scale currency counterfeiting is predominantly undertaken by organized crime groups that conduct current—that conduct currency counterfeiting alongside other profit-oriented criminal activities.

The national risk assessment states that these actors exhibit a high level of sophistication and capability. They also appear to have the network and the infrastructure in place to successfully launder the cash proceeds arising from such activities. How do you think they bought that house? Well, they probably just printed money.

Human smuggling. The national risk assessment indicates that Canada is a target for increasingly sophisticated global human smuggling networks. We need to be aware of that. We need to be on guard for that, for our country and for our province. Such activities—it continues—is believed to be carried out by a small number of well-established organized crime groups that have developed the sophistication and capability to smuggle humans across multiple borders, which is something that I talked about earlier.

We need to stop that from happening. Human smuggling requires international connections along with a high degree of organization and planning. The organized crime groups engaged in this type of criminality are believed to engage in sophisticated money-laundering activities.

\* (16:30)

Tobacco smuggling and trafficking. The national risk—risk—risk assessment states that organized crime groups have lot—have high levels of involvement in the smuggling and trafficking of illicit tobacco products such as counterfeit cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco imported illegally by Canadian-based manufacturers. It also indicates that the organized crime groups involved in that trade have the sophisticated capability to launder and—the significant cash proceeds generated from the sale of those products.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

Mortgage fraud. This is something that I just—I've learned about. Yes, mortgage fraud and many of these things that you don't hear about that are happening

around us. It could be the person down the street because it doesn't take much for them to be able to do things like this and nobody really sees it. But when you see them with all of this extra wealth, it draws attention.

So mortgage fraud includes a wide range of deceptive practices relating to the provision of mortgage financing. It is—it—in—at its simplest, it includes false and misleading statements made by a borrower on a mortgage application.

However, a large number of sophisticated schemes are used to defraud lending institutions and property owners, such as—I read an article recently that a home in Toronto had been—a couple had been gone on vacation for several months and came back to find their house had been sold. Yes, it had been sold on them and it was done [*inaudible*] and they actually did that. Yes. So there is—it's very sophisticated and the people are doing that—organized crime is doing that to people.

The national risk assessment states that organized crime groups conduct the vast majority of mortgage fraud activity in Canada and Manitoba and are believed to rely on the assistance of professionals such as a real estate agent, mortgage brokers, appraisers and lawyers. Lawyers don't even know that this is an illegal situation happening until somebody comes along and says, hey, that—like, this is my house. People will walk into a lawyer's office with paperwork and everything and try—and think they're actually buying the house from this other—from the illegal crime—or crime syndicate. Some estimates suggest that the total amount lost to mortgage fraud annually is in the hundreds of millions and could be as high as \$500 million. There's a lot of money right there that is very obvious that it's unexplained wealth.

Third-party money laundering. National risk assessment states that large-scale money-laundering operations, including those connected to transnational organized crime groups, frequently involve third-party money launderers, defined as individuals or groups who would not—were not involved in the actual offence. Examples include professional money launderers, nominee owners and money mules. Professional money launderers specialize in laundering large sums of money and generally offer their services to criminals for a fee. They are often the masterminds behind sophisticated money-laundering schemes and are frequently used by the most powerful organized crime groups to launder domestic- and foreign-generated proceeds. Nominees and money mules are less of a

threat but are nonetheless important because they may be critical in carrying out money-laundering schemes both large and small.

Let's talk about payment card fraud because that's something that hits most people. The national risk assessment notes that credit card fraud increased significantly from 2010 to 2015, while debit card fraud decreased over that period. Like many other profit-oriented criminal activities, organized crime groups are heavily involved in payment card fraud, which includes card thefts, fraudulent applications, fake deposits, skimming. Skimming is what happened to me when I went on my trip, when I put my card into the machine, they actually said my card got skimmed. So that's what happens when you—and that—they got some money. That unexplained wealth went into somebody's bank account that was mine.

I'm sorry, I lost my spot here. Skimming and card-not-present fraud. These groups are sophisticated and have specialized technical knowledge that allow them to carry out this type of fraud. They also exhibit very high levels of sophistication and capability in laundering the proceeds of this activity.

In 2020, report from the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada indicates that financial institutions reimbursed approximately \$862 million to Canadian credit card customers in 2018. That's a lot of money that was stolen. However, it's unclear how much of that total is attributed to organized criminal activity, as opposed to opportunistic use of credit cards by criminal—'crimily' inclined individuals.

Thank goodness, when my car was—card was skimmed, I did get the—my bank did have insurance on my account, so I did get the money back. But it still puts people out, and it makes you—it could—like, for—in my case, I was stranded in Montreal for a couple days without any money. So it does affect you. And that money is somebody's. [*interjection*] Yes.

So, pollution crime is generally understood as unlawful activity that harms the environment. Examples of such activity include the improper disposal of hazardous materials and the important—importation of counterfeit products that do not meet Canada's environmental standards.

Robbery and theft. Robbery and theft is a huge part of what we experience in Manitoba. While small-scale thieves and robbery—thefts and robberies carry out—carried out by opportunistic criminals and petty thieves do not raise any significant money-laundering

concerns, it is an important—it is important to recognize that organized crime groups are heavily involved in large-scale motor vehicle, heavy equipment and cargo theft. The most sophisticated and capable threat actors in this area have well-established auto theft networks, and are used to supply foreign markets with stolen Canadian vehicles.

That's why you hear, often, people saying you shouldn't buy that kind of vehicle, because that one tends to get targeted for theft the most. The national risk assessment indicates that these organized crime groups are believed to use a range of trade-based fraud and money-laundering techniques to disguise the illicit origin of the automobiles to move the illicit proceeds back to Canada.

Firearms smuggling and trafficking. Firearms smuggling and trafficking has been assessed as having a medium money-laundering risk in Canada. The national risk assessment states that very few organized crime groups are involved in trafficking or smuggling firearms in this country for the purpose of generating illicit profits. Instead, these groups use firearms to strengthen their position within the criminal markets. So they use them to—as tools to go and steal other things.

Extortion. This is something that's very devastating. The national risk assessment indicates that organized crime groups often use extortion in furtherance of other crimes such as drug trafficking, illegal gambling, the human trafficking. For example, there is evidence of extortion being used as a tool to obtain money and property, control the distribution of illicit drugs, force the payment of illegal gambling debts and gain access to ports of entry. It also states that the organized crime groups operating in this space vary in their level of sophistication and capability.

Let's talk about—a little bit more about what we do when we see somebody with unexplained wealth.

\* (16:40)

So in our world and our scope of Manitoba, when you see parents that don't have jobs with expensive cars or a really beautiful big house, with three or four cars coming and going all the time, it draws attention to that family. Or—and often, they look like they're, you know, innocent people just hanging out and living life, but there's a lot of attention. So I encourage everybody to pay attention to what goes on around you.

Like I said, there's—crime has no respect to our persons. You don't—it doesn't matter who you are or where you live, there's something that, you know, we

need to keep safe, we need to protect ourselves. We need to continue to work towards making sure that we are observant of what's happening around us. We need to pay attention to situations and hopefully, we're wrong when we draw attention to somebody.

Hopefully, it's the same thing as my son Taylor, that he, you know, he was just innocently giving money to somebody and—at six years old. Yes, he was, you know, this child did have the unexplained wealth, but you know, the parent noticed and brought it back. And it was an innocent good thing.

But when we do look at what happens around us, just pay attention, and let's just try to believe the best in everybody. But I do appreciate this legislation being brought forward. And I just want to just thank again the minister across the aisle, who I believe was always going to—*[interjection]*

I was going to say, who I believe will always take the high road and do the right thing always by every Manitoban, whether they live rurally or in the city. I appreciate that and I appreciate that you will always pay attention to my constituents as well.

Thank you so much.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I, too, have some comments to make about this bill and I wouldn't want to miss my chance to speak about this important piece of legislation, so thank you for the opportunity.

First, I think I'll just cover off some of what the bill does. I think it's important that we get that on the record. I'm not sure if anybody's done that yet, so I just want to make sure that I do.

With this legislation, the court may make an order that requires a person to provide information about how they acquired 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. Makes sense.

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. That's interesting.

So under this plan, the court is to presume unless the contrary is proven that cash is proceeds of unlawful activity, if it mailed or shipped with no information or false information about the sender. And that makes

sense, because who mails cash? That's a terrible idea. Don't mail cash.

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. Okay, I can get onboard with that.

The legislation makes several other amendments. There are some minor and administrative changes made to the act, for example, crypto assets such as cryptocurrency are added to the definition of property. I'm not going to pretend to know anything about crypto but that sounds like a good idea.

The maximum value of property that can be the subject of administrative forfeiture proceedings is increased from \$75,000 to \$125,000. Inflation. Yes. The maximum length of interim orders under the act is extended from 30 days to 60 days, and notice of administrative forfeiture proceedings must be published on a government website instead of in a newspaper. I don't know how the local media feel about that, but that seems in keeping with the times.

And this legislation also includes amendments to The Corporations Act. Now, most privately held corporations will be required to disclose information about any person who has significant control over the corporation to police and certain government officials for purposes set out in the regulations. That's fairly broad, but I'm sure the intent is good.

So the intent of this bill is to give 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, and the mechanism by which it proposes to do that is using unexplained wealth orders.

So it's important to note that forfeitures don't actually rely on criminal prosecutions. They don't create findings of guilt or innocence and are technically initiatives against the property, not the person. And this was all a learning experience for me, too. You know, I'm not the Justice critic; I'm the Health critic. So I learned a lot in researching this bill and preparing for my comments today—*[interjection]*—thank you, thank you.

I learned that this is actually a civil court process through which government may apply to confiscate property for proceeds of unlawful activity and the property used in committing crimes, property that is considered an instrument of unlawful activity. Now,

I did know this: the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit has been active in Manitoba for 16 years. Yes, it's been around for a while.

These assets are held in the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund and are allocated to initiatives that prevent crime, promote safer communities, support victims of crime and purchase specialized equipment for law enforcement agencies. That's all great, and I have some great examples of that that I'm going to talk about in a little bit. Yes, you can look forward to that.

I also learned that from 2009 to 2021, the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit in Manitoba seized over \$22 million in assets and disbursed approximately \$16 million of that in grants. Under the former PC government, this included distributing money to various initiatives, including supporting Bear Clan Patrol patrols, combatting cybercrime, reducing catalytic converter theft—now, that is a scourge—providing Internet in northern areas for court appearances. These are all worthy causes.

And in 2022, the PC government made changes that included preliminary preservation orders and preliminary disclosure orders. What are those, you may ask? I certainly did. I learned the former could prevent a person from disposing of their property before a statement of claim is filed against them in court. So we're staying one step ahead of criminals, which is good. And the latter could require someone to answer questions under oath about the source of their property before forfeiture proceedings have even been initiated. Got to stay one step ahead of these guys.

I think most of us in the Chamber have probably experienced crime at some point; property crime, certainly. I remember once in my early days of home ownership, I left my garage door open one night. That's a mistake you only make once.

I was living in St. James at the time. Now the current member for St. James (MLA Sala) was not my MLA at that time. We were both much younger then. I think the MLA for the area at the time was Bonnie Korzeniowski, may she rest in peace. And I left the garage door open, much to my husband's chagrin, and many of our tools were stolen because they were the only real thing of value in that garage. There was an old, rusty Honda Civic; nobody wanted that. There were some gardening tools, not very useful.

\* (16:50)

But what they did take, and this I remember, was a mitre saw. It was brand new, in-the-box, so—

*[interjection]*—I think it was a gift to my husband. But because it was new and it was in the box, we hadn't yet made a note of the serial number or anything, and I worried about that. So we were scouring Kijiji that night, looking for our tools because, of course, whoever stole them was going to sell them, and they'd find themselves with some ill-gotten gains of crime.

And we reported the crime to police because it's really important, you know, and I encourage—I encourage my constituents to do this all the time, that even if it's not what you might think is a serious crime or you think the chances of, you know, the police catching the perpetrator are low, you still have to report the crime. It's really important for the local police service to know what's going on and where it's happening so they can establish trends and work to combat them.

So, anyway, we reported the crime. Never got our tools back. It was too bad. I hope that those criminals were eventually caught in relation to some other crime.

And, you know, my colleague, the member from Morden-Winkler, talked about credit card fraud. I'm sure that most of us have had, at some point, and there's nothing quite like the sinking feeling you get when you check your credit card statement or your bank statement and you see a slew of transactions on there that you know you didn't make, and you've got to make that awkward phone call to the bank and explain that you've been a victim of fraud.

And you know the one time that that's happened to me, my bank was excellent about it. I was able to quickly establish that no, I wasn't—it's funny; my colleague mentioned Montreal. The fraud that occurred with me is there was a bunch of charges on my card from the Bell Centre in Montreal, and I have never set foot in the Bell Centre. And any victim of crime would want to see the proceeds of that crime taken from criminals and instead go to support, perhaps, the victims.

And, certainly, we don't want to see the proceeds of that crime going into the hands of criminals to further their criminal activity and help them build their criminal empire.

And so if that money's not going to go to victims, there are other great uses for the seized proceeds of crime. Those funds can be used to assist law enforcement or other agencies with tools, with programming, with other programs that they may want specific to their community that directly impact and improve public safety.

You know, my colleague, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) pointed out several examples that he is aware of, ways that criminal property forfeiture funds were used to support worthy initiatives in his community. For example, a van for the Bear Clan Patrol in Brandon, and tools, like flashlights and gloves, to help them do their important work.

He also spoke of a vehicle for Crime Stoppers that was funded through the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, and he elaborated at length on the ways that these funds were used to support the operations of the Brandon Police Service while he was chief there.

He used—cited the examples of safety equipment, bicycles, other items that supported that police service and police services across the province to fight crime.

I want to put a few words on the record about the historical context within which this bill has been introduced that's brought us here today.

So, back in 2021, I wasn't here in the Legislature; many of us weren't, but we have colleagues who were who will remember this. The PC government made legislative changes to strengthen the ability of the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that was believed to be used for money laundering. And in 2022 the PC government expanded the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to combat money laundering by hiring more investigators and financial analysts. And that's why it's unfortunate that, in its most recent budget, the NDP government actually cut funding for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit.

Given the intent of the legislation being introduced today, it makes one wonder how they plan to actually carry it out when they aren't properly resourcing the unit. That was just one of several cuts to Justice in the most recent budget, actually. There were cuts to a few other line items in the Justice budget that are important, and it really does make me wonder how committed the new NDP government actually is to reducing crime. The bill sounds great, but unless you put your money where your mouth is, it has the potential to be meaningless.

We saw cuts to courts, to Legal Aid, to corrections, public safety, crime prevention, intelligence, prosecutions, Judicial Services, family resolution, Victim Services—the list goes on and on and on.

And last week, during debate on this very bill, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), my colleague and a mentor of mine, in his line of questioning, asked



the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), what does this bill do that is new or different from the existing legislation that's already in place in Manitoba?

And I didn't feel—and I think that some of my colleagues would agree—that the Minister of Justice didn't properly answer that question. And that's not a knock on the legislation itself; I think there's a lot of good in this bill. But I think it's important for us to explore what this legislation actually adds to what's already in place. And as several of my colleagues have pointed out, there's nothing new here from the NDP.

Now, some of those members, who've been in this Chamber for longer than I have, have pointed out—and I've mentioned—that amendments were passed to this act back in 2021.

And those amendments would allow for unexplained wealth orders. And all of this is to reiterate, once again, that already in Manitoba there is the ability of the courts to make an order that requires a person to provide information about how they acquired property, or 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.

The member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), during the question period on this bill, also asked the Minister of Justice about the Cullen Commission. Now, it was pretty clear from the minister's answers that he maybe didn't know what the Cullen Commission is—*[interjection]*—well, I'll admit that I didn't know what the Cullen Commission was until my colleague, the member for Steinbach, brought it up, I didn't know what the Cullen Commission is. There's no shame in it. You know, I'm not the Justice Minister, but okay.

So I looked it up. It turns out the Cullen Commission is extremely relevant to the issue of criminal property forfeiture. The commission was established in the wake of significant public concern about money laundering in the province of British Columbia. The public was rightfully disturbed by the prospect of criminals laundering their cash and parking their illicit proceeds in their province.

The commission was given a broad mandate to inquire into and report on money laundering in British Columbia, and that mandate included the extent, growth, evolution and methods of money laundering in various sectors of the economy, the acts or omissions of responsible regulatory agencies and individuals that contributed to money laundering in the province—this would've been very interesting—the effectiveness of the anti-money-laundering efforts by these agencies and individuals and, importantly, barriers to effective law enforcement.

The commission was tasked with making recommendations to address those conditions that allowed money laundering to thrive in BC. They embarked on a process of extensive study and investigation, and this culminated in the commission's public hearings. And this is extensive; they heard testimony from almost 200 witnesses over 133 hearing days, and they received over 1,000 exhibits. It seems that—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 13 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is adjourned and will stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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