

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

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authority of
The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone.

Please be seated.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):

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

1. At the top of orders of the day today, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, with following limited debate provisions to apply:
 - (a) First, the Minister of Justice may speak up to five minutes;
 - (b) Then a question period may be held in accordance with subrule 137(5);
 - (c) Next, a member of the official opposition may speak up to five minutes;
 - (d) Lastly, each independent member may speak up to five minutes; and
 - (e) The Speaker shall then put the question;
2. Once Bill 41 passes second reading, it shall then be referred to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, which will meet at 3:30 p.m. this afternoon in room 255;
3. The House then shall resolve into the Chamber section of the Committee of Supply to consider the concurrence motion;
4. On November 7, 2024, the House will consider concurrence and third reading of Bill 41 during orders of the day, government business, with the following limited debate provisions to apply:
 - (a) First, the Minister of Justice may speak up to five minutes;
 - (b) Next, a member of the official opposition may speak up to five minutes;
 - (c) Lastly, each independent member may speak up to five minutes; and
 - (d) The Speaker shall then put the question.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to expedite consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act as described by the minister? Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):

Please could you canvass the House to see if there is leave to 'expediate' consideration of Bill 41, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, and Bill 221, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, on November 5, 2024, as follows:

1. At the top of orders of the day, the House will consider second reading of Bill 41, with the following limited debate provisions to apply:
 - (a) The—first, the Minister of Justice may speak for up to five minutes;
 - (b) Then a question period may be held in accordance with subrule 137(5);
 - (c) Next, a minister from the official—a member—sorry, let me redo that—(c) next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;
 - (d) Lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and
 - (e) The Speaker shall then put the question;
2. Once Bill 41 passes second reading, bills 41 and 221 shall be immediately referred to the Committee of the Whole. Once the Committee of the Whole rises and the Chairperson reports, the House will consider concurrence and third readings of bills 41 and 221.
 - (a) The following limited debate provisions will apply to Bill 41:

First, the bill sponsor may speak up to five minutes;

Next, a member from the official opposition may speak for up to five minutes;

Lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

The Speaker shall then put the question;

(b) The following limited debate provisions will apply to Bill 221:

First, the bill sponsor may speak up to five minutes;

Next a member from the government may speak for up to five minutes;

Lastly, each independent member may speak for up to five minutes; and

The Speaker shall then put the question.

The House will not see the clock until all business outlined in this request has been completed.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to consider bills 41 and 221 as described by the opposition—Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson).

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: And at this point, I have a statement for the House.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) has had her baby the evening of Sunday, November 3. She and her husband welcome a healthy baby boy into the world, weighing eight pounds, two ounces and measuring 20.5 inches. Hudson Louis Lamoureux-Burns is happy and mom is doing well.

On behalf of all honourable members, we'd like to congratulate the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

* * *

The Speaker: Introduction of bills—

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

Committee reports?

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Just before we get into tabling of reports, I have some guests in the public gallery I'd like to introduce. Draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today, all

the way from England, Kawe [*phonetic*] Asante Appau; Mourine Serwaa Yeboah; and Alice Mensah, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses).

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to table the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2024.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I am pleased to table the Five-Year Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report, 2018-22, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

The Speaker: And at this point in time, I have a report I'd like to table.

In accordance with section 49(2) of The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act, I am tabling a report by the Ethics Commissioner regarding the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), dated November 5, 2024.

Any further reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): November is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a critical time to rededicate ourselves to ending all forms of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence.

This month, we must confront a hard truth: domestic violence and intimate partner violence are pervasive, often deadly and shamefully persistent in our society. For far too long the issue has been framed solely as a woman's issue, when, in fact, it is a societal crisis caused by perpetrators whose actions remain largely unaddressed.

Make no mistake, the largest issue affecting family violence is male violence. It is male violence that 'perpetuates' the majority of violence against women, girls and gender-diverse folks.

This year alone, Manitoba has mourned lives taken by two horrific public acts of intimate partner violence. These tragedies cast a harsh light on a reality too many Manitobans face daily behind closed doors.

We cannot allow perpetrators to remain invisible, nor can we continue to place the burden solely on survivors and victims to seek help and to address this issue. Ending domestic violence requires holding perpetrators accountable, addressing toxic attitudes and behaviours and reinforcing a culture where abuse is never tolerated.

* (13:40)

Let us be clear: this is not just a women's issue, and it's not just an Indigenous issue, though Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse folks bear a disproportionate burden. This violence affects us all. It scars our communities, our families and our collective future. And until we break the cycle by addressing root causes, including male violence, we cannot hope for change.

So I invite all male allies to join us. Speak out against misogyny, hold your friends and family accountable, talk to the young men and boys in your life; be a part of the solution.

In Budget 2024, our government committed \$20 million to a new strategy for the safety and empowerment and healing of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit peoples. This funding is a substantial and real step in prioritizing the protections of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit.

Later this month, I look forward to sharing this new vision for the safety, healing and empowerment of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

We are in year two of implementing the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, a commitment underscoring our dedication to a Manitoba free of violence—one where perpetrators are held accountable and survivors have the tools, resources and support they need to heal and thrive.

As the Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, I stand alongside survivors and amplify their voices. Our government listens to survivors, and we believe women.

Miigwech to all of our community partners in women's shelters, women's resource centres, transitional housing and those on the front lines of this important and critical work. As Minister responsible, I am forever grateful, proud and in awe of each of you and the critical work that you do across our beautiful province.

Together we can—and we must—create a future where every Manitoban can live free from the threat

of domestic violence, because that is what every Manitoban deserves.

Miigwech.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Today, I stand before you to speak about Domestic Violence Awareness Month and to address domestic violence as one of the most painful and pressing issues facing our communities. It is a crisis that touches countless lives, robbing individuals and family of safety, dignity and, far too often, life itself.

As we remember the growing number of tragic losses, including Amanda Clearwater and her family in Carman, Manitoba, we must confront this reality with a renewed sense of urgency and responsibility.

According to the University of Manitoba, in our Prairie provinces, especially in rural areas, domestic violence, including domestic homicide, reaches the highest rates in our country. It's a sobering fact that, on average, one woman or girl is killed every day in Canada. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the numbers are even more dire. These aren't just statistics; they are lives, stories, families that are forever changed. Rural areas experience the greatest danger, with violence rates several times higher than in urban areas, particularly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse committee calls on the need for a whole-of-society approach to remove barriers and pockets of isolation when an individual seeks help—a call for each and every one of us to stand with victims and survivors to ensure they never have to return back to such a painful experience. This is a shared responsibility of all of us that also requires more effort on knowing the signs of abuse and knowing where to turn when you witness or suspect domestic abuse.

A tool for meeting that collective responsibility includes Bill 43, The Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence Act—Clare's Law, which allows individuals to obtain information if they believe they may be at risk of violence from a current or former intimate partner, including risks to their children.

This tool also allows police to inform a person about applying for that information if they have reason to believe that an individual could benefit from relevant background information.

As we embark on Domestic Violence Awareness Month, let us commit to taking action, whether it's by learning the signs of abuse, supporting those affected or advocating for policies that aim to protect those at

risk. Together, we can create communities where safety and dignity are rights, not privileges, and where no one suffers in silence.

To every survivor and every individual experience domestic violence: you are not alone. Your courage, even in the face of fear and isolation, speaks volumes. You are worthy of respect, dignity and safety. Your well-being matters, and know that reaching out for help is an act of strength. You are not defined by what you've been through. There is a path forward, and it's paved with people who believe in you and are ready to help.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Volunteer Guild of Victoria Hospital

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Volunteer Guild of Victoria Hospital, a charitable organization celebrating their 70th anniversary, an incredible milestone and commitment toward the community.

Each year, they raise funds to provide financial support for a variety of health-care services and equipment. Over the years, the guild has donated more than \$5 million to the hospital. In 2023, they funded two capital construction projects, which include \$30,000 to build a small kitchen and \$50,000 to add automated doors for the rehabilitation department.

The guild also funds scholarships for young volunteers and support staff pursuing or upgrading their studies in health care.

Recently, they hosted an event which showcased the long history of the organization and their evolution from being a small endeavour to being an integral part of society overall.

I want to express my gratitude to the members, many of whom are long-term residents of Fort Richmond and retired health-care workers, for their contributions to our community and for helping to create a sense of belonging.

Their selflessness and dedication serve as a powerful example of what it means to give back, and they are truly role models for us all. Their actions inspire us all to contribute more to our communities and to care for one another with the same compassion and devotion they demonstrate every day.

I'm so grateful to have the Volunteer Guild of Victoria Hospital in Fort Richmond, and I invite my

colleagues to join me in thanking these volunteers and congratulating them on their 70th anniversary.

And I would like to add my guests' names to the Hansard.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Brenda Catchpole, Sraboni P. Chowdhury, Minwei Dong, Janet E. Evans, Reem Haile, Louise Horst, Janelle Luchuck, Nadine Slight, Sharmon Stacey, Charles Thomsen, Roine Thomsen

Robert Sopuck

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, Canada lost a tremendous conservationist with the passing of former Dauphin-Swan River-Neepawa Member of Parliament Robert Sopuck on Wednesday, October 23.

Bob was born in 1951 to Eastern European immigrants in Winnipeg's West End. The family spent summers in the Whiteshell, where he developed a love for fishing and hunting. From these humble roots, he earned an honours science degree from the U of M and a master's degree in fisheries science from Cornell University.

He began work as a fisheries biologist with the federal and provincial governments before moving to the Lake Audy area. Here, he was in his realm: farming, waterfowl guiding, serving as a farm vacation host and an environmental consultant.

He was tapped on the shoulder by the Filmon government to be the director of Sustainable Development, which led to new conservation legislation in this province. After a brief time at the paper plant in Pine Falls, Bob served as a policy analyst with the Delta Waterfowl Foundation.

Bob was elected as an MP in 2010 and won two more elections before retiring in 2019. During his tenure, he was a member of the hunting and angling caucus and served on the federal fisheries committee.

Bob always credited his loving wife Caroline for her support and wise counsel while he served one of Canada's largest rural ridings.

* (13:50)

He truly had a zest for life and was in his element talking with people and generously sharing his time as a mentor to those who wanted to learn to fish or hunt.

Bob was a fierce defender of the rural way of life, believing that conservation was the best way to protect the environment. He was named International Legislator of the Year by the Safari Club International, awarded the Outdoor Heritage Award from the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and the Canadian Wildlife Federation's past presidents' award.

Honourable Speaker, on behalf of all Manitobans, I want to thank Robert "Bob," "Uncle Bob" Sopuck for making a difference.

To his family: Caroline, daughter Marsha, son Tony and their families, thank you for sharing this incredible man with Manitoba.

Bob, you will be truly missed.

Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): The year was 1974 and Ed Schreyer was the young and dynamic NDP Premier of Manitoba. Thanks to Premier Schreyer and Minister Larry Desjardins, MLA for St. Boniface, the Centre culturel franco-manitobain was established as a Crown corporation and opened its doors on January 25, 1974.

C'est donc avec immense fierté que nous célébrons les 50 ans du Centre culturel franco-manitobain, et nous invitons tous les Manitobains et les Manitobaines de se joindre à nous pour marquer cet événement.

Le Centre a parcouru un chemin extraordinaire au cours de ses premières 50 années, et lors de cette année anniversaire, nous célébrons non seulement le passé, mais également l'avenir radieux qui s'ouvre devant nous.

Situé au cœur de Saint-Boniface, le CCFM appuie les organismes francophones qui offrent des services et des programmes culturels. Le CCFM offre également une programmation éducative en arts visuels et comprend une galerie d'art, un restaurant et des salles de concert.

Les premiers 50 ans du CCFM ont connu de grands succès, et nous reconnaissons le travail de tous ceux qui ont contribué à sa création et à son parcours, que ce soit en tant qu'artiste, bénévole, membre du Conseil d'administration, membre du personnel, spectateur, animateur ou bailleur de fonds.

Depuis 50 ans, le CCFM est le lieu où les gens peuvent vivre leur culture en français, de même qu'enrichir et affirmer leur identité comme Francophones.

De plus, le CCFM est un attribut économique et identitaire pour tout le Manitoba.

Que cette célébration du 50e anniversaire du CCFM soit le reflet des derniers 50 ans et le début d'une nouvelle ère d'inspiration, d'inclusion et d'innovation.

Longue vie au CCFM.

Translation

It is with great pride that we celebrate 50 years of the Centre culturel franco-manitobain, and we invite all Manitobans to join us in marking this event.

The Centre has come a long way in its first 50 years, and in this anniversary year, we celebrate not only the past, but also the bright future that lies ahead.

Located in the heart of St. Boniface, the CCFM supports Francophone organizations that offer cultural services and programs. The CCFM also offers educational programming in the visual arts and includes an art gallery, a restaurant and concert halls.

The CCFM's first 50 years have been a great success, and we recognize the work of everyone who has contributed to its creation and journey, whether as an artist, volunteer, board member, staff member, audience member, presenter or funder.

For 50 years, the CCFM has been a place where people can experience their culture in French, and enrich and affirm their identity as Francophones. Furthermore, the CCFM is an economic and identity asset for all of Manitoba.

May this celebration of the CCFM's 50th anniversary reflect the past 50 years and usher in a new era of inspiration, inclusion and innovation.

Long live the CCFM.

English

Honourable Speaker, in the gallery, we have Michelle Gervais, présidente du CCFM [*CCFM President*]; Marie Lorrain, directrice de la programmation du CCFM [*CCFM Director of Programming*]; et Bessé Sady, adjointe de la directrice générale du CCFM [*CCFM Assistant to the General Director*].

I would like to include the names of my guests in Hansard, and I invite all my colleagues to rise in honour of le Centre culturel franco-manitobain.

Brandon Bobcats Wall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I rise today after attending the Brandon University Bobcats Athletics Wall of Fame induction ceremony on Saturday morning. And I'd like to take this opportunity to begin by thanking both Russ Paddock and Tyler Crayston for their excellent work in organizing this event by keeping Bobcat athlete alumni connected to our important—this important institution in our region.

I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate Patty Kinvig, Tara Pitz, Marvin Russell, Charlton Weasel Head and the Bobcat men's basketball teams of 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 on their induction into the wall of fame.

I would also like to congratulate two Souris products who were inducted into the wall of fame with deep roots in Spruce Woods constituency: Glen "Ab" Williamson and Guy Williams.

I'd like to spend the rest of this member's statement talking about Guy, because I think this is an important story to tell on behalf of Westman residents.

Guy was inducted into the community builder category, and he is certainly a community leader. Following his Bobcat hockey career, he pursued education, coming—becoming the principal at first Hartney and then Souris schools.

During his time in Hartney, he built the rink because, as he said in his speech, you get involved because you see a need. But in his speech, he also recognized that he stated he knew that the path for elite hockey was built there for his son, Matt [*phonetic*], but wasn't there for his daughters, Brianna [*phonetic*] and Tori [*phonetic*].

And so he went to work, pursuing Hockey Manitoba to support the creation of an elite hockey program for female hockey in rural Manitoba which has resulted in the Westman Wildcats that he coached for many years with athlete graduates now playing in university hockey, the women's professional league and Olympic gold medalist, Ashton Bell, to name just a few.

Guy is facing a serious battle with cancer and finished chemotherapy just prior to his speech on Saturday morning. When I shook his hand, he—and asked him how he was doing, his response was still that he has more good days than bad. And his first act in his speech was to apologize for his raspy 'vorce'—voice, normally booming, which many of us experienced in the halls of Souris School.

Guy, you have nothing to apologize for. Our community and the broader hockey community are better for your leadership. Thank you. We're with you in this battle, and we're wishing you all the best.

Commercial Fishery in Manitoba

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I rise today to pay tribute to our commercial fishers here in Manitoba.

For most commercial fishers here in Manitoba, they are a multi-family, multi-generational industry. With my home community of Hollow Water and my own family being generational commercial fishers, I see first-hand the impact and the benefits the industry brings out not only to family and community, but to the province as a whole.

As we look at various industries and the ag sector, for example, here in Manitoba, and we see the economic horsepower they bring to our great province, it really brings into perspective the horsepower and contribution commercial fishing brings in its own right.

More and more, we hear from other jurisdictions not only in Canada, but from around the world, that Manitoba has what the world wants, and there is no better example than our fishing industry that catches fish in a sustainable, responsible way from some of the largest inland lakes in the world, right here in Manitoba.

As the fall fishing season comes to a close, I want to say a big thank-you to our commercial fishers for your tireless work to put food on our tables. I know there is many a day where you are up before the sun rises and the end of the day long after the sun sets. You may face challenges and uncertainty like whether or not knowing the catch of the day will be sufficient to make all your hard work and efforts worthwhile, and whether you can continue on until the next day. But you take in stride the good days with the bad, because you know the importance of what you do not only for your family and your community, but for all Manitobans.

I want to say a thank-you for all your dedication and for all you do, and know that your hard work is appreciated.

Whether you fish in Hollow Water, Bloodvein, Berens River, Poplar River, Norway House, Grand Rapids, Fisher River, Gimli, Riverton or our other great fishing communities, I want to say on behalf of all members and all Manitobans, thank you for all you do to keep our commercial fishing industry thriving.

Miigwech, Honourable Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Increase in Rural Crime Request for Plan to Address

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, on—from this side of the House, happy Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Honourable Speaker. We must all work together to end 'domestic'—domestic violence.

All across Manitoba, crime has people on edge. And this NDP government doesn't seem to understand or even care how it affects rural Manitobans. They think crime is a Winnipeg issue, as proven by their inadequate responses. A single camera on somebody's front door is not going to cover and protect their home, detached shop, workshop or other outbuildings where they might store their expensive equipment.

This is a bit of a lob for this Premier (Mr. Kinew) if he attempts to actually answer it for a change, but on behalf of rural residents, what is the Kinew government doing about the increasing property crime across Manitoba, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I want to acknowledge Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

And I want to thank our Minister for Families and—who leads and champions initiatives and services across this province and, you know, lifts up the voices of folks who provide care to women, girls, 2SLGBTQ+ folks and families across the province who are impacted by domestic violence. It's a very serious issue.

I think that in her ministerial statement, she addressed it in a really comprehensive and important way, and speaks to the important role that men play in addressing domestic violence and stamping it out from our communities across Manitoba.

On the issue raised by the member opposite, I'm happy to tackle that in a follow-up, but certainly our government has taken many, many steps to address property crime and retail crime across the province.

The Speaker: Time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, Manitoba business owners are being charged for defending their properties under this Kinew government, and no answer from this Premier.

* (14:00)

And now, other Manitobans are putting up rewards: \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of people responsible for arson in the Interlake.

And what does the Justice Minister have to say? I quote: The public safety strategy that we're developing this fall will certainly speak to some of those concerns that we have heard in rural Manitoba. End quote. So he confirms it.

They came in with no plan, take no action, everything gets worse, and one year in, they are still working on this strategy. The Premier doesn't say what he's doing about rural crime because he isn't doing anything, Honourable Speaker.

So will the Premier rise in his place and apologize to Manitobans for his complete failure—and his minister's failure—to address rural crime, Honourable Speaker?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I want to take this moment to commend our Attorney General and Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) on this side of the House, who has done more to address public safety in the just-about one year than was ever done by the failed PC minister in seven and a half years.

Honourable Speaker, our government has made significant investments in not only addressing property crime and rural crime and public safety, but we've done that, honestly, across the entire province, whether it's in urban settings, rural settings, northern Manitoba. And we've taken an approach that treats municipalities, rural communities, as partners.

For seven and a half years, what did members opposite do? They froze their funding. They cut funding to rural services. They cut funding to—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Arson in the Interlake, theft of vehicles from Powerview-Pine Falls just this weekend. Actually, three vehicles, Honourable Speaker.

Manitobans—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —are putting their own capital at risk. And this Premier and his Justice Minister—the Attorney General, I may add—doesn't seem to care, Honourable Speaker.

I quote from the Justice Minister: Feedback from the public safety summit will be incorporated into a province-wide strategy to reduce crime and take—make communities safer, which will be released in late September. End quote. Well, Honourable Speaker, it's November. Still no plan.

I ask this Justice Minister, since the Premier (Mr. Kinew) won't stand up, where's the plan, Honourable Speaker?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans made a choice just over a year ago to elect a serious government to fight for them, to advocate for them and to take public safety seriously.

Honourable Speaker, in Budget 2024, we increased funding to law enforcement by 28 per cent in this province. Increases in Lac du Bonnet, Virden, Beausejour, Swan River, Stonewall, Niverville, Selkirk, Morden, Portage la Prairie, Winkler, Steinbach and Brandon—all rural communities that were cut for seven and a half years by that member opposite. We'll take no lessons from the PC caucus and their failed approach to public safety.

IHRA Definition of Anti-Semitism Federal NDP Position—Government Response

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

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, still no apology from this Premier for his many, many broken promises, and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) can't even stand up and speak.

Speaking of crime and safety, Honourable Speaker, the Manitoba NDP exists—according to the second article of its constitution—to, and I quote: 'furthee' object—further the objectives of the New Democratic Party of Canada. End quote.

The federal NDP's latest objective, according to a press release this week, is to prevent governments from adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism. Our PC government adopted the definition in 2022, sending a strong message that anti-Semitism has no place in our society—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: Will the Premier rise in his place and tell Manitobans if he will be helping further the objectives of the New Democratic Party of Canada as it says in their constitution, which I will table,

Honourable Speaker? Or will he continue to stand beside his federal leader, the one he wants to replace—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, you know what? I'm actually thankful when that member stands up in this House and continues to remind Manitobans why they rejected a divisive and hateful message from that side of the House.

It is so disappointing that members opposite fail to learn that Manitobans want leadership that brings people together. On this side of the House, we are focused on making sure that all Manitobans know our province is a home for everybody, that we stand against hate and we stand united in making sure that all Manitobans can thrive right here in our beautiful province.

On that side of the House, they need to get on board.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, it's unfortunate that this member stands up in the House once again and continuing—continuously continues to divide Manitobans on behalf of his Premier—of their Premier, Honourable Speaker.

In June, the member from Agassiz pointed out that CUPE, a founding and delegated member of—for the Manitoba NDP ratified a motion to lobby for the repeal of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. It would seem, with Jagmeet Singh having joined that effort, they have gained traction with the NDP. In June, the Premier—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —said he stayed by the IHRA definition, and as he normally does, he put on a good show of saying all the right things, another photo op, Honourable Speaker.

Can the Premier please commit to Manitobans that he will not be repealing Manitoba's commitment to the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism?

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member—Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will please refrain from quite as much voracious heckling.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our government has been very, very clear. On this side of the House, we stand for all Manitobans, and we stand against hate and hateful rhetoric of any kind.

We have stood with the Jewish community to make very clear that our government is taking concrete steps to combat anti-Semitism. We have taken tangible steps to make sure that there is curriculum in schools that better equips educators and learners about the impacts on the realities of the Holocaust so that those mistakes are never repeated, that harmful narratives have no place in our communities, that anti-Semitism is wrong and that Manitoba must be a place where folks are united and together as one Manitoba.

I will say it again—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Discarded Needles in Swan River Cost for Cleanup and Supplies

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, the City of Winnipeg has commissioned a report indicating that it will cost \$200,000 annually to clean up the NDP's used needles that are littering city parks. As Councillor Gilroy stated, and I quote, there's just particular parks that we know that kids are at play where there are needles, glass, weapons and debris that is unsafe; \$200,000 is all that separates children from getting hepatitis instead of high fives.

Why can the NDP find hundreds and thousands of dollars for first-class travel to shop in New York, frolic in Houston, to campaign in BC but cannot find 0.02 per cent of the Justice budget—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine).

An Honourable Member: I want to thank that member for that question. I'll take an opportunity to let members opposite—

The Speaker: My mistake.

I'm sorry, the honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Gives me an opportunity to let members know, and I don't know if all members opposite know that when they were in government, that they did not have a plan for disposal. They were simply allowing SDOs to give out needles but weren't—they had no plan for disposal. We've directed all of our SDOs to have a plan for disposal so

when needles are given out, that there actually is a plan to get them off the—and disposed of.

So we are working with communities, we are working with municipalities, we are working with the City, something that members opposite never did. We will not take their approach of divisiveness. We will work collaboratively; unlike members opposite.

* (14:10)

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

Mr. Balcaen: I'm wondering how that plan's working in Swan River.

The NDP have distributed half a million needles in a town of 4,000. Swan River bylaw enforcement Derrick Piwish says that he sees the cost of cleanup under this NDP's strategy. Syringes are getting called up daily—six calls a day about needles in the parks, playgrounds and on the sidewalks. I table a picture of a typical morning at the Swan River dance school entrance.

And what's this minister's solution? Kids doing community cleanup.

The minister has no problem distributing half a million needles in Swan River. But how many gloves with puncture level 5 have been issued? I'm going to say—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Ms. Smith: I was actually just in Swan River, and I had an opportunity to meet with the reeve and the mayor, and we were actually working collaboratively with Prairie Mountain Health.

We actually have a needle cleanup committee that are working alongside the reeve and with communities, something members opposite never did. They never had committees. They never worked with municipalities on solutions that work with their community.

What members opposite did is they distributed without a plan of disposal. We are not going to take that approach. We are working with the community so that there are solutions that are built in communities, something that they never did.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, this minister doesn't care about punctures. This minister doesn't care about cleanup and does not care about the kids that will suffer.

Manitobans aren't asking a lot from this minister except maybe an interest in protecting the kids in our parks, playgrounds and on the sidewalks.

For the price of the minister's vacation to shop Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, almost 400 puncture-resistant gloves could have been purchased.

So again, on behalf—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen:—of the local residents waking up every day to the used needles on their doorsteps, when will the free distribution of gloves begin—or does this NDP only offer free needles?

Ms. Smith: You know, it's unfortunate that that member continues to attack members on this side and take a personal attack. Like, we're talking about people's lives here. We are talking about a harm-reduction approach. We are talking about people who need supports. Instead, what is this member talking about? He's talking about pointing fingers. We're not going to be pointing fingers.

We are at the tables with these municipalities. We are working on solutions. We are working on disposal plans. We have a committee out there that is working on cleanup, and we have actually worked with municipalities, something that the prior government never did.

They picked fights, and we will not take that approach.

Grace Hospital Bed Capacity Impact on Wait Times

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Last November, the NDP promised Manitobans that they would add 31 beds at the Grace Hospital, and they said that 21 of them would be operational by the end of March.

So last week, I tabled in the House the relevant sections from the most recent WRHA annual report, showing that no new beds were added as of March 31.

Why weren't these beds operational when the minister promised they would be, and what other commitments have they made that they have no intention of honouring?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I have to say, I find it rich—I find it really rich—coming from that side of the House from that member or any member opposite. That they would be critical of us adding beds to the health-care system. To stand up and

to be critical of us making investments to add beds, which are front-line staff, to the health-care system—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—where they cut over 500 beds is absolutely ridiculous. That member needs to get her priorities in check.

On this side of the House, we're making investments. We're adding beds. We're adding people to the front lines of the health-care system.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, the beds that the minister failed to add at Grace Hospital were initially intended to reduce ER wait times at the Grace, that have only gotten worse under the NDP.

Right now at the Grace, wait times are over 4.38 hours at the median and 10.87 hours at the 90th percentile, a significant jump from the median of 4.8 hours this time last year. If the NDP had kept their promise to open those beds, maybe they'd—we'd see an impact on wait times at the ER at the Grace Hospital.

With wait times at the Grace only going up, when is this minister going to add the beds that they promised, and when can west Winnipeggers expect to see wait times at the Grace stop getting worse?

MLA Asagwara: In 2016, they cut beds. In 2017, they fired staff. In 2018, they cut more beds and they also fired staff. In 2019, they cut beds across the system. In 2020, they cut beds even during the global pandemic. In 2021, they cut beds, they fired people. Twenty-twenty to—this—yes, I think you get where I'm going with this, Honourable Speaker.

We have added more—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—beds to the health-care system in just over a year than they added in seven and a half years, because they cut over 500 beds from our system across Manitoba.

Now, we have much more work to do, but we're starting to see the benefits of our approach, including wait times coming down, surgery capacity going up, and there's more and more that will happen as we continue to do the work that Manitobans sent—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I'm going to offer a quote for the House. Quote: We're not seeing an improvement in those wait times, and that's disappointing and certainly concerning for those who are simply trying to access

the best care possible in our emergency rooms. Unquote.

Who said that? The Minister of Health said this to the media while in opposition, when median ER wait times at the Grace were lower than they are right now, Honourable Speaker. We are seeing ever-increasing wait times at the most important hospital for west Winnipeg. So not only did the minister promise 21 beds at the end of March and failed, they promised 31 beds this year.

Now, I've asked this question so many times. No status update from the minister.

When can the Grace Hospital expect to see all of these beds operational?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe investing—investing to make health care stronger, which is what we've done from day one. For seven and a half years, the PCs cut health care, fired health-care workers, closed beds across the province.

Now, it is going to take us years to fix the damage that they did, but we're doing that work, including adding beds to a hospital that members opposite cut.

Honourable Speaker, the member can stand up as much as she wants on health care; the problem is she has zero credibility on the issue—zero credibility that they earned over seven and a half years. We will take no lessons from that member or any member on that side of the House on health care.

Zebra Mussel Contamination in Clear Lake Request for Resources for Affected Communities

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, with the failure of the federal containment curtain at Clear Lake, Manitobans are understandably concerned. Zebra mussels will have a dramatic impact on the livelihoods of many, as we saw this year.

What supports is this government offering to these hard-working Manitobans who have been affected through no fault of their own?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): I'm really pleased to have an opportunity to speak in the Chamber and respond to this question.

Manitobans share a passion and a love for Clear Lake. We know it's one of those most beautiful spots in Manitoba. We're saddened by the discovery of zebra mussels, and we stand with Manitobans in urging the

federal government to do their part to make sure that they keep that beautiful lake in Manitoba clear.

And so we've been advocating for the business community, advocating for the protection of the lake; but also we've been doing our part as a Province by testing the waterways downstream, investing more money, 45 per cent increase on AIS in our—this year's budget, and we'll continue to protect our waterways from zebra mussels and all aquatic invasive species.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, there are a lot of comparisons between the NDP government and the containment curtain: a lot of talk, really flashy, and when push came to shove, it failed at the first opportunity despite being incredibly expensive for taxpayers and it is beyond repair.

* (14:20)

Will this minister learn the lesson from this contamination of Clear Lake and partner with local communities to expand inspection and cleaning operations?

Mr. Moses: Well, Honourable Speaker, I can tell you that we're not taking the failed approach that the former failed government took. We not only increased the budget to fight all aquatic 'espasous' species: \$1.5-million increase; that's 45 per cent increase. We also announced the first-ever publicly available strategy to combat aquatic invasive species.

These are real actions we're taking to keep waterways clear. And so my message to Manitobans is this: Clean, drain and dry all 'waterclraft' whenever you're leaving water bodies across this beautiful province of Manitoba.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, locals have so much more invested in keeping waterways clean than this government. Where this minister might read a report how bad an infestation has gotten, these are the people whose day-to-day lives are impacted. Right now the best thing we could do is give resources to those most invested in the fight.

Why does this minister refuse to make funds available to municipalities and communities that want to protect their waterways?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, we know that Clear Lake is a beautiful spot and we love going there, and it's clearly in the federal government jurisdiction.

We've advocated to the federal government to do more to combat zebra mussels and to 'supride' supports for the businesses and communities that are impacted. It is clearly their decision, and so we continue to advocate.

In fact, I wrote a letter to the federal minister just last week to advocate on behalf of Manitoba, and we continue to do that work, on top of the fact that we continue to invest in combatting AIS here in Manitoba on our waterways. Forty-five per cent increase in the budget for AIS, a first-ever strategy working on mobile sites to—working with DFO to provide prevention strategies right across the province. And I want all 'mannis' to know to clean, drain and dry their watercraft.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Before recognizing the next member, I would ask both benches to calm down.

Drainage of St. Malo Lake Notice to Residents

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Two weeks ago I asked this minister why they started draining down the St. Malo Lake before informing any of the residents, and all that I received was deflection. Residents deserve the minister's respect, and they deserve communication.

Why did the minister allow this critical lapse in communication to occur?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): We know that with the release of our, again, first-ever publicly available strategy to combat aquatic invasive species—it's called the aquatic invasive species prevention and response plan—outlined our strategy about how we're going to deal with this unfortunate circumstance of aquatic invasive species spread across the province.

And so as we continue to deal with these issues, we continue to look at lakes like St. Malo, which did test positive for zebra mussels earlier this summer; that was announced. And so we continue to make sure that Manitobans are well-informed and well have the educational tools to prevent the spread of zebra mussels across Manitoba. That means cleaning, draining and drying their watercraft as it comes to moving their watercraft across bodies of water around Manitoba.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Narth: With this government, phase 1 is the listening tour, phase 2 is enacting a whole bunch of new committees. Manitobans don't know when the action is going to occur.

With the federal failure on the Clear Lake barrier, understandably, Manitobans are hesitant to trust government plans.

What precautions have been taken to ensure that contaminated water doesn't impact water systems as it drains downstream from St. Malo Lake?

Mr. Moses: I appreciate the question from member opposite, who is obviously very concerned with the waterways. And I think Manitobans share that concern.

And that's why I encourage them to collectively do their part by cleaning, draining and drying all watercraft. That is the most important thing we can do to prevent the spread of zebra mussels in Manitoba.

And, as a Province, we continue to do our part as well. We've increased enforcement; we've enhanced our testing approach; we've released a publicly available strategy. We've also increased funding for mobile stations which are providing opportunities to provide education and supports the—to prevent the spread of zebra mussels across Manitoba. That's what we're doing—a province.

Former government failed to take those steps. We've taken them. We've listened to Manitobans, and we're actually taking action—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Narth: St. Malo residents have great concern about the health of their lake, and I'd argue that many Manitobans also appreciate the health of the St. Malo Lake.

Local residents, though, have regularly asked for the lake levels to be lowered to allow for the vegetation and sediment control. The morning after my question in this House about the lake dewatering, the tap was shut off without any explanation.

Will this government commit to work with the local residents to allow for these projects to occur?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, the former government failed to even listen to Manitobans, and I think that's why they got into the mess that they got into.

Us, we listen to communities. And that's why, following the steps of our strategy with the detection

of zebra mussels in St. Malo this summer, we explored opportunities to mitigate the situation there with zebra mussels.

We required a drawdown of the reservoir, and steps were taken to test the infrastructure, but it was determined that these options were not feasible.

And so we will continue to work with the community. We'll continue to fight the spread of zebra mussels. Even if the members opposite don't want us to do that, we'll continue to protect the waterways in Manitoba and work and listen to community.

Western Manitoba Cancer Centre Expansion Announcement

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Honourable Speaker, cancer has impacted the lives of far too many Manitobans. Our government is committed to making sure more and more people hear those four magic words: you are cancer free.

But we know that the journey to hearing those words can be an extremely hard one. It's why our government is making investments in cancer care, not only so that more people can hear those magic words, but so that their healing journey is a little bit easier and by ensuring all Manitobans can receive the care, should they need it.

Honourable Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell us about our government's investments to cancer care access and the expansion at the Western Manitoba Cancer Centre in Brandon.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our government was proud to partner with the community of Brandon and western cancer centre to announce a new expanded centre for cancer care in the region.

The expansion provides space for additional exam and procedure rooms and treatment spaces. The 9,400-square-foot expansion includes additional radiation treatment capacity, medical oncology and hematology. This will provide Manitobans with quality care closer to home, integrating clinical and supportive care at the same location.

And like my colleague said, we're working hard with community members, experts, front-line health-care workers and service providers to make sure that more Manitobans hear those four magic words: you are cancer free.

Thank you.

Labour Legislation Amendments Concern for Public and Private Workforce

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): The Minister of Labour and Immigration does not seem to understand the words that she chooses to use. When we talk about Manitoba workers, we mean all workers in Manitoba, not just the workers the minister chooses to see.

Her comments in this House have been quite ugly, insinuating that those that have chosen to work independently are ill-informed or being taken advantage of.

I'll give the minister a chance today: commit to meaningful engagement with all Manitoba workers.

* (14:30)

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you to members opposite for giving me a chance to put words on the record that are truthful.

We on this side of the House respect workers—all workers. Especially—and especially the most vulnerable of all workers. Whether they're unionized or part of the private sector, the public sector, it doesn't really matter. Our government is here to support and protect all workers, making sure that their dignity, their rights and protections are front and centre, and especially their—stuff for their safety and health protections.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Ms. Byram: This government believes Manitoba workers deserve choice only if they agree with this minister. Make an independent choice and they will use the full force of their legislative authority against you.

Why does this minister insist on creating division between Manitoba workers?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, our government is very proud of the legislation that we put forward to protect workers. I want to put on—for the record again that this legislation has been long held, cherished legislation that workers have been trying to put forth since the 1970s. And our government is proud of the fact that we're putting in this historic legislation here in Manitoba.

We'll be alongside the British Columbia workers, workers in Quebec and all federally regulated employees as well. So, we're really proud of this

record that we're putting forth here with—for workers across Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Ms. Byram: We saw this government's apathy when they partnered with the federal labour board to design legislation to keep small, local firms out of major contracts. We saw it when the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) said that the way to prosperity isn't hard work or investing in yourself, it's signing a union card. Makes sense; small firms don't spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year advertising—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Byram: —for this government.

Why is this minister putting her partisan friends before Manitobans?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, you know, on this side of the House, we're proud to stand with workers every single day.

And it's not just us. Even federal Conservatives—at the federal level of the Parliament, they passed this legislation unanimously, including the seven conservative MPs from Manitoba—unanimously. When Pierre Poilievre was asked if he was going to form a Conservative government in the future—a majority government—would he retain this legislation? And the answer was, wholeheartedly, yes.

Even the federal PCs get it that it is a new day for workers. Workers are demanding respect, and this is part of the pathway and this is the new resolution that Canadians coast-to-coast—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member—*[interjection]*

Order.

Invasive Weed Species Support for Farmers to Combat

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, our farmers are seeing even more threats from invasive species and noxious weeds such as waterhemp and Palmer amaranth. It's spreading through Manitoba.

Can the minister tell us what he is doing to combat the spread of these invasive weeds that are threatening farmers' livelihoods?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Agriculture—

Order.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you to the member from Portage la Prairie asking the question.

Obviously, the question poses the importance to the federal government registering certain chemicals that are allowed to be used, as the member identified today in our discussion.

We work together with the federal government, but the important thing is that we rely on research, proper information to protect the environment, and also work towards—to help out the agriculture producers. And it's my pleasure today to stand and resupport the agriculture producers in the province of Manitoba, and be there whenever need be to discuss.

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

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, just to let the minister know that these weed species are blowing up from the US.

Farmers are dealing with a problem that is affecting their bottom line. These weeds are becoming resistant to herbicide, becoming difficult to control, affecting farmers' yield potential.

What is the minister's plan to invest in research in Manitoba to help our farmers control these pests affecting their yields?

Mr. Kostyshyn: I hope we don't blow up too many more weeds, as the member opposite indicated.

But let me stress the importance of the partnership that we are talking about, the importance of chemical applications and the duty of elected officials to work with the federal government in approval of chemical operations.

Now, I understand member opposite is referring to a chemical that maybe is not allowed in the province of Manitoba. But I want to assure you that if it's an issue—and the opportunity to discuss it with the Agriculture Department. We have great staff and we will continue to work with agriculture producers on the importance of sustaining a proper operation for our agriculture producers.

And I want to thank the agriculture producers for what they do and what they—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, has the minister ever had to hand-rogue weeds that are over six feet tall? Because the only way to get rid of these weeds is to hand-rogue.

Manitoba Crop Alliance has tips and strategies for farmers on how to deal with these weeds.

Will the minister commit today to invest in new specific programs, education and research to support farmers in eliminating these threats that are growing in prevalence over Manitoba—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: —and affecting farmers' profitability?

Mr. Kostyshyn: It's always entertaining to answer a question that member opposite brings forward.

As I'm going to indicate to him, again, is that we all understand the importance of weed control, and the opportunity is working with the agriculture producers and working with the federal government. And I'm being repetitious in my commentary, but I'm sure member opposite knows full well that we're not going to have an opportunity of jeopardizing the importance of environmental concerns and to have a proper chemical in place that is approved by Health Canada—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. *[interjection]*

Order, please.

I was going to ask the member for Portage la Prairie to come to order, but I think I'll expand that now and ask the rest of you to come to order as well. It's not even close to Friday yet.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture has a few seconds left on his answer.

Mr. Kostyshyn: I do want to contribute a commentary here to the importance—

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Do you folks just want to sit and make noise all day, or shall we get back to business?

The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):

To correct an inadvertent error made yesterday in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in room 255 considering the Estimates for the Legislative Assembly, could you please canvass the House for leave to reconsider Estimates resolution 1.5 today in the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber immediately following this request.

* (14:40)

The Speaker: Is there leave to reconsider Estimates resolution 1.5 today in the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber immediately following this request?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Fontaine: Will you please resolve the House into Committee of Supply to consider Estimates resolution 1.5, and once this has been reported back to the House, will you please call for debate on concurrence motion in the Committee of Supply?

The Speaker: The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to 'compitter'—consider Estimates resolution 1.5.

And the Deputy Speaker will please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. As agreed by the House committee—as agreed by the House, the committee will now reconsider Estimates resolution 1.5.

Resolution 1.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,765,000 for Legislative Assembly, Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the business before us.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted certain resolutions.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Order, please.

As previously announced, the House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the concurrence motion in Committee of Supply.

The Deputy Speaker will take the Chair.

* (14:50)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

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

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move that the Committee of Supply concur in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025, which have been adopted at this session, whether by a section of the Committee of Supply or by the full committee.

Motion presented.

The Chairperson: The motion is in order.

For the information of all members, on November 4, 2024, the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson) tabled the list of ministers to be called for questioning in debate on the concurrence motion. In accordance with that list, all members of Cabinet will be questioned concurrently.

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Yesterday during question period, I tabled a document regarding projects undertaken by the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force that also referenced a number of projects under RFSA contracts.

And I have asked this question, or a variation of this question, multiple times. I've also asked for it through FIPPA. I've asked for it via a written question. The media's asked the question and we have yet to get an answer.

So I'm wondering if the minister—I'll be very deliberate in my phrasing of this question: Can the Minister of Health provide a list of the RFSA contracts that are currently active, and which ones were allowed to lapse or cancelled at the end of the

March 31 fiscal year? And for what services those contracts are, i.e., how many and what types of procedures will be provided?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I welcome the opportunity to talk about what our government is doing to take a different approach that is producing long-needed results for Manitobans in the area of surgical care diagnostics and essential services that Manitobans count on.

I'd like to be clear and put some information on the record that I think is really important for Manitobans to be reminded of. I know that we've talked about this previously, and I want to share to here—share it here again, because the member opposite references a task force that spent 250 million—north of \$250 million in their time—their short time established spent north of \$250 million.

And what did that get Manitobans? Well, I can tell you what it didn't get Manitobans. It didn't get Manitobans a backlog that was—predated COVID under the previous government that was cleared. Two hundred and fifty million dollars, including \$15 million spent on administration. Fifteen million dollars spent on administration costs alone, and sending Manitobans out of the province and out of the country for essential health care.

* (15:00)

And just so that I can illustrate an example for Manitobans to really identify the approach of the previous government and, quite frankly, the damage that it continues to do, along with their other choices to the health-care system, Manitobans were paying about \$45,000 for a knee surgery when here in our own province it costs about \$4,600 to do that. I hope that folks can appreciate the magnitude of the resource that was sent out of our country, along with Manitobans; all the while the PCs cut beds from our health-care system.

Member opposite has talked a little about beds, and she references a report from the WRHA. The member opposite, had she bothered to appropriately, adequately, properly read the report and take a look at the footnote, would realize that, actually, that report is detailing how the previous PC government failed to add beds to the health-care system.

So during a time we were in a global crisis, the PCs continued to cut health-care services and spend essential dollars out of the country. Our government has taken a different approach. We are working with

our partners here in Manitoba to build capacity. We're working with our partners in the public system and, yes, private partners too, to ensure that we're making investments that improve Manitobans' access to health-care services, that they get more access to quality health care and not less.

So, you know, when it comes to the activities of the previous task force, what I heard when I came into this role, really plainly from health experts across the province, was that they didn't have clarity on what necessarily was going on, how decisions were being made, and that they wanted to see a different approach, and that they also wanted to see an approach that prioritized investments being made here in Manitoba and working with our partners in order to make sure Manitobans could get access to essential health care in their own borders. And that's an approach that we as a government have taken very, very seriously.

We've been able to work with experts right here in the province to take historic steps in standing up programs, services, infrastructure that did not exist previously, would never have existed under the failed approach of Heather Stefanson and her team.

And certainly, you know, the steps that we have taken, the meaningful investments that we've made, have been informed directly by the front lines, the very front-line health-care workers that for seven and a half long years were treated with contempt, disregard, disrespect, disdain by the previous PC administration. And I want to thank those health-care workers for being a part of the solution as we work to not only fix the monumental damage that was done by the previous government, but we take action to take innovative and new ways to make health care better in our province.

And so, you know, as we continue to move forward, our government's going to continue to listen to Manitobans, to front-line health-care workers. We're going to continue to make investments that strengthen health care here at home and to work with the same front-line health-care workers that for seven and a half years, under the previous administration, weren't engaged in any dialogue or conversation whatsoever.

It's a new day in our province when it comes to health care, and we're going to keep taking an approach that puts the health care and well-being of Manitobans first.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): For the Justice Minister, the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) have spoken extensively about paying overtime for police in three or four areas of Winnipeg to address the rise in crime. There's yet to be a comprehensive, sustainable, long-term commitment to funding for police services or municipal police services across the province.

I'll remind the minister that there are nine other municipal police services in the province besides Winnipeg. There was 10 before his government started defunding the police and losing Riverdale. Rural communities, families and businesses are experiencing the same challenges and threats to public safety as the city of Winnipeg. Yet they have not been included in the retail crime initiative.

Can the minister provide a detailed explanation of his government's plan to provide support for the public safety and retail crime in the rural areas of Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to engage with the member opposite a little bit further about this—some of the successes that we've seen in terms of our initiatives that we've undertaken as a government.

And I think there's just maybe a few elements that maybe he—you know, we want to concentrate on or focus on in terms of what I think the essence of his question is. I'm not a hundred per cent sure, but I think I've got a sense of what he's asking for. He's sort of asking a few different things.

What I wanted to start with was, first of all, to really just point out the naked hypocrisy here from the member opposite when he talks about funding and talks about predictability. And you know, it's absolutely unbelievable to me that the member opposite could come into this House and talk about their record on funding and call it predictable.

Now, to his credit, I would say that zeros are predictable. And it was predictable that when first Brian Pallister and then Heather Stefanson were premiers, they made it very clear to rural Manitoba that they were on their own. And that, of course, came from—you know, in terms of the funding that was available for municipalities but it also carried over to the urban policing grants.

And it's frustrating now for the member to—opposite to say they want predictability when if you ask rural municipalities across the province if they want the kind of predictability in that they would get zeros every year that the previous government offered,

they of course would say no. They want to be partners with us.

And that's why, as we travelled across the province and we spent time in, I would say, all regions of the province—certainly there's more communities—we did extensive consultation through the AMM early on—or, I guess it would have been late last year—early on in the process. We also, of course, travelled, physically travelled to many communities throughout the province.

And we wanted to ensure that they knew that they had a partner. So they, first of all, have a partner on the funding side. But then when it comes to good ideas or it comes to initiatives, this is where I think the exciting work really is just getting started. We understood that there are different circumstances and there are different pressures, but also different opportunities in different communities and in different regions of the province.

That's why we listen to them. We listen to them, whether we could work with them to expand the CSO program, whether we could invest in their downtown like we did in Brandon, of course. We directly invested in public safety in Brandon. Whether it be other initiatives that have been brought forward to us. We worked in the City of Thompson. Of course, they have a separate set of concerns and issues.

* (15:10)

So we know that there are opportunities to work with community. But again, when the member opposite talks about funding, does he suggest that we go back to the idea that there would be zeroes across the board for seven year? Because that's the record of his government.

We're taking a different approach. We're taking a collaborative approach. And we're taking the kind of approach that brings along members from across this province.

Now, that being said, I do want to just focus quickly on the success of the retail crime initiative, and of course we're working on making that—stabilizing that and making some of those investments permanent and really focusing on community policing.

Under the PC administration, we saw a net loss of 55 officers in the city of Winnipeg. We are adding officers in the city of Winnipeg. We also have seen over 769 total arrests; 8,000 engagements with retailers, with people in the hot spots; 504 businesses engaged;

224 fines issued; \$63,000 more in—recovered in product.

This is the kind of success—it's not just about specific communities, it's all of Winnipeg. But it's also rural Manitoba, and I'll just mention that we're also doing something the previous government never did, and that is partnering with Indigenous communities and Indigenous organizations who see the value in partnering with us to keep their communities safe, and ultimately keep all Manitobans safe.

That's the kind of collaborative work our government is committed to.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I have a question related to community funding, resolution No. 13.4, in particular the Manitoba GRO program. While not specifically stated, I assume this program falls under this appropriation area.

So we know the minister rebranded the Municipal Economic Development Infrastructure Program as Manitoba GRO. In doing so, he kept the project eligibility requirements exactly the same as MEDIP as well as keeping applicant eligibility the same, the only change being that he reduced the budget by 2 and a half million dollars, meaning fewer projects will be approved.

So can the minister tell us how many projects were approved under MEDIP and what the dollar value of those approved projects were?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): I thank the member for the question. It gives me a great opportunity to talk about the significant sustainable investments that our government is making in Manitoba.

It was an honour to be able to take on this role of Municipal and Northern Relations side of our government to really kind of help dress and—help address and amplify the voices that we heard. In our time in opposition, we heard from municipalities as to what the effects and what they were feeling in regards to the significant impacts that the seven and a half years of frozen funding meant for them. But they were also very open and welcomed the idea of having not only the ending of the freeze but also predictability going forward.

And that was a big factor in what they asked for, including—we had the opportunity to look at the AMM report card a while back, where we met a lot of the issues that were addressed and the pillars that they addressed, and predictability of funding was one. So

as a government, it was imperative that we address those concerns with the municipalities but also with an eye on being responsible.

So when the member was referring to and in previous conversations and questions as well—when he talks about various programs that the previous government rolled out, there was really nothing sustainable about them; BSC being an example of that. They, pre-pandemic, the election year spent, and there was nothing sustainable about what they had, and really, they were kind of spending beyond their means and definitely spending beyond their mandate.

So it was quite an eye-opener for us to know that—the fact that the municipal funding was frozen for a lot of years but yet has still really never amounted to them being able to still work within their means and balance budgets.

So it was important for us to bring forth programs that were very sustainable and mindful of the budget and mindful of what we wanted to be able to do, to not only be mindful of the public purse but also to invest in communities and municipalities.

So it was significant for us to be able to do that and to roll out those programs, From the Ground Up being one program that we rolled out, 12 and a half million dollars. That was very sustainable for the intake, but also the Manitoba GRO project—program that we're rolling out as well.

I know members opposite want to be able to try and do a comparison over their program to our program, but the end of the day, none of the things they brought forward are really sustainable, and over the course of time, they were going to fail.

And Manitobans seen through that, and Manitobans seen that it was just election year spending. They had record transfers during the pandemic, and they tried their best to kind of put that into election year spending, but Manitobans seen through that and seen that it was going—nothing that was going to be sustainable.

So for us to be able to bring forward the Manitoba GRO program, a \$42-million program, mind you, for critical infrastructure projects that focus on community renewal, disaster mitigation, climate resiliency recreation—and all these are for municipalities outside of Winnipeg, as well, and they're all eligible to apply—so after years of frozen funding, this was a very welcoming thing that municipalities seen from our government, because it was investments in a sustainable way.

So these are programs that we brought forth that are only going to grow, including, I mean, AMM, for example, Honourable Speaker, brought forth—or, honourable Chair—they welcome that. They welcome the \$42-million investment into Manitoba GRO, the Growth, Renewal and Opportunities for Municipalities.

* (15:20)

And they talk about the renewed collaboration that they had with our government. And I take that with great humility, to be able to engage municipalities, to actually have municipalities come to the table and come to the office and get out to the communities and be welcomed into the communities, but also welcome here in the office, as well; here in the Legislature, which is their building.

So there was a real need in the community, and we answered that need. So Manitoba GRO, \$42 million, again, in critical infrastructure comes off of seven years of frozen funding.

So there's significant investments that we're going to be able to do and wanting to do going forward, and we are going to continue to do that going forward in a responsible way that really is sustainable for not only government of Manitoba, but it helps municipalities actually make a difference in their communities.

So for us to do that is significant, so when we brought forth the \$42-million Manitoba GRO project, that is something we're going to be able to do.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): We know that, by now, shovels should be in the ground on nine new schools with attached daycares in Winnipeg and across rural Manitoba.

We know that the Minister for Education cancelled the tender for those involved in the Manitoba Schools Project last October, shortly after this NDP Cabinet was sworn in and then refused to provide funding for them in budget '24.

In fact, the minister cut the education capital budget by \$100 million total in this year's budget, leading to further hallway education for Manitoba students.

Seeing as new schools—and you know, honourable Chair, I think the minister and I—you know, I get it; this new acting minister shares the same opinion as the previous minister, that they don't like the P3 model. That's their discretion as government. We think it's too bad.

But, nonetheless, you know, I think the minister and I, in the Estimates process, agreed that these—you know, she calls it back-of-the-napkin school planning, which I criticized. And I think she's come around to recognize that these nine schools were actually not, you know, made up, pulled out of a hat with a bunny by the PCs. But the schools, the nine schools, were in fact identified by school divisions as the most pressing need for those divisions in terms of space. I think the minister and I have come to an agreement that she's recognized that we didn't just make them up, that they were, in fact, identified by education leaders as desperately needed.

So if this minister doesn't like the P3 model, and this government doesn't like the P3 model, that's fine. But why are they refusing to build them with provincial funds?

And so, seeing as new schools are an urgent concern for families across this province and that the cost increases for every day of delay by this NDP government to build these schools, we know that these nine schools were desperately needed, were put forward by the education system as desperately needed to meet the needs of students.

Does this minister plan to build these nine schools with public funds? And does she have an estimate on how much the cost of each of these nine schools is increasing every day that she and her government refuse to get a shovel in the ground to build them?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you to the member for the question about school capital and the opportunity to talk a little bit about our plan and about the previous government's failed plan.

The truth of the matter is, honourable Chairperson, is that we are building schools. We've got four school projects right now that can be described as, you know, shovels in the ground. We've got two schools in the works for the Sage Creek community, one DSFM school and another one for the Louis Riel School Division. There is one school in the works for Seven Oaks, and there is another school set to open for next fall in the community of Steinbach in the Hanover School Division.

So I'd argue that we're making really good progress since forming government just one year ago. We are assessing space utilization across the province with a study, a space utilization study, to be able to assess where the need is greatest and where we should put our resources.

* (15:30)

And we're going to do that in a responsible way, in a deliberate way, in a way that serves the interests of Manitobans and in a way that puts us on a path back to balance.

I hate to disagree with the member opposite, but on the record, he has stated that we agree about the previous government's failed plan. And quite frankly, unfortunately, we don't agree. We don't agree that their plan was not written on the back of the—of a napkin. Frankly, it was.

And I'll remind the member and the committee that the member opposite has stated this publicly on the record to the Winnipeg Free Press. I'm quoting: Money did not need to be set aside last year because the school contracts were not set.

The truth of the matter is, honourable Chairperson, that they had no plan. And their—the plan that they did have was costing Manitoba taxpayers an exorbitant and an unsustainable amount of money. Under the model used by the previous, former, failed Stefanson government, costs for school construction soared. They were completely out of control.

The truth of the matter is, honourable Chairperson, that the average cost per school in Manitoba tripled under their leadership; tripled the average cost per school. The cost per student here in Manitoba is the highest in Canada today after seven and a half year of their failed leadership. The cost per student in Manitoba after seven and a half years of their failed model is more than double the cost that it is in Ontario. Their model was simply fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable.

So thank goodness we have a new government here in Manitoba. One that is responsible. One that is working in the best interests of Manitoba to come up with a sustainable plan that will see more schools built. Very excited about our next budget where Manitobans can learn a little bit more about our plan to build schools here in Manitoba, which we're going to do.

As I said, we are reviewing the space utilization study. We are assessing the need across the province. And we're going to build schools in a way that meets the needs of students and the community while also putting us back on a path to balance.

Very proud of our progress so far. We know the need is great after years of underfunding by the previous government, and we know that the plan that we

have is realistic. The plan put forward that the member opposite likes to talk about all the time, these nine schools that they were going to build: well, they didn't build them. They didn't have a realistic plan to build them. They created false hope for Manitobans.

That's not something we're going to do. We're here to bring real hope for Manitobans. We're going to deliver real results. And we're going to do that in a fiscally responsible way that serves the needs of the community, and most importantly, serves the needs of students in Manitoba.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): During Estimates on October 16, I asked the Minister for Advanced Education and Training for an update on the cyber-attack that happened at the University of Winnipeg. You'll recall thousands of students, faculty and staff had their personal and financial information stolen.

When I asked the minister who was responsible for the attack and what was being done to bring them to justice, she refused to answer. She called it, and I quote, a dangerous precedent, unquote.

That's deeply disrespectful to all the people who had their information stolen and who have no idea where their data has ended up. They deserve a clear answer.

So Honourable Speaker, I ask the minister again: Who were the hackers behind the cyberattack on the University of Winnipeg earlier this spring, and will they be brought to justice?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): You know, the question that the member opposite asked is a really important one. The cybersecurity attack at the University of Winnipeg was, you know, very impactful for the students and for the staff members involved.

You know, as we know, there are security—cybersecurity issues affecting many, many, many large institutions and it is an evolving—a rapidly evolving industry. There are bad actors in many corners and it is imperative upon all of us to be safe with our data, to invest in additional security; two-factor authentication is very important.

And I would just like to provide a bit of an update in that the University of Winnipeg has concluded its investigation. And they restored access to community users and taken additional steps to secure the network. As of today, no misuse of the stolen data has been identified and the U of W has offered two years of credit monitoring for affected individuals.

Importantly, Manitoba aid stepped in to assist students financially impacted by the change to the school term—you'll recall that there was an extension of the school term to help deal with some of the interruption—to ensure that they had sufficient funding to complete the extended term.

* (15:40)

The University of Winnipeg has also created a new position of chief information security officer, whose role will be to continue to monitor.

And I just want to reiterate what I told the member during the Estimates process, which is that the findings of this investigation are being very carefully considered by the institution, and they have strengthened their protocols. But it's important that we don't give notoriety to bad actors in the system, and that we don't inadvertently put students, faculty, other folks at additional risk by publicizing the names and by inviting additional actors to participate.

The university is reviewing the independent forensic analysis to determine how it may be applied to system-wide improvements.

And, you know, I do want to commend the university for acting swiftly. It is a very unfortunate incident that no institution wants to deal with. And it is—I know it was incredibly stressful for the staff and for current students, former students. Many of the folks on this side of the bench were impacted by the data breach.

And, you know, I want to, again, commend the folks who dealt with it swiftly and take this opportunity to remind the member opposite about the year-over-year cuts that institutions faced and that under their government and their leadership, many programs were cut.

And we are still in the process of rebuilding. There was inequitable and volatile funding to post-secondary institutions. Every institution received either a freeze or a cut during that time, and there were no program expansions to train additional people in cybersecurity.

So while I appreciate the concern now, I would implore the member opposite to perhaps ask some of the colleagues that are sitting on those benches now what they could have done to help prevent this incident and investments that they could have made.

Thank you.

Mrs. Cook: My colleague asked last week in Estimates about mental health workers being hired in rural areas. The minister's mandate states that the NDP would hire 100 mental health workers to work alongside police forces across the province.

But despite this promise, the minister refused to provide a clear answer on how many of these mental health workers have been hired in rural Manitoba thus far.

So can the minister confirm today how many of these mental health workers have actually been hired in rural Manitoba to date?

* (15:50)

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister responsible for Mental Health): So I want to thank the member for that question.

I was pleased to join KIM in their announcement of their mobile outreach van a couple of weeks ago, where we announced services to five surrounding communities but also to the City of Thompson.

There was six members from the community that—actually—or, five; pardon me. Five members of the community actually came and spoke about the impact that that van has had in that community. And that van has only been mobile for about—it was less than a month.

So these were folks that didn't access mental health supports, didn't access any primary health care in their community, weren't accessing any services, really. And they talked about the impact that it had on building relationship within a trusting hand-off within the health-care system and really creating a support network of getting the care that they need.

So I was able to meet with six of the folks that were providing these services. That was—they were nurses, psychiatric nurses, folks that have been working in rural communities, which is, you know, they live in the community, they're all First Nations, so to provide services, again, to five surrounding communities and the town of Thompson.

This has been lacking for many, many years under the previous government. So they were so happy, these communities, but also the town of Thompson, to finally have some services and access to mental health supports, to a—from a harm reduction approach and also to have access to reproductive services. They're able to do exams right in this van. They're able to connect people to the resources that they need.

And some of these folks spoke about trying to access services but didn't really feel comfortable accessing these services. And they spoke about just how warm and compassionate the care was that these folks were providing.

Members opposite would remember the announcement about our FACT and ACT teams. And these folks are doing phenomenal work, and these teams are meant to support and help keep folks housed in the community. These are folks that would be, you know, in the hospital, that have extra needs. They would be in homes that would be supported—homes by—that would be supported by many people.

And these are teams that help support people in their homes to be independent. And these teams are a continuum of care. So we all know life happens, so if someone is experiencing, you know, an episode in their life where they need extra care, they go up to the FACT team. And if they need, you know, a lower level of care, they come down to the ACT team.

And this is reaching 300 more Manitobans. So 300 more Manitobans in our province are receiving care that they weren't receiving before. These are folks that may be homeless, folks that may enter into incarceration, folks that, again, may be hospitalized due to, you know, mental health reasons.

So I just want to lift up, you know, these teams that are out there that are supporting—and again, these are enhancements to these teams. These are new folks that are added to the system to support folks living in the community that otherwise wouldn't be able to live in the community, that would be hospitalized in mental health centres, that would be in other levels of care homes. And, you know, they're doing phenomenal work in our community.

And, again, I want to lift up all of the folks that are on the front lines that are providing mental health care. We know that under the previous government that there was a lot of cuts that were made to services, and we are a listening government and we have been hearing and—

The Chairperson: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Will the minister please tell the committee how many seasonal staff were hired in Manitoba parks this year and how many received layoff notices earlier than normal this fall?

* (16:00)

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you to the member opposite for the question about Parks and Parks staff. The member knows it's one of my favourite things to talk about. One of the most vibrant parts of the portfolio in the Department of Environment and Climate Change is that of Manitoba's provincial parks.

Cutting straight to the heart of the question, and the member opposite—I will remind the member opposite of what we talked about in the Estimates process, which is that—and the truth of the matter is, honourable Chairperson, is that there were no layoffs. There were no layoffs in the Parks department.

The Parks department operates with a complement of both permanent staff and a complement of seasonal staff, and that's because of the nature of how parks operate. Many of our provincial parks, some of them are open year-round, but some of them are very seasonal, and they are only open during spring, summer and fall months, or when the weather and the conditions are co-operating.

So we depend on those seasonal staff, and we're so grateful for them. And, again, because of that variable nature of parks operations, sometimes those seasonal staff's seasons are extended and sometimes they are not.

We value all of our staff at Parks, and again I've mentioned this during question period, but I'll take the opportunity again here today to acknowledge and thank all of the incredible staff at Manitoba parks and trails that keep our parks accessible and clean. They provide programming; they serve park users and campers; and they make the experience of visiting Manitoba parks all that more special and beautiful and enjoyable.

The member opposite wants to talk about cuts. Well, the former Heather Stefanson PC government cut the department in half during their time in government. The department, including the Parks department, the Parks Branch, was slashed and burned. Not only did they cut positions and fire workers, the workers that were left—what—when we formed government in October, the vacancy rate in the department was close to 30 per cent.

Under the PCs' watch, environmental inspections were cut in half. Under the PCs' watch, they tried to sell off and privatize our beautiful Manitoba parks and park services.

Under our government, we are proud of our public resource in our parks.

They will—Manitoba parks will always remain public underneath an NDP government. We are investing in our Parks staff, we're investing in our parks infrastructure, we're rebuilding our department. We're cleaning up the mess left behind by the previous government.

We have seen some great capital investments this summer across Manitoba parks, some of those parks that I had the pleasure of visiting. I got to see first-hand this summer, honourable Chairperson, the work being done to restore the beautiful Nutimik museum, and we expect that to be open soon for Manitobans to enjoy and to learn a little bit more about the rich cultural and natural history of our parks.

Thank you.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I asked minister last week about enforcement, and it's come to our attention COs have been told not to enforce. Can the minister answer now if this is, in fact, true?

* (16:10)

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Happy to always speak regarding our conservation officers.

First of all, I just want to take a couple minutes to show our government's appreciation for the work that they do. We know how challenging it is for conservation officers. They're on the front lines every day. They spend time out in some of the most remote areas of our province. Communities—they assist communities, and they help to protect people in some of the very challenging situations that they might be facing.

Conservation officers obviously spend time building relationships with community members, educating folks on current regulations and laws, and they build relationships, as well, with Indigenous and First Nations communities, and they do a really good job of ensuring that we're protecting our natural resources, as well. And this goes both from the perspective of within Parks and partnering with Parks department. This also goes for working very closely with our Fisheries Branch. They obviously play a large role assisting during wild-fire season. And so during that fire season when it gets very busy and they're called on for additional assistance, Chair, our conservation officers play a role in helping out, and so we're very happy and proud of that work that they do.

And so I want to just send a message that—to all the conservation officers that we really value, appreciate the work you do, understand how challenging it

is, and we're grateful that you're doing it on behalf of Manitoba. We really feel that in many cases, conservation officers represent the face of the government in many cases. And so we appreciate them being able to do that work with an amount of diligence and care that they do, and our government continues to find ways to support them.

Now, to answer very directly to member opposite's question, we—conservation officers absolutely enforce the laws. That is their job, and they'll continue to enforce the laws. And so we know that that is something that conservation officers are—have done, are doing and will continue to do.

But beyond that, honourable Chair, I want to say very clearly that we know that the conservation officers in the past few years have been in many ways impacted by the cuts of the former government. And we just know that, you know, there has been an especially high and a particularly high vacancy rate with the conservation officers. And that was, quite frankly, it felt and it has been felt with conservation officers.

So, you know, since I took a role and we got into the position here, you know, we saw the vacancy rate being so high and we got immediately to work in trying to address that, recruiting more conservation officers and really diving into what it takes to retain conservation officers, recruit them and retain them.

And so we spend a lot of time listening to those folks to best understand their position and the work that they do. I personally have been out to conservation officers in their offices up in Churchill, out in The Pas and Flin Flon, and met with folks around in eastern Manitoba and western Manitoba and these—to see first-hand the really important work that they do.

Day that might take them out many hours out in the truck, you know, driving out and investigating a situation with an animal that might pose a threat. Another day might take them up on a helicopter. Another day might take them out in a boat inspecting, you know, folks who are doing some fishing.

And the scope and the range of tasks that they are charged with is impressive and so not only do we want to understand what makes them, you know, what makes them successful in that job, but what will help to recruit and retain more conservation officers.

And so, I'm very happy to report that, you know, because of that work that we're doing and the team has been doing, we have not only taken the vacancy rate that was previous under the former government, but

we've actually now cut that in half. And so that goes directly into the work that the conservation officers do every day, being able to address that vacancy rate that's cut by more than half, in fact.

And so, having that little bit, showing a little bit of progress in terms of revitalizing the Conservation Officer Service allows our government to not only talk about how important we believe conservation officers are, but to really show that our government is serious about improving the service—you know, Conservation Officer Service.

So, again, to all those conservation officers out there, thank you.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I just wanted—before I get to my question, I heard earlier this afternoon, we were talking about the GROW project, and I have studied the GROW fund a fair bit.

And I just wanted to table a document for anybody that wants to have a look at it. And just a little bit of background information is: The Manitoba government will create a \$52-million endowment fund for the GRowing Outcomes in Watersheds, or GROW program.

As part of its commitment to implement home-grown province-wide programs, the GROW program will support enhancements of ecological goods and services on private land, helping landowners contribute to reduced flooding, improved water quality and nutrient management, and support overall goals of the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan. And I just wanted to make reference that the date on that was June 11, 2019. That was the past PC government's program.

My question is: Much has been said in the news about the Cereals Canada proposed Global Agriculture Technology Exchange, or the Gate project. The estimated cost is currently \$100 million. There's approximately \$18 million in private money committed to this project. MP Terry Duguid recently expressed the federal government's openness to fund the project.

Does the minister support the Department of Agriculture's funding the Gate if they were asked? And a secondary question is: Which main appropriation category would that funding be coming from, and what is the current budget of that category?

Thank you.

* (16:20)

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Agriculture—and I appreciate the question's been brought forward—you know, when we talk about the importance of agriculture and the continuation of the importance of agriculture, and I just want to share some of the data that I'm sure members opposite are quite familiar with, is the importance of what agriculture contributes to our province. When we talk about 7.2 per cent of our GDP and over 5 per cent of our provincial jobs is directly linked to agriculture and agri-food international exports, where it reaches a total of \$9.39 billion in 2023.

As we all know, we want to foster sustainable growth for Manitoba producers and agri-businesses through innovation, reliable supports and services. Our budget in 2024 addressed several key priorities, ensuring a strong, competitive agriculture sector. As I said earlier, agriculture is a key component to our province. And we continue to work towards added value of opportunity—as I will get to your question eventually, but I need to set some premises of the importance of your question that relates to this. So let's do some history on it.

So the strong agriculture need is reliable and responsive to assist producers in managing the risk. But the added-value component, I think, is the real important question that's being asked today. And we can't remain stagnant of opportunities that we want to bring into the province of Manitoba.

Where we are geographically located in the province of Manitoba is very unique. Just in the recent months of travelling to tri-national accord I was at, we were down in the state of Minnesota with the state fair. I thank members opposite and to the MLA from Portage la Prairie. There was such a great working relationship that we have with our neighbours to the south, and we need to emphasize the importance of continuing and building the relationship that we have with our neighbours to the south and down into Mexico as well.

I think the other key component—as we've seen, changes have happened in the agriculture sector—is the rail logistics movement that has recently been changed. And we talk about the Kansas City and CP Rail System that now has formed a partnership—an opportunity of moving of cargo from the province of Manitoba down south, or opposite, from the US coming up into Manitoba—in fact, all the way up to Churchill. And I'm sure members opposite really support the Port of Churchill and the opportunity that

there is to have the port to be used in our province of Manitoba.

But I want to ensure members opposite, when we—not to be stagnant, and to the question that was—been brought up by the members opposite, is the importance of the Gate project. That is an important project—as we know, you know, was the Canadian Wheat Board building, and it's been turned Cereals Canada.

And as we talked about the innovation movement forward in agriculture, that is currently seriously under consideration. We know that we need to have members' involvement and organizations involved in it, from farm and agriculture organizations to the grain companies and added-value companies that will be, but we value the importance of the Gate project because we've had such a historical—when you have an opportunity that is a recognized organization that's worldwide, I think the continuation of the positivity and measuring the importance of the Gate project is definitely in consideration and discussion.

But it's going to take a team effort to move forward on this, along with the producers and producers organizations and other companies that directly use this company or this opportunity of moving forward for the betterment of the agriculture producers, not only today but into the futures that we see—the value worldwide.

Thank you for the question.

Mr. Jackson: I would just reflect on the Minister of Agriculture's (Mr. Kostyshyn) comment there that he got to his answer, I think he admitted, after four minutes of preamble and three minutes and 15 seconds of prep time.

So aside from the government seeming to have a strategy of just wasting time this afternoon completely in delaying their answers, I'd like to reflect a little bit on the Minister of Education's response to my last question.

Quite aside from the minister showing her complete illiteracy—[*interjection*]

The Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Jackson: —both in how an RFQ—[*interjection*]

The Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Jackson: —and an RFP works and also—[*interjection*]

The Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Jackson: –how a P3 model works, it's actually alarming that both this–*[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Jackson: –minister and the procurement minister are cancelling badly needed capital projects, and they don't even understand the basic principle–

The Chairperson: Can we please stop the clock.

I would like to be able to hear the question, and I think the minister would probably like to hear the question–whichever minister this question is geared towards.

Mr. Jackson: And so in spite of this minister and the procurement minister–are cancelling badly needed capital projects, and they don't even understand the basic principle in a P3 model that the private sector pays the initial investment, and then the province purchases the asset with payments over an extended multi-decade period of time.

* (16:30)

Quite aside from the fact that she has made it perfectly clear on the record multiple times that she is illiterate on how this process works, if–I find her comments today terribly, terribly disrespectful to our civil servants. She calls the nine Manitoba Schools Project the back of a napkin.

It's not just–I hope she knows it's not just politicians she's taking a run at, or businesses–which, you know, we know the socialists over there love to take a run–love to run through the mud, particularly large businesses that, you know, create jobs, grow our economy, build Manitoba's infrastructure. We know they love to take a run at those businesses. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jackson: But this plan, the nine schools plan, does she know it was written by civil servants and education sector leaders from across school divisions? Does she know that the formal RFQ outlining the schools, their size, the–you know, distribution of their size, the requirements, et cetera–does she know that those were written by civil servants in her own department and the procurement division of public services?

So will this minister, after calling all those civil servants' work the back of a napkin, fake or not a real plan, will this part-time Education minister on the other side who's running the department off the side of her desk, will she apologize to those civil servants for her comments today?

The Chairperson: Before I recognize the acting Education Minister, I would like to just acknowledge that we're getting Thursday afternoon energy on Tuesday.

So, if we could maintain a level of decorum for the next 24 minutes, that would be appreciated by many in the room. And accuracy is also worth striving for, so where other words were used previously, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt) is, in fact, the acting Minister of Education.

So with that, the acting Minister of Education.

MLA Schmidt: Thank you very much for your guidance, honourable Chairperson. It's a lot to unpack in that question, if you can call it that.

Honourable Chairperson, I'm happy to take the shots fired at us from the opposition, because when they're taking shots at us in government, thank goodness they are no longer taking shots at students here in Manitoba, putting students in harm's way during their disastrous, disastrous failed election campaign.

You'd think that they may have learned from the results of that sort of divisive rhetoric, but obviously they haven't. They're–on that side of the House, they're focused on taking shots at me and at the agricultural minister, who, I might add, provided a fantastic, contemplative answer–substantive, beautiful. We are very proud of our agricultural minister, and I want to put that on the record after some of the embarrassing comments made by the opposition.

It's fine if the member opposite wants to spend his time in this House cutting me down as a person because that means they're no longer cutting the public service, which is what they did for seven and a half years. So he can spend his time unwisely in this House cutting me down as a person, calling me names, honourable Chairperson, calling me illiterate, taking the opportunity to mansplain P3 models.

But I'm not surprised, honourable Chairperson. And I want to take this opportunity to talk about–on a day where members on this side are standing in solidarity with women elected to Houses across this country and across democratic nations–I want to talk about some of the misogyny that we see in this House.

Earlier today, we heard the member from Brandon West talk about a work trip taken by one of our members, one of our Cabinet ministers, and talked about it as a shopping trip, honourable Chairperson. That's misogyny. I'll put it on the record today, tomorrow and every day: that is misogyny. There is

no way the member of Brandon West would've accused a male member of taking a trip and calling it a shopping trip.

* (16:40)

And this is why the members opposite are sitting on that side of the House, because Manitobans are sick of divisive, negative leadership. Manitobans are looking for hope. They're looking for unity. They're looking for the Manitoba NDP, and thank goodness we were elected a year ago in October.

The member opposite talks about wasting time; let's talk about wasting money. I mentioned this in my last answer, honourable Chairperson, and it's worth repeating. When it comes to school capital projects, the average cost per school in Manitoba under the failed Heather Stefanson government tripled. An average cost of \$25 million per school under their failed leadership has ballooned to over \$75 million per school. It's unexplainable. It's failed leadership. It's lack of control, it's lack of direction.

Manitobans have a government that they can trust, a Manitoban that is going to work with the public servants. And the member opposite tried to imply that I was disrespecting public servants; absolutely not. We're not—the school divisions put forward their plans. We're going to work with school divisions to actually accomplish those plans, unlike the previous government who made a plan on a back of a napkin, making false hope for Manitobans.

They had no plan to build those schools. We're going to build them.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): My question would be for the minister responsible for Municipal and Northern Relations, and the concern that we're hearing from municipalities about cuts and the failure to fulfill support promised to municipalities across the province.

Municipalities from corner to—*[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Order. Order.

Member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) and the Minister of Health, I'd ask that you come to order.

I would love to hear the question from the member from La Vérendrye.

Mr. Narth: As I was saying, municipalities from across our great province are growing short on patience to see the promised support that this minister has told them that they deserve to receive. Under the previous PC government there were a number of different pro-

grams for municipalities across our province. Many of those programs have since been cut and replaced by programs that use a different title but have copy and pasted program delivery only to receive much less funding.

Much of that funding has drastically been cut. We see that with the Municipal Economic Development Infrastructure Program being replaced by Manitoba GRO. The only thing that it changed is the support and the funding, \$2.5-million cut. Further to that, we see the BSC funding cut, Green Team funding cut, community development program funding cut and the list goes on.

So the concern that I have today relates to the From the Ground Up program that has been brought forward by the NDP government and a cut to a program that was under the previous PC government. Many municipalities have been dependent on the previous Community Planning Assistance grant to fund the provincially mandated five-year review of their development plan and zoning bylaw.

The previous program used to automatically fund the process for any municipality going through a review. And it's outlined in The Municipal Act, section 44.1(b), that municipalities must consult with a qualified land-use planner. Many municipalities recently have seen that they are cut from this funding. Funding that was automatically provided to municipalities in the past, now are leaving them in the dark on whether or not there is support that they are able to access.

So my question, on behalf of many municipalities that are frustrated that they're mandated to provide a review—and I think many municipalities and many Manitobans see the value in reviewing a development plan and zoning bylaw—the concern is that municipalities are really starting to notice the effects of the cuts of the NDP government and the cuts to valuable support to municipalities.

So my question is: How does the minister plan to support municipalities in their mandated five-year development and zoning bylaw review?

* (16:50)

Mr. Bushie: There's a lot to unpack there. By the time the member actually got to his question, he left a lot for us to be able to unpack. And I will say, some of the commentary from the member is very divisive, and it really kind of lends to the—kind of the way that they've been operating.

The member referred to what they deserve to receive when it came time to municipalities and Manitobans. And I must say, what they deserve to receive is a better government, which they got a year ago. What they deserve to receive is a member who does not vote against trans kids and then hide in the stairwell of the Legislature.

And again, Mr. Chair, I realize there's definite shadow Cabinet auditions going on there for the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), but at the same time, I think it's clear on our side when it comes to municipalities that we're investing.

So the member tries to put out a narrative of cuts and what municipalities deserve to receive. Well, they deserve to receive funding predictability. They don't deserve frozen funding, which is what they received under the previous government. They deserve predictability, which is what we provide each and every day.

And it's very interesting that when the member talks about programs that were just basically slush funds by the previous government, one-offs, nothing predictable, nothing sustainable. And yet, members opposite continue to still—not in this space—but they still continue to get out there and try and create divisiveness, but at the same time are standing behind our very announcements, our very commitments.

And I remember being out in—and we had committee, Committee of Supply, for our department yesterday. And the member—the critic—who is failing to ask these questions, mind you, did not have an opportunity. He was short about maybe 10, 15 minutes because the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) was standing up on a grievance to try and justify why he was voting against our investment in the PCH in Lac du Bonnet.

But yet, the Leader of the Opposition was sitting in the front row applauding while we were out there in Lac du Bonnet giving the great news to the citizens of Lac du Bonnet.

And then, that also reminds me as well, I was privileged to be able to get out into Taché and Lorette the other day. And we talked about the commitment to the—there that we did to the Taché Community Centre. And it's our commitment to get there, and we came out there and we had a firm commitment.

And I know, and don't take my word for it or the great people of Taché or the great people of Lorette. Perhaps they should talk to the member from Dawson Trail, who was also sitting in a front row applauding

that great announcement we had for the community in Lorette.

An Honourable Member: Just applauding that you finally found his constituency.

Mr. Bushie: Is—they coming out there? Highway 207. Oh, lookit; blank stares across because Highway 207 took me to Lorette and Taché. I know members opposite don't even realize where that is. Northern Manitoba. Our investments in the community in Thompson. I know members opposite, for the most part, this is the furthest north they've ever been, is their seat here in the Legislature, which is shameful.

But Honourable Speaker, when we come time to investing in municipalities, we have, you know, over \$42 million in Manitoba GRO fund, 12 and a half million dollars From the Ground Up, \$6 million in Green Team and \$24 million for the Manitoba Water Services Board. That's \$85 million in grants available to municipalities. That's investment in municipalities, and that's giving municipalities what they deserve.

They deserve a better government, which is what they are getting today. When the member opposite talks about what they deserve to receive, did they deserve to receive frozen funding under the previous government? No, they did not. They deserve predictability, and they called for that time and time again.

And, Honourable Speaker, I still—and I referred to this in my earlier comments, too—is when we talk about engaging with municipalities, what's the better way to see your impact? AMM gave us a report card. They gave us a report card where they talked about our 2 per cent municipal board—municipal funding predictability that we had; 2 per cent to the strategic infrastructure basket; 24 per cent for the Water Services Board.

Expedite our Bill 37. Again, something that was very heavy-handed by the government, and I'll table that report card here for the committee, Honourable Speaker—or, honourable Chair—so member's opposite can see that. I know they want to be able to pull out old documents, and they talk about, you know, recycling their various programs that were, again, written on the back of a napkin. But that's just shameful.

Mr. Perchotte: The Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) promised to keep our universities and colleges whole after the federal government cut permits for international students.

Colleges and universities are now losing hundreds of students and millions of dollars of revenue, and

they are passing those costs along to students, with tuition hikes up to 5 and a half per cent. Obviously, the minister has broken her promise and is not keeping our schools whole. She's forcing students to foot the bill.

Honourable Chair, my question is this: Are contingency funds being allocated from this year's budget to keep universities and colleges whole, and can she commit today that funding will be in place for Budget 2025 to avoid more tuition hikes next school year?

MLA Cable: I know that we are close to wrapping for the day, and I really just wanted to take an opportunity to put a few words on the record.

And really to take the opportunity to remind the member opposite about the years of underfunding that happened under the previous government. And to take a moment to remind the members that every year that they were in government, institutions saw reductions,

with the exception of the year leading up to the election. And so I will give credit where credit is due.

But every institution that I've spoken with talked about the difficulties in the relationship between their institution and the previous government.

We are not doing what the members opposite did. We are working towards sustainable funding for post-secondary institutions, and we have moved all of our resources to focus in on student success. So—

The Chairperson: Order.

* (17:00)

The hour being 5 p.m., committee rise and call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

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