

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 22, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

I'd ask that you please remain standing.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House for leave: (1) for the Speaker to dispense with calling introduction of bills, committee reports, tabling of reports and ministerial statements today; (2) to have only one member's statement today, with the understanding that the official opposition will use their two statements from today sometime later this session; (3) to waive the two-minute time limit on a member's statement delivered today by the honourable member for Waverley; (4) for the House to observe a moment of silence after the statement; (5) for the House to recess up to 30 minutes, followed by the statement by the honourable member for Waverley, with a two-minute bell to summon members at the end of the recess. As part of this agreement, the House must resume by 2:30 at the latest.

The Speaker: Leave has been requested for the Speaker to dispense with calling introduction of bills, committee reports, tabling of reports and ministerial statements today; (2) to have only one member's statement today, with the understanding that the official opposition will use their two statements from today

sometime later this session; (3) to waive the two-minute time limit on a member's statement delivered today by the honourable member for Waverley; (4) for the House to observe a moment of silence after the statement; (5) for the House to recess for up to 30 minutes following the statement by the honourable member for Waverley, with a two-minute bell to summon members at the end of the recess. As part of this agreement, the House must resume by 2:30 at the latest.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: At this time I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today the family of fallen firefighter Preston Heinbigner. We have with us Shayda Tashakor, Elaine Heinbigner, Robert Heinbigner, Mona Taskador *[phonetic]*, Farshid Taskador *[phonetic]*, Dalain Gagne, Roxanne Tessier, Stephane Mitton, Lindsay Hebert, Gary *[phonetic]* Geron, Asha Geron, Chantal Pachal, Bill Pachal, Andrea Mucska, Steve Obelnicki, Jenna Loder and Cherie-Ann Sheppard.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Preston Heinbigner

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Today, I pay tribute to Preston Heinbigner, a devoted firefighter, cherished husband, father, son and dear friend.

Recently, at just 40 years old, we lost Preston. He dedicated his life to serving our community and safeguarding Manitobans. Preston embodied selflessness, humility, service to others and left an indelible mark on all who knew him.

His family has bravely asked that we recognize the immense challenges first responders face. Their roles demand intense emotional resiliency as they bear witness to life's fragility and offer comfort during our darkest times.

Preston balanced these heroic acts with personal struggle; the impacts of his duty. I've been reflecting on the phrase, it's okay to not be okay, and as a fellow

firefighter, I affirm the importance of embracing this mindset fully.

We need a commitment across our ranks to be open and honest about needing help. The work we do exposes us to relentless stress and trauma, and acknowledging when we're not okay is the first step towards healing.

True resiliency is found when we break the silence and make space to share the quiet battles within us.

These words are not just reassurance. They're a call to action for the well-being of every first responder.

To Shayda, Oslo and Preston's family, we support and stand with you. Your courage in the face of such profound loss and your advocacy for better support for the mental and emotional well-being of our first responders remind us that the challenges Preston faced are too common among all who serve on the front lines.

* (13:40)

I would ask that we reflect on Preston's life and his commitment to others, and let this strengthen our resolve to support the well-being of those who protect us.

Honourable Speaker, I ask for leave from the House to observe a moment of silence in honour of Preston Heinbigner.

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

A moment of silence was observed.

The Speaker: I'd ask that all members remain standing while the piper pipes the family.

Please be seated.

As previously agreed, there will now be a 30-minute recess, followed by a two-minute bell to call the House back to order. In all cases, we will be resuming by 2:30.

The House is now in recess.

The House recessed at 1:42 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:13 p.m.

The Speaker: The honourable—[interjection] Order, please.

We are resuming session.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): As per our previous leave, is it leave of—is it the will

of the House to continue our recess until 2:30 p.m. with a two-minute bells beforehand?

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to continue the recess until 2:30 with a two-minute bell? [Agreed]

The bell will be two minutes before 2:30.

The House recessed at 2:14 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Order, please. We will now resume session.

Routine proceedings.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Nominee Program Draws Premier's Knowledge of Labour Minister's Conduct

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, on behalf of PC caucus, condolences definitely go out to the Heinbigner family and, of course, Shayda and their son Oslo, and their new addition that they're expecting in the upcoming fall.

Honourable Speaker, members on this side of the House have raised some significant concerns about the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) threatening to interfere with Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program draws.

Since we shed light on the issue, more individuals have come forward to corroborate the story, making the NDP's denial confusing.

I've got some important questions. The question to the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is simple: When did he know about the minister's threats? Was he aware of the threats the minister made before they were brought up in the House?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): You know, we had a pretty sombre start to sitting in the House this week, and, you know, on this side of the House we certainly send our condolences and strength and prayers and support to the family and to front-line workers, you know, first responders, firefighters, EMS, police, all those working on the front lines who show up for Manitobans in some of their worst moments, quite frankly, and provide the care that Manitobans depend on.

Our Minister for Immigration is doing an excellent job addressing the issues that were unaddressed by the previous government cuts made to the department incapacity—or on immigration in our province, and she's

going to continue to do a great job, and we support her fully.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, once again, no answers from this Premier (Mr. Kinew). Members on this side of the House do not doubt the veracity of the complaints we have received about the minister's threats. The fact that hopeful newcomers who are in immigration limbo would risk their immigration status to raise these issues is heroic and deserves more respect from this Premier.

I understand the Premier himself met with a group of hopeful newcomers who had protested here at the Manitoba Legislature. It's so far unclear at which meeting the minister decided to make her threats.

So, for clarity, I have to ask this Premier: Was he, in fact, in the room when the minister threatened the hopeful newcomers?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our Premier and minister have done a lot of outreach—a lot of outreach—in the months that we've been in government. The Premier and the minister have met with protesters; they've met with families; they've met with advocates. And on this side of the House, we're going to continue to meet with folks who express their concerns in terms of the decisions made, handed down by the federal government.

We're going to continue to work with those on the front lines of immigration in our province and work with all levels of government to make sure that, here in Manitoba, the pathways to becoming a Manitoban, being a part of our Manitoba family, contributing to our economy, working in health care, are supported by this government, while also cleaning up the mess the previous government made on this file.

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

Mr. Ewasko: The words of this Deputy Premier are ringing hollow throughout this great province of ours. It's the actions that are deplorable, Honourable Speaker—in—the inaction.

When the Premier became aware that the minister threatened hopeful newcomers with a cancelled draw is an important detail. Whether or not the Premier was present for that threat is also important. If he knew

about the minister making such threats before they were raised in the Legislature, why did he fail to act?

And if he was present for the threat, why didn't he interject to restore the faith in the impartiality of the Provincial Nominee Program?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, some would argue it's deplorable that the previous PC government cut resources in the department so badly that we couldn't process over 2,000 folks who wanted to be here in Manitoba due to their cuts.

Some might say it's deplorable that the previous PC government created a head tax for those in the nominee program.

Some may say it's deplorable that instead of bringing people together in our province, members opposite continue on their train of division—their rhetoric of division—that hurts people across this province.

On this side of the House, we're focused on bringing people together, on making sure no matter who you are, you get to build a life here in Manitoba, and our Minister of Immigration is doing an outstanding job.

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

Provincial Nominee Program Protest Labour Minister—Interference Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, the only droop that is dividing Manitobans right now is that NDP government.

As long as the MLA for Notre Dame is the Minister of Immigration, the immigration process in Manitoba is compromised. Manitoba's immigration process needs to be impartial and free of interference. Unfortunately, those who are awaiting the next steps in becoming Manitobans do not have confidence in this minister. In fact, Honourable Speaker, they're afraid.

I'll table a transcript from a meeting between workers and students hopeful to remain in Manitoba. In this meeting, it's made clear that these individuals were informed by the minister there would be consequences of protesting.

If it's not a cancelled draw, as many people believe was implied, then the Premier (Mr. Kinew) needs to be clear: What are those consequences?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans made a decision when it

came to trust on October 3. Manitobans made very clear that trust was important to them, which is why they voted out members opposite and why they voted in a government that puts people first on this side the House.

Honourable Speaker, we know that during their time in government they cut capacity from the department. We know that the previous PC government led the highest out-migration this province has seen in over two decades. We know that immigration was being attacked and cut and undermined by the previous government.

On this side of the House, we're focused on people. We're focused on bringing people together. We're focused on immigration—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Provincial Nominee Program Request for Labour Minister to Resign

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, another great display of distracting, dodging and deflecting by this Deputy Premier. And again, no answers from the Premier.

We are bringing these concerns forward on behalf of hopeful Manitobans who want to remain in the province, who this minister threatened with consequences. They shared their story with us, and we brought that story here to the Assembly because it involves wrongdoings of this NDP government.

More and more individuals continue to come forward to share their stories with us, and more still are too afraid to come forward. The reputational harm to Manitoba on the international stage is already done, unfortunately.

So I have to ask the Premier: Will he remove the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) from her role today?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, I think we're all glad that Manitobans removed them from their role of government on October 3 in the election. And it's this kind of behaviour that's—that behaviour is the reason why Manitobans made that decision.

On this side of the House, we're focused on bringing people together. We're focused on working with all levels of government to make sure Manitoba has pathways in place to improve immigration in our

province. We're focused on moving things in a better direction. The highest out-migration in two decades under the previous government—we're improving that on this side of the House.

Our government is focused on making sure we have more capacity, not less. Our government is making sure that immigration in Manitoba is strong for generations to come.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, our job on this side of the House is to advocate and support new and hopeful Manitobans. Not like that side of the House, which seems to be dodging and deflecting and protecting their ministers, who on a day-to-day basis continue to threaten Manitobans.

The immigration process shouldn't depend on who you know or whether or not you're able to gain an audience with the minister and the Premier.

Making promises contingent on protests ending is the same as making threats to end protests.

Will the Premier do the right thing to restore confidence in Manitoba's immigration system by asking this failing minister to resign or removing the NDP MLA for Notre Dame from her duties as Minister of Labour and Immigration today, Honourable Speaker?

* (14:40)

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans have the strongest Immigration Minister they've had in almost eight years in this province, on this side of the House. A minister with expertise that predates her term being an elected official in Manitoba; expertise that Manitobans can count on to put people first.

Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we're focused on making sure that every single day, our government is working to improve immigration for Manitobans, challenging in—the federal government to improve on some of the decisions they've handed down to our province that don't put us in the position to best support folks who want a pathway to our province.

The minister's working each and every day on that. They've met with protesters. They've met with community members. They've engaged communities more than the previous government ever did.

We'll take no—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Provincial Nominee Program Draw Labour Minister—Interference Concerns

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, last week this NDP government denied the scandal of the Minister of Labour and Immigration threatening to interfere MPNP draws. They denied that she told potential applicants that draws would be cancelled if they continued to protest.

Honourable Speaker, more individuals have come forward with the truth. I table additional correspondence from a graduate international student.

Honourable Speaker, this minister needs to make it abundantly clear: Will she commit today that there will be no further interference in MPNP draws or scheduling?

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, the accusation that I have suspended or threatened to suspend draws is categorically false. No suspensions have ever occurred, and all that the members opposite needed to do was to check a website, and they would've seen that there have never been a suspension of draws.

So let me put the website on the record, Honourable Speaker. It's W-W-W-dot-immigrate-Manitoba-dot-C-A.

Honourable Speaker, I am tabling a document that shows we have not suspended any MPNP draws, and in fact, we have done consistent draws since I took on this role. The most recent one was two weeks ago—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, I quote: I have confirmed that I, as well as another international student, have received threats from that minister, threatening to stop the drawing of MPNP if we protest again before May. End quote. These are the words of an international student that is standing up to this NDP government and this minister.

So I ask the minister a simple question: Who is being honest with Manitobans, the students with everything to lose or this minister?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, since March, when all these protests began, in every single interaction that I've had in public or in private with folks who have raised this matter with me, whether it was through email, social media, by phone, in-person

meetings, in question period, at Tim Hortons or in gurdwara, my message has been the same.

I understand and empathize the difficult situation that folks are in. These difficulties were brought on by previous Tory cuts and mismanagement and by the fact that the federal government chose to cut out these temporary foreign workers.

My message has been the same: Manitoba needs your labour, and I am working with the federal government to allow these people to stay in the country. Immigration is a priority for our government, and our government is investing these resources into the MPNP.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Request for Labour Minister to Resign

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, and I quote: According to them, during their talks, that minister shouted at them and even slapped the table and said, how dare they challenge her like that? End quote.

This is behaviour that is unacceptable in any facet of society and even more so for a minister of the Crown. To quote again: This is totally a sign of having power and using it to dictate. End quote.

This minister must resign. Will she today?

MLA Marcelino: My message has never wavered. I am doing all I can to keep these folks in the country, and to improve our MPNP system. It is members opposite that are making slanderous accusations with no hard evidence.

My messages in public and private have all been the same. Members opposite are being careless about their privileges of freedom of speech in the Chamber. Those privileges need to be balanced with care for others' reputations. They are bringing forth damaging accusations with no evidence, no corroboration and no information for me to even be able to begin defending myself.

It is members opposite's bullying, baseless actions that are the threat to democracy—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Minister of Labour and PNP Program Newcomers Right to Protest

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Well, that was an interesting statement by the minister; not to suspend any draws—yet. Honourable Speaker, it is the

Charter of Rights and Freedoms, not the charter of wrongs and freedoms. And many wrongs do not make a right.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has repeatedly said that this is the people's building. They have invited anyone to exercise their democratic right here to protest, with the exception of those that give their government bad press. They're more worried about their government's reputation than Manitobans' reputation on the international front.

As the saying goes, when the cat's away, the mouse will play.

Was this a caucus decision made in the absence of the Premier, or was he informed?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, I was quite surprised when the member stood up and he started to talk about the people's building, about one Manitoba and I thought maybe, just maybe, Honourable Speaker, he'd finally gotten the message that Manitobans are sick of the division, they're sick of the misrepresentation of the facts and they want a new approach.

That's why I'm proud to be on a team—I'm proud to be with a Minister of Immigration that cares; that cares to meet with people, that cares to reach out to the public and cares to respond to their needs. And what is this minister doing but trying to repair the damage that was done by seven and a half years by the previous government.

So I stand with this minister, and we will stand each and every day—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: I'll agree with the Justice Minister: Manitobans are sick of the division, and these letters proved that. Honourable Speaker, it's a character right—it's a Charter right to association, assembly and expression. There's no Charter section that gives rights to threats, intimidation or coercion.

Federal law also speaks to abuse of power by a public official. And for this minister to threaten individuals by prohibiting protests right here is a blatant violation of such rights and freedoms.

Why is this NDP government ignoring the rights enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for newcomers for Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the truth is, Honourable Speaker, that members opposite have no proof that their accusations are spurious, and that they have no real connection with what's really happening on the ground.

This Minister of Immigration has met with folks—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —who are concerned about immigration. This Premier has met with folks who are concerned about their futures here in Manitoba. And every single time that they have met, they have heard the same message: that we welcome you, that we want to ensure that this issue that's been caused by the federal government, that we resolve it on our end and that we prioritize immigration.

That's been the message of one Manitoba and one future—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Perhaps this minister should look at the evidence of co-operation, thus these letters.

* (14:50)

Honourable Speaker, we have individuals from the international community scared to come forward out of fear of retribution and consequence. They have shared with us that this NDP government has blatantly threatened their dreams of becoming Manitobans as they exercise their democratic rights and protest against this government's poor management of the MPNP program. This is fundamentally wrong and a miscarriage of justice.

Why is this NDP adopting failed policies from dictatorships that these folks are so desperately seeking freedom from?

Mr. Wiebe: You know, Honourable Speaker, the words that are put on the record here in this place matter.

I know the member opposite had some notes prepared for him, I suppose by somebody in the back rooms there that thought they were being clever or that they would be able to make these accusations. There's no repercussions for them sitting in the back room. But these words matter to Manitobans, and these words are being heard by Manitobans.

And what they're hearing from this side of the House is a message of unity, a message of working together with people who want to build a future here

in Manitoba. We're going to do absolutely everything we can to make that a reality.

While the opposition will continue to divide Manitobans, we won't take that dark path. We'll continue to fight for Manitobans and fight—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Minister of Labour and PNP Program Newcomers Right to Protest

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): The constitutional rights and civil liberties of Manitobans are non-negotiable. They have protected rights to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

But the NDP Immigration Minister seems to treat those freedoms like a bit of a nuisance. Everyone has the right to peacefully protest and oppose NDP policies whether this minister or her government likes it or not.

So I need to ask, will the minister admit that she was wrong and stop infringing on the Charter rights of hopeful Manitobans?

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It's a very interesting question.

I'll just say this: We on this side of the House are working every day to repair the damage that was made by that former government. We have, Honourable Speaker, a minister in place that knows its portfolio inside out, makes the connections necessary and ensures that people are treated with dignity and respect—something they never got from members opposite.

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

Mr. Jackson: It's very interesting that the Minister for Education is answering these questions about immigration policy, but I guess a Cabinet shuffle is on the horizon.

The Charter guarantees Manitobans freedom of expression, 'feedom'—freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. Protests are one way Manitobans can speak truth to power and set a loud message to this NDP government about their reckless policies and manipulative behaviour. But this Immigration Minister wants to silence these Manitobans. That's dangerous.

So, again, I will ask: Will she stop infringing on the Charter rights of Manitobans and allow them to peacefully protest in front of this building?

MLA Altomare: Again, it's a privilege to be in this House.

That member, the member—the Minister of Immigration and Labour knows that this is a privilege and treats it like a privilege. Arrives to work every day with integrity and with purpose to make this place, Manitoba, a place that's attractive for immigrants, attractive for everybody in the world to bring their talents and opportunities here to this province. I can't think of a better person, either can anyone on this side of the House.

It's time for them to get on board and agree with us.

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

Mr. Jackson: Honourable Speaker, threatening immigrants to stop them from exercising their freedoms is unethical and wrong. It's also not treating this place like a 'priverige.' The Immigration Minister needs to stop this and apologize. She also needs to come clean on the infringement on these immigrants, as well as an infringement on all Manitobans.

Will she stop threatening these immigrants, apologize and retract her statements that infringe on their rights and the rights of all Manitobans?

MLA Altomare: I will continue supporting this Minister of Immigration and Labour every day as she arrives in this House to do the important work for Manitobans.

Right now we're a—busy repairing a damage left by the previous government. We're fully instituting a functioning health-care system. We're ensuring our public schools are fully funded with the supports they need to support new Manitobans coming into this province, and ask—after six months, not only have we got to work, we got lots more to do. Pay attention and we'll get it done.

Minister of Labour and PNP Program Call for Independent Investigation

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): We have tabled documents, letters and emails, and the members opposite will not deny what we are saying.

If the minister is not denying this happened, then it must be true. Manitobans deserve answers and they deserve more from this Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino). The international community has come forward with their credible fears, having heard directly from the minister herself. The PNP program was the gold standard and is now

destroyed under this NDP. It was a tool to bring people to Manitoba to make it a better province for everyone.

Will this Premier (Mr. Kinew) stand in his place, turn to the camera as he loves to do with that smirky smile on his face, and tell Manitobans—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

I would caution the member for Fort Whyte about the language that he used there, and perhaps maybe he should apologize for it.

Mr. Khan: I wasn't aware smirky smile was a negative comment, but I will apologize. I will apologize and say will the Premier turn to the camera and smile like he does and tell Manitobans that he will launch a full investigation into the scandal, or is the Premier afraid of the truth?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Honourable Speaker, I just want to begin my response by noting that we began with today with a tribute to a firefighter, and as a minister responsible for wildfire service and other front-line workers in Manitoba, specifically conservation officers.

I want to just add our thoughts and prayers with the family who gone through this tragic time, and say that we are all supportive as this province, as front-line workers and as folks who care deeply about supporting community and supporting people in this province, we want to offer our thoughts and prayers.

I'll get to the member opposite's question in my next opportunity to speak.

The Speaker: Before the member for Fort Whyte resumes his question, I would point out that he actually asked two questions, which is somewhat of a reflection on the Chair. I asked him to apologize; I didn't ask him to repeat and ask a question again.

So I'd caution the member to pay attention to rulings from the Chair and not question them in the future.

Mr. Khan: Well, I guess the Premier and the Minister of Immigration are afraid of the truth and they don't want to stand up and answer the simple question of if they will launch a full investigation into these letters and tabled documents.

Regardless of whatever story this government tries to spin, or now the Minister of Economic Development stands up and tries to pull the wool over Manitobans' eyes, there is no denying the truth.

Why will this Premier not stand up and call a full investigation into the scandal by this Minister of Immigration, and if he won't, will the minister resign today?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, it's quite clear that members opposite are trying to drive a very divisive debate based on a false narrative. We won't play into that.

What we will do is work every day for the benefit of Manitobans, of newcomers here, to support them with greater supports through education, greater supports through settlement services, greater supports through health care. These are the initiatives that we're leading as an entire team and vocalized through the incredible advocacy of our Immigration Minister, and we'll do that work on behalf of Manitobans every day.

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

* (15:00)

Mr. Khan: This Premier and the Minister of Immigration refuse to stand up and simply answer the question. If they are denying these allegations, why are they afraid of the truth? Why would they not call an investigation into these accusations by people who want to come to Manitoba?

The only division occurring in this building is on that side of the House: the NDP dividing immigrants and newcomers to Canada versus Manitobans.

So I'll be very clear again: Why will this Premier not call an investigation, and if he won't call an investigation, will the Minister of Immigration and Labour resign today?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, I think the member for Fort Whyte knows quite a bit about division from the campaign that went on the last fall.

On this side of the House, we learned the lesson of that campaign: that it pays off when you bring Manitobans together; when you bring Manitobans on to one side and on one team. And not only did we learn that lesson, but we're living that out in this group—this today.

This NDP team is united, united around our Minister of Immigration, united around the idea that Manitobans—that newcomers can come to this province

and they can have a better and brighter future led by the most popular Premier (Mr. Kinew) in the country, something we're very proud about, something that we want Manitobans to know and we'll continue to work on their behalf every day.

Plastic Waste Recycling Request for Local Processing

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Happy Earth Day.

Let me begin by commending all the fantastic Manitoba organizations who continue to strive for a more sustainable future. This year's Earth Day theme is focussed on the epidemic of plastic waste.

The recovery rate of plastic packaging is 45 per cent in Manitoba. There are no local businesses that processes recycled plastic materials in our province. Instead, they are shipped to end markets in Ontario, the US and even overseas.

Can the Premier explain why we choose to increase our carbon footprint by not repurposing recycled plastic locally, right here in Manitoba?

The Speaker: The honourable member for Immigration—sorry.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

I also want to wish Manitobans a happy Earth Day. We had a wonderful celebration of Earth Day in the Rotunda earlier today. And on Earth Day, we really commit ourselves not only to celebrating our Mother Earth, but really to committing to protecting our Earth and conserving our Earth.

I'm very proud of the work of our Department of Environmental Stewardship. I know that they are working hard on modernizing our material stewardship program and our recycling programs and I look forward to sharing more.

Thank you to the member again for the question.

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

Low Aluminum Can Return Rate Request for Plan to Address

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Here in Manitoba, our recovery rates for aluminum beverage

cans are 48 per cent. Compare this to Alberta where their overall return rates are 85 per cent. There's no excuse as to why Manitoba is only recovering half of what Alberta is able to do.

Does the minister believe Manitoba's return rates are sufficient and, if not, what is she doing to boost this number?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. I thank the member opposite for a question that's important to Manitobans.

You know, I know that Manitobans care about many issues and I would urge the members of this House to ask more pertinent questions that Manitobans are concerned about.

I have met many times already with the Canadian beverage recyclers. I do question the member's facts and statistics there; I do not believe that they're accurate. I'd be happy to meet with her later to talk about it, but I know that Manitoba is doing a great job in our recovery program. I know that there is room to do better. We are doing that work and we are committed to doing better for Manitobans for the environment.

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

Refundable Beverage Containers Request to Expand Program

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The same amount of energy used to produce one aluminum can is equal to 20 recycled cans. Part of the reason why Alberta's recycling system is so effective is because beverage containers for both soft drinks and beer, which include aluminum, plastics and glass bottles, are all eligible for refunds.

Can the minister explain why Manitoba does not have a refundable container program outside of beer products?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Again, thank the member for Tyndall Park for the question.

As I said, you know, I am very proud of the work that our department is doing. I know that we are working hard on modernizing our recovery and recycling programs. We know that we can do better. We know that Manitoba [*phonetic*]—Manitoba is already doing great things. We're very proud of our budget that we've just put forward and the budget measures that were put

forward for our department, and I look forward to working with the member opposite and learning more about what they're doing in Alberta.

Thank you very much.

Support Services for First Responders Government Announcement

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, I rise today with an important question on an issue that affects every community in the province.

When Manitobans call, first responders are there. As a government, we have a sacred duty to support first responders and their selfless work in keeping Manitobans safe.

Can the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) tell us about our announcement earlier today that will further support our first responders?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank my colleague for the question.

This is, indeed, a sombre week and a sombre day for first responders in this province. I want to thank you, Honourable Speaker, our clerks, our Premier and our House leaders, who facilitated the family and allowed us, as a Legislature, to offer our condolences.

Today, our government announced funding for three mental health workers, to ensure firefighters, paramedics and law enforcement across the province have access to mental health support. First responders are always there for Manitobans during an emergency, and over time it takes a toll on their mental health.

These three mental health workers are a step in our government's continued effort to reduce the stigma around post-traumatic stress and to remove barriers for people to get mental health support.

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Provincial Nominee Program Draws Labour Minister—Interference Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): For the historical record, members of the NDP Cabinet and backbench are today calling MPNP applicants liars for speaking out about the treatment they've received at the hands of this Immigration and Labour Minister. They have closed ranks around their minister, leaving MPNP applicants out in the cold. If that's not divisive, I don't know what is.

Will the minister stop threatening MPNP applicants today?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, since coming into this role as the Minister for Health, it has been an absolute honour and privilege to invest in increasing capacity for folks to work in our health-care system.

Internationally educated health-care workers have been living in Manitoba for many years. They've never had a government the past seven and a half years who had any interest in addressing the barriers that kept them out of joining our health-care system.

Our government is doing that work. We're doing that work in Department of Health, the Department of Immigration, EDIT and our—and others as well. We're going to make sure that if you are an internationally educated health-care worker, you have a home in health care here in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Cook: I'd like to quote again from the same document that my colleague tabled earlier: I have confirmed that I, as well as other international students, have received threats from the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), threatening to stop the drawing of MPNP if we protest again before May.

The minister says that these folks are liars.

Will the minister stand up today and acknowledge their role in this mess?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I understand the angst that many folks who hold postgraduate work permits are feeling in Manitoba these days because of the actions announced by the federal government.

I want to assure folks, though, that our steadfast commitment to keeping you here in Manitoba remains. When we talk about the PCs, there were any number of protests outside. One thing I never saw the members opposite ever do during their time in government was take the time to meet with people holding rallies or protests and bring them into the building.

On the other hand, our Minister of Immigration and Labour, at each event that has been held on the steps of the Leg., invited people into the building to listen to their concerns and to work together to chart a path forward.

* (15:10)

We held a draw two weeks ago. We're holding another draw this week, and we are about to announce a major breakthrough with the federal government.

While they want to play games, we're delivering results for Manitobans and those who hope to join this province in the future.

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

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, there are no games here, and contrary to comments made by the Minister of Environment earlier today, these are incredibly pertinent questions to a huge number of Manitobans.

I'll quote again from the same document tabled earlier: During their talks, the minister shouted at them and even slapped the table and said, how dare they challenge her like that? In public she says, welcome to friendly Manitoba—as long as you keep your mouth shut regarding their mismanagement of the program.

Will the NDP stop politically interfering in the Provincial Nominee Program today, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: I want to say something clearly and unequivocally for the House and for everybody on the opposite side: this Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino) has my complete confidence.

She's doing important work. She's doing draws to ensure that the Provincial Nominee Program can move forward. She's doing the work of staffing up the department. She's engaged with the federal government so that we're going to be able to deliver results for postgraduate work permits.

And I'd like to assure everyone on the opposite side that not only will she be in Cabinet longer than the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), she'll be there longer than the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), longer than the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Longer than any of them were ever in government, she will still be there in Cabinet.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call the continuation of second reading deadline debate on the following bills: Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act;

Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images); and Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act.

The Speaker: As per subrule 2(11), today is the second deadline day for the second reading of specified bills and, as such, at the beginning of orders of the day the following provisions shall apply: for each such bill, the minister can speak for a maximum of 10 minutes, followed by up to 15-minute question period—question and answer period. Critics of recognized parties and the independent member may then speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill, following which I will put the question on second reading of the bill. If such a bill had been previously called for debate, all remaining actions just identified will be dealt with before the question is put.

The list of bills that will follow this process is as follows: Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act—advisory council; Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act; Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (distribution of fake images—fake intimate images); Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment Act and Interpretation Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 13—The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act

The Speaker: Accordingly, I will now call second reading of Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker—[interjection] You don't really have to—I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—sorry. It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 13, The Emergency

Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message—the message has been tabled.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]* And again.

Honourable Speaker, currently The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act does not contemplate the issuance of separate licences for the operation at different parts of one air emergency medical response system. However, a new service model has been adopted for one air emergency medical response system, based on a 10-year agreement signed in 2023 in which the air platform and the medical care on transports will be operated by two different entities.

In particular, the air platform is provided by Keewatin Air LP, a certified and licensed Transport Canada air carrier, and medical care in transports is provided by Shared Health. This bill will enable the department to issue separate air emergency medical response system licences to both Keewatin Air LP and Shared Health to operate the parts of this system that they are each responsible for.

This bill will also provide flexibility if the model is changed in the future to allow more than two different entities to be licensed to operate different parts of an air emergency medical response system. The licence holders will be required to enter into an agreement to define their responsibilities in respect of the air—rather, the operation of the air emergency medical response system, to ensure that it will function as one cohesive system.

To enable new emergency medical response system—rather, to enable the new emergency medical response system, in which two different entities are responsible to provide the air platform and the medical care, it was necessary for a ministerial order to be issued under the act to exempt Keewatin and Shared Health from certain requirements in the legislation. This bill will revoke these exemptions when new licensing regime is implemented.

Currently, ministerial orders issued under The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Act to exempt the licence holder from requirements in the legislation are not made public. This bill will require that the ministerial exemption orders issued under the act must be published on a

government website to provide for greater transparency in relation to these exemptions.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be answered—addressed to the minister by any opposition, independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from another recognized party; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I have a couple of questions, and they're a little bit detailed, so bear with me.

Can the minister—these questions are around section 5.5(2). Does this section imply that the minister could cancel an emergency medical response contract at will? And, depending on your answer, I might have some follow-ups.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I think I'm following the member's question—I'm not, to be honest, entirely sure—asking about the ministerial capacity to cancel the contract. I believe—I mean, under, more broadly, the ministerial powers that is something that I believe would be under the capacity of the minister.

* (15:20)

However, given the way this legislation is being brought forward, really at the heart of the amendments being brought forward is to allow for flexibility for increased capacity.

So it's really around—this is a 10-year agreement. So this is really about in future, if there are other agreements, having the flexibility to have more than, you know, one and two separate licences issued if you've got multiple folks who are responsible for each component of the agreement.

Mrs. Cook: Okay, I thank the minister for that answer.

Under section 12(2), does this provide that no additional licences could be issued to any other provider besides Keewatin Air LP and the relevant provincial health authority?

MLA Asagwara: I appreciate the member's question's getting in the weeds. I think that's a good thing. We

did have a briefing with the critic on this particular legislation, but I do think it's a good thing if questions are coming up after that are looking at the details.

So, you know, this particular agreement is a 10-year agreement and, as it stands in the agreement, the responsibility of staffing the aircraft is by Shared Health. The responsibility to maintain and maintain standards for the aircraft is under Keewatin Air LP. That is the agreement in place. It's a 10-year agreement.

I personally don't foresee any changes there, but certainly, you know, I think the important is having the flexibility for future agreements, should this be an issue.

Mrs. Cook: So, if I'm understanding the minister correctly, so the licence that'll be issued under this bill to the—to Shared Health is a licence only to operate the services within Keewatin Air's aircraft as described in the legislation? This isn't issuing a licence for Shared Health to operate their own separate air ambulance vehicles?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's an important point of clarification.

So even the language of the question, I think I want to be mindful of how I respond because the licence for Shared Health is for the staff, right, it's for the human resource component to provide care within the aircraft. And the maintenance of the aircraft operations, et cetera, are specific to Keewatin.

And so there's a clear distinction of responsibilities there. Shared Health is responsible for the health-care staffing expertise that will deliver care in those ambulances.

If there is a bit more nuance here the member needs, happy to provide a follow-up briefing on that note.

Mrs. Cook: I thank the minister for indulging me in my weedy questions. I have a few more basic questions they're probably prepared for.

What kind of personnel will Shared Health be providing to these aircraft?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's a great question.

I believe, and I can get clarity on that, but I want to say that the complement is going to be a physician, nurse—there may be a paramedicine component to that as well, but I can get the full complement for that member on the details of that. I don't have it right in front of me.

But it's important to know that the human resource component of this agreement will have standards and have consistency. Shared Health is going to be responsible for maintaining the standards and the quality around what that staffing complement looks like and, as well, making sure that if there are adjustments, training, et cetera, that need to be made that they're responsible and on top of that.

Mrs. Cook: Has the minister consulted with Keewatin Air specifically on this bill?

MLA Asagwara: Yes. So both proponents, Shared Health and Keewatin Air, are aware of this legislation and have been consulted.

This is a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, just sort of cleans up and streamlines the process moving forward. It also allows for greater transparency. Previously, there was no requirement to post if any exemptions were being signed off on a ministerial order, to place those online or on a website and make them public.

So this is an opportunity to not only, you know, make sure we're mitigating the use of exemptions and just having a clear delineation of duties but also enhancing public trust and transparency.

Mrs. Cook: Has the minister consulted with any other stakeholders on this legislation?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's a really good question.

We have had really good meetings and conversations with other emergency air service providers. Maybe not necessarily the same type of aircraft, but folks who provide these emergency response services in different capacities.

And there's a good understanding, I would say, across the board from folks that it's important that we have legislation that supports people being able to practise to their full scope and recognize the 'delineation' of duties is very, very clear.

And so this legislation, obviously, is specific to, you know, what's come of this agreement and the difference in responsibilities. But certainly, we communicate with partners across the province in regards to the best approach on these types of provision of health services.

Mrs. Cook: It's not a secret that, while in opposition, the minister was critical of Keewatin Air. And I'm just wondering if they could articulate why they've chosen to continue working with Keewatin Air now that they're in government.

MLA Asagwara: Sure. This agreement was signed by the previous government. It was a 10-year agreement that was entered into by the previous government. That agreement is in place, and in my capacity as a minister, ensuring that we're doing our due diligence to make sure that Manitobans having the best chance at good health-care outcomes is prioritized, which is why this legislation is being brought forward.

It's to make sure that we've got clear legislation that supports the responsibilities of either Keewatin and Shared Health and has a clear distinction there. We're going to continue to work with all of our partners and service providers, no matter who they are, to make sure that Manitobans' outcomes are prioritized and that we're making sure we're strengthening the health-care system for no matter where you live in our province.

Mrs. Cook: What communities in Manitoba would be served by this contract?

MLA Asagwara: Sure. We certainly know that rural Manitobans, northern Manitobans are served by this aircraft.

We also know that, you know, ideally, we're also investing in—which we are, as a government, and our Budget 2024 does that—investing in strengthening services on the ground in rural and northern communities.

And so air ambulance services are one really important component of how folks are able to access health care, especially in emergency services where, you know, there are heightened health-care needs.

But definitely, you know, it's important to ensure that we're always investing in strengthening care in community, so that no matter where you live, you can get the care that you need. And also, you know, this legislation is doing what's necessary to make sure that the responsibilities are clearly defined and supported by law.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Excuse me. Has the minister consulted with any other stakeholders regarding this?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, we talk to our stakeholders on a regular basis, rural and northern communities, you know, in constant consultation, quite frankly, in terms of what the best approaches are to better serve their communities.

Our Budget 2024 makes significant investments in strengthening care in communities, whether that's training health-care expertise, whether that's working with rural and northern communities to make sure that

their ERS services have the flexibility that meets the needs of rural communities.

That's been a really, really big point, something that I've heard really clearly from folks needs to be prioritized; and thrilled, you know, that recently, we were able to put forward for community consultations the ERS services approach that they were hoping to see by our government.

So there's a lot of work to be done. Lots of conversations we need to continue to have. But we're always talking with our stakeholders to make sure we're making the best decisions, taking the right approach.

The Speaker: Time has expired.

No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Honourable Speaker, I did have one additional question, I just didn't stand up quickly enough. Could we revert back to the question period for one additional question?

The Speaker: You'd need to ask for leave to do that.

Does the member have leave to revert for one more question?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mrs. Cook: I'm pleased to rise to put a few words on the record about Bill 13. We did have a briefing. I had additional questions coming out of that briefing that I may have to follow up with in writing.

I was going to ask the additional question about whether this legislation applies to the transport of deceased persons as well, if that's something that Keewatin Air is doing under their contract. But I will refer that question to the minister for another time.

* (15:30)

So in reading this legislation, I'll admit that it was a little bit confusing to understand exactly what the intent of it was. So my understanding of this legislation is that there is currently no legislation explicitly allowing Shared Health employees to be on sub-contracted air ambulances, and it is my understanding that that's what this legislation seeks to correct, that Bill 13 would formally allow Shared Health employees to be

on Keewatin aircraft. And in speaking to stakeholders on this bill, that is also their understanding.

But it—where I have some concern as the critic for Health is that, you know, previously as opposition critic for Health, the now-minister was very critical of the previous government's decision to work with Keewatin Air. They alleged that patients were being put at risk and that the quality of care had been diminished. They labeled it privatization.

And, obviously, I disagree with that characterization of Keewatin Air's work. I am glad that the minister has changed their tune somewhat since becoming Minister of Health; and, indeed, the Minister of Infrastructure said in the fall that this was a way to save money.

So, I guess, kudos to the previous Progressive Conservative government for signing this contract. It's kind of like how the Premier (Mr. Kinew), shortly after becoming the Premier, told media that it's much harder to be in government than it is to be in opposition.

So I just felt that it was important to get those comments on the record, because where it causes concern is knowing that that's how the minister previously felt about Keewatin Air. I had been combing through this bill, trying to find what was hidden, if there was anything hidden that the minister might be trying to pass in legislation in order to get out of the contract.

So I'm glad they've seen the light, that there's nothing wrong with partnering with service providers under the publicly funded health-care system. That's good news for Manitobans.

I would note that the provision of air ambulance services is a critical part of our health-care system, that just like any other part of our health-care system requires staff. And I am hopeful, although I'm not holding my breath, that we will soon see some kind of tangible staffing plan from the NDP in order to properly staff our health-care system.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The targets that we've heard spoken of in the budget and through news releases are—they're just numbers without a real plan to train and to recruit and to retain those staff. New beds, new ERs; air ambulances don't staff themselves, either.

And I do have some concern that some of the measures the government is taking are going to drive health-care workers out of Manitoba, or at bare

minimum make it a least—a less attractive province for health-care workers to come and work here.

And so with those comments I will cede the floor to others who may wish to make comments on Bill 13.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 13, The Emergency Medical Response and Stretcher Transportation Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 17—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Economic Development, industry, Trade and national—Natural Resources, that Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

The Deputy Speaker: Moved by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration, seconded by the Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources (Mr. Moses), that Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill and I—and the message has been tabled.

MLA Marcelino: It is my pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 17, an amendment to The Workplace Safety and Health Act, to re-establish the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health.

Restoring the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health is an immediate priority of our—for our government. In 2018, the previous government, against the advice of the business and labour communities, repealed the advisory council as part of a government-wide reduction of standing committees. Its

repeal ended a long-standing practice of engaging with Manitobans and receiving input on protecting the health of workers.

Our government made a commitment to Manitobans to grow the economy with good jobs. All workers deserve a fair wage and to be treated with dignity and respect. Good jobs mean safe jobs and an expectation that employers provide safe work environments so that workers come home to their families after a hard day's work.

This bill re-establishes and restores the 13-member advisory council. Members of the council will represent workers, employers and technical and professional bodies. Like before, the advisory council will advise the minister on occupational health and safety issues, legislative and regulatory changes and the appointment of consultants and advisors.

The council will also undertake a review of The Workplace Safety and Health Act every five years. The call for restoring the advisory council came from the health and safety community, employer and labour representatives and Manitobans through an Engage Manitoba consultation in 2022.

Our government is a listening government, committed to meaningfully engaging employers and workers. Restoring the council is one example of this commitment.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this important bill.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): We all know the importance of safety and health on the job here in our province of Manitoba, and I welcome the opportunity to ask the minister a couple questions here and get some things on the record.

Can the minister share specific examples of what type of advice the council will provide to them?

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member—Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Examples of advice could be legislative or regulatory changes on emerging safety and health matters; recommendations on the appointments of consultants and advisors; again, the completion of a five-year review of The Workplace Safety and Health Act, which is a pretty large undertaking; and other, you know, recommendations relating to occupational health and safety.

Other recommendations could be about the protection of workers in specific workplaces and situations. A concrete example would be protections and—on PPE for women. Women currently—and other types of—

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): What measures will be in place to prevent conflicts of interest among members of the advisory council?

MLA Marcelino: Just like—thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you to member opposite for their question.

* (15:40)

I'd just like to remind the member that this was a unanimous recommendation by many different types of folks that have been on this council for many years before the 2018 time that it was repealed.

This is not a partisan type of decision. There are technical advisors on here, there are members from labour and there are members from the employer community. And those types of people also give their own names for future recommendations, for people that would represent them as well; that would be for our consideration.

Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): Of course I'm—this is not a partisan issue when it comes to safe way—safety, pardon me, and we are all are concerned, of course, for our workers' safety.

Can the minister tell us again—and I know you touched on it earlier—who you consulted in labour and business community? And I'm talking specifically business community in the private sector.

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member opposite for their question.

We did take on the public and stakeholders through the Engage Manitoba website—this was from October 30 to November 30 of 2022: the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Manitoba Employers Council, American Industrial Hygiene Association, the Mining Association of Manitoba Inc. and the Occupational Health Centre.

As part of the Manitoba Employers Council members, we've got the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, the City of Winnipeg, Credit Union Central of Manitoba, Keystone Agricultural Producers, Made Safe, Manitoba Association for Safety in Healthcare, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Manitoba—

The Deputy Speaker: And the honourable minister's time has expired.

Ms. Byram: Thank you to the minister for sharing that information.

Can you share with us, will the council have representation from rural and northern areas of the province?

MLA Marcelino: In general, we strive to ensure that all regions of the—our province are covered and with—especially to rural areas, because a lot of the mining and other types of potentially dangerous work comes from there. So we will ensure that those kinds of considerations are put forward to the council.

Thank you.

MLA Bereza: Thank you to the minister for the answers.

Is there a risk that the advisory council could become dominated by certain interest groups, potentially marginalizing other groups?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and to member opposite for their question.

This is a non-partisan issue. There are very important issues that need to be tackled as it relates to safety and health that this council has done remarkably well over the many, many years of its existence. This is something that other jurisdictions have across Canada. There is nothing, you know, remarkable about it in terms of it being able to be susceptible to this type of thing. This is a non-partisan issue. It's about workplace safety and health, and this is a unanimous recommendation made by both business, labour and technical experts in this field.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wharton: I thank the minister for answering the question I posed earlier. I will build on that, though.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business—the minister had mentioned that there were some consultations done with CFIB. Was that in person or was it done through Engage Manitoba?

MLA Marcelino: These consultations with the Manitoba Employer Council happened with the department from January 21 to August 8, 2023. So that was not through Engage Manitoba.

Other folks that are part of Manitoba Employers Council include the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, but there are so many others that I wasn't even able to name in the time that I had. And perhaps the other—members opposite would like to hear about the rest of those: Manitoba Home Builders' Association, Manitoba Hotel Association, Manitoba Motor Dealers Association, Manitoba Pork Council, Manitoba Restaurant & Foodservices Association, Manitoba School Boards Association, Manitoba Trucking Association, Maple Leaf Foods, Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba, Restaurants Canada—

The Deputy Speaker: And the honourable minister's time has expired.

Ms. Byram: Can the minister tell us how much members will be remunerated for their participation on this advisory council board?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member opposite for that question.

Actually, I've asked the department for that same piece of information and it hasn't been—gotten back to me yet, and I will take that on notice and let the member know once I have that information.

I was just briefly told that the issue of remuneration is just something done as part of—par for the course. It's nothing going to—it's not going to be like a really high number or anything like that. And one of the reasons why the previous review committee that was established by the previous minister in this role where it failed to actually accomplish their review in a timely matter, was because of the lack of remuneration of those folks there.

So this is something that is going to be—

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: Thank you to the minister for the previous answers to my questions.

How will the advisory council enhance public trust and confidence in the government's actions?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to members opposite for that question.

This is like a new—a very, very important topic, workplace safety and health. There are so many facets to this that even folks like us that, you know, head the department, there is so much information and it's such a growing field that we really, really need this proper advice from folks on—especially from the technical aspect of it.

One of the important incoming questions that we're going to be asking has to do with PPE and the applicability of PPE for people with diverse needs and for women in general.

Another kind of question would be something about asbestos or silica and how to best protect workers in these types of—

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Wharton: The minister had mentioned in an answer earlier to my—one of my colleagues about not knowing what the 'mumuneration' will be for this new committee, yet she mentions that she has information on what the committee was remunerated under the former government.

Could she table that report today?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to the member for that question.

What I did say was that the previous group was not remunerated. The previous review committee group was not remunerated, and that was one of the reasons that was cited by the department as to the reason why these folks had a difficult time maybe meeting on a regular basis in order to come up with the different recommendations that the department needed to move forward on the review of The Workplace Safety and Health Act.

Ms. Byram: Can the minister share how frequently this new advisory council will meet?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member for that question.

This council can—could possibly meet whenever a question or an important matter arises at the minister's

discretion. It also has to meet a minimum of four times per year, so it can go from those two facets of time.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Bereza: How will the advisory council ensure that the needs and concerns of various stakeholders are adequately represented?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to the member opposite for that question.

Again, the makeup of the council, it has, in the past, been a 13-body—a 13-member body divided into three, with experts from the technical side, folks with the labour leader experience and also folks from the employer community.

* (15:50)

And each set of groups, they bring forward names, experts in their own field, and then those names are brought for the consideration of the minister, and that's how we get to choose who gets to go on this. It's basically pretty much a self-nominating group—

The Deputy Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

Mr. Wharton: Can the minister tell us, during the Engage Manitoba, did they also engage other jurisdictions across Canada?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member for that question.

As far as I know, there wasn't that physical or virtual engagement across Canada. However, there was a jurisdictional scan that was made by the department, taking a look at what other jurisdictions have that are similar to a workplace safety and health advisory council.

And sure enough, pretty much all the jurisdictions across Canada have this. They might be named other things. They could be called advisory council on occupational health and safety that has an 11-member advisory group in Newfoundland-Labrador. In Ontario they have a 14-member group; it's called occupation health and safety prevention council. Saskatchewan has a nine-member group—

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable minister's time has expired.

Ms. Byram: Can the minister explain why this legislation has changed from its previous iteration and no longer has the LGIC making appointments, but rather the minister themselves?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member opposite for that question.

This was a recommendation that was made by the department to just help streamline this process so that there wouldn't be, like, the necessary step of having to put many names through the order-in-council, because there are a lot of them. Again, this was another recommendation that was made by the department in conjunction with consultation with all the folks that have been part of this Engage Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Bereza: The concern that I see here is with 13 people is—a number of people here. Will the advisory council add unnecessary bureaucracy and delay the legislative process?

MLA Marcelino: Thank you to member opposite for that question.

Again, I can't stress enough the unanimous nature of this recommendation to bring forth, again, this council. It was a mistake on the previous government's part to ever do away with it. We were outliers, once again, across Canada. This was a weird decision that the previous government made not to have a workplace safety and health council that had technical expertise and buy-in from both employers and labour groups across Canada.

Our message is the same. Our—the reason why we do this is all the same. Whether they were technical experts, employers or labour leaders, the message was to keep Manitobans safe while they were at work. This was the primary point why this was necessary and—

The Deputy Speaker: Honourable minister's time has expired.

And with that, the question period has come to an end.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: I open the floor to debate.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I'm pleased to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act.

I would like to address the crucial topic of workplace safety and health and—excuse me—specifically focusing on the importance of that in every workplace here across our province.

We all know and recognize that workplace safety and health are paramount concerns for both employees and employers, and it is incumbent upon us all to foster

a work environment that prioritizes the physical and mental well-being of all individuals involved.

The Province of Manitoba has always recognized the fundamental principles and has always worked towards enhancing the existing framework, emphasizing the importance of prevention and safety, as well, in the workplace.

Manitoba has legislation and safety standards that aim to strengthen, and proactive measures taken by employers, to identify and address potential hazards before they happen and cause harm. By fostering a culture of prevention, we can significantly reduce the number of accidents and injuries in workplaces.

We all understand and realize the nature of today's workforce is evolving with technological advancements and a changing workforce and practices. And it is crucial to adapt to the challenges and the changes related to the workplace while ensuring that our workforce remains safe and healthy.

In Manitoba, there are health officers that conduct thousands of inspections per year. Some of those inspections result in orders being issued to an employer. Many of these improvement orders are issued with required measures to be put in place by a specified time frame to ensure compliance and that safety and health of workers is improved and not compromised. Thousands of those orders are issued every year.

I do have to raise some concerns related to the amendment, is the burden that could come from changes and the potential increased compliance and the associated costs for which small—excuse me—and medium-sized businesses could potentially face. Increased requirement includes, you know, stricter penalties that could impose significant financial burden on some of these Manitoba businesses, and this, in turn, could impact their ability to grow, create jobs and contribute to the economy.

There needs to be balance between safety, health, all while supporting the growth and sustainability of our working force and our businesses.

It's concerning what the impact could be with an advisory council and the potential for excessive regulations and/or unwarranted interference that this could have on our local businesses. And this council adds an additional layer to bureaucratic hurdles that stifle innovation and could impede business productivity.

Concerns related to the safety and health of Manitobans on the job is priority for all of us here in the Legislature, and I believe and trust that we all recognize that. But the question still remains: Why does there need to be an appointed ministerial advisory committee to replicate the work of other committees? That is, you know, this is only adding, like I said, that additional layer to a system of red tape and bureaucracy. Employers and employees want investment and action, not another ministerial-appointed council.

It's important to know and learn what is coming from the legislative five-year review that was initiated. Hopefully we'll see that.

Concerns lie that there's potential for introduction for stricter penalties and potential overreach. There needs to be collaboration between workers and employers and members making a safe and transparent environment for all.

Workplace safety and health is significant in our ongoing commitment to protect the well-being of workers. It provides a foundation for a safer and healthier future. We all need to work towards creating workplaces where every individual employee can thrive without compromising their safety and health and where employers feel confident in their abilities to provide that safe work environment without the threat of intimidation and interference.

Again, thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to put a few records—or a few words on record regarding bill 7.

And thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 17, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act.

* (16:00)

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

I declare the motion carried.

We will now move on to second reading of—oh.

One point of information. For the information of all members, under the provisions of subrule 2(11), the House will not rise tonight until the second reading question has been put on all remaining specified bills. If the House is still sitting at 12 midnight, the debate will be interrupted to put any remaining second reading questions without further debates or amendment, and the division bells shall ring for no more than one minute on each question.

Bill 18—The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, we'll move on to second reading of Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act.

Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Manitoba (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la garde d'enfants, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message. There you go.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, and seconded by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, that Bill 18, the community care standards amendment act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor shall—has been advised of the bill, and I table the message—and the message has been tabled.

MLA Altomare: I'm pleased to stand before the House today to speak to Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act.

Manitoba Government is committed to supporting our youngest learners and children here in our province. In our November 2023 Throne Speech, we pledged to create a comprehensive strategy for recruiting and retaining early childhood educators. This bill supports our commitment under the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement to establish 23,000 new child-care spaces by March 31 of 2026.

Increasing child-care spaces requires a proportionate increase in the early learning and child-care workforce. One particular key initiative that we're excited about to address this workforce demand is the expansion of early childhood education and child-care assistant training programs at Manitoba's post-secondary institutions. These training expansions include the creation of innovative new learning labs that will support practical hands-on learning experiences for post-secondary students in the field.

These amendments will enable the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning to directly fund the construction of these learning labs at our

public universities, colleges and the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology.

The proposed amendments align with commitments announced in a 2023 Speech from the Throne, and our department's mandate letter commitments to develop a comprehensive strategy for recruiting and retaining early childhood educators.

Once the necessary legal authority is in place, the department will flow the funding for the construction of learning labs directly to the post-secondary institutions. These new innovative learning labs will provide practical hands-on learning experiences for post-secondary students in the field of early childhood education.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, investing in a comprehensive strategy for recruiting and retaining early childhood educators supports the families who require child care and strengthens and expands the child-care sector in the province. This legislation will allow us to fulfill these responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

With that, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I complete my remarks on this bill and recommend its passage through the House.

Miigwech, merci and thank you.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I would like to thank the minister for bringing forward this legislation. As he mentioned, this was under development by the previous government, as part of their commitment in signing on to the national child-care plan in 2021.

I'd just like to ask the minister—he's talking here about funding for post-secondary institutions and my own constituency, Assiniboine Community College was committed to having a 216-seat child-care facility built there as part of this agreement.

Will this bill enable that child-care facility to come to fruition?

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

Not only is Assiniboine Community College at the North Hill campus approved for this learning lab, the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology at the Pembina campus; Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology at the Henlow campus; Red River College Polytechnic at the Notre Dame campus; the University College of the North located in The Pas; Université de Saint-Boniface at their main campus; and also approved is the University of Winnipeg at their main campus.

And again, I want to thank the member for that important question.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As a member that represents a constituency in the southeast corner of our province and representing a rapidly growing region, my question is, are there plans to consult with stakeholders to create programming in northern regions but also providing training outside of Brandon, Winnipeg and The Pas?

MLA Altomare: I do want to thank that member for that important question.

While we're working with these particularly identified post-secondary institutions, we're always open to see if we can expand this further into other areas of the province. The reason these particular institutions were chosen is that they were ready to go.

We're always hoping to hear of new plans from other centres and look forward to partnering with possibly places from that member's 'constit' and so we can get this going. We need child-care workers desperately in the province. We also need to ensure that they get the training they need to provide the support for our earliest learners.

Thank you for that.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you to the member opposite for bringing the course forward with this legislation. Very much needed, the child-care workers in our province.

Can the minister provide an update on project details and some timelines for when these learning lab classrooms will be in operation?

MLA Altomare: Again, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question.

I expect these learning labs to be created as soon as this fall, starting with the one, I do believe, at

Assiniboine Community College. I can check to ensure accuracy and veracity of that, but I expect them to be opening and being constructed very shortly.

Mr. Jackson: Again, thank the minister for his answer to my initial question.

He confirmed the seven learning labs will be going ahead, and that is the reason for this legislation.

* (16:10)

My question now is, will the child-care centres that were also supposed to be built at these post-secondary institutions also be proceeding?

Assiniboine Community College was supposed to get a 216-seat day care, in addition to the learning lab. MITT was supposed to get a 104-seat day care in addition to the learning lab, et cetera, et cetera.

Will those child-care centres also be proceeding as part of this legislation?

MLA Altomare: Again, I want to thank the member for that question, and what I can do is I can provide an accurate answer on—once I have the stuff in front of me that will identify exactly if that will proceed.

I want to ensure that we put accurate information on the record, and I can get to that as early as today after this question and answer session.

Mr. Narth: We look and—or, we see that ACC is a beneficiary of this legislation. ACC has campuses in Dauphin and Red River in Winkler. Will those benefit also from future expansion?

MLA Altomare: I want to thank the member for that question. I believe with the North Hill campus, what that'll do is that will spur even more expansion into these learning labs. I would expect that campuses located in places like Dauphin will also be included in this project once it's under way at North Hill; see how it goes, get some of the learning done, and then they can become more efficient at providing this service and training.

Mr. King: I'd just like to ask the minister if there will be some mechanisms in place to evaluate the effectiveness of this amendment in achieving its intended goals.

MLA Altomare: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. Part of the Canada-Manitoba agreement has in it—has, as part of the agreement, mechanisms in place to ensure that the funds flow properly, and that they follow regular, standard public accounting practices so that we can be accountable for the

money as it's flowed to institutions that are identified here.

Thank you for that.

Mr. Jackson: I appreciate the minister taking it upon himself to get back to us with some of those details as early as later today.

With respect to the learning labs, can he share with the House and with all Manitobans how many further early childhood educators will have the opportunity to take part in these learning labs? What size of classes of early childhood educators will they be receiving?

MLA Altomare: Again I want to thank the member for that question. The only limitation on the number will be identified by the particular institution as to how many people they can take in at a time.

It'll all depend on the number of instructors that are available. It would also depend on the square footage and if—how many people can be in that particular place. There are a lot more requirements when it comes to early learning and child care as opposed to the actual public school environment. They're much more stringent on the square footage and the number of people that can be in that piece, and it will depend on the square footage of the—these new learning labs and how many people can be trained at a particular time.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Just a quick question for the minister: I was wondering if he could provide an example, just in reference to the purposes of grants, of when the minister may requisition a grant to be made to support. Just an example of what this might look like.

MLA Altomare: I just want to clarify the question. Are you talking about, like, how a person, or how a particular institution would apply for the grant? Is that what you're talking—no? Or an example of an institution that has already applied for a grant—no? Can I get some clarity on that?

Thanks.

MLA Lamoureux: Just to provide a little bit of clarity, in the legislation itself it references how the minister may requisition a grant to be made to support, and I interpret this as the minister has the authority to provide a grant or to send or share a grant with a child-care facility.

I'm wondering what an example of a case where he might do this would be.

MLA Altomare: Again, I want to thank the member for clarity on that question.

We're willing to work with anybody that is willing to provide the training for new child-care workers. It's something that we need to really expedite in this province in order to provide the space necessary for new child-care centres to be built.

Child care can only work if we have enough people trained in the system to get them out there working in these centres. I do know that there are a number that are really chomping at the bit to get people into these seven areas that were identified and to get them trained and out into the community as soon as possible.

Mr. Jackson: Just to build on my colleague from Tyndall Park's question, the premise, as I understand it, of this legislation is with regard to being able—for the department of Education to flow funds to post-secondary institutions to operate these facilities.

Can the minister outline: Were there any other reasons for these proposed amendments, or is that the only focus of this bill?

MLA Altomare: Again, I'd like to thank the member for that question.

Before, under the agreement, what would happen is that if you were an existing child-care centre, you were the only facility able to access funds from the Manitoba-Canada-wide agreement for child-care spaces.

So what this does is, in the creation of these learning labs, it allows these learning labs, even though they're not licensed child-care centres per se, to proceed with the training and to provide space for kids as they need the child care in that particular institution.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the question before the House—oh, sorry; it's open for debate. Right. We have to do debate.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open to debate.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): That's okay, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'll be brief. *[interjection]* Yes, yes. I know.

I—no, I sincerely appreciate the minister bringing forward this bill. As he and I have discussed previously and as he mentioned in his comments on this bill, as well, this is a continuation of what was happening under the previous Progressive Conservative

government. And we take lots of shots across the floor, but can't be all bad.

And so I appreciate the minister recognizing it and proceeding with this bill, because this is a non-partisan issue. We know that we need more child care in this province, we need—we know we need more early childhood educators in this province.

And that's part of the reason why—most of the reason why, in fact—the previous government signed on to the national child-care plan proposed by the federal government in 2021. At the time, I was privileged to be working for the minister of Families. At that time, the early childhood education portfolio fell under the Department of Families, and so Minister Squires, at the time, was responsible for that portfolio.

And it was my first look at negotiating bilateral agreements with the federal government. Quite a process that is, I will tell you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, when you ever find yourself in a situation negotiating agreements with the—our federal cousins, it's quite a process and an experience.

But, nonetheless, we got to the point where we agreed on 23,000 new child-care spaces in this province within a five-year time frame; that is historic. That level of child-care spaces have never been created that fast in the public sector in this province before, and we were very, very pleased to be getting that work done. And I would like to highlight, certainly very pleased to be halfway there at the time of the change of government in October.

And so we look forward to this new government continuing to make progress on creating those affordable child-care spaces across the province.

And this agreement didn't just do that. It lowered child-care fees in the public sector to an average of \$10 a day. That is badly needed financial assistance for young families in this province at a time when their cost of living has never been higher.

* (16:20)

And so I want to recognize the work of previous ministers from this side on that agreement, in particular, that milestone achievement. We were the first government—provincial government in the country out of any that signed on to this deal to reach that average of \$10 a day across the province, the first one recognized by the federal government to reach that target. That is a significant achievement and provided significant relief to Manitoba families who had their kids in our affordable public child-care system.

And further to that, we introduced a wage grid. We're talking about the challenges of retaining staff, about attracting people into the profession, even folks who start on their early childhood educator diploma program and then don't follow through, don't complete the program. These learning labs that the minister is proceeding with will be a way to get some hands-on training while they're going to school, which, you know, student teachers get when they're going through their education program, so why would we not have that for early educators—early childhood educators as well.

It's a good idea. I thank the minister for following through with it. We were very proud to introduce it, and we are very glad to see this minister proceeding with it.

And we know that these types of programs cost money. And so, as the minister confirmed for us in the question and answer period, that's the premise of this bill, is to ensure that these high-quality public sector institutions can get the financial support from the provincial government that they need to be able to offer these post-secondary additional programs and these learning labs.

And so we're very glad to see that come forward from an official opposition perspective, very glad that the minister is continuing to follow through with those commitments that were made by the previous Progressive Conservative government.

And I look forward to his responding to my earlier question about whether these post-secondary institutions, all of which are receiving learning labs, will also be receiving their child-care centres as well.

And just to put it on the record, Assiniboine Community College North Hill campus in the beautiful constituency of Spruce Woods is supposed to be receiving a 216-seat daycare. That's the largest daycare in provincial history under one roof, just for the record. The—MITT is supposed to be receiving a 104-seat facility at their Pembina campus and a 74-seat facility at their Henlow campus; Red River College Polytechnique, a 20-seat facility at their Notre Dame campus; UCN, a 74-seat at their The Pas campus; U of M, a 90-seat at the Bannatyne campus and a 76-seat at the Fort Garry campus; a 60-seat for Université de Saint-Boniface and a 32-seat for the University of Winnipeg.

I look forward to the minister confirming that all of those childcare seats should be going ahead and will be going ahead as well.

We, this side of the aisle, when we were in government, did the front-end work. We got the deal signed with the federal government—\$1.9 billion deal over five years to create 23,000 spaces. We were well on our way to achieving that target.

We hope that the minister will be proceeding with these projects, as well as the RTM model and many, many other avenues to ensure that these child-care facilities get built, not just here in Winnipeg, but across southern Manitoba, in the Parkland and up north, to make sure that Manitoba families can access the \$10-a-day child care that they need and deserve so that these kids can get the high-quality early childhood education that they deserve.

That's what this bill takes steps towards by allowing the financials to flow to these post-secondary institutions. Now the minister needs to do the work and get these facilities built. As an official opposition caucus, we will be making sure that that work gets done and reminding this minister until those doors are open and those seats are filled with the next generation of Manitobans.

Thank you very much, Honourable 'decubity' Speaker.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise and just put a few words on record here this afternoon for Bill 18, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act.

I think that it is unanimous within this House that we all know the importance of child care and having enough facilities, having enough spots, having staff and ECE and retention and recruitment. And these are all issues that are very real and prominent right now here in Manitoba. We know that we need more child-care spots.

As an example, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we know that every single facility here in Manitoba has wait-lists for children within the province, and we just can't keep up with the amount of children who are currently waiting. And so it is encouraging to see that, whether it be the former government or this new government, they want to invest and create more child-care spots. I think that we are all in favour of that, but there is still a lot of action that needs to be taken on this.

You know, earlier this morning, I was at Stanley Knowles child-care centre, and this is right in the heart of Tyndall Park, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and it was a very neat experience because we had Minister Hussan, the federal minister, come out and join us as

well as my father, the Member of Parliament for Winnipeg North. And this child-care centre, I actually used to be a child in it. So it's very neat for me to be able to go back into the community and see what's going on.

And it was very precious, some of the experiences and encounters I had this morning. From one little child explaining to me how octopuses have five tentacles instead of eight and how because of this, it could hold up its head better—these little toys and figurines that they make, Honourable Deputy Speaker. And I had another child show me this obstacle course that they had created where you had to stand up on, like, a little curb and walk in circles all around but only if you were holding the teacher's hand because it can be very dangerous as well.

But to me, this was a testament of how excited children get when they actually get to participate in these child-care centres. But in order for this to happen and for their minds to be able to grow and for socializing to occur, we need to have the spots available, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

So I think that it's a good piece of legislation as far as creating more spots. We want to see that happen. We want to see hard numbers and have them tangibly be rolled out. The \$10 a day, it's very exciting. It's very encouraging. It's long past due. And we need to make it more affordable for Manitobans and their children to be able to access child-care centres. Again, we need the spots for that, though, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

But during the question portion of this bill here in second reading, I did ask a little bit about, like, what would an example be if a minister could requisition a grant to be made to support. Now, I didn't hear a tangible example. And so, hopefully, I'll hear more about this at the committee stage.

But my only concern is I believe that this should be done in a non-partisan fashion. It's important that decisions are being made by non-partisan civil servants, not necessarily the minister at hand, but again, I'm hoping I'll learn more about this at the committee stage, and we're happy to see this legislation pass through second reading.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, the community child-care standards act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

I declare the motion carried.

Bill 19—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and sport, that Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of this bill, and I table her message.

The Deputy Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General and minister in charge of MPI, and seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and sport, that Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act.

The Drivers and Vehicles Act currently does not allow Manitoba Public Insurance, or MPI, to designate a trailer as either, quote, salvageable or, quote, irreparable, or it does not allow for it to be classified as, quote, rebuilt.

* (16:30)

With these proposed amendments to The Drivers and Vehicles Act, the provision dealing with written-off, salvageable and irreparable motor vehicles would now also apply to heavy trailers, those with a gross vehicle weight rating of over 4,500 kilograms.

Based on the definitions used in The Highway Traffic Act, The Drivers and Vehicles Act and their regulations, anything that references motor vehicles does not include trailers because they are not self-propelled. Currently, trailers automatically receive the same normal-status designation after they are repaired and reregistered.

This means that trailers that have been written off can be purchased at a salvage auction and reregistered without being subject to any kind of inspection to verify that they are in fact roadworthy. It also means

consumers who subsequently purchase these trailers have no record of their claim history or an accurate estimate of their true value. This situation can also happen to trailers purchased from other jurisdictions and then brought into Manitoba, where they receive normal status upon registration.

With these proposed amendments, MPI will be authorized to designate trailers with a status that accurately reflects their roadworthy condition and claims history upon registration. This bill will therefore improve road safety and strengthen consumer protection, as it will prevent unsafe trailers from being registered and operated on Manitoba roads and will inform consumers of the true condition of the claims history of the trailer.

Honourable Speaker, I urge all members of this House to show support for Bill 19 today and pass second reading.

Thank you.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I was wanting to know if the minister actually had consulted with any groups to—about this legislation that he put forward here, such as the Manitoba Trucking Association?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, that's right, Honourable Deputy Speaker. The Manitoba Trucking Association is an important partner of the government as a whole, an important stakeholder, but specifically within Manitoba Public Insurance, which the member opposite would know very well.

They are an important partner. They were consulted. We also consulted with the Keystone agriculture producers and other users of heavy equipment and heavy trailers. They understand the need for this, and they support our efforts in promoting road safety for all.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): It's important for us to continue to invest and enhance in all aspects of road safety and infrastructure.

Was there consideration adding light trailers to this category for the policy?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, it is an interesting question, Honourable Deputy Speaker. I welcome it from the member opposite. I think there's always room to improve the work that's being done at MPI to ensure that we're promoting road safety.

My understanding is, is that, you know, the nature of the trailers that we're contemplating here today are so significant in terms of their size and their weight that they do pose a specific kind of danger if they are not properly repaired and that information is not communicated.

But I think there's always room for improvements to ensure that we enhance safety across the board.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): The minister just alluded to the fact there was no safeties required after a vehicle has been damaged, but any trailer over 4,500 kilograms requires a safety and, actually, an annual safety. Are you aware of that?

Mr. Wiebe: Right. Again, for—so what we're talking about here is these heavy trailers, and that's the classification that we're talking about.

What this is specifically referring to in this bill is with regard to those that have been written off and then are deemed at that point by MPI to either be salvageable or irreparable.

And so these are for trailers that are then repaired. Again, you know, done in a way that is checked by MPI and—to ensure that the safety is there and then those would then be allowed to be back on the road.

It's just another check and balance for those trailers which, up until this point, would have had no record about their—when they were written off, what the repair was done on them.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll remind all members that the questions should be put through the Chair and not directed directly to the minister.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Yes, the answer should be as well then.

So the question is, anything that's 4,500 GVW or higher has to have a safety—like that little green sticker—on the side of the trailer and/or vehicle prior

to it being able to be registered. So it goes through a safety process.

Is the minister suggesting it goes through multiple safety processes?

Mr. Wiebe: So again, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the issue at hand here that's contemplated in the bill is simply those trailers that have been damaged to the point where they have been deemed as being written off. And I'm not sure I'm using the exact, proper language here in terms of how MPI classifies them, but I think the member knows what I'm referring to and that is, is that the damage was so severe, MPI has written this off.

Now, if it's salvageable, they will still sell that trailer back to the public through auction and at that point, it is possible—or in fact, I think the person who owned the trailer gets first dibs—they would have the opportunity to then fix that trailer. We want to make sure that when it's fixed, the record of that is clear and that the work is done to a standard that we all expect for safety on the road.

Mr. Piwniuk: I just want to know if the minister can answer this question that, what impact will it have on individuals insuring trailers, especially the rates that they will have to pay and the delay if there's also—if a trailer has to be fixed and put out of sequence or out of circulation, and how much time would it delay and especially the—when it comes to the supply chain issues going out there right now?

Mr. Wiebe: No impacts on rates, certainly. And certainly in working with the Manitoba Trucking Association, with others—again, Keystone Agricultural Producers and others—what we understand is, is they believe that the safety of these vehicles is paramount.

The Speaker in the Chair

And that's why, you know, for their members and for producers across the province, I know that they do a lot of work to ensure that their members are following the rules, that they're doing everything to a high standard.

We're not concerned about those folks; we're just giving them additional tools to ensure that the work that they are getting done on these trailers is appropriate and has been checked.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, absolutely, safety is paramount. I think on both sides of the House, that's not a question at all.

But the question is, I believe every—well, I know, every vehicle over 4,500 GVW has to go through a safety annually and prior to any registration, and if there's a change of ownership it has to be gone through the safety again.

So is this requiring multiple safeties on a vehicle that has been written off, repaired, then it'll be safetied and then safetied again to get the green sticker on the side of it?

I just want to be clear what the minister is suggesting.

Mr. Wiebe: No. No duplication, Honourable Speaker.

In fact, what this is doing is giving additional tools for, you know, those vehicles that have been in a serious accident and, you know, either the owner or, in this case, MPI wants to—you know, believes that it's repairable to get this vehicle back on the road. That's the idea.

* (16:40)

Unfortunately, again under the current definition in The Highway Traffic Act, the—we just—because these trailers are—they're not self-propelled, we needed to make this change. It's supported by industry and it's supported by MPI.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, Honourable Speaker, will that trailer then have a salvaged title, like if you have a vehicle that's written off and repaired, it has a salvage title? Will this trailer now, as well, have a salvaged title just so the buyer is aware of a—potential issues and that it was in a major accident, enough to write it off?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, that's correct, Honourable Speaker. The member opposite has it exactly right.

The idea is, is that, you know, the work that's going to be done on these vehicles will be to a high standard, again, as the member opposite mentioned, will be safetied and appropriate to be on the road. But for the consumer, they also have the information about the history of that vehicle so that they know what they're getting into. They know exactly what kind of vehicle, in this case trailer, that they're buying.

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, currently, right now, through MPI, if you have a vehicle that is—has a salvaged title, it has to go in for an integrity test before getting insurance in part of that safety program.

What institutions are out there currently that can provide this integrity test, because I'm not aware of any, Mr. Speaker—Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wiebe: Got too excited there, Honourable Speaker, to answer the question. I stood up a bit early.

But just because it was a question that I asked as well to ensure that the facilities were in place to be able to implement this and to be able to, as the member opposite mentioned earlier about, you know, pressures in the trucking industry.

There are—I can get him a list or I can get him information that will give some more detail on that, but certainly we do have the ability to do these safeties and to make sure that they're properly checked before they get back out on the road.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): My question for the minister, as someone who owns a safety inspection shop for trailers and also an integrity inspection facility endorsed by Manitoba Public Insurance, and being unaware of the process for an integrity inspection for trailers, at what time will those integrity inspection facilities be certified to provide the inspection?

And I would assume, although the minister had said that it's not a duplicated inspection process, that it would be similar to motor vehicle integrity inspections, which are a multi-layer inspection process that all—that has the integrity inspection layer as well as followed up by a safety inspection layer, which is mandatory for any trailer over—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, it's—it sounds like the member opposite wears a lot of hats, because it seems like every time he gets up in this Chamber, he's talking about another job that he has outside of the Chamber. So good on him; and has some knowledge about this that I would be happy to get MPI to follow up on to make sure his shop has all the details to do this work properly.

He knows how important it is to have safe vehicles on the road, and so we're going to ensure that we work with shops like his to make sure that we get that work done properly.

Mrs. Hiebert: Will there be any added administrative burden for MPI to administer on this?

Mr. Wiebe: No, MPI has been calling for this and, again, working with partners in the industry and has asked for this bill to be brought here before the Legislature.

They see the value in this. Of course MPI has dual roles: keep the roadways safe and to ensure all

Manitobans are safe, but also keep rates affordable and low. And so that has been a mandate that we've been given. We've communicated that clearly to MPI. This fits with that mandate and we'll continue to implement this.

Mr. Piwniuk: I just, I—question for the minister is, once this bill gets implemented, like royal assent and it actually goes to, you know, being implemented, how long—is it going to happen immediately, the implementation, or is there going to be some—when—especially when it comes to safeties, when it comes to shops that have to get ready for this.

Is there going to be a time frame, transition period until the actual process gets developed?

Mr. Wiebe: It's a good point, Honourable Speaker, and we do want to move as quickly as possible on this. And that's why we're bringing it here for second reading immediately. We do hope that this will come to committee, that we'll have an opportunity to hear from the public.

I imagine we'll hear from members opposite and from the public about ways to implement this more quickly, and we're happy to work with them. And, you know, the intention is to get moving as quickly as we can.

Mr. Perchotte: Currently, Honourable Speaker, with MPI there—you're permitted to have home-built trailers. And I've built several trailers myself over the years, 4,500 kilograms and above.

What's going to stop somebody from buying a irreparable trailer or a repaired trailer and simply just bringing it forward as a home-built?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I've got to admit, that's a great question, Honourable Speaker. I mean, I'm impressed—I know the member opposite does a lot of work on, I think, classic cars and other stuff like that. So I know he has some knowledge in this area as well.

By the number of questions I'm getting here, opposite, the bill briefing should've been a packed house, a jammed house, but in fact we only had one member there. I mean, I don't now if I can offer a second bill briefing, but we can get right into all the details and make sure that members opposite know all the details.

What I will say is, is that I appreciate his perspective; I'd be happy to follow up and maybe get him a more detailed answer about homemade trailers that are over 4,500 kilograms. That's a big trailer, and I appreciate the member sharing that info.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): As a member that attended the bill briefing, it's no wonder there's so many questions coming up, because they weren't provided—these answers weren't provided at the time.

So my question that I have for the minister is: Will this come under the auspices of—sorry—for Carfax, and will Carfax be notified of any of the damage that is done to this? Because they are a reputable institution that helps buyers and protects buyers from buying damaged vehicles.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it is a good question, and I'm surprised that the member opposite didn't think that the officials at the bill briefing gave him the proper information. We spent—good amount of time, and good folks. Again, I'm happy to give specific information—in fact, I think he asked this question. He asked this question at the bill briefing.

And so I'm kind of surprised that he would bring it forward here again. Happy to follow up, make sure the member opposite has all the information. This is an important bill for road safety, and I think every member opposite understands the importance of road safety.

So you know, open book here; we're happy to work with you to make sure—even former ministers who are—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Debate

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I just want to put a few words on the record here when it comes to this bill, Bill 19, the drivers' licence vehicle amendment act. And you know, I—it's dear to my heart, by the—I was actually an insurance broker for over 20 years, when it came to owning an insurance agency in Virden, Manitoba, and a few other locations: Reston, Oak Lake.

And I know we used to deal with a lot of truckers and truckers that insured their vehicles. And I think this bill sort of indicates that, now, that when it comes to buying—especially nowadays, when there's so much—such a big trucking industry going through our country, our trade corridors, lot of times there's a lot more semis on the road right now. And I'm thinking, probably in the last 10 years, it's probably more than doubled the amount of volume of traffic that's coming out.

And so it's—I—as I see on the Trans-Canada Highway, every day there's more and more traffic that are semi trucks on the highway. So it's very important that, you know, lot of times you see accidents on the highway,

and lot of times trucks have ran into the ditch. I'm not quite sure if they were sleeping or distracted, but they were straight in, not looking at the curve that was going through.

* (16:50)

But here's an example of if these semis weren't 'dably' that damaged, but could cause a lot of problems when it comes to the trailers, especially when they were in an accident like that. And so it is important that identification, when it comes to classifications of these trailers, if it's—if there are damaged of any point for a minor accident to a major accident, making sure that the public is aware or the industry is aware.

And I believe that, you know, being that I was also the minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I had lots of conversation with the Manitoba Trucking Association, and I know they would be looking at this situation, too, to really protect and the safety and the opportunity when it comes to trucks on highways. They want to make sure that their industry is safe—that not a semi-trailer that's on—behind a truck almost goes out of control because of the situation, the condition of that trailer because it was in an accident.

So it's so important that safety is No. 1 when it comes to—on both sides of the aisle here. We all agree that safety for the Manitoba public is so important, especially with the amount of traffic, you know, truck traffic that's on the highway right now—that these trailers are actually inspected, they're actually safe to drive. And then identification when it comes to the status of the condition, if they were rebuilt, had to be repaired, that status is going to be known to the next buyer. And making sure that the buyer—when it comes to the buyer beware, this gives—for consumer protection too—this is very important.

So I want to give a few—that's probably all the words I want to give on this particular bill and the opportunity to pass on to other members in the Chamber that want to speak on this bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 11—no, 19—Bill 19, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 20—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

The Speaker: The honourable—we now move on to Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, for second reading.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, that Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce for second reading Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to support the implementation of The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Alternatives Measures for Driving Offences), which came into force on May 1, 2023, and imposed the requirements for individuals dealt with through the alternative measures to having an interlock—ignition-interlocking device in addition to completing an out-of-court impaired driving education and awareness program.

The Highway Traffic Act already prevents people from appealing against the interlock—ignition-interlock requirement itself. However, it does not prevent people from appealing the suspension of their licence if they refuse to comply with the ignition-interlock requirement. Allowing these appeals could enable these individuals to delay the installation of the ignition-interlock device with potential public safety implications.

The amendment will address the appeal loophole in the alternative measures by allowing Manitoba Public Insurance to immediately implement the ignition-interlock requirement for individuals undergoing the alternative measures program without the possibility of renegeing on their obligations for full compliance.

In this way, the amendments will also keep the Licence Suspension Appeal Board from hearing frivolous appeals filed by individuals who have agreed to participate in alternative measures to avoid criminal prosecution but then who do not comply with that agreement and have their licences suspended as a result.

Honourable Speaker, I urge all members of this House to show support for Bill 20 today. While it's a small step and a small measure with regards to closing a loophole, it's an important message to send of unity around the issue around impaired driving that this

House takes it seriously, that this government will continue to push and to make changes to keep our roads safe and to address impaired driving in all its forms.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Bill 19—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act *(Continued)*

The Speaker: Before we move on I do need to declare that second reading of Bill 19 was carried.

Bill 20—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act *(Continued)*

Questions

The Speaker: We'll now have a question period of up to 15 minutes. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer may exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, my question for the minister is simple: Have there been any individuals who have appealed the suspension and not had to participate in the ignition lock program due to this loophole to date?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

No. My understanding is that there has not been anyone that has found and exploited this loophole. So, you know, we're appreciative of the work that's been done behind the scenes to ensure that we close this loophole quickly to ensure that nobody tries to exploit it in a way that avoids accountability.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): If someone who doesn't own a vehicle and therefore can't install an ignition interlock, obviously because they don't own the vehicle, how does this legislation affect those individuals that don't have a vehicle but still need their licence to work or—like, where would they install it? Like, where would they install one? Like, they can't install it in a work vehicle or something like that, for example.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it would be my understanding that that particular alternative program wouldn't be applicable in that case. In other words, the ignition interlock wouldn't be a—be able to be used in that situation.

As the member knows, this was a bill that was brought forward by the previous government and supported by all sides in the House. And so I could take the opportunity to dig into that legislation. If they'd contemplated that specific—a work vehicle—I'm not sure if it contemplates that.

But, certainly this is a loophole. This came into effect on—into force on May 1, 2023. So we are closing this loophole as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Johnson: So if—I mean, all loopholes, if they choose they can find another loophole, and I guess that's why we keep adding on regulation. And I do like the member stating, you know, that he's riding on our coattails and our legislation.

But if a person that was supposed to put in an ignition interlock got rid of all his—all the vehicles in their name, sold all their vehicles, gave them to their kids, transferred them to their spouse, how would this legislation 'benefect' that member? That—sorry, that resident?

Mr. Wiebe: No, not riding on coattails, but simply building on the work that was done previously. And, absolutely, this government stands, you know, against impaired driving in all its forms, and we will be taking action. I hope that the member opposite continues to support us in that good work as we did in the work that they did and, I believe, even going back, some important work that was done under the Doer government that still leads the country. We really took the lead.

With regards to the specific bill, it—that does not apply. This is simply closing the loophole. It is actually an important loophole to close, so it wouldn't apply to those folks who don't qualify for the alternatives measures program.

* (17:00)

Mr. Johnson: Okay, yes. All seriousness here, we all hope all the loopholes are closed. But if somebody disposes of all their vehicles, will that, then, be closed for them? Like, just what will happen to those people? Do you take a snapshot of the day they had their infraction, and then, you know, then they—if they get rid of their vehicles, they aren't allowed to appeal at all?

Or—and if the minister doesn't have the answer, like, it's fine. He can get the answer to me another day. But I think it's just serious—that if we're serious about closing the loopholes, that we look at all the loopholes that can potentially be there and close them.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I think I understand where the member opposite is going here. And, you know, I—a good point. We want to ensure that if somebody does engage in this alternative measures program that they are sincere in what they're doing. In other words, that they're following all the steps and rules when it comes to the impaired driving education, but then also that they're not somehow sidestepping their requirements when it comes to transporting themselves.

My understanding is they would not be eligible, that they wouldn't be—this—they wouldn't be entered into an alternative measures program if they were trying to, you know, get rid of vehicles. And there's an oversight element that I think would apply there.

This is a very serious—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Was there any stakeholder groups consulted in the development of the amendment? If so, can the minister list who was all involved?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, we—you know, one of the first steps that I took as Minister responsible for MPI was to be in touch directly with MADD Canada and to start to work with them. I—you know, MPI already has a really good working relationship with MADD; they're important partners. But we did consult with MADD, and, of course, with law enforcement, to ensure that they understood what we were doing and we were taking this step.

You know, again, the understanding is, is we want to continue to partner with them. And we reached out right away to say, you know, we want to close this loophole, but we're looking for new ideas and ways that we can strengthen our impaired driving legislation.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm—from my understanding, from the discussion from the minister, this has to do with criminal offences that have been diverted out of the court system. So does this have the same impact for the IRP program, which is the immediate roadside prohibition program?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. And what, again, what this loophole closes specifically when it comes to those diverted cases is that we—it sort—well, and again, the member opposite was at the bill briefing, so I think he knows

very well that this is between the interplay between MPI and the ability to appeal, whereas you wouldn't be able to appeal in the court system for, you know, agreeing to participate in these alternative measures.

So it really is about that interplay between MPI and their appeal process, and the appeal process available to everybody who goes through the court system.

Mr. Balcaen: I do understand the interplay based on criminal code and alternative measures, and looking at this. But the IRP program is not a criminal program; it is a MPI-sponsored bill that allows for immediate roadside prohibition. So I'm wondering, again, if this comes into play, or if the minister thought about this side of the immediate roadside prohibition.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, Honourable Speaker, I'm not sure that the IRP would be applicable in this case in terms of the ability to appeal and the loophole that we're trying to close here. You know—and maybe the member opposite can clarify exactly how he's asking this question.

My understanding is, is that—you know, and actually now that—now I'm saying it out loud, maybe I'm understanding a little bit better what the member is asking, is that if somebody was charged—well, maybe I'll just ask the member, obviously, to restate his question. Maybe I can answer it a little bit better.

Mr. Balcaen: So through the immediate roadside prohibition, it is not a criminal charge.

It's a diversion that's already taken place at the roadside by the member that's responsible for the investigation. Many of the same outcomes are administered through MPI.

So I'm wondering if this was considered by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe).

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, okay, so—but I'm not sure—again, I—and we can take this conversation offline if it's more helpful, to get more information, but my understanding is the IRP, again, wouldn't have—the alternative measures that were contemplated in this specific bill would not be applicable for somebody who fell into the IRP through that process.

So, you know, again, I could be wrong. I'm happy to talk to the member opposite more thoroughly about this. Happy to contemplate that if it's applicable, but my understanding is that's not what this bill specifically is about.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm just wondering if the Minister for Justice could inform the House and the Manitobans

that are watching today, what specific offences can be deferred to an alternative measures program when it comes to impaired driving?

It's a very serious offence and, you know, we have some of the highest standards within our province, so I'm just wondering which offences can be designated to alternative measures?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, and I've got a ton of respect for the work that's done in our criminal justice system and with our law enforcement folks to ensure, as I said earlier, that the—that those folks who are charged with impaired driving, that there is a standard which they need to meet in order to be eligible for the alternative measures program.

You know, it's all about keeping our streets safe, and it's all about making sure that those folks who have offended, have, you know, an impaired driving charge, that we're giving the tools to those who want to make good decisions, the kind of tools that they can now succeed with.

The Speaker: The question before the—no? A little early yet.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'd like to thank the minister for answering many of the questions that were put forth today and for the bill briefing. Still a few questions here, but I absolutely support strengthening our laws on impaired driving.

Impaired driving is obviously one of the leading causes of death for Manitobans, young Manitobans and older Manitobans alike. It puts all motorists on the road at danger and at risk when somebody chooses to drink and drive, and having loopholes where people can negate processes is something that we should work on, both sides of the House, to make sure that these are closed.

I know that police services spend ample amount of time working with stakeholders such as MADD Canada and then local MADD chapters as well as the TADD, the teens against drunk driving, the school resource officers that go into the schools and speak with them there as well as the groups of Mothers Against Drunk Driving to ensure the safety of motorists on the road.

And, as the minister is aware, a lot of the education happens at the school level when people are taking their driver education and learning the foundations of

driving and the importance of ensuring that they are not driving while impaired.

Impaired has really extended over the years, Honourable Speaker, from impaired by alcohol to impaired by drugs, and with the legalization of cannabis products, there is an increase of impaired driving by drugs, specifically cannabis. And what people in the law enforcement area were seeing was more impairment by other drugs such as methamphetamines and by morphine and by other prescription drugs that people are abusing.

* (17:10)

So when somebody is diverted from the court system, the Crown prosecutor makes a very serious case review and decides which case should be put forward for alternative measures or for a diversion from the court system. Not only does this save us time and money in the court system, it also strikes a balance between the offender's responsibility and the citizens that the courts are served to protect.

So I do thank the great work of MPI and many of the other organizations, such as MADD, TADD and the school resource officers education programs that put their time and effort forward. Unfortunately, sometimes this message is not getting through. And so closing the loopholes, making sure that people cannot appeal this legislation, is a great thing for all Manitobans.

And so with those words on the record, Honourable Speaker, I'll leave the floor open for anybody else who may wish to add some words.

The Speaker: Question before the House is the second reading of Bill 20, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

We'll now move—the motion is accordingly carried.

**Bill 24—The Intimate Image Protection
Amendment Act
(Distribution of Fake Intimate Images)**

The Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images).

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images), be now read

a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce for second reading Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act. This bill will expand the definition of intimate image to capture images created or altered by electronic means and update the title of the act.

The Intimate Image Protection Act came into force on January 15, 2016. The act requires the government to make supports available to assist people who have had or have—who are believed to—that they are about to have an intimate image distributed without their consent.

In addition to establishing a new requirement for government to assist people who have had an intimate image distributed without their consent, this statute created the tort of non-consensual distribution of intimate images. This provision allows a person whose intimate image is distributed without consent to sue the person who distributed the image.

Currently, the definition of intimate image is limited to actual photographs, film or video recordings. This bill will expand that definition to include visual recordings that were created or altered using electronic means, including software, machine learning and other types of artificial intelligence.

This amendment to the legislation will increase access to civil remedies for plaintiffs whose intimate images, including those electronically created or altered, have been shared without their consent. It will also bring The Intimate Image Protection Act into alignment with similar laws in other jurisdictions such as New Brunswick, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island.

The addition of altered or computer generated images into the definition of intimate image was recommended by both the Uniform Law Conference of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

In addition to supporting priorities identified by the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit and Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet, the amendment would support access to justice and provide victims and survivors of these incidents with another venue of recourse. The amendments may also deter would-be distributors of electronically altered or created intimate images.

I would submit, Honourable Speaker, that recent events in Manitoba have made it clear for the need for this bill. Our laws must account for the impacts of AI in our communities, and it is unfortunate and deeply regrettable reality that these tools can be used to alter images of people and try to shame them, embarrassment—embarrass them or demean them.

We cannot and should not stand by and allow this to happen. That is why we have brought forward this legislation, and I look for the support of all in this House in passing the bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. I also had a similar bill on the Order Paper, and I know, after our bill briefing, we both have the same end goal in mind, and that's to protect vulnerable children and youth.

We've definitely seen, over the past few months, deepfakes and altered AI images being distributed throughout classrooms and at schools.

So I'm wondering if the minister can explain what action's being taken to enhance education enforcement in the school system around the distribution of fake intimate images.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, thank you very much for the question, and I look forward to the support of all members. I do think this is a bill that is important to many members in the House.

We do work with school divisions to ensure that the policies that they have in place are strong and strengthened. This bill will lead the way in providing that guidance and that support in the work that they do.

The bottom line, though, is that the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, C3P, is an incredibly important partner in this. They do amazing work in reaching out and giving support to youth. We fund them, and we want to continue the—supporting them to do this work.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

And I was hoping that he could just speak a little bit more to how this legislation would specifically help and protect minors.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, Honourable Speaker, we lean heavily on the expertise of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. They do incredible work in reaching out and providing resources.

Obviously, the most extreme cases, we partner with law enforcement, and we had a chance to meet some of the amazing law enforcement that do that work here in the province, I guess a couple months back. Incredibly difficult work, but incredibly important work.

But in terms of supporting youth and giving them the resources, C3P is a great partner.

Mrs. Stone: Can the minister please explain, further to my first question, what specific resources will be provided to schools around enforcement as well as education for distribution of intimate images?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, Honourable Speaker, the work that's being done in school divisions is important, and we continue to partner with them to do the work.

What we're realizing or the information that we're getting back—obviously, there's been some high-profile cases, but the information that we're getting back is the ease of not only creating these images now, with the technology that's available, but also the ability to rapidly distribute it. That's why we're supporting our school divisions to ensure that they have the right policies in place.

And again, this legislation will just help strengthen that on the altered images and on the fake image side.

Mrs. Stone: So, further to that, are there supports in place for youth and children to help navigate the process when they're victims of such crimes?

* (17:20)

Mr. Wiebe: Within the schools of course, they have their own support networks and we have a lot of

respect and faith in the work that's being done at the school level.

More broadly, though, the resources that are available through the C3P—through the Canadian Centre for Child Protection—they are the experts in this. They not only do work in terms of connecting directly with victims, but they do work in schools as well. So they'll connect with the school, with the guidance counsellors, with the administration and they'll make sure that those resources are rolled out.

We fund them; they do the work. That's how this was set up originally and supported, you know, through multiple changes in government.

Mrs. Stone: Individuals within the legal community has done quite a bit of work on analyzing what different organizations and jurisdictions are doing across the country.

So can the minister list who he has consulted with from the legal community and if he has consulted anyone within the legal community?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, as I mentioned in my opening statement, the Uniform Law Conference of Canada did incredible work. This is legislation that's now slowly starting to be created and rolled out across the country.

When Manitoba brought in this legislation under an NDP government, it was groundbreaking. It was totally unique in the country and we were a leader and others followed us. We want to get back to that position and this bill will help us once again be leaders, something I think all members can support.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Does this legislation include images that are not of an intimate nature, but are equally embarrassing, 'humanitmitilizing' and 'dehumanilizing'—sorry, I can't speak today.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: This bill is specific to intimate images, but I take the member's point that, again, the ease of which these images can now be created really makes it a very difficult tool—or, a very powerful tool and a difficult one for us to sort of mitigate some of the damage that can be done.

This is specific to intimate images, although the definition of that may include some of the images that the member opposite is referring to.

Mrs. Hiebert: Does this bill include any provisions to protect the identity of individuals or youth that are victims of such crimes?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, this builds on The Intimate Image Protection Act that was law here in Manitoba, puts the victims first, put the victims front and centre in terms of protection and ensuring that their identity is protected.

Again, the experts in the field right now, we have so much respect and faith in the work that they're doing. We want to continue to give them the tools to be able to protect people.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Can the member elaborate a little bit more on the great work that the child protection—centre of child protection does here in the province?

And also, I want to at least state that it's absolutely unfortunate that we need this kind of legislation in this day and age. I—my heart goes out to these victims and I would definitely say that this is a good piece of legislation.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, on that point, I couldn't be in more agreement with the member opposite. And, you know, maybe—you know, and not to continue on too much on this, but the fact that it's so easy to do now and that it's so damaging to somebody is really nefarious and difficult to deal with.

What I will say is, is that you folks may have seen—members opposite may have seen the billboards that are out there and the information that's circulated online and ad campaigns that are run by C3P, they do such amazing work of ensuring that victims know what their rights are and know what tools are available to them.

They're an amazing partner.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, we've certainly seen a few other jurisdictions across Canada introduce similar pieces of legislation to deal with deepfakes.

What would this legislation closely mirror? Is it modelled after a specific jurisdiction's legislation?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. Several—as the member opposite mentioned—several, now, jurisdictions have this legislation to address non-consensual disclosure—or, distribution, sorry, of intimate images. Currently, Alberta and Nova Scotia have statutes similar to Manitobans, where the burden is on the plaintiff to provide that they did not consent. Similar legislation has been acted in

New Brunswick, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island.

MLA Lagassé: As someone who works with a lot of vulnerable children, I would like to ask the member the question: How will this legislation effectively protect the vulnerable individuals from the creation of these images?

Mr. Wiebe: You know, it's, you know, again, groundbreaking legislation when it was brought forward, and we were able to lead the country in terms of its impact, but because that was done here in Manitoba a number of years ago, we've now been able to see the impact that it's actually had. And, of course, this is just one piece of the—or one part of the solution to protecting victims. It's not the only solution, but it has proven over time now, in Manitoba, to be effective.

And, so, you know, we need to stay current with the technology and to make sure that we're protecting victims in this with the new technology that's available, but it has proven effective and we want to keep building on it.

Mrs. Stone: The Centre for Child Protection uses Project Arachnid. With this great program that had identified millions of child pornographic images, will it pick up AI imagery, and has the minister considered this through the use—the implementation of this legislation?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I'm not sure, and, you know, I'm happy to talk further with the member opposite, but I'm not sure in that case.

Child pornography is illegal and is pursued by law enforcement. And so that is—would be a separate issue aside from this bill in terms of—but, you know, but law enforcement is well aware of the changing nature of technology, and I know that they're current with doing the work that they can do to protect victims.

Mrs. Hiebert: How will this deter individuals from creating altered intimate images, and what would be the proposed penalties for that?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, the proposed amendments that we're contemplating here today are with regards to a civil mechanism for plaintiffs, who have had fake images created, to pursue remedies. So, again, it's on the civil side, so the penalties are with the courts. It's not something that's prescribed in the bill. It's—it would be a civil tort.

That being said, it, again, strengthens the work that's already being done by C3P and other amazing organizations.

MLA Lagassé: I'd like to ask the member opposite what kind of supports are in place for individuals who have been victimized by this kind of crime, and what is the process for bringing this forward to a lawsuit?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, what I—you know—and when we were bringing this bill forward and having, you know, the bill briefing and other briefings with regards to this information, one of the items that we brought forward right away is how do we get this information out there. How do we let the public know their rights and let the public know that, you know, this bill will help deal with some of the technological changes that, quite frankly, there's been some high profile cases, but I think it's more a day-to-day where we're hearing about victims that we want to be able to support.

So I think it's a good point. I think we need to get this information out there, and we need to make sure that people know what their resources are and how we can support them.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, so just further to that last answer, is the government planning to take on an education awareness campaign of its own, as it relates to creation and distribution of deepfakes and the consequences that result thereof?

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I think it's something that we can continue to talk about. What I vision this, though, is again working with the experts at C3P who already have, you know, the ability and the knowledge of how to get this information out there.

* (17:30)

As I said, you know, billboards and kind of like that, you know, media that gets the information to the people who need to hear it, they're the experts in terms of where those resources can go to. So, you know, not saying no, but I think that they are a good resource to lean into to get that information out.

Mrs. Stone: So, just further to that, on communications and back to schools, because we are seeing really terrible circumstances of AI-generated images and deepfakes being passed around within school settings and during school hours.

So can the minister specifically mention and discuss what resources and supports he is planning to provide educators and our school systems to help educate and enforce when this is happening during school hours?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, as I said, Honourable Speaker, I think the member opposite has it exactly right. We need to get this information and these

resources to the people who need it and to meet them where they are; in this case, in schools and working with educators.

So there is some really important work already being done by C3P. I know our Minister of Education has done a lot of work to ensure that school boards are being, you know, properly briefed.

This bill, though, will help give them some of those tools and will support the work that they are doing. So I've got a ton of faith in our schools and in our educators, but we want to give them as many tools as we can to do their important work.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Thank you for the opportunity today to rise to put a few words on the record as relates to Bill 24.

As I mentioned during question period, this is an important topic and one that our side of the House is taking very seriously. We also had a bill on the Order Paper earlier in March, very similar in nature, to deal specifically with this issue and what we have been seeing in schools and globally with individuals who have been targeted and become victims of AI-generated images, sexually explicit and deepfakes.

So, you know, it is the outmost priority for our side of the House to ensure that we do strengthen our existing laws to protect individuals from sexual exploitation. And, you know, Honourable Speaker, I do want to mention that I do believe that this is a non-partisan issue, one that all sides of the House have the same end goal in mind, and that is to protect vulnerable children and youth and young people and to ensure that young people are kept safe online.

You know, AI-generated images are often referred to as deepfakes, are incredibly realistic depictions of individuals. The use of video deepfakes further adds realistic representations of an individual's voices. The concerned in particular for young people are sexual deepfakes that include intimate images and/or videos, can be used for revenge porn.

These deepfakes can be intentionally used to exploit, harass, embarrass and harm another individual. And in Manitoba, although we do have legislation that bans the sharing of images—intimate images, this does not include altered images.

And, you know, as we've seen, AI is emerging technological advancement and one that is developing much faster than governments are able to safely regulate in order to prevent criminal activity. AI apps and sites such as faceswapper.ai are designed to almost instantaneously alter an image, and their website itself says, your go-to platform for seamless face swapping using cutting-edge AI technology.

You know, there are also other AI websites that specifically target undressing women in a matter of minutes. A Victoria-based Internet safety company actually did conduct an experiment on this and found that it only took minutes, using free websites, to virtually undress an image of a fully clothed women. This experiment easily found, just by going on Google for a search, seven easily accessible and user-friendly websites and applications that are capable of creating deepnudes.

And, you know, as we've seen, with the accessibility of cellphones, iPads, social media, Internet everywhere we go at our fingertips and the ability to rapidly share on social media in the middle—in a matter of seconds. This is absolutely terrifying for individuals, and especially for vulnerable children and young people.

AI is developing at a significantly rapid pace, and if unmonitored and unregulated, it can leave the door open for AI to be used to commit significant harm to another person.

So, Honourable Speaker, it's important that we do strengthen our existing laws and safety systems to prevent the distribution of images that are being misused for sexual exploitation and revenge porn purposes.

You know, I do want to call out a good friend of mine, a Member of Parliament, Michelle Rempel Garner. She has been a strong advocate and the leading voice on this issue for a number of months, and I have the utmost respect for her and the work that she is doing on—in Parliament on this.

And she's actually created a bipartisan committee to specifically discuss the challenges and issues that we're currently seeing, but can see in the future, on AI and AI-generated images and the consequences and concerns that that could pose for individuals within Canada.

And, you know, some of the other things that she has certainly drawn attention to in Parliament and through this bipartisan committee are things like the effect of unchecked AI on children, sharing intimate images and altering of faces and voices and the ease

of users to create fake content of others, needing only three seconds of someone's voice to be able to create a deepfake.

You know, she's also drawn the attention of elections and ensuring citizens know what politicians are saying or aren't saying.

So, in addition to speaking to the dangers, both current and future, that Michelle Rempel Garner has brought to the attention of Parliament and of AI, and how it will affect individuals, particularly not women—or, particularly women—we certainly see that challenges that—and consequences that could occur if E-I is not properly regulated.

So, you know, as part of this non-partisan caucus, they're reviewing emergent technology and also utilizing this as an opportunity to educate members of Parliament from all parties about the dangers, as well as opportunities, of AI but specifically the dangers and the consequences that can come from it.

You know, so when I refer back to my earlier comment in my opening statement, Honourable Speaker, you know, I mentioned that this should be a non-partisan issue as our end goal should be about protecting all young people and vulnerable individuals from this type of harm, and how we as legislatures can do everything in our power and everything possible to protect people online.

You know, so I just wanted—I was reading through some of Michelle Rempel's comments in Parliament and there is one that really struck me. And so I just want to quote: The member will not have any recourse because we have a legislative gap and we do not have the incentive to put someone on the national offender registry afterwards. Someone could have cost that member their career because of this information, and there is no repercussion for them afterwards.

So we often hear the saying, what goes on social media stays on social media forever; that pictures and videos that are shared online do have a permanent place in cyberspace. And the downside of AI is that intimate deepfakes can and are being shared online with little consequence to the creator and the distributor.

You know, and we certainly did witness this past January when international news erupted after explicit fake images of Taylor Swift rapidly spread across social media. The deepfakes depicted Taylor Swift in sexually suggestive positions and were viewed tens and tens of millions of times on social media before they were finally removed.

So, certainly, this case, very high profile, very global in nature, drew the attention of the White House, social media companies and lawmakers around the world, and the US has already developed a method in place for dealing with AI deepfakes.

You know, 'howasever,' Honourable Speaker, as we've seen, it's not just, you know, the most popular person in the world that has experienced this harm. We've also seen this happen in schools. We saw this happen here in Winnipeg back in the fall where AI-generated fake nude photos were posted online and shared throughout the school, including during school hours.

We also saw this within the past month: a school in California dealt with a similar situation. These are terrible situations that are occurring in schools and with our young people, and it's a very scary reality of the dark side of AI.

* (17:40)

You know, and Winnipeg police, at the time when this did happen within our Winnipeg school, indicated that A-R—AI is uncharted territory. It's complicated and it's controversial, and we as legislatures now have a duty to keep up.

And, you know, as a mom myself—and I've mentioned this numerous times in the House as well—you know, social media is a very scary thought when I think of my daughter going to school, and what laws are available to protect her from situations like this occurring.

So it's certainly my priority and our priority on this side of the—our House to ensure that our young people are safe within schools, and that the education and resources and supports are being provided to individuals within a school setting and to classmates so we can ensure that we are protecting them to the best of our ability.

You know, so across Canada, eight provinces have legislation on intimate images; however, only BC, PEI, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick actually have amendments to the legislation to refer to altered images. So, you know, Manitoba is behind the eight ball. This is one of the reasons why I put a similar piece of legislation—or bill—on the Order Paper earlier in March.

And, you know, to be honest, I was surprised that I didn't see the NDP's bill until a couple weeks after mine was on the Order Paper, but, you know, as I mentioned, the end goal is the same and appreciate the

opportunity to sit with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) in a bill briefing to discuss how we can commonly ensure that we have as much protections for young people as possible, especially as it relates to AI deepfakes.

So, Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity for putting a few words on the record, and thank you very much.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'm happy to rise and just put a few words on record here this afternoon for Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this really important piece of legislation, as well as for the bill briefing that he offered. I know I learned a lot through the bill briefing and the question and answer portion here this afternoon, Honourable Speaker.

It is very sad that we're living in a day and age where technology is being utilized in very negative and harmful and dangerous ways. We know that technology can be very helpful and quite proactive in many senses, but, with relation to this bill, it is harming people—many people of all ages, of all demographics across the entire world, Honourable Speaker.

It was back in 2011 I actually worked for the Senate of Canada and I—this is where I was first exposed to first-hand testimony of youth who had experienced cyberbullying, Honourable Speaker, and some of the stories that they shared—and these were often as young people—as young as 12 years old through I believe it was 17 or 18, and they were in tears. They were devastated of sharing their own personal experiences, sharing stories of loved ones that they had lost to suicide because of the harmful acts that technology can have.

And this is getting worse, and we're seeing this whether it be through AI, through deepfakes—and I'm learning more about this too, Honourable Speaker; I know I asked lots of questions about it during the bill briefing—where deepfakes are an accumulation of video and audio where you can take a picture of someone and then put them basically on a video of something else and make it look so realistic that it's actually hard to challenge.

But I'm happy to see that this—that legislation has been brought forward. I think it brings more consequences for those who are misusing images and things such as deepfakes, and I suspect we will be

revisiting this legislation. I think it is good and it is strong, but it will need constant revisiting as a—society continues to progress, Honourable Speaker. But I'm happy to see the bill move through this House to committee.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 24, the intimate images partner—Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

We will now move on—the motion is accordingly carried.

Bill 11—The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act—second reading of that one.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to speak about Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act. This bill brings forward amendments that are related to keeping the statute book of Manitoba in good order.

The bill deals with three matters: gender neutrality, minor amendments in corrections and regulations, and proclamation commencement dates.

Firstly—and I would argue, most importantly—The Statutes and Regulations Act is being amended to provide two legislative tools for updating the language of acts and regulations to achieve gender neutrality. The Lieutenant Governor-in-Council is given a regulation-making power to make amendments to achieve a gender-neutral style in Manitoba's regulations.

The power can be exercised for this restricted, limited purpose in respect of any regulation on the books. The Chief Legislative Counsel is given revision power to replace the exclusive use of masculine

or feminine nouns and pronouns, or binary pronouns, with equivalent gender-neutral nouns and pronouns.

For example, he or she can now be replaced with they. There are dozens of acts and regulations that still only refer to he or his, and hundreds that refer to he or she. This will be a major undertaking for Legislative Counsel, but they will now have the tools to tackle these changes in a more efficient manner.

You may recall the Chief Legislative Counsel was given a similar power to change the references from queen to king on the demise of the Crown. Changes to achieve gender neutrality in statutes that cannot be made by the exercise of the revision power will continue to be made by bill amendments.

A consequential amendment is made to The Interpretation Act to reflect gender diversity. This bill is in keeping with our government's commitment to upholding diversity and inclusion. Language matters, and it matters that all Manitobans can see themselves reflected in the laws and regulations of this province. By replacing outdated terms with modern language, we are demonstrating our commitment to the principle that we are one Manitoba.

That means ensuring that every Manitoban, no matter their gender identity, is afforded the respect and recognition that they deserve. We in the Chamber are familiar with the minor amendments and corrections act, the annual omnibus corrections bill put forward in this House. There are—is no equivalent process for regulations.

This bill gives the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council a restricted, limited, regulation-making power to make those minor or administrative changes to regulations. This will allow for efficient updating and corrections to Manitoba's regulations, and fulfills a request from government departments and government agencies for an expedited process or a MACA for regs.

Finally, The Interpretation Act is amended to allow proclamations that bring an act into a—force, be amended or revoked before the coming-into-force date set out in the original proclamation. This clarifies the legal ability to make a change for—to a proclamation that has already been made. It is similar to a provision in the Ontario legislature.

This concludes my remarks on Bill 11. Thank you for your attention. I look forward to bringing this legislation forward to committee.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (17:50)

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent question asked by critics or designate from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): The question for the minister is: The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has made several rulings related to gender neutrality and language.

Was there expertise consulted prior to bringing this bill to the Legislature?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, Honourable Deputy Speaker, this legislation was done in consultation to make sure that we get it right, but more specifically, that when we're making these changes, that we give the ability to our Legislative Counsel to continue to make the kind of changes that reflect modern language and how we use gendered language.

Not only is—this gives them the power now but going forward, will continue as language evolves for them to be able to include all Manitobans as they update our statute book.

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): I want to thank the Minister of Justice for bringing this forward. And as the Minister of Justice clearly stated, language does matter.

So I'll ask the minister if he could please clarify, as I'm—not all of us are fully bilingual in here, subclause 8(1)(a)(ii), the French version amendments, and if you can clarify what those amendments are in French.

Mr. Wiebe: Appreciate the opportunity. I want to make sure that the member is looking at Bill 11. Yes. Okay. Maybe I'll give the member an opportunity to read the amendment so that I can get that here in my bill.

Mr. Khan: You know, as I said in my previous question, not all of us are fully bilingual. I'm not bilingual. I do speak and understand a little bit, but it's clearly here on page—Bill 11, subclause 8(1)(a)(ii) of French version is amended by striking out "toute personne ou 'enté', le compris le lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil, un ministre, un groupe de ministres" and substituting—and it goes on and on.

So, if the minister could please clarify that, since it is his bill, Bill 11.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate the question from the member opposite and I'm—hope to be able to answer his question more fully. Maybe he can just maybe get to the heart of the question that he's trying to ask.

Is it a problem with the translation that he's identified and that he maybe wants to share with the House? We'd be happy to, yes, to dig into that a little bit more closely.

Mr. Khan: Sure, thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and I guess I'll ask for the third time because as I stated, not all of us are fully bilingual in here. It's just mainly clarification around the wording that the minister has put in this bill in regards to the French language.

If he can please clarify what changes he's proposing in French?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I'll apologize to all members of the House because I have the bill in front of me and I'm not seeing section 8 in this bill. And so I may be missing something here. Be happy to work through any concerns that the member has, specifically about that translation if he's got information about how the translation is incorrect.

This is a bill that has come forward at the request of our Leg. Counsel, folks that are non-partisan, work on behalf of all members of the House. Many members opposite know them well, and they are just trying to get some more tools to be able to do their jobs more effectively.

Mr. Balcaen: Wondering if the minister could speak about the fact that language is in a continual state of evolution and what mechanisms are in place to ensure that gender-neutral style used in legislation will remain up to date?

For example, there's over 80 different recognized gender identities used, so just wondering how this will follow through with this legislation.

Mr. Wiebe: And I think the member opposite has really cut to the heart of the matter here, and what this does, similar to a bill that was brought forward under the previous government called the Demise of the Crown Act, which sounds quite ominous, but gave the tools not only to change, make the simple change, I would suggest, of, like, you know, he/him to they, or she/her to they, but also allows our Leg. Counsel to continue to do this work, not just on the new legislation that's brought forward, which is already happening, but now going back and using what the current gendered language is to ensure that it's as inclusive as possible.

Mr. Khan: So I guess we'll try this in here now for the fourth time here as I pulled it up for clarification. So, the Statutes and Regulations Act is amended by this section, 1(2), subclause 8(1)(a)(2) of the French version is amended by striking out, and it goes on.

So again, just looking for clarification as I'm not fully bilingual, maybe 65 per cent bilingual, that he can just further clarify what changes this is making in the French language, since language does matter.

The Deputy Speaker: I will let the minister answer, but I'll just let the whole, all members know that clause-by-clause questions are traditionally left for the committee period, so, but we'll let the minister answer.

Mr. Wiebe: And thanks for making the correction there so we can all find it. Clause 1, not clause 8. We are back on track; I appreciate that.

No, that's an important question, and as the Speaker has given us guidance here, I think that's a great question to bring up at committee. Be happy to go through that.

And again, what the benefit of having that committee stage in our process is, is that we will have, of course, the drafters of the bill there who will, I'm sure, be happy to be more specific about that French translation.

Mr. Khan: And I want to thank the Minister of Justice for that clarification. I—well, I didn't see the 1(2) off to the side, but yes, I look forward to committee where we can get further clarification on that, as language does matter. We've said this numerous times in this House.

When it comes to language in this bill coming forward, curious if this bill applies exclusively to bills going forward, or is this going to be a retroactive bill to change all the language to make it more inclusive that happened in this province. Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Great question from the member opposite, who was a former minister in government, and so he would know very—*[interjection]*—yes, he'll know very well. He brought forward legislation in this House, and so he would know this is the standard and has been for a number of years already on the legislation that he himself brought forward. I'm sure he's well aware of that. I think he was just asking this in a hypothetical way, and for others to understand.

This is to go back on legislation that has already been passed that didn't meet the standard. Of course, the legislation that's been brought forward in this House for a number of years has already met these standards.

Mr. Balcaen: And that's a great segue into my question for the minister.

I'm wondering if the minister has looked at a sequence of bills that will be brought forward in order of importance; how you see these bills outlined—of importance, whether it's going to be Health, whether it's going to be Justice, whether it's going to be Education, and where this process will begin.

Mr. Wiebe: It's actually a very good question. I appreciate the member opposite for asking that.

Again, this gives the tools to our Legislative Counsel to do this work. You know, I guess there may be a role for the minister to direct or to suggest bills that would be a higher priority or not.

To be honest with you, the way that we've approached this as a non-partisan, sort of hands-off process, but if there are specific bills—because, again, we want to include all Manitobans—so if there's specific bills from members opposite that they feel should be changed and updated with this gender-neutral language, we'd be happy to work with Leg. Counsel to make that happen.

* (18:00)

Mr. Khan: I thank the minister for his answers, and he's right, inclusive language is very important so that we represent all of Manitobans. What we are dealing with today isn't what we were maybe dealing with five, 10, 20, 50 years ago.

So, with the minister claiming that this is retroactively going back, does the minister have an idea of how many pieces of legislation are now going to be required to be reviewed and possibly amended to comply with Bill 11?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I mentioned it briefly in my opening statement where we identified there are literally hundreds that need to be gone through; hundreds of instances where they refer to he or she.

What I think is more interesting, maybe, to members or, you know, anyone who is interested in the history of this place, is there are still statutes on the books that only refer to he or his, right?

That's how far back some of this goes, and there's no ability to change it right now. So, obviously, we wouldn't ever think of only referring to the male gender in legislation nowadays. But in the same way, as—going forward, being inclusive of all Manitobans, we want to use true gender-neutral language.

Mr. Khan: I could not agree with the minister any more. I think everyone on this side agrees that language is important and inclusivity is important with our language.

The minister says hundreds of pieces of legislation; maybe the minister can actually give us a solid answer we can bank on: how many pieces of legislation are going to be required?

And also, is there a cost associated with now going back and changing these previous bills—previous pieces of legislation to comply with Bill 11?

So how many pieces and how much it's going to cost, and I'll save the third question for after that.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, hundreds of pieces of legislation that need to be updated.

And, you know, the amazing work of our Leg. Counsel and all the civil servants and public servants throughout Manitoba is so much appreciated by this government. That's why one of the first things we did was to say we were giving them a hug just to recognize the work that they do, and I want to extend that to our folks over at the Leg. Counsel.

I also want to point out that by bringing forward bills where we're amending the red-tape regulation bureaucracy bill that this opposition blocked would truly free up resources with these specific folks who are doing this kind of important work. If the members opposite think that's important, they should not have blocked that other piece of legislation.

Mr. Khan: I mean, it really shows to the class of this Minister of Justice. Simple questions like how many pieces of legislation and what's the cost going to be, and he turns it into a partisan issue.

Members on this side of the House could not say any—clearly that we are in support of inclusive language; I'm just looking for a simple answer.

How many bills is he looking at, what's the cost going to be associated with it, and since he won't answer those two questions, Honourable Speaker, what is the time frame on when this will be completed?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, all the legislation in Manitoba needs to be put through this gender-inclusive lens. We do it now going forward. Members opposite, in fact, did it while they were in government.

But we need to go back and we need to be inclusive in all of the statutes that exist, the regulations that exist, and to make sure that we're being inclusive.

It's an important part of how we were elected to bring people together, to see that one future. By showing all Manitobans that they have a place here in the Manitoba Legislature with our laws and regulations, we believe we're doing—taking a step in that direction.

Mr. Khan: I want to thank the Minister of Environment for applauding for me as I stood up to ask the question now for the fourth time. You know, minister won't comment, just hundreds, all legislation.

How many, the minister won't give us an answer. We agree language is important. We want to make it an inclusive language. We need to go back. Minister will not give us a number on the cost of it.

And I'm simply asking is there a rough timeline?

Let's try to end this discussion off nicely—is there a rough timeline, maybe, on when the minister has a rough ballpark on when he thinks they will be able to go back and look at the legislation here and make it more inclusive for all Manitobans?

A very simple question. Hopefully, we can get a non-partisan issue—answer on this.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, we're looking to pass this bill here today, bring it to committee as quickly as possible, get it past third reading and get to work. The members at Leg. Counsel do incredible work, again, in a non-partisan way; they do amazing work.

We want to give them the tools to do that work. They're, you know, dare I say, excited to do this work.

You know, I think they have a unique set of skills and abilities that—and interests—that, you know, really for—bring them to prioritize these kind of things,

support us as legislators. And as a government, this has been a priority, where we want to show Manitobans that they belong here in the Legislature, in our province, that we are one Manitoba.

So we hope that all members will join us in that endeavour.

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, our question period has concluded.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: But the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): And again, it gives me great pride to rise in the House and speak about any of the bills and anything that this PC government has brought forward throughout the years.

If we look back historically, the former PC government implemented policy changes allowing individuals to select a non-binary option in addition to male or female under The Vital Statistics Act, including on birth and death certificates.

So we are a very inclusive government—sorry—when we were in power, and we'll continue to do that when we look at these bills moving forward.

It's important to recognize, as the minister said many times today, that words on the record are important, and words mean a lot to individuals. And sometimes words in these—House—specifically based on gender neutrality, are attacking of individuals across the aisle.

And I've heard many times that this government has accused this side of being transphobic or being homophobic without actually knowing any of our individual circumstances and what each of us represent within our ridings and within our personal lives. So to have those sort of innuendos pass forward is shameful.

But on the same token, I'm happy to work with this government and bring gender neutrality into reality on a number of these bills, and as the minister has stated, there is probably hundreds of bills that have to be looked at.

The Speaker in the Chair

And so from our side of the aisle, I would like to make a shout-out to Legislative Counsel, who is going to tediously go through each and every one of these bills and look at them for gender neutrality. There is literally hundreds of bills and regulations, as the

minister has stated, and this is going to be a very long time.

And a matter of fact, Deputy—or, sorry, Honourable Speaker, I'm sure we will be back into government in three years when this finishes off this quest.

So with those words on the record, Honourable Speaker, I will leave the floor to anybody else that may want to put words on the record.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 11, The Statutes and Regulations Amendment and Interpretation Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

I declare the motion carried.

So that concludes the business before the House this evening. Accordingly, this House is now adjourned, and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 22, 2024

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