

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

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 28, 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 and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

Before we proceed, I have a couple of things that I want to do. One of them is a speech.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: I want to make a statement on decorum.

So prior to routine proceedings, I'd like to clarify remarks I made when the House last met on October 17, 2024. At that time, I shared with members that I had noticed that the tone and manner of heckling had become meaner and nastier in recent weeks.

I would like to be clear as possible on this so every member understands what I am saying. If you were under the impression that my comments on October 17 were only addressed to one side of the Chamber, you are mistaken. If either side of this House is thinking that my concerns about decorum are only addressed to the other side of the House, I would like to correct that perception.

I have noticed a change in the tone of heckling from both sides of this House, and I think it should stop. I am particularly concerned about heckling that takes the

form of personal attacks or insults, as I believe that such behaviour is not worthy of the privilege we have all been granted by the people of Manitoba to represent them in this place.

Before we begin our proceedings today, I would urge you all to consider this advice and be mindful of your language in this Chamber. As I have said previously, I am not concerned about heckling if it remains civil, but I am not—but I am concerned when heckling becomes nasty, and I will be listening to all of you.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: At this point in time, I would like to draw all members' attention to the public gallery, where we have with us some very special guests. Seated in the public gallery are first responders who bravely served the people of Manitoba on June 5, 2023, in the aftermath of the horrific collision near Carberry.

In recognition of their heroic efforts, these individuals were honoured earlier today with membership in the Order of the Buffalo Hunt, which honours organizations and community groups for their contributions to the province.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today and thank you for your dedicated service to the people of Manitoba.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Third Report

Mr. Josh Guenter (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on October 23, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report – Investigation of the Protection for Persons in Care Office (PPCO) dated July 2023
- Auditor General's Report – Manitoba's Rollout of the COVID-19 Vaccines dated April 2023

Committee Membership

- Mr. BRAR
- MLA CHEN
- MLA DELA CRUZ
- MLA DEVGAN
- Mr. GUENTER (Chairperson)
- MLA KENNEDY
- MLA LAMOUREUX
- MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. NESBITT
- MLA SANDHU
- Mrs. STONE

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- MLA BEREZA for Mrs. STONE
- Mr. KING for Mr. NESBITT

Officials Speaking on Record

- Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Min. Asagwara, Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care
- Scott Sinclair, Deputy Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Investigation of the Protection for Persons in Care Office (PPCO) dated July 2023
- Auditor General's Report – Manitoba's Rollout of the COVID-19 Vaccines dated April 2023

Mr. Guenter: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: And I have some reports to table.

In accordance with section 32(1) of The Elections Act and subsection 107(1) of The Election Financing Act, I am tabling the Elections Manitoba 2023 Annual Report, Including the—Conduct of the 43rd Provincial General Election.

No other reports?

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Red Turtle Lodge Cultural Centre

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Earlier this month, I was honoured to attend the grand opening of the Red Turtle Lodge Cultural Centre in Fisher River Cree Nation.

When Ron Sinclair and Faye Murdock approached each other nine years ago, they were inspired to create a place where members of their community can come together in a place of healing.

Within this place, their relatives and community can come together to learn about their heritage and culture, and it is here where members of Fisher River could truly flourish. Red Turtle Lodge is a community hub for cultural and healing in Fisher River. This initiative is dedicated to assisting their fellow community members to heal and connect with their Cree roots.

This place is—this place, where all can access services such as healing circles, ceremony and annual woman's gatherings, these events are open to everyone and provide a safe and welcoming environment for all.

As I watched the speakers and community members in the lodge, I felt a deep sense of joy witnessing this remarkable achievement that had finally become a reality.

It is wonderful to see the dedication that Fisher River has to uplifting their community members.

* (13:40)

I am humbled by their deep dedication to their—to dedicating with and celebrating their cultural traditions and language. This was a communal effort that required support from everyone, and it highlights the resilient spirit of the people in Fisher River. This is an important development in the community and an incredible step for First Nations in Manitoba to reclaim their Indigenous identity and languages.

Ekosi.

Miami Railway Station Museum

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the Miami Railway Station Museum, who recently this summer celebrated their 135th anniversary. I welcome volunteers with the museum who are here with us today.

The Miami Railway Station Museum is located in Miami, Manitoba, which is a beautiful part of southern Manitoba nestled between the Pembina Valley and with the rolling hills of the escarpment in the distance.

The Miami Railway Station was built in 1889 by Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Company in an attempt to break the monopoly of CP Rail. It was restored in the 1970s, and it stands as a testament to the community's rich railway heritage.

The museum, which celebrated its 135th anniversary of its construction, is both a national historic site and a municipal heritage site, highlighting its significance in Canadian history.

I've had the opportunity to tour the museum, and dedicated local volunteers has ensured it has remained beautifully preserved. Victorian-style artwork, furniture and textiles, a 1914 Canadian Pacific Railway caboose and a 1940s doll crib are just a few of the items that visitors can see at the museum. Artifacts dating back 100 years and exhibits tell the story of the railway's role in connecting southern Manitoba to the rest of the province and country, particularly in supporting our rich agricultural economy.

The museum offers a unique window into the past, preserving the legacy of the railway and its impact on the region. It's not only a key part of the history of southern Manitoba, but also Canada, as the railway station is the only one left if it—in its original location in Canada.

I want to thank the volunteers, many of whom are with us today, for your commitment to this national treasure. And congratulations on 135 years.

And, Honourable Speaker, I wish to add their names to Hansard.

Thank you very much.

Miami Railway Station Museum members: Edwin Driedger, Joan Driedger, Donna Hanks, Kim Longly, Alyssa Rivard, Cathy Savage, Mel Vanstone

Health-Care Support Workers

The Speaker: The honourable member for Elmwood.

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans know that our 25,000 health-care support workers work around the clock in a variety of settings from acute care to home, community and residential care. They work with those of us who fall ill and those who find themselves in most need. Health-care support workers are indispensable to our health-care system.

Today, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the new four-year contract for over 25,000 health-care support workers in Manitoba, many of whom reside in Elmwood. Our fair-wage settlement has resulted in their wages rising from rock bottom in all of Canada's 10 provinces to fourth highest. This settlement, negotiated with the MGEU and CUPE was a meaningful step in resetting and restoring our health-care system and more properly aligning wages within our system.

Elmwood residents recognize that restoring our health-care system is very much a work in progress. Its cracks did not appear overnight. They will not disappear overnight.

A major step forward was our government's recruitment of 873 net new health-care workers into Manitoba's public health system. After all, our health-care system depends on the workers. We depend on doctors, nurses and health-care support workers, and we must be fair to all of them.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just remind the member that the correct term is Honourable Speaker, not Mr. Speaker.

Jennifer Borgfjord

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I rise today to recognize and commend the remarkable efforts of Jennifer Borgfjord, a dedicated Manitoba breast cancer advocate and a constituent of Agassiz.

I had the privilege of meeting with her to hear about her deeply personal journey with breast cancer and the importance of breast screening practices and self-awareness in early detection.

Today in the gallery, I would like to welcome Jenny and her family.

Jenny's story is one of resilience, determination. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2023, she faced numerous challenges. But her unwavering spirit and

commitment to raising awareness about breast screening practices has truly been inspiring.

Her advocacy for a comprehensive review of breast screening protocols includes reducing the age of breast cancer screening from the age 50 to 40 in Manitoba is a testament to her dedication to improving women's health in our province.

Early diagnosis significantly improves the survival rates and reduces the physical, emotional and financial burdens on patients and their families. Jenny has been a vocal advocate for change, engaging with health-care professionals, policy makers and communities to spread awareness and drive action. Her story has resonated with many, encouraging women to be proactive and to seek the necessary screenings and information.

Regular breast cancer screenings and awareness of changes in one's body are vital steps in early detection. Jenny's efforts extend beyond just raising awareness; she has been instrumental in providing support and resources to women navigating their own breast cancer journeys.

Individuals like Jenny remind us of how—the power of personal stories and their impact on public policy and community health. Her tireless efforts have made a significant difference, and I am proud to support her in her mission to ensure that all women have access to the necessary information and resources for early detection and better health outcomes.

Thank you.

St. Vital Knights Villa Tenants' Association

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources): Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to recognise the tenants' association from the St. Vital Knights Villa, a community of seniors and retirees.

This remarkable group actively organizes social and recreational programming, playing a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for seniors at the Knights Villa.

One of those standout contributions is fostering a strong sense of community among residents through various events and outings around the city. These gatherings not only provide entertainment but also cultivate friendships, helping to combat loneliness and isolation.

The association's publication, the Villa Voice [*phonetic*], is another exciting initiative. Delivered to every household in the building, these newsletters keeps residents informed about important building notices, upcoming activities and local news. It serves as a link that connects residents, ensuring everyone feels engaged and included.

This past Canada Day, I had a wonderful time celebrating our national holiday with the folks at St. Vital Villa. It was a joy to connect and share stories with residents. The laughter, stories and the sense of community I witnessed is truly uplifting.

Honourable Speaker, the association's impact extends beyond their building as well. They have established a meaningful friendship with local youth organization, Teen Stop Jeunesse in St. Vital. In the past, they have invited teens to their community to assist residents with gardening, commuter-computer skills and other activities.

This intergenerational connection is inspirational, and it enriches the lives of both youth and older participants, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

I want to thank Richard Macey, president of the association. I commend him and the leadership of their team for their commitment to the St. Vital Knights Villa tenants' association. And I look forward to witnessing their continued positive contributions to the St. Vital community.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: At this point in time, I'd like to acknowledge some students that are just in the process of leaving the public gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery from École Riviere Rouge 47 grade 4 students under the direction of Mme. Gagnon and Mme. Valdez. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott).

* (13:50)

Further, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Jennifer Borgfjord, Mason Gregory Friesen Borgfjord, David Stanley Friesen, Reverend Canon Donna Joy, who are the guests of the honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome all of you to this Chamber.

* * *

The Speaker: And before we go on to question period, I have a leave request.

I would request leave to revert to tabling of reports because I have one more report to table.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

(Continued)

The Speaker: In accordance with section 28.1 of The Elections Act, I am tabling the proposal to modify the voting process, Vote Anywhere in Manitoba, at the returning office.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: I also have a statement.

I'm advising the House that I have received a letter from the Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson) indicating that the opposition caucus has identified Bill 214, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements), as their third and final selected bill for this season.

As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each recognized party to select up to three private member's bills per session to proceed to a second reading vote. I have therefore been advised that Bill 214 will resume debate at second reading on Thursday, October 31, 2024, starting at 10 o'clock a.m., with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Carberry Bus Crash Acknowledging First Responders

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, before I begin, I want to echo the words of appreciation shared with the first responders of Manitoba, who were involved in the aftermath of the terrible accident near Carberry last year.

Seventeen people from Dauphin, Gilbert Plains and surrounding areas were killed and so many lives have changed, not just the families, not just the friends, but also the men and women who responded that day, investigated since and those who cared for the victims. Today's honour is very much deserved.

Also, Honourable Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition and all Manitobans, I'd also like to say that

thoughts and prayers are with the Bob Sopuck family, former Member of Parliament. So to his wife Caroline and children Tony and Marsha, our thoughts are with all of you.

Honourable Speaker, I'll get to my first set of questions in the next set.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I feel very humble to have the opportunity to pay tribute to some true Manitoba heroes today. Our government's first opportunity to award the Order of the Buffalo Hunt took place earlier this morning, in which we honoured the first responders who saved lives, who provided comfort and who rushed to the scene of their fellow Manitobans at that horrific and tragic Carberry bus accident.

I would add that when we have the opportunity to thank folks, whether they're firefighters, law enforcement, paramedics, air ambulance attendants, nurses, physicians, those who work in the hospitals as well, we are truly honouring the best among us, people who idolize and valorize those values of putting the collective best interests ahead of our own.

On behalf of the government of Manitoba, I'd also like to offer my sincere condolences to the family of Bob Sopuck. We know that he was well known and well liked across the Parkland region, as well as western Manitoba, and we are deeply sorry for your loss.

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

Increase in Food Bank Usage Cost of Living Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): So, Honourable Speaker, we know that today we're faced with unprecedented affordability challenges right here in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans appreciated the tax changes that were started under the PC government. The Premier needs to be more responsive to the present moment we're experiencing here in Manitoba. But we know that he has no plan. Food bank use is on the rise and Manitobans struggle to make ends meet under this NDP government.

Today on radio—on the radio, Harvest Manitoba CEO, President Vince Barletta said there are more Manitobans using food banks in our province than ever before, and it is, I quote, getting tougher and tougher with each passing month because costs increase.

When our PC government heard of such need, we responded with millions in new funding.

I'd like to ask today if this Premier is going to stand up and help out not only harvest Manitobans but the thousands and thousands—almost 50,000 Manitobans—that are lining up for food banks on a daily basis—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): One thing there's a lot more of in Manitoba today are children being fed at schools, and that's thanks to the excellent efforts of the team that surrounds me, \$30 million devoted from the provincial treasury to ensure that no child in Manitoba has to go to school hungry.

Of course, I thank Mr. Barletta, who I had the opportunity to visit with over the weekend, for the important work that his organization is doing to help fight hunger amongst children.

Now, what's happening on the other side of the House—well, this week the PCs are going to be hosting a fundraising event with their two leadership candidates that is going to be hosted by James Teitsma, who you will remember as the former MLA who said that feeding hungry children was a bad idea.

Apparently, that idea has not been left in the past; it still represents the PC Party of this contemporary era.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, once again, no answers from this Premier. Matter of fact, he continues to dodge and deny his failed record of his NDP government.

Honourable Speaker, when times are tough, governments need to step up to make sure people who need the most help get that support.

The Premier knows that many people going to the food banks don't drive or benefit from a single-minded failed gas tax stunt. Many aren't property owners, and most were already removed from the tax rolls by our previous PC government. And again, our previous PC government increased the basic personal exemption to make sure that there was more money in each and every Manitoban's pockets.

Will the Premier today stand up and apologize for once again failing Manitobans who are struggling to afford food and, in addition, the 50,000 Manitobans that are lining up for food bank usage on a daily basis, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: The most direct way that we can help those in greatest need is by ensuring that when a child

who is hungry shows up at the school, that we feed them. The PCs refused to do so during the opportunity that they had around the Cabinet table. We decided to take action immediately.

This year's budget—\$30 million in resources to go to the classroom to help ensure that young minds will learn and to ensure that young people will stay in school.

On the other side of the House, the member opposite should get outside of the Perimeter. If he was there, he would learn that the cut to the provincial gas tax benefits so many Manitobans, including lower income Manitobans.

Again, growing up in the country, I know that a lot of people spend a lot of money chipping in on gas to get to the store, to get to town.

We're concerned with you. We're helping you even when the members opposite ignore people like you.

Accidental Release of Offender from Custody Review and Recommendations

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, a major public safety incident occurred with an accidental release from our justice system.

According to a just expose—a justice spokesperson, the review is currently being undertaken. The public deserves now not only that this will be completed, but recommendations for changes will come from the review.

Will the Premier commit today that the review will be conducted by an independent outside actor and that all recommendations will be made public?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Think like most Manitobans, I was shocked to see this incident play out last week, and I wanted to thank the folks both on the corrections side and the law enforcement side for their good work and ensuring that this person was apprehended.

Now, when we ask the questions of what went wrong, of course, it will be a robust and thorough process to ensure that situations like this don't happen again and, most importantly, to ensure that your provincial government is doing what we can to keep you safe in the community.

An important turning point was arrived at one year ago when the PCs were shown the door and their inaction on public safety was confined to the dustbins of history.

You have a new government today. We're working hard to keep you safe.

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

Mrs. Stone: This was a major public safety incident, and this warrants a significant amount of scrutiny by this NDP government.

The judge, and I quote: He is a do-not-release until after his trial is completed.

* (14:00)

The Crown prosecutor was even more specific, and I quote: Just wanted to ensure there's no issue with the paperwork and an accidental release. End quote. Is there more to this story? The public deserves these answers. Public safety is irrevocably undermined if the general public has no faith in our justice system.

This government refused to tell the media who's doing the review, so will the Premier stand up and tell the public today?

Mr. Kinew: It's very important that Manitobans have confidence in both public safety and the administration of justice here in the great Manitoba that we all know and love.

Now we know that when an incident like this happens, of course, there's a ton of public interest, and rightfully so. And so our Minister of Justice is working hard, along with his team, to ensure that we take steps to prevent something like this from happening again.

Of course, I would point out that the remarks being shared by the member opposite were first reported by the media, and we have to acknowledge the important role that they play in a free and open democratic society. I welcome the members opposite to work with us to ensure that there is respect for journalism in the public sphere, and that the necessary accountability questions to pave the way to a free, honest and rigorous democratic debate are upheld in the great province of Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Stone: This Premier props up Trudeau and his catch-and-release policies. We need bail reform at the federal level, but this incident shows more needs to be done.

The individual was picked up on bail violations violating both a sobriety order and a curfew. The system failed Manitobans in this instance. This

government has a pattern of hiding important reviews from the public.

So will this Premier commit today that unlike other reviews his government has done, all recommendations will be made public?

Mr. Kinew: We know that the members opposite always wanted to point the finger at other levels of government, never accept any responsibility. You know, it's not the PC Party of yesteryear that used to highlight personal responsibility.

It seems like the members opposite only want those Manitobans living in lower socio-economic standing positions in their lives to accept responsibility. For them, they always want to skate by. They never accept responsibility.

Our government is different. We're taking action. We've implemented real steps on bail reform right here in the province of Manitoba, so much so that the National Police Federation has said, and I quote here: We call on the federal government as well as provincial and territorial governments to follow Manitoba's lead on public safety and root causes of crime with concrete solutions. End quote.

That's about bail reform. Isn't it nice, Honourable Speaker, to live in a Manitoba under the NDP that leads rather than follows, as we did with the PCs.

Long-Bladed Weapons Control Act Inquiry into Effectiveness of Legislation

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): This Premier (Mr. Kinew) touts the media and their reports, so I want to add one. I want to read and table a headline from the Free Press in a case this Minister of Justice missed it: Victim in machete attack brought this city—or thought this city would be, quote, safer than Brazil.

Earlier this month, a 22-year-old walking home was robbed at gunpoint, and after he complied, he suffered life-altering injuries from a machete attack.

Can the minister explain how Bill 39 would have prevented such an attack?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We're talking about some of the most horrific crimes we've experienced in our community. These random violent attacks perpetrated by offenders with machetes are just terrible to read about and terrible to contemplate.

This government is taking action, and we are bringing in legislation that will restrict the sale, and

hopefully making a big impact—of the impact of these weapons on our streets.

We know that there's been some success around bear spray—25 per cent reduction in its use here in the city of Winnipeg. We're really working towards those kind of results when it comes to long-bladed weapons.

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

Mr. Balcaen: I understand the minister's legislation was actually modelled on the successful restrictions on bear spray. But there is a fundamental difference: a machete doesn't expire on a shelf, and it's not consumed in the attack.

A 20-year-old machete stolen out of a garden shed bought responsibly to clear bushes is just as effective to criminals.

Manitobans deserve safety, not window dressing legislation. This minister still has time to bring forward, this afternoon, effective legislation.

Will he?

Mr. Wiebe: I have to admit, Honourable Speaker, I'm quite concerned by the words put on the record by the member opposite. It was my understanding that we were able to come together as a Legislature to understand the severity of these crimes and to start taking action; and understood that maybe the members opposite would understand that we're working on this issue in good faith and in a non-partisan way, to get this legislation moving in a way that they didn't and had the opportunity to when they were in government.

Now, the member's right: we are absolutely still advocating at the federal level for changes to the Criminal Code when it comes to long-bladed weapons, and there are going to be more—there's going to be more to say on that in the days ahead. But for the member opposite to call into question, in any way, the passage of this bill is very concerning, and Manitobans should be very concerned about the member opposite's rhetoric.

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

Federal Bail Reform Request for Government Support

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Manitobans should be quite concerned about this NDP's record. Hansard is quite clear: the minister and the majority of his party have voted against public safety time and time again. This very Justice Minister voted against

calling for substantive bail reform, promised it in his first hundred days in office and failed to deliver it.

Monitoring is important tool, but it does not de-incentivize these criminal elements in perpetrating these violent crimes.

Will the minister admit that he was wrong, get on board with team Manitoba, and agree we need substantive bail reform at the federal level?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, further reason to be concerned, Honourable Speaker, is to just look at the PCs' record in this last session. In the spring sitting of this House, this government brought forward the unexplained wealth act, again, a bill that should be supported by all members, that it should have unanimous, quick passage in this House, and yet members opposite decided to play political games with that bill and hold its passage off for day after day, week after week and month after month.

So members opposite have a record. They also have a record. You want to talk about votes, Honourable Speaker? The members opposite voted against this budget that adds 28 per cent increase to police funding across this province. The members opposite all voted against it. They should be answering for their record on this issue.

The Speaker: Member's—the honourable member for Roblin.

Diagnostic Services Wait Times

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): After weeks of repeated prodding in question period, the NDP have finally updated surgical and diagnostic wait times data, but the results are very troubling. I'll table the update for the House.

At Seven Oaks, wait times for a CT scan have surged to over 25 weeks, a 15-week increase this year alone. Meanwhile, at Concordia, they now also have wait times reaching over 25 weeks. That's a 16-week jump in 2024 and the highest it's been in four years, Honourable Speaker.

These are the highest increases to CT scan waits Manitobans have seen since the pandemic.

How can the NDP possibly justify these staggering increases to diagnostic wait times?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we understand the importance of

having front-line staff in our health-care system delivering the care that Manitobans count on each and every day. For seven and a half years staff were driven out of our health-care system by the previous Heather Stefanson government. We have hired a net new 873 health-care workers, including in the area of diagnostics, to staff the services that Manitobans count on.

Now, we know it's going to take years to fix the damage done by the previous failed PC administration, but we're doing that work every day on behalf of Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Cook: The minister's refusal to take responsibility for what is happening under their watch is cold comfort to over 12,000 Manitobans waiting for a CT scan today.

* (14:10)

At HSC, CT wait times have reached a staggering 32 weeks in August, a 24-week increase in just one year. That is the highest wait times have been in years, and is by far the longest wait for a CT at HSC since the pandemic. This surge is clearly a direct result of NDP mismanagement.

When will the Minister of Health take responsibility for the dangerous delays that have plagued diagnostic services under their watch?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our government has worked very, very hard to do something the previous government refused to do, and that is to identify Manitobans who have been waiting for years for services at—the failed Heather Stefanson administration refused to invest in.

Honourable Speaker, we've heard from Manitobans who are waiting for one, two, three, four, five, six, seven and a half years under that failed former government and never got the care that they needed. We're getting those Manitobans, finally, the diagnostics they deserve and we're actually performing more diagnostic tests than ever before here in our province.

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

Mrs. Cook: We are nearly one year to the date from the NDP's decision to fire the Diagnostic and Surgical Recovery Task Force; the very doctors and medical experts who were hired to reduce the diagnostic backlog directly. This reckless move has clearly had a

direct impact on the skyrocketing diagnostic wait times in Manitoba, and we are now seeing the full consequences of this short-sighted decision: massive wait times for essential services like CT scans, all across Manitoba.

Now that wait times for CT scans are nearing an all-time high, only seen previously during a worldwide pandemic

Will the Minister of Health admit their mistake and rehire a team to address diagnostic backlogs in Manitoba?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, it's been a pleasure to work with the experts here in our province who were never listened to by the previous Heather Stefanson administration: these are the very folks who identified the Manitobans who waited for years under the PCs and were never even put on a—couldn't get access to a wait-list, never mind think of getting care.

We're getting those Manitobans the care that they deserve in their own province, not sending millions of dollars to the United States and then sending Manitobans to the States, as well, to get care they deserve to get here at home.

We're delivering more tests, more diagnostics and more surgeries than ever done by the previous failed PC government, and we're making sure folks who have been waiting for years are not waiting any longer. We're going to continue to fix the damage done by the failed PC administration.

Population Increase in Neepawa School Construction Inquiry

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): This NDP government has cut nine schools from across our province, and this impacts many communities and students, and of course the ability to learn in classrooms and not a hallway.

I ask the minister: Has there been a formal notice delivered to those school divisions, notifying them that they will not be getting their schools or vocational schools?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you to the member opposite for the question, but unfortunately the premise on which her question is based is simply untrue.

Our government is building schools. We are very excited about our capital program. There is a lot of work to do but more to come. There are—this year alone, our budget included \$125 million for school

capital. We are building four new schools; two in Sage Creek, one in Seven Oaks and one in Steinbach. We also had one open just this year in Morden.

Again, more work to come. Really excited about our school capital plan that'll be announced in Budget 2025. And we're committed to working with all school divisions, with school administration to make sure that the needs in our communities are met.

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

Ms. Byram: I know in Neepawa the classrooms are beyond capacity and the classes are continuing to grow in size, as well as the population. This community will lag behind with a continued increase, and delivery declines. Students will be left out of the equation on this.

So again, I ask the minister: Is there a commitment to building a new vocational school in Neepawa, yes or no?

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would just caution the minister: using the words, such as simply untrue, are bordering on being unparliamentary. Perhaps choose your words more carefully.

MLA Schmidt: Thank you for your guidance.

The member opposite asks about students. And absolutely, when it comes to teaching students, new schools are part of that equation. We are going to build new schools. We are building new schools today; we're going to build new schools next year and the year after and the year after that.

But another thing that it takes to educate students in this province is having the educators in those schools to be able to teach those kids and to educate those kids. And that's why our government is so proud of our record: in our first year alone, we have hired more than 630 new educators here in the province of Manitoba. And to celebrate those educators, Honourable Speaker, I would like—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Ms. Byram: Again, I will ask—I see there'll be no commitment for vocational school in Neepawa.

So, again, with Neepawa's growth to continue and student population increasing annually, and no commitment, again, for a vocational school in the town of

Neepawa, I ask the minister: What is the plan for a new school in Neepawa?

MLA Schmidt: We are happy to work with the community of Neepawa as we are to work with communities across our great province to make sure that their needs are met.

But when the member opposite asks about a plan, I think what the member opposite needs to do is ask the people that she's sitting aside—beside about their failed plan: the plan that didn't come to fruition; the plan that was written on the back of a napkin; the plan that put false hope into communities across Manitoba—hope that we are working to restore, Honourable Speaker.

We are very proud of our government's commitment to schools. More to share in Budget 2025.

Driver Education Program Need for Testing in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Previously, I talked about the 'memense' failing of this Minister of Justice in making driver's education available to young Manitobans, but it goes further.

Even if you get one of those golden tickets that lets you into the program, we are hearing that there is a crucial lack of driver's testing, especially in rural communities.

Will this minister commit that—his department making more testing available before the new year?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Once again, we have a former minister getting up who was a member of the Heather Stefanson government, who was the minister, who was responsible for this very program that he's now asking about and is saying that, well, we broke it; we broke it real bad. And now he's saying, why aren't you fixing it? That's what he's basically coming to this Legislature with.

What we've done is we've looked to our educational partners—of course, ACC has been a great partner for us in Westman. We've looked to our partners throughout the province, and we've looked to how we can repair the damage that's been done in partnership across this province.

That's the work that we're doing, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Piwniuk: Honourable Speaker, as a former broker for the MPI broker, and for—been a—I've never been a minister of MPI, I just want to say, you know, I'm—I wish I was the—had the opportunity to be the minister for MPI. I would have fixed the situation.

You know, for the—when we were—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —in government, we never had this amount of emails that were requesting driver's licensing testing, this problem right now.

Will this minister commit to making sure that there's more testing in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, the—now, the member wants to run away from the decision making.

It wasn't me, it was maybe in—the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) or maybe it was another member of this failed Heather Stefanson government. Many of the members still sit in the opposition benches, Honourable Speaker.

Well, you know what? Minister—or the member opposite, he may say it wasn't him, but it was certainly that government that broke this program and really just didn't want to stand with partners throughout rural Manitoba who are looking to deliver this program.

Of course, we saw a huge spike in demand that came after the pandemic, not something, I think, that anybody should have been surprised by. But it seems like the members opposite were, and I think I know why. It's because it required investment; it required partnership: two things those—that previous government—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

* (14:20)

Mr. Piwniuk: When we were in government, we actually had made sure my own kids—they were—actually had licensing. They had no problems getting testing, and they didn't—had no problems getting to the—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —Driver Education Program, Honourable Speaker.

You know, right now in Manitoba—rural Manitoba, it's very hard to get actually a taxi or to get a vehicle to actually go driving. These are giving opportunities

for kids who want to earn money for college and universities, and the fact is it's impacting many families around rural Manitoba.

Will this minister do—going to do the right thing and give Manitobans the opportunity to participate in the—our growing economy in this province, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, while the member opposite is desperately trying to skate away from this issue—skate uphill, maybe, Honourable Speaker, the reality is, is that it was his government that perpetrated a strike or allowed a strike to not only happen at MPI, but then to use it as a political wedge issue or try to politicize hard-working Manitobans at MPI who are out on strike and walking the picket lines.

Honourable Speaker, we came in as—one of our first acts as a new government was to end the strike, was to get a new CEO in place to replace the board—hand-picked by members opposite, hand-picked by the Stefanson government across the way. We got things right at MPI. We started—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Shingles Vaccine for Vulnerable Populations Pharmacare Coverage Request

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Our Province continues to choose not to invest in a preventative model for health care, such as a shingles prevention.

We have an aging population with over 310,000 people 60 years of age and older and many others who are immunocompromised or living with chronic conditions and are therefore more vulnerable for developing shingles.

Will this government prioritize the health of seniors and vulnerable populations by offering preventative care in the form of providing publicly funded coverage for the cost of the shingles shot here in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that really important question about preventative health care. I really appreciate that she often stands up and talks about the needs of seniors.

On this side of the House, we recognize how important it is to protect vulnerable populations in Manitoba. It's a big part of the reason why we went out very early just a few weeks ago with Dr. Roussin and announced our campaign for vaccinations this flu season.

We're taking a proactive approach, making sure that Manitobans have the tools and the information they need to protect themselves, their loved ones and communities as we head into a season that we know is—illness is prevalent in our communities.

We're going to continue to work with our partners to make sure that more vaccines are available for seniors and vulnerable communities across Manitoba.

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

MLA Lamoureux: We need to focus more on prevention strategies as a long-term solution to decrease the strain on our health-care system.

Will the minister acknowledge that coverage for shingles, specifically for seniors and those at low risk, would be beneficial to the health of Manitobans, as well as economically long term to our health-care system?

MLA Asagwara: Again, really appreciate that important question from the member opposite.

Our government has been listening to experts locally here in Manitoba, and we've taken some really important steps to make sure that seniors are protected this flu season.

We've made sure that we've added more health-care workers to the front lines of the health-care system in order to deliver these vaccine campaigns and meet their needs. We've worked really proactively to make sure that the RSV vaccine is rolled out for vulnerable older Manitobans across all personal-care homes in Manitoba. That's one area that's been made very clear to us by the evidence and our public health leadership.

We need to make sure we're protecting seniors as we see them show up in hospitals very sick as a result of the previous failed PC government not doing that work and being proactive.

We're going to look at taking more preventative steps as we move forward, but we've taken some really important steps alongside health-care experts in Manitoba.

The Speaker: Time has expired.

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

Seniors in Manitoba Prescription Medication Costs

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I have raised the need for Manitoba to take the lead on a Pharmacare plan since 2017 through questions, member statements, petitions and debate here in the House.

The main reason many seniors choose not to take their prescribed medications are because of the financial costs associated with them.

What is this government doing to be preventative and reduce financial barriers for our seniors when it comes to prescribed medications?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Thank the member for that really important question, and I actually want to take a moment to shout out our Finance Minister, who in our first budget provided Manitobans, including seniors, 21 ways to save in our very first budget.

Many of those steps directly benefit seniors across this province. Our government is taking additional steps in health care. We've made sure that the RSV vaccine is available for seniors in all personal-care homes across this province.

We've made sure that there's more folks on the front lines of our health-care system to deliver the services that seniors need. We've made sure that we're adding beds to the health-care system and outside of the health-care system to support seniors and their families.

Now, we know that there's a lot of work to do to repair the damage done by the previous failed PC administration, but we're doing that work every single day on behalf of Manitobans and especially doing the work to protect seniors across—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Extended Hours Primary-Care Clinic Concordia Hospital Announcement

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Honourable Speaker, Concordia Hospital is the main health-care facility in northeast Winnipeg.

When I was in high school, I volunteered at Concordia Hospital and Concordia Place right next door. Like most communities in our province, ours was not spared from the PCs' systematic dismantling of the health-care system.

I was overjoyed last week when the Minister of Health announced our government is increasing primary care capacity at Concordia Hospital.

Can the minister please share with the House how we're making health care better in northeast Winnipeg?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my wonderful colleague for that really important question.

She is one hundred per cent right. We are bringing health-care services closer to home for those in 'northweas'—northeast Winnipeg. We announced our second extended hours primary-care clinic at Concordia Hospital last week after the success of nearly 600 families being seen at the Grace.

We know that we need to continue to do this work for Manitobans. It's been a very, very exciting start. I was even getting messages on my social media from Manitobans who went to go and access that primary-care clinic on the first weekend that it was open.

We promised to make primary health care more accessible for Manitobans and we are doing that work each and every day, making sure it's where Manitobans need it, when they need, it in their own communities.

Child-Care Facilities Request for More Spaces

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): In the previous session on October 17, when we were in Committee of Supply, I was asking the minister—the Acting Minister of Education when she plans to roll out new child-care centres as part of the Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

The minister had no answer, so I'd like to reiterate that question on the record today. The only new child-care centre that this minister has unveiled and this government has unveiled has been in the constituency of Fort Rouge.

When is the minister going to roll out more new child-care centres for the rest of Manitobans?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The truth is that we have opened thousands of spaces and that there are thousands of spaces more to come.

But the Minister of Education has educated me that there is more than just spaces when it comes to

taking care of our early learners. There are spaces that we need to take care of. We also need to take care of wages, something the previous government failed to do. And we also need to take care of the operational funding of those spaces, Honourable Speaker, something that was frozen for seven and a half years under Heather Stefanson's failed PC government.

I ask the member opposite maybe to ask his former boss.

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

Mr. Jackson: Some facts for the record, Honourable Speaker: While the member—the minister opposite and the member for Transcona (MLA Altomare) have been busy running around cutting ribbons at child-care centres that this previous PC government funded, that's not actually announcing new spaces for Manitobans, which she has failed to do.

She came up on the record in Committee of Supply and said the reason that they haven't announced any new spaces was because the federal government was holding things up.

With a Prime Minister who's set to be kicked out of office as soon as this week, desperately low in the polls and looking for new—good news, does this minister expect Manitobans to believe that the Prime Minister is the reason for the delay? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: When will this minister get to work and announce some new child-care centres for Manitobans?

MLA Schmidt: I would love to share some good news with Manitobans about the great work that we are doing with our federal counterparts; again, something that the previous Heather Stefanson government failed to do. They left millions of dollars on the table, millions of dollars that could have stood to benefit Manitobans because they are more interested in fighting political games.

* (14:30)

Something that we announced last week with the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the federal government was enhanced funding for our universal nutrition program. We have \$30-million investment from our treasury, but we are able to secure more than almost \$4 million this year alone from the federal government to enhance that program.

This is a program that is seeing children fed across our province, again, something the previous

government said was a bad idea. They know they said it was a bad idea. On the record at Committee of Supply he said that was—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Jackson: There is so much to disagree with in the minister's comments there, but I digress. She keeps putting these false records—or false comments on the record that are inaccurate. When is this—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jackson: —going to get serious about building child-care spaces, take off the training wheels, load up the flat decks with RTMs and get these child-care centres out into Manitoba communities?

MLA Schmidt: The member opposite doesn't have to take my word for it.

Just this weekend, at the 50th anniversary of the Manitoba Child Care Association, an event that our team was at, as well as members opposite; the member who asked the question was there. Director after director of the Manitoba Child Care Association got up and talked about the dark days of the Heather Stefanson government, and about the relief that they felt when—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Schmidt: —NDP governments here in Manitoba can work together with the federal government in Ottawa to secure child-care spaces for Manitoba. That's what we do on this side of the House: we work together for Manitobans.

MRI Wait Times Constituent Concern

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: Honourable Speaker, Portage la Prairie citizen Dave Jeffries was told he would have to wait several months to receive the MRI that would determine if his cancer had returned to his kidney.

Dave decided not to wait to find out. He did have the money to pay for this out of pocket, to go to Quebec and spend thousands of dollars for an MRI. Unfortunately, Dave's results came back that his cancer had returned. If Dave had waited the several months, he might not be alive.

Can the minister tell us what happens to patients like Dave that don't have the money to go out of province for an MRI?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): It's stories like Dave's that made it really clear to our government that it's so important to invest in having more capacity in our province.

Now, our province would be in a much different place if the previous government hadn't fired health-care workers, cut services and undermined our capacity for seven and a half long years. That member knows all about that; he ran under a campaign to not have an MRI in his own community. He ran under a campaign to continue to fire health-care workers. He ran under a campaign to undermine health care in Manitoba.

In our province we are doing more MRIs in Manitoba than we've ever done. Why? Because we're building capacity. Why? We're listening to health-care workers. Why? We believe in working with local experts, and that's the approach we'll continue to take.

The Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Petitions?

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet Wednesday, October 30, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider: Bill 38, An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other Amendments); Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

The Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, October 30, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 38, An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other Amendments); and Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

* * *

MLA Fontaine: Can you please call Committee of the Whole of Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, followed by second reading of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

The Speaker: It's been announced that we will now resume Committee of the Whole for—we're going to begin Committee of the Whole for Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, followed by second reading of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On a leave request, Honourable Speaker.

On House business, could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to not see the clock until the following items of business have concluded: (1) Committee of the Whole, consideration of Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and reporting of the same back to the House; second reading of Bill 39, long blade weapon control act, and referral of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

The Speaker: Is there leave for the House to not see the clock until: Committee of the Whole consideration of Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and reporting of the same back to the House; second, that second reading of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act; and third, the referral of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

So now we will resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

Deputy Speaker, take the Chair, please.

* (14:40)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 37—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

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

As announced, this committee will now consider the following: Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 37 have an opening statement?

* (14:50)

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I'm very proud to have this opportunity today to finalize these last steps in putting through this BITSA bill. This is legislation that will implement our very first budget as a new government, and that's a budget that is delivering a lot of help for Manitobans in every corner of the province.

We know, just to touch on a few of the items, that this legislation supports a new homeowner affordability tax credit, which will put \$1,500 into the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. We know that the legislation will also increase a new—the renters affordability tax credit, which will deliver on one of our key campaign commitments in making life more affordable for renters. And, of course, we know that seniors have been struggling for years under the last government with a lack of supports, and we're proud to be bring forward a seniors top-up, because we know those seniors have given so much to our province and we need to ensure that they can continue to live their lives with dignity.

Our plan doesn't end there. This budget implementation bill brings forward rental housing construction incentive to help support the growth of the rental housing universe in Manitoba. That provides a refundable tax credit of \$8,500 on all new rental units, honourable Chair, and an extra \$5,000 for those that are affordable and held to be affordable for 10 years.

We are going to build more rental housing thanks to the impacts of that—of our budget and, of course, the passing of this BITSA bill.

So we're very proud of what this bill supports in enacting our budget, including 21 affordability measures that will help to address a cost of living; a crisis that was unattended to, again for many years, under the Heather Stefanson government.

One of the big measures that this drives forward is, of course, our cut to the gas tax, and we know that that has delivered massive reductions in cost of living for Manitobans. And we know that recently when we saw Statistics Canada release their report, that we had an inflation rate of 0.8 per cent, which is among the very lowest in the country, and that 0.4 per cent was taken off of that inflation number thanks directly to our fuel tax holiday.

We've also doubled the fertility tax credit to \$16,000, making it even easier for Manitobans who are trying to start or grow their family. And we know that that is just something that's really been incredibly well received from so many families in Manitoba who are looking to expand their family, and this makes it much more affordable to take those measures to help them do that.

And, of course, the legislation follows through on our commitment for a broad middle-class tax cut with the benefits going to those who need it most.

But the budget wasn't just focused on driving forward more affordability measures. We know that, for years, Manitobans had seen our health-care system slide into an increasingly challenging place because of cuts and decisions made by the Heather Stefanson government, and this budget and this bill helps to rebuild health care.

We are going to recruit and train staff. We know that—we're already seeing the impacts with 860 new health-care workers in our system that are helping to provide better supports to Manitobans day in and day out.

The budget also stated our commitment to rebuilding health-care infrastructure, such as the new Vic ER, expanding primary care across the province as we've been hearing so much about in this House from my incredible colleague, the Minister of Health, and others who are seeing the impacts of those investments on the well-being of their families.

And, of course, the legislation takes the critical step of creating an independent seniors advocate to investigate and report on systemic issues which are being faced by seniors in Manitoba. We know seniors helped to build our province and they deserve to have their voices heard.

So we know that affordability and health care are key. This budget, this—we passed or that we brought forward in this bill help to drive forward our commitments in delivering better affordability and better health care for Manitobans.

And, overall, we know that our budget looked a lot different from what the PCs brought forward year after year. And we know that not only did we see huge cuts under their government, but we saw a fiscal mess, a fiscal mess that left Manitobans with a \$2-billion deficit; an enormous sum, Mr. Chair, and a challenge that we now to dig—have to dig our way out of.

But we're going to do exactly that. Our budget delivers on those commitments we made to Manitobans to improve affordability, to improve health care, and we're going to do that while we balance our fiscal commitments and our commitment to balancing the budget in the final year of our mandate.

On that note, I conclude my remarks.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Deputy Honourable Speaker, as mentioned extensively throughout my remarks during second reading, this is a undemocratic bill that the NDP is ramming through major pieces of legislation to avoid public 'scrutiny' at committee.

And I want to reiterate some of those comments again today as it's important for Manitobans to clearly understand what is being presented here. This is an unprecedented omnibus bill. They are—the NDP is not providing Manitobans with the right to present at public committees. Labour legislation, environment legislation, seniors advocate; these are non-finance-related items that have been stapled to the back of this budget bill.

In addition, the NDP has decided to make changes to The Election Financing Act that is essentially propping up their own NDP party coffers with taxpayers' dollars when many Manitobans are struggling with affordability and the cost of living. This is the priorities of this NDP government: to give themselves money while other Manitobans are struggling.

These are not minor legislative changes by any means. These are major legislative changes that the NDP is undemocratically forcing through in this budget bill to avoid accountability to Manitoba.

* (15:00)

They know that some of these bills will be controversial. They know there will be backlash from the business community. They know this labour bill is only about supporting their union boss friends, at the detriment of Manitoba workers and Manitoba businesses.

The democratic process in Manitoba allows all non-financial bills to go to committee where the public can provide input. However, significant changes to labour, environment, election financing should be in separate bills and should go through the due

democratic process with public input. This is undemocratic; this is not transparent; the NDP are hiding. They're hiding from Manitobans and trying to hide their true agenda. Manitobans clearly deserve better from this NDP government. The NDP is saddling Manitobans with increases to taxes, increasing deficits, increasing borrowing and increasing debt on the backs of Manitobans.

In their first year in office, they have taken a \$373-million surplus and turned it into a \$2-billion deficit. They've given themselves \$9 billion in borrowing, significantly more than in years prior, in addition to the high interest rates that came along with it. And they approved a \$700-million special warrant, also at a time of significantly high interest rates.

They're projecting an almost \$1-billion deficit for this fiscal year, despite transfer payments from the 'freds', increasing by \$800 million and interest rates coming down. And despite reports from S&P Global indicating it was possible to return to balance, this minister clearly has no plans to return to balance, and Manitobans will pay the price. Based on what we have seen over the past year, I question not only this minister's ability to get the job done and return to balance, but also their desire to even try.

This budget bill is proof in the pudding that today we're sitting in a situation where this NDP government will not run a surplus, but instead, Manitobans will be faced with an almost \$1-billion deficit again. Clearly, fiscal and monetary policy are related. The government cannot borrow more without causing more inflation. We need to move back to a free market and away from state run. We need the private sector to drive Manitoba's economy and reduce red tape.

We need to focus on growing the economy, to bring in that revenue. It's the surest way to tackle debt and inflation. Growth-oriented policies are not—are the answer; constant borrowing is not. However, taxing fiscal problems with higher taxes, like this NDP is doing in this bill, is adding further to the costs-of-living challenges that we're seeing today and will drive up costs for Manitobans, inflation and people's overall ability to spend into the economy.

Unfortunately, this BITSA bill does the exact opposite. It does increase taxes. It creates an anti-business climate. It runs deficits and it increases Manitoba's overall debt and debt-servicing costs.

Honourable Speaker, there is so much more to be said about Bill 37 as this is quite the bill. It gives the NDP unprecedented taxation powers at the Cabinet

table. They're allowing themselves to raise fuel rates whenever they so desire, thus creating a slush fund for their outlandish spending that is coming on the backs of Manitobans. They plan to set hydro rates at 4 per cent, all at the Cabinet table, bypassing accountability through the Leg. Assembly and watering down the powers of the B-U-P—the PUB.

This bill takes more money away from a significant number of Manitobans that we not only need to keep in Manitoba to keep the economy going.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks, and thank you for the opportunity—put those on the record.

The Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clauses and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order. Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Shall clauses 1 and 2 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Shall clause—shall clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

Mrs. Stone: In this bill, in part 1, clause 1, amending The Fuel Tax Act, the minister is giving himself and his Cabinet friends unprecedented, sweeping powers by allowing themselves to set fuel rates at the Cabinet table. We know that the fuel tax is going up on January 1. What are we looking at: 14 cent, 20 cent, 28 cent? We don't know, because it's up to the Cabinet to decide, and Manitobans do not get a say.

I want to be very clear that taxes constitutionally should only be raised by the Legislature, not the executive branch, and the minister is avoiding accountability and the democratic process through these changes.

The Chairperson: The minister has an opportunity to respond.

MLA Sala: Yes, no, I'm confused by the premise of the sort of bullets being put forward here by the member opposite.

Look, we came into government and very quickly sought to make life more affordable. We used a tool that they were unwilling to use for seven and a half years to take immediate action to reduce costs for Manitobans. This provision will allow us to ensure that, in future instances, should that be required to support improving affordability for Manitobans, that that tool is there.

We have done something that I think they were never willing to do. And I know it's hard for them to accept that we took action where they wouldn't, Mr. Chair, but that's just the truth of the matter. We took action to make life more affordable. We're proud of that, and we're proud to have reduced the cost of energy for Manitobans.

The Chairperson: Any further comments?

Seeing no one else, shall clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: So all those in favour of clause 1, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clause 1 is accordingly passed.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 2—pass.

Shall clauses 3 through 8 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass.

Shall clause 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: As mentioned in my comments, in this clause, the minister is giving himself and his Cabinet

friends unprecedented sweeping powers to raise fuel rates at the Cabinet table, thus bypassing the democratic process of going through the Manitoba Legislature.

Taxes should only be raised by the Legislature, not at the Cabinet table. The minister, through this clause, is clearly avoiding accountability and the democratic process by these changes.

Manitobans need protection from tax increases and they need protection from the NDP using the fuel tax as a slush fund for their outlandish spending that Manitobans should expect in the coming year and coming years.

And so, with that, I would like to move an amendment.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: So do I read the amendment then? *[interjection]* Okay. I move,

THAT Clause 5 of the Bill be amended by replacing the proposed subsection 8(2) with the following— *[interjection]* Sorry? *[interjection]* Keep going? Okay.

Reduced rates may be set by regulation

8(2) Despite section (1), if a reduced rate of tax is prescribed by regulation for a fuel listed in clauses (1)(a) to (g), the applicable rate for the fuel listed in that clause is the rate prescribed by regulation.

* (15:10)

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Midland,

THAT Clause 5 of the Bill be amended by replacing the proposed subsection 8(2) with the following:

Reduced rates may be set by regulation

8(2) Despite subsection (1), if a reduced rate of tax is prescribed by regulation for a fuel listed in clauses (1)(a) to (g), the applicable rate for the fuel listed in that clause is the rate prescribed by regulation.

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no further questions, we'll move on to the vote on the amendment.

Shall the clause as amended—shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: Recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The question before the committee is the amendment to clause 5.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, King, Lagassé Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Piwniuk, Stone, Wasyliw, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Nays

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Simard, Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Tim Abbott): Ayes 21, Nays 29.

The Chairperson: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

* * *

* (15:20)

The Chairperson: Shall clause 5 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: It's very disappointing that the minister and his NDP colleagues voted against this amendment, which was presented to protect Manitobans from NDP Cabinet raising fuel rates at the Cabinet

table, as opposed going through the due democratic process, which is the Manitoba Legislature.

So, you know, I have to ask the minister, is he planning on raising rates past 14 cents as of January 1, since he's voted down the—our amendment to ensure that rates are actually decreasing.

MLA Sala: I appreciate the question.

Manitobans know we're focused on saving them money, and that's exactly what we did with our fuel tax holiday measure. We're really proud to have extended that out to the end of December. That's offering Manitobans huge savings in their energy bills.

That's what we're about, not making life more expensive, as the members opposite did for many years in government.

The Chairperson: Are there any more comments?

Mrs. Stone: Either the minister wants to repeal the fuel tax or not, and from what I'm hearing is he has every plan to increase fuel taxes on Manitobans as of January 1, and perhaps even beyond 14 cents, in order to pay for their spending. Instead, you know, he's dancing around and wanting regulatory authority to make clauses exempt and to change rates at his disposal and his desire.

Why is the minister avoiding accountability and setting rates at the Cabinet table and not through the democratic process, which is the Manitoba Legislature?

MLA Sala: Again, the member opposite can make as many claims as she'd like here today.

What Manitobans know is that we've lowered their costs of fuel. We're really proud of that. We know how important that's been. I know I and my colleagues have been hearing that over the course of the last year just how much this has meant to Manitobans.

We're proud of that measure, and Manitobans can count on us to ensure that their costs of fuel remain low.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, honourable Chairperson, for the opportunity.

So it's interesting that I'm sitting here and listening to the Finance Minister and I'm not really hearing any answers to the questions that the critic, my friend, the MLA for Midland, is asking. But it just seems that

it's one of the things where the minister seems to be contradicting the words of the Premier (Mr. Kinew).

Today in question period, the Premier had stated that he felt that Manitoba is a democratic—a fair democratic society, and—which I have long believed so, until, of course, the NDP got into power.

The Premier again mentioned today that he's in favour of a fair, democratic debate, whereas the Finance Minister seems to be contradicting the Premier by trying to ram through this BITSA bill now. I mean, we've seen signs of dysfunction stemming all the way back from March and April of this year, where the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) has failed to bring in various pieces of legislation.

So what are they doing in the BITSA bill? They're actually, again, as my colleague and other colleagues have mentioned, they're bringing in various different things into this BITSA bill and trying to ram it through in an undemocratic way, and trying to avoid giving the opportunity to Manitobans to come to committee and put forward their opinions of not only the BITSA bill, but of many of the other schedules that are—that have been stapled—you know, take a word from the Government House Leader and some other members of the NDP, but basically had been written on the backs of napkins and then failed to bring it through the proper process for bill consideration here in Manitoba and then now is just stapling it to the back of the BITSA bill.

So the Finance Minister is again avoiding the question, which is something that the Premier seems to be also very good at, dodging and denying various different topics within this—not only this BITSA bill, but also on many things that are concerning Manitobans on a day-to-day basis.

We've seen the various questionable affordability measures that are happening in Manitoba, and here we are with a tax increase that no doubt the Finance Minister doesn't want to answer that question today. The question was from my friend and colleague, the MLA from Midland, you know, what is that increase going to look like come the beginning of January 2025, whereas we already know that this gas tax holiday is going to be added on to Manitobans and is not helping all Manitobans, like the basic personal exemption that we brought in.

* (15:30)

So I ask the Finance Minister: Will he apologize today on behalf of his NDP government for putting misinformation—matter of fact, disinformation—on the

record; not answering the MLA for Midland's questions on how much that gas tax is going to be increased onto Manitobans come the beginning of January? Because what they are doing, the NDP government, are putting the authority so that they are raising the various different prices at the Cabinet table as opposed to coming to you, Manitobans, for your opinion on what you see that would help with affordability measures.

So I would like to ask the Finance Minister, will he sit in his spot today, his place today, and apologize to Manitobans for contradicting his Premier and not give Manitobans the ability to come forward and express their concerns at a committee hearing? Will he, today, have a sober second thought and bring this forward to Manitobans in committee and—instead of trying to ram it through, once again, at the Cabinet table?

MLA Sala: Look, the only party that should be apologizing are the members opposite.

We know for years, again, they charge Manitobans a steel tax. They also talked a lot about things that they said they were going to do as it relates to, for example, carbon taxes. And otherwise, what did they do? They wasted millions and millions of Manitoba taxpayer dollars fighting legal fights, all while they took absolutely no action.

So it is ludicrous to hear them making this line of argument when we are the ones who lowered these costs for Manitobans. We're proud of it; we're proud to have made life more affordable for Manitobans. Manitobans know who they can trust.

Mr. Ewasko: I just ask the Finance Minister: Will he and his government, or will he and his government not, raise the fuel tax in January by more than 14 cents—yes or no?

Please answer the question, Minister.

MLA Sala: Yes, we're really proud to have brought in that fuel tax holiday to the end of December, as we've announced. That will be a full year that Manitobans will have benefited from that fuel tax holiday, and we know how much they needed it after years of inaction from the PCs.

The Chairperson: See no further comments. Shall clause 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: Said no.

The Chairperson: Oh, sorry.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: Hearing a no, all those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it. Clause 5—[interjection]

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: Recorded vote, please.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (15:40)

The question before the House, or before the committee, is clause 5.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Piwniuk, Stone, Wasyliw, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Deputy Clerk: Ayes 28, Nays 21.

The Chairperson: Clause 5 is accordingly passed.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass.

Shall clause 8 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: It's unfortunate that the NDP did not pass our first amendment to protect Manitoba taxpayers from excessive and extensive tax increases at the Cabinet table and utilizing the fuel tax as a slush fund for their future spending.

Had the PC amendment prescribing reduced rates and protecting Manitoba taxpayers had passed, then at this time, we would have moved another amendment essentially prescribing a reduced rate of tax for the fuels listed in clauses 8.1(a) through 2(g).

So I have to ask the minister: Since he did vote against including a hard cap on increasing fuel tax rates, does he plan to take the excised tax back down to 10 cents a litre, the level it was before Greg Selinger and the NDP started tax-hiking up taxes, which I believe was in 2012?

MLA Sala: Lots of ideas we're hearing here, Chair, but the reality is they charged 14 cents a litre on Manitobans for seven and a half years. So they're trying to make suggestions now about things they'd like to see happen or, you know, proposals that they just were not willing to entertain for seven and a half years.

We did the work of reducing the fuel tax from 14 cents to zero. Manitobans are saving money they never did under the last government.

Mr. Ewasko: Again, honourable Chairperson, Manitobans are seeing this. The hundreds of Manitobans that are watching this this afternoon are seeing the fact that the Finance Minister is refusing to answer the question.

We've seen, as the MLA for Midland has pointed out, we saw the then-premier, Greg Selinger, raise the tax. This Finance Minister and his NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) have taken that ability into the Cabinet room.

And so, again, in 2012, when they raised the fuel excise tax to 14 cents and at the same time had expanded the PST on so many goods and services that Manitobans rely on, on a day-to-day basis. And I know that some of the members on the NDP side are nodding their head. They agree. They remember those times, and they don't want us to bring that up.

But the fact is that Greg Selinger's protege was actually this Premier, the MLA for Fort Rouge.

And so the question was: Is the Finance Minister and his NDP Premier going to behave like the Greg Selinger era of the NDP and continue to raise taxes?

* (15:50)

Can he just answer a question for a change to all Manitobans because Manitobans, of course, as we know already, do not have the ability to come and speak to committee on the BITSA bill because this Finance Minister is trying to ram through this bill and many other pieces of legislation that, due to the dysfunction of his House Leader, was unable to bring forward these pieces of legislation, so stapled it on the back of this BITSA document—of this BITSA bill.

So is he going to commit to not raising the gas tax to 15 cents or even 16 or 20? Will he just answer the question: Yes or no?

MLA Sala: We're proud to have lowered taxes for Manitobans. We increased the basic personal exemption. We increased the brackets. We lowered taxes for renters, something that was needed after the last government raised taxes on renters, some of the most hard-done-by Manitobans in the midst of an affordability crisis. That's their record: raising taxes by \$175 on renters. That's seniors, people on fixed incomes, people with disabilities living in rental units. That's their record.

Since we've come in, we've lowered taxes, we eliminated the fuel tax, offered this fuel tax holiday.

Manitobans can see that we're doing exactly what is needed, which is offering them relief. It is simply ridiculous for the members opposite to suggest otherwise. Manitobans can see that, and I know my colleagues are hearing every day just how grateful and supportive Manitobans are of those changes we've made to make life more affordable.

Mr. Ewasko: How many Manitobans are benefiting from the gas tax holiday?

MLA Sala: We know that anybody who's driving is benefiting from that fuel tax holiday. And one of the, you know, segments of Manitoba that we know is benefiting in the biggest way are the people that member opposite, the temporary Leader of the Opposition, represents. Those are folks living in rural and northern communities who have to drive long distances to work, to get their kids to hockey games, ballet, whatever it is. That's their reality. We know that's helping them in a huge way.

Manitobans across the province are benefiting from that fuel tax holiday.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, the temporary Finance Minister hasn't answered the question.

I believe the question was how many Manitobans are benefiting from the gas tax holiday. We saw that the raising of the basic personal exemption and indexing the different levels of income by the rate of inflation helped all Manitobans.

So, again, it's a simple question. How many Manitobans has this gas tax holiday benefited?

MLA Sala: The member opposite seems to forget that we passed those tax changes. He wasn't in government anymore. Those are our—that's our middle-class tax cut. We're proud of that, all the savings that that brought to Manitobans.

The fuel tax holiday is, of course, just one of 21 ways to save that we brought forward in our budget, a budget that is being enacted through this BITSA bill. We're proud of these 21 approaches that we've offered to Manitobans to help them reduce their costs. Fuel tax is obviously a big piece of this. This is something we hear about all the time and invite the member opposite to support.

The Chairperson: Any further questions or comments?

Shall clause 8 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland—oh, sorry.

I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour of the clause, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clause 8 is—the honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: Sorry. On division.

The Chairperson: On division.

Clause 8 is accordingly passed, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 9—pass.

Shall clauses 10 through 12 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Chairperson: Clause 10—[interjection]—I hear a no? I'll just repeat the question.

Clauses 10 through 12—pass.

Shall clauses 13 through 15 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: Thank you—

The Chairperson: Oh, sorry.

Shall clause 13 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mrs. Stone: This clause is what has become a tax on doctors—doctors' tax, an engineers' tax, small business owners' tax, farmers' tax. Many of these skills, jobs and careers have income over \$200,000. This bill takes more money away from a significant number of Manitobans that we not only need to keep in the province to keep our economy going, like engineers and small businesses, but it's also a deterrent to those that we are desperately trying to recruit, such as doctors.

This is not tax-competitive with other provinces: both Saskatchewan and Alberta have increased their basic personal amounts, yet the NDP is limiting this for many, many Manitobans and completely eliminating it for others. They're taking the basic personal amount from crucial workers that we do need to attract into Manitoba.

You know, I question how will universities attract professors and research 'ector'—experts, when the NDP keeps raising taxes on them. How will our hospitals attract doctors, technicians, R & D when our tax system will be penalizing them compared to neighbours across our country? It's ironic that the Minister of Health stood earlier today in this House and talked about respecting health-care staff, but when you look at any public sector disclosure report, you see medical experts, law enforcement, other essential services, many of who would fall under this catch-all provision.

So how does the minister expect us to attract doctors? Other jurisdictions are offering huge incentives for medical professionals to stay within their province. However, by including this clause in BITSA, the minister is offering instead bigger tax bills at the end of the day.

So I have to ask the minister: How did he determine a \$200,000 threshold where the basic personal amount needed is getting clawed back?

MLA Sala: We're lowering tax bills, Chair.

Manitobans know that. It wasn't only the, you know, the basic personal exemption increase and the bracket increases that we brought in place to lower tax bills, but of course the \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit, is going to put \$1,500 into the pockets of Manitobans every year to reduce the costs—the impacts of school taxes. The gas tax holiday again continues to create big savings. And this is just a few items from a very long list of ways that we've helped make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

The issue with the member opposite's argument is that we're doing the work. Doctors are actually coming to Manitoba thanks to our Health Minister and the work of our team. We're seeing 863 new health-care workers, including over 100 new doctors, working in Manitoba. That's a sign that our plan and our approach is working.

Mrs. Stone: I'm going to ask again where the minister came up with a \$200,000 threshold.

MLA Sala: Look, we brought forward a plan that sought to make life more affordable for all Manitobans and I think—I know, again, something I hear all the time in my role as Finance Minister, in speaking with Manitobans when I travel throughout the province, is that they're very grateful for the 21 ways to save that we brought forward. This is life-changing for a lot of Manitobans, and we think about seven and a half years, seven and a half long, difficult years under the members opposite, where life was being made more expensive.

* (16:00)

So, you know, it's a little—I'm a little incredulous when I hear sort of the claims being made by members opposite about us making life more expensive when we've brought forward 21 new ways to save. Again, I invite the member opposite and their team to get on board with the work we're doing of making life more affordable.

Mrs. Stone: Manitoba has—is having a challenge right now attracting medical specialists into our province. Many of these specialists, GI, pediatrics, oncology—you know, the list could go on—many of those individuals make over \$400,000. You know, there are incentives that other provinces are implementing to encourage and attract those specialists into their province.

However, with the changes that the minister is making on income tax thresholds—not just over \$200,000 but over \$400,000, completely eliminating the basic personal exemption for those incomes—how does he expect to attract those specialists into the province, and how did he come up with a \$400,000 threshold to completely eliminate the basic personal exemption amount?

MLA Sala: One of the biggest challenges we face in attracting health-care workers was the damage that was done by the previous government. They ultimately did everything possible to damage our health-care system and, in many ways, make it, unfortunately, a less attractive place to work.

Thanks to the work of our Premier (Mr. Kinew), my colleague the Minister of Health, who's doing an incredible job, we're turning that around. This isn't an overnight process, but our investments in Health, including a billion-dollar increase to that Health budget line, is helping to drive massive improvements to those workplaces, and ultimately that will serve to go a very long way in making Manitoba a much more attractive place, certainly much more attractive than it has been for the last seven and a half years under the previous government.

Mrs. Stone: How many Manitobans are in an income of between \$200,000 and \$400,000?

MLA Sala: What we know is that the 21 ways to save we brought forward are helping Manitobans in every corner of the province, of all income levels.

Again: gas tax holiday, \$1,500-homeowner affordability tax credit, a broad middle tax cut with raises to the personal income tax bracket thresholds as well as the basic personal exemption. These are changes that are putting money in Manitobans' pockets, ultimately making us a more competitive and desirable place to live.

Mrs. Stone: Okay, did not hear an answer of how many Manitobans that this is actually going to impact with this threshold being \$200,000, so I'll make it a little easy for the minister.

How many Manitobans will be impacted by the \$400,000 threshold?

MLA Sala: Again, you know, we're just so honoured to be able to do this work that we're doing and making life more affordable, Mr. Chair. And, you know, Manitobans can see that we're coming at this after, again, many years of government that wasn't connected to the challenges that Manitobans were facing,

that really had no clue what the average Manitoban was experiencing on a day-to-day basis.

On this side of the House, I know my colleagues and I have connections and understand the real challenges that Manitobans face day to day. That's not something they had for seven and a half years. They had a government that wasn't listening; they had a government that proved that when they raised taxes on renters, one of the most challenged groups in this province.

That's their record, among many other decisions like legislating hydro rate increases in a BITSA bill in 2020. That's their record, a record of making life more expensive, of not connecting to the needs of everyday Manitobans. We're proud to be tuned in to those needs and to work to support all Manitobans in making life more affordable.

Mrs. Stone: So what I've now heard is that the minister has no idea how he's come up with a \$200,000 threshold. I find it ironic that the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) salary is \$195,000, just below that threshold. So perhaps they created this threshold specifically to benefit their own Premier and members of Cabinet.

I now—I ask the minister again: what consultation did he have in—or what formula did he use to come up with a \$200,000 threshold? This is now the third time I'm asking him, so unless he pulled it out of thin air, I'd like to know where this formula on this threshold came from.

MLA Sala: The formula we used in putting together our plan is that Manitobans suffered for seven and a half years, and we had to take action.

So we put together a response to the challenges that they'd faced for so long to make life more affordable. Extending the gas tax holiday, again, the new \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit, I've talked about those a lot but you've got the increasing a seniors top-up, free prescription birth control, \$10-a-day child care all year round, 5 per cent lower auto insurance rates, security system rebates and on and on and on.

That's our record. Their record is making life more expensive.

The Chairperson: Any further questions?

Seeing no more, all those in—shall clause 13 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mrs. Stone: Recorded vote, please.

The Chairperson: Recorded vote has been requested. Please call in the members.

* (16:10)

The question before the committee is the passing of clause 13.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Deputy Clerk: Ayes 28, Nays 18.

The Chairperson: The clause is accordingly passed. Clause 13 is accordingly passed.

* * *

* (16:20)

The Chairperson: Clause 14—pass.

Shall clause 15 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: This clause essentially eliminates the education property tax credit and establishes the homeowners affordability tax credit, which only applies to principal residences. Manitobans will now be

responsible for full education property taxes on their cottages and rental properties.

This is a tax on investment in Manitoba. This is a tax on tourism in Manitoba. We have beautiful lake country across our great province, which many Manitobans, Winnipeggers, small communities across this province go to their cottages and their rental properties in these lake countries, and with that brings jobs, bring economic development and growth. And this is essentially charging Manitobans more tax.

You know, I look at my colleague from Lac du Bonnet here and, you know, he represents a good chunk of lake country. And many of—Manitobans come to his area and have cottages within his riding, and that brings a significant amount of tourism to beautiful parts of our province that otherwise wouldn't have. And I think it's a shame that this minister and this NDP government is taxing Manitobans on their cottage properties.

You know, by eliminating the education property tax rebate, the NDP are moving backwards, not forwards. This is a status quo tax policy that is out of date, that no other jurisdiction in Canada has. Manitoba is the last jurisdiction in Canada that charges education taxes on our property. It did not work in other provinces; this is why other provinces have moved away from it. Yet the NDP refuses. They refuse to move beyond this.

School taxes are going up as much as 17 per cent; you know, my colleague, the MLA from Morden-Winkler, is seeing that within her constituency right now. Yet the NDP have decided to eliminate tax credits that have been providing much-needed relief to Manitobans. Cost of living is expensive; it's the No. 1 thing Manitobans are concerned about right now, cost of living and affordability.

Yet, the NDP are eliminating these tax 'mesures'—measures that help Manitobans across the entire province. And any savings from this bill will be completely reversed by the NDP school division tax policies that are going up and tax increases that are going up.

So I have to ask the minister: Did he do any comparisons across jurisdictions into how their tax policy and education property tax policies have worked, or are they just stuck in the days of the NDP Greg Selinger tax policy?

MLA Sala: Look, again, it gives me great pleasure to sit here and have this opportunity to talk about all of

the amazing things our team is doing to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

The \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit is going to, in many cases, eliminate school taxes for a huge number of Manitobans. In fact, I would venture a guess to say that the member opposite who's asking questions here today, that the vast majority of folks living in her community are going to see huge benefits from that \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit. So that's a measure we're proud of. It's making home ownership more affordable, especially for new homeowners who are just getting into home ownership today. It's a—really a massive benefit and something that will go a very long ways in making life much more affordable.

But, again, as I've had the great opportunity here today to talk about at length, which I'm grateful for, is that this is not the only measure that we've brought forward. Manitobans, regardless of position in this province, will benefit from our broad middle-class tax cuts that we brought forward, in addition to the gas tax holiday, in addition to a long list of other affordability initiatives that are making life better for Manitobans in every corner of the province.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, I'd just like to correct the record for the minister that my constituents in Midland would have been far better off had the NDP followed eliminating the education property tax policy. This would have driven more savings to Manitobans. It would have been—driven more savings to farmers, of which I largely represent. So in no way does this tax policy actually improve constituents in my area. Had they actually followed the PC path of eliminating education property taxes, then my constituents would have more money in their pockets.

MLA Sala: I think in that answer, we can see what led Manitoba to have a \$2-billion deficit under their leadership. They left us in the ditch because of bad overall financial management.

And, ultimately, we're doing the work, but we're finding a balance between making life more affordable while making the improvements that Manitobans needed after seven and a half very long years under their governance.

The Chairperson: Are there any further questions, comments?

We'll go to the question: Shall clause 15 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mrs. Stone: Recorded vote, please.

The Chairperson: Recorded vote has been requested. Please call in the members.

* (16:40)

The question before the committee is clause 15.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Jackson, Johnson, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Deputy Clerk: Ayes 28, Nays 16.

The Chairperson: Clause 15 is accordingly passed.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall clauses 16 and 17 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Clause 16—pass.

Clause 17?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Are there questions?

Mrs. Stone: I reiterate my comments from earlier that, had the NDP followed the elimination of the education property tax model that the former PC government instituted, then Manitobans would have more money in their pockets, not less under the NDP's model today.

The Chairperson: Any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, shall clause 17 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say no.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: Nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: I believe the Ayes have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 17 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall clause 18 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

Mrs. Stone: As mentioned earlier, Manitobans will now be responsible for full education property taxes on their cottages and rental properties. In this clause they specifically call out principal residence while, as I mentioned earlier, many Manitobans have cottages across this beautiful province of ours.

This is going to limit job growth, economic development in these key areas; it essentially hurts our tourism industry. Many cottages are outside the city of Winnipeg and outside the Perimeter and I encourage the members opposite to travel in various parts of our province and see how beautiful our country is.

And many of these areas are supported by cottagers that come in for weekends, for summers, throughout the holidays and invest in those towns.

So I just want to say that the NDP is clearly moving backwards on tax policy at the detriment of Manitobans.

MLA Sala: Again, the member is making comments that are undermined by the reality of the situation, and I was—I know, along with my colleagues—very proud to see Stats Canada's most recent update where we learned that Manitoba had the fastest rate of job growth in the private sector of any province in Canada for the month of September.

That's a sign that our plan is working. Manitobans are getting to work. We're creating economic growth that hasn't been seen in a long time, and we're just incredibly proud of the affordability work that we've done to make life just that much more affordable for Manitobans in just so many ways thanks to our 21 ways to save.

Mrs. Stone: In 5.4(2), I asked the minister how \$1,500 was reached for this flax-flat tax credit rate?

* (16:50)

We know from CBC reporting earlier this year that this will actually be increasing taxes on Manitobans if their house is valued at or above \$437,000. And we know from real estate data that the average home sale in Winnipeg this summer crossed, I think, \$438,000.

So where did they come up with this flat rebate?

MLA Sala: We know that the vast majority of Manitobans are going to have more money in their pockets thanks to that measure. Again, this is a great measure that will help support affordable home ownership and is going to go a really long ways for those Manitobans who are looking to buy their first home.

The Chairperson: Any further questions?

Seeing none, shall clause 18 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: Those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: On division, clause 18 passes.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall clauses 19 and 20 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Clause 19—pass.

Shall clause 20 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

Mrs. Stone: I reiterate my comments from earlier that Manitobans would have more money in their pockets if the NDP had maintained with the path the PCs were on to completely eliminate education property taxes.

The Chairperson: Any further questions?

Seeing none, shall clause 20 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clause 20—

An Honourable Member: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 20 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall clauses 21 through 23 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Shall clause 21 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: Again reiterate my comments that Manitobans would have more money in their pockets to eliminate education property tax rebates.

The Chairperson: Any further questions or comments?

Seeing none, shall clause 21 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 21 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 22—pass.

Shall clause 23 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: This change to the renters affordability tax credit will not go very far once costs are filtered down to those renting.

So I just ask the minister how he came to these numbers for changes to the renters tax credit for seniors, and why are there changes to the eligible income for seniors, as well?

MLA Sala: We are unbelievably proud to start that work of making—restoring some of those tax increases that the former government placed upon renters. They increased taxes by \$175 on those who are facing some of the greatest struggles in our province.

I think, you know, it's clear that that highlights their failure to understand the realities faced by everyday Manitobans—seniors, folks with disabilities—who've seen their incomes remain stagnant and weren't getting help under the previous government.

So we're proud to do that work of starting to reduce some of the damage, the impact that had been created by their tax hike on renters. We're making life more affordable.

The Chairperson: Any further questions?

Seeing none, shall clause 23 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 23 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 24—pass.

Shall clauses 25 and 26 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Clause 24—shall clause 25 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

Mrs. Stone: Requiring individuals applying for primary caregiver tax credit to register on or before April 30 of the year following the year for which the credit is

claimed is unnecessary red tape on primary caregivers of the disabled and ill.

By including this clause, this is reversing progressive policies that have been introduced and been implemented by the former PC government to ensure that caregivers don't have the added stress of an already very stressful situation: having to deal with bloated bureaucracy and red tape.

With that, I have no more comments.

The Chairperson: Any further questions or comments?

Seeing none, shall clause 25 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 25 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 26—pass. Clauses 27 and 28—pass. Clauses 29 through 31—pass.

Shall clause 32 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: This government is choosing to define affordable unit by regulation, once again giving them the power to decide who this applies to at the Cabinet table without proper scrutiny and accountability to Manitobans.

So I just want to ask the minister why he is unwilling to define something as simple as affordable housing, especially when it dictates the rebate Manitoban developers could qualify for.

MLA Sala: Look, we know for years that Manitobans who needed access to affordable housing were not

getting the supports or seeing any type of indications from the previous government that they understood their housing challenges that they were facing. They completely failed to develop the new stock that Manitobans needed to have access to.

I've been so proud to see our Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) in their work—supported by our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our team—to expand access to affordable housing and Manitobans—so Manitobans can get access to that shelter in a—at a rate and a cost that they can afford.

This is, again, just another example of the difference between our party and our understanding of the challenges that Manitobans face, relative to what the previous government did. Their record is one of failure—a chronicle of failures to meet the housing needs of Manitobans. We're getting the work done and we're developing new housing—new, affordable housing.

And I think this rental housing construction incentive is very important in that it not only supports the expansion of affordable housing, but it also helps to support the expansion of market housing, and we know that more market housing means more housing overall, less pressure on the system, and that will help to create greater affordability of rental housing across the province.

We're proud of that work.

Mrs. Stone: Looking at the definitions under 10.7(1), the minister is giving himself the power to add qualifying non-profit entity and qualifying for-profit entity to the broad definitions.

Is the minister specifically leaving a back door to add others in at a later date?

MLA Sala: Yes, the purpose of this rental housing construction incentive is to expand rental housing in Manitoba, something we didn't see for many years, and to do that in a good way that ensures that we're not only supporting the expansion of affordable housing and social housing with the great work that's been happening through our colleague—Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith)—but also that we're expanding access to market rental housing which we know will help to support overall increases to affordability for rental housing in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stone: Yes, so I—you know, I noticed that hotel and hostels are specifically exempt from this, by the letter of the act. So what other facilities would the minister look to add by regulation?

* (17:00)

MLA Sala: Yes, again, I'll just repeat. This is an incentive focused on expanding rental housing in Manitoba, something we hadn't seen in a very, very long time. We're proud of that. I think this is a sign that we want to help Manitobans get to work, develop more housing; more rental housing is good for Manitoba, again, not only affordable but also in the private market or in market rentals as well.

Mrs. Stone: I've also noticed in the broad definition—still on 10.7(1)—residential rental unit is once again governed by regulation. A dwelling is defined in the act with a lockable door, a bathroom and some form of kitchen.

So what unit that doesn't meet this basic criteria would the minister be trying to publicly subsidize?

MLA Sala: Again, I think, you know, there's many years that went by—seven and a half, to be precise—where we did not see a government that cared about the importance of affordable rental housing.

That was something that led to a lot of struggle for a lot of Manitobans and we're still dealing with that in terms of our need to play catch-up in helping to grow our affordable housing, rental housing universe.

We've got a lot of work to do. We're proud to have taken these measures to start expanding that rental housing universe in Manitoba. This incentive is about growing affordable housing stock, as well as market rental housing because we know that will help all Manitobans.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, shall clause 32 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clause 32—the honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 32 passes, on division.

Clauses 33 and 34—pass; clause 35—pass.

Shall clause 36 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

Mrs. Stone: Clearly, the NDP is trying to add more paperwork and additional red tape and burden for oil and gas companies by making them store records for longer. So I have to ask the minister if he consulted with any oil and gas companies about the impact that this additional red tape would have on them.

MLA Sala: Yes, no, this is being extended to align with the record retention period of the Canada Revenue Agency.

The Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Clause 36—pass.

Shall clauses 37 through 40 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Clause 37—pass; clause 38—pass.

Shall clause 39 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: As mentioned in earlier comments, this is a major tax change that results in homeowners, farmers, property owners paying more in taxes than they would have under the former PC government; \$148 million in new property taxes on the backs of Manitobans, thanks to this NDP government, who are already struggling with cost of living challenges and high interest rates.

As I've clearly mentioned, education property taxes are an out-of-date tax policy that every other province in Canada has moved away from. Manitoba is the last jurisdiction in Canada to charge education taxes on properties. What Manitoba does need is a sustainable funding model for education and this is exactly why the PCs were well on their way to eliminating education property taxes and replacing it with a sustainable funding model for education.

You know, I've already mentioned 17 per cent school division taxes. Like, my colleague, the MLA

for Morden-Winkler has seen in her communities—we've seen 7 per cent, 12 per cent, you know, upwards—17 per cent. Huge, huge taxes.

This is not only financially unsustainable for Manitobans who do need stable and consistent taxes for their own budgets, but this is very poor tax policy that every single province in Canada has seemed to realize, except the NDP wants to go backwards; they want to stay in status-quo tax policy that the former NDP Greg Selinger had.

So seeing as how other provinces have moved away from education property taxes, I have to ask the minister, has the minister done any comparisons to how property taxes are done across the country?

MLA Sala: Tough sell for the members opposite to suggest that their approach to education was, by any measure, sustainable.

I know I just—every single division we can look at and see that they experienced cuts under the previous government that harmed the quality of education, made it harder for our students to succeed. No one is looking for—to them for a model as to how to manage education in Manitoba.

Our approach, the \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit, will make school taxes much more affordable for the vast majority of Manitobans. We're proud to do that. We know that it's something that was needed after many years of cost increases under the PCs.

Mrs. Stone: So what I'm hearing is, no, the minister hasn't done a comparison in how property taxes are approached in other provinces, because if he had, then he would realize that Manitoba is the last jurisdiction in Canada to charge education property taxes.

So I ask the minister, does he have any plan for a sustainable funding model for education, or are they going to maintain backwards, status-quo tax policies on the backs of Manitobans and allow education to continue being defunded via property taxation?

MLA Sala: Yes, I appreciate the question. Again, any suggestion that anybody should be looking to the PCs for a model for how education should be managed, we know that that is just not—that is not a model to be followed; it's a model to be avoided. They showed us exactly how to make schools and education less sustainable.

We're doing the work of fixing the mess that they created in education, and I'm just so proud of our Education Minister and our interim Education

Minister for the work that they are doing. We've got 600 new teachers in the system. We brought forward a universal child nutrition program that's creating the best possible conditions for our youth to succeed in school and have the greatest futures possible. That's what Manitobans are getting in—under an NDP government versus what they had for seven and a half years under the PCs, which was an endless series of cuts and failures.

Mrs. Stone: One of the provinces that Manitoba competes the most with in terms of recruitment is Saskatchewan. And about 15 years ago, Saskatchewan undertook a major overview of how property taxes were approached.

There was, you know, significant variations in mill rates across the province, education property taxes were there, and they repealed that. And they came up with a much more sustainable and consistent funding model for education as well as between various RMs across the entire province.

So, I ask again, did the minister look at any other provinces in how they approach property tax models when he implemented this new regressive tax policy?

MLA Sala: Yes, again, I mean the idea that, you know, there's all these new approaches and ideas that we're hearing from the members opposite, I'll remind the member, although I know they weren't there during the seven and a half years of the last government's tenure, but it's fair to remind her just to say that that is not a model that we need to reproduce and also, they had seven and a half years. Where were these ideas during the seven and a half years that they were in government? They weren't—they were not ready for bringing forward a better approach to managing education.

Our minister's doing an incredible job of leading that, including our interim minister, who are bringing forward an approach that is repairing the significant damage that was created under the PCs.

* (17:10)

Mrs. Stone: The PCs were well on their way to eliminating education taxes from properties, and this was committed to, you know; we brought it up to 50 per cent and then—the rebate up to 50 per cent, with a move that was going to see the complete elimination of it, with a sustainable education funding model.

As mentioned about 15 years ago, Saskatchewan did a major overhaul of their property tax system. What did we also see over the past 15 years? We've seen major investments and investment in this province

of Saskatchewan. This is where companies want to invest, this is where people want to live and these types of tax policies are very regressive for investment.

It does not create a tax-competitive province and I want to be very clear that the PCs were well on their way to eliminating education taxes from property and that, instead, the NDP is sticking with a regressive tax policy, of which Manitoba is the last province in Canada to have. It's because other provinces recognize and realize that it is out-of-date tax policy and they've looked to change that, and they have changed that.

And the NDP, for some reason—it must be their ideological views—has decided not to.

MLA Sala: Look, a plan to eliminate education taxes entirely is not an education funding plan. We were seven and a half years in to a Conservative government when they were removed from office. I don't know what well on our way means, but seven and a half years is quite a long time. Would we have waited, I don't know, another seven and a half years? I don't—I'm not sure how much longer it could have taken. But look, we know they were not well on their way to doing anything except for proceeding with more cuts to education.

We are investing, we're making life better for students, for families and we're creating every opportunity for young people in Manitoba to succeed with our universal nutrition program.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, shall clause 39 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mrs. Stone: Recorded vote.

The Chairperson: Recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (18:00)

The question before the committee is clause 39.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Deputy Clerk: Ayes 29, Nays 16.

The Chairperson: Clause 39 is accordingly passed.

* (18:10)

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 40—pass; clauses 41 through 45—pass; clauses 46 through 49—pass; clauses 50 through 53—pass; clauses 54 and 55—pass; clauses 56 and 57—pass; clause 58—pass.

Shall clause 59 through 61 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Shall clause fifty—I heard a no.

Clause 59—pass.

The Chairperson: Shall clause 60 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: Before this change was hidden in the budget, small businesses could receive a small commission when collecting and remitting the retail sales tax.

I'd like to make note that small businesses do collect the RST on behalf of the government, yet the NDP now wants to place an additional added cost burden on small businesses, eliminating commissions for collecting and remitting tax.

Business groups have voiced their concern, so I would like to ask the minister if he consulted with the

Canadian federation for independent business on this change.

MLA Sala: One of the things that we were happy to bring forward with the budget, and it's been brought forward here through the BITSA, is that we've raised the filing threshold from ten-thousand-K to thirty-thousand-K and that means a lot of small businesses will not need to file.

Proud of that work we're doing to help make things easier for some of our smallest economic generators in the province, and in regards to the broader change, it is worth noting that we have moved from a paper-based process, which was quite arduous, to one that is digital, at this point, which makes filing much simpler.

Mrs. Stone: The CFIB came out and said that the government decided to remove this commission allowance without any consultation with the business community. They said that removing the commission allowance sends a signal that the Manitoba government does not care to acknowledge the effort of business owners to collect and remit the government sales tax. For small businesses, it may seem like a small amount for this NDP government, but these commissions could total up to \$58 per month or almost \$700 per year.

So, like I said, this may not seem like a lot to the NDP, but for small businesses that are struggling to keep up with the skyrocketing operating costs, any amount of money helps. CFIB also did a survey earlier this year and almost half of Manitoba's small businesses said that they were approve—opposed to the removal of this commission, and they indicated that some of these cost savings helped with pandemic-related costs, debt and/or to expand their operations, so that came directly from Canadian federation for independent business, so they said that they were not consulted by this minister.

So I ask who the minister did consult in removing this commission on the collection of retail sales tax from small businesses.

MLA Sala: You know, Manitoba is modernizing our approach here. We were one of the last provinces in the country to continue to provide those commissions. Again, proud of the work that's gone into making this simpler for businesses and also very proud of the fact that, again, we raised that filing threshold up to 30,000 to make it even easier for some of our smallest businesses to continue to do their good work, growing our economy and creating jobs here in Manitoba.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, shall clause 61 pass—or sorry, 60.

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Clause 60 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Clause 61—pass; clauses 62 through 66—pass; clauses 67 and 68—pass; clauses 69 and 70—pass; clauses 71 and 72—pass.

Shall clause 78 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

* (18:20)

Seeing no questions, clause 78—pass.

Schedule—shall schedule A, clauses 1 through 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Shall—I hear a no.

Schedule A, clause 1—pass.

Should schedule A, clause 2 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): The changes to The Election Financing Act really—I must reiterate that this was added on to BISTA [*phonetic*].

This is not something that the NDP campaigned on. It's not something that they consulted with the public on. It's not something that they got any feedback from the public on before tacking this on to a BISTA [*phonetic*] bill and ramming it forward so that there can be no public consultation on this act.

Again, this government has said that they want to be open and transparent, but they're hiding issues in BISTA [*phonetic*], and the public wants the transparency; they want the opportunity to come to committee and to talk on these many important items.

Our party made the changes that were in force to make sure that campaign rebates were reduced. And so this party is now adding campaign rebates to pad their pockets while working towards—working off the hard dollars of Manitobans—dollars that could go towards other programs such as safety, such as medical, such as education.

This is yet another hidden attack on Manitobans because they won't have a chance to have their say.

So, with that, I would ask the minister: what value is adding this 50 per cent to the everyday Manitoban?

MLA Sala: Appreciate the question. And, you know, we're happy to be bringing in this measure because we know that it will help to ensure that all Manitobans have the opportunity to participate in our democratic process. And by doing this, we know that we'll be helping and encouraging Manitobans who might not otherwise be able to do so to participate, to put their name forward, to be part of helping to make positive change here in Manitoba.

So this strengthens the political process, ensures financial transparency, and it will strengthen integrity in the democratic process and, very importantly, level the playing field for all parties in Manitoba.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Chairperson, I have an amendment to bring forward. I move

THAT Schedule A to the Bill (The Election Financing Amendment Act) be amended by replacing Clause 2 with the following:

2 Subsection 73(2) is amended in the description of E in the formula by striking out "25%" wherever it occurs and substituting "20 %".

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member from Brandon West

THAT Schedule A to the Bill (The Election Financing Amendment Act) be amended by replacing Clause 2—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Chairperson: Dispense.

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

I see no questions. Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Balcaen: Recorded vote, please.

The Chairperson: Recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (18:30)

The question before the Committee is the amendment to schedule A, clause 2.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Nays

Asagwara, Brar, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk: Ayes 18, Nays 27.

The Chairperson: The amendment to schedule A, clause 2 is accordingly defeated.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule A, clause 2 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Chairperson: Schedule A, clause—

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: I believe the Ayes have it.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On division.

The Chairperson: Schedule A, clause 2 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule A, clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Balcaen: It's unfortunate that this legislation again, in BITSA, is getting rammed through with this. The fact is it's disappointing that this government continues to reverse the fiscal responsible work that was done previously by this PC government.

Manitobans expect better, and we heard loud and clear that this is simply a subsidy directed to political organizations that actually does nothing for everyday Manitobans.

So rather than finances going into the party accounts, I wonder if the minister could answer: Could this money not be used better, accountable to the public?

MLA Sala: Again, we're proud to be ensuring that all Manitobans have an opportunity to access the democratic process. We know this will strengthen the political process in Manitoba, make it more inclusive, strengthen the integrity of our democratic process here in Manitoba, level the playing field.

It is, just as a side note, somewhat comical to hear the party responsible for a \$2-billion deficit talk about their fiscal responsibility.

Mrs. Stone: I think it's incredibly questionable that the NDP is using taxpayer dollars to essentially prop up their own political party coffers at a time when Manitobans are facing cost of living challenges and

affordability. Affordability is the No. 1 issue Manitobans are facing today, and this is the party of the NDP: to put that taxpayer dollar money into their own political party for subsidies.

This is the vote tax all over again, and I question why the minister believes that this should be a priority as opposed to putting this money back into the pockets of Manitobans or to deal with cost of living challenges.

MLA Sala: Affordability is a massive priority for Manitobans. That's why we're so proud to have brought forward 21 ways to save; it's been great to have this; just so many opportunities to talk about our affordability measures today here in the House.

I'm grateful to the members opposite for giving me repeated opportunities to just keep talking about our 21 ways to save that we know are really resonating with Manitoba.

Mr. Balcaen: I have an amendment to move.

* (18:40)

I move

THAT Schedule A to the Bill (The Election Financing Amendment Act) be amended by replacing Clause 3 with the following:

3 Subsection 74(2) is amended in the formula by striking out "25%" and substituting "20%".

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) that—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Chairperson: Dispense.

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Balcaen: Recorded vote, please.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The question before the committee is the amendment to schedule A, clause 3.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Nays

Asagwara, Brar, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Naylor, Oxenham, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schott, Simard, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Deputy Clerk: Ayes 18, Nays 26.

The Chairperson: The amendment to schedule A, clause 3, is accordingly defeated.

* (18:50)

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule A, clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: No question.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Balcaen: A recorded vote.

The Chairperson: If you could just repeat that one more time.

Mr. Balcaen: A recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The question before the committee is schedule A, clause 3.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Ayes 28, Nays 17.

The Chairperson: Schedule A, clause 3 is accordingly passed.

* (19:00)

* * *

The Chairperson: Schedule A, clause 4—pass; schedule A, clause 5—pass.

Shall schedule B, clause 1 through 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Shall schedule B, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I have a few questions on the environment amendment act that's embedded in the BITSA bill here today.

So why has the minister chosen not to include mandatory community notification provisions in this bill, especially considering the Fort Garry Bridge sewage spills affected Treaty 1 nations and other communities downstream?

MLA Sala: We're proud to bring this in. We know that Manitobans care deeply about our air, our lands, our water. And we know for many years we had a government that didn't share that concern.

These provisions will strengthen environmental protections here in Manitoba. We know that they'll modernize the enforcement framework by allowing a

director to impose administrative monetary penalties and preset fines.

Unfortunately, we know that under the previous government, environmental inspections were cut in half and the PCs just were very clearly not serious about deterring pollution, and they refused to even take the simplest steps to improve enforcement.

So this is action. This is helping to ensure that we can protect our environment, protect our water, and it addresses an important gap in the enforcement framework by introducing some administrative monetary penalties and preset fines.

Mr. Nesbitt: Shouldn't this legislation reflect the minister's stated commitment to addressing notification concerns from First Nations and municipalities as a result of these spills late last year and earlier this year?

MLA Sala: Yes, again, appreciate the question from the member opposite, but I'd like to just, you know, remind him that for many years under his government, we saw environmental protections lag. We fell behind. The PCs just were very clearly not serious about deterring pollution and refused to even take the simplest steps necessary.

So this change will help to respond to that gap that's been in place for many years under the previous government and will help to ensure that we can have stronger environmental legislation. It's action in ensuring compliance with environmental laws and will provide a serious disincentive for pollution, protecting our province and, of course, preserving it for generations to come.

Mr. Nesbitt: So does the minister not agree that affected communities deserve timely notification and transparency from her office after severe environmental incidents?

MLA Sala: What we know is that under—when there were environmental incidents, that there wasn't really a good mechanism for responding to them under the last government. They allowed that to lag, and essentially anything that—any actions that government wanted to take were—required prosecution and the laying of formal charges, which of course can result in very lengthy and complex undertakings requiring significant time and resources.

So this is an important step forward in addressing a gap in the enforcement framework that had been left there by the previous government, and we're doing that, I think, in the right way that reflects the best approach to helping to protect our environment in

allowing for swift action that will disincentivize pollution.

Mr. Nesbitt: With maximum fines set at \$25,000 for individuals and \$125,000 for corporations, does the minister believe these penalties are adequate to prevent environmental violations?

MLA Sala: Look, we do recognize that this is just the first step in improving environmental protections in Manitoba after many years of seeing us lag behind and seeing, you know, pollution or acts that were taking place that—where we had zero response, and ultimately we didn't have the tools necessary to respond in a swift manner.

There's more work to do, of course, to improve The Environment Act. It hasn't been substantively looked at in many decades. But this is an important first step in improving environmental protections, and we're going to do this work in collaboration with stakeholders and experts and, of course, Indigenous communities.

Mr. Nesbitt: Given that these penalties are capped, what other preventative measures or monitoring does the minister plan to implement to deter repeat violations and address persistent non-compliance?

MLA Sala: Again, persistent non-compliance has been aided and abetted by years of a failure on the previous—part of the previous government to take any type of action to make it reasonable to take action swiftly.

These changes will allow this to be done, allow for fines to be issued and will act as a real deterrent towards pollution here in Manitoba.

Mr. Nesbitt: This legislation proposes administrative penalties but does not mandate Clean Environment Commission hearings for significant environmental incidents, like the Fort Garry Bridge sewage spill.

Why has the minister avoided including provisions for public oversight in these amendments?

MLA Sala: Again, we know there's more work to do, but this is a very important first set of steps here, moving us forward after many years of inaction.

Mr. Nesbitt: So does the minister believe there should be mandatory CEC hearings for incidents that significantly impact public waterways like the Red River and Lake Winnipeg watershed?

MLA Sala: What we believe is that we need to be serious about deterring pollution. And, again, we had for many years a government that refused to take

necessary action. Here we are, taking action. I invite the member opposite to get on board with this important first set of steps we're taking to reduce pollution of our waterways and pollution in Manitoba.

Mr. Nesbitt: Budget 2024 cut water infrastructure funding by \$105 million. So how does the minister plan to implement these new penalties without sufficient investment by government in water protection and environmental stewardship?

* (19:10)

MLA Sala: Well, we know there was significant challenges that municipalities across the province faced from years of zeros and freezes to their operational budgets. That created significant challenges for them in managing waterways and water management overall. We do, however, need to take important steps, of course, in response to their years of inaction and those years of cuts to municipalities.

I was very proud that our budget brought forward a funding commitment for municipalities and, of course, that it's bringing forward these important changes that will help to ensure that those organizations or entities that might think of polluting know that they've got a serious disincentive in doing so.

Mr. Nesbitt: Will the minister commit today to restoring and increasing the water infrastructure budget to ensure that Manitoba's water resources are properly protected and infrastructure is maintained?

MLA Sala: What I'm proud to commit to today is moving forward this bill and the important changes we're proposing here to make it easier to ensure that those who are polluting are fined in a swift manner to act as a serious disincentive and to start moving away from the, essentially, the, you know, the fallback that we've seen over the last many years where environmental inspections were cut in half by the previous government.

Mr. Nesbitt: Given the minister's newly legislated power to impose administrative penalties under this bill, can the minister clarify what measures are in place to ensure consistent and impartial enforcement of these penalties?

MLA Sala: I appreciate that question to ensure—regarding the consistency, or the importance of consistency, in how these fines are handed out.

Look, we've—the penalties and fines will be imposed by regulators instead of courts; we have confidence in their work. The change will allow the—a director to impose an administrative monetary penalty if a

protection order is not complied with. We know this is important after many years of inaction from the previous government.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the minister outline any planned reporting mechanisms to ensure Manitobans are kept informed about enforcement actions taken under this legislation?

MLA Sala: Again, God, it was a very long seven and a half years where I know, you know, so many folks on this side of the House who have deep concern about the environment and what's been happening here in Manitoba with the lack of environmental protections that it's just—it's been a long time coming that Manitobans had a government that took these issues seriously. We know how important environmental protections are for citizens in this province, and this is just such an important first set of steps in moving us in a direction where it will be much less palatable for entities, organizations to pollute here in Manitoba.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll move to the vote.

Shall schedule B, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Nesbitt: On division.

The Chairperson: Schedule B, clause 1 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Schedule B, clause 2—pass; schedule B, clause 3—pass; schedule B, clause 4—pass; schedule B, clause 5 and 6—pass.

Shall schedule C, clauses 1 through 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Shall schedule C, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: Clearly, through this bill and this schedule, the NDP are watering down the powers of the Public Utilities Board to act on behalf of Manitobans that do own and depend on Manitoba Hydro.

I'd like to remind Manitobans that the last time the NDP were in power, they put Manitoba Hydro \$24 billion in debt, and this added debt and the resulting debt servicing costs is something that Manitoba Hydro continues to be faced with.

It is very clear that Manitoba Hydro is highly leveraged, and what this bill does is it removes all accountability for Manitoba Hydro to improve their debt to equity ratio. The NDP have broken their promise to freeze hydro rates, and instead, this bill allows a 4 per cent increase in hydro rates every single year. It's becoming very clear that the NDP misled Manitobans during the election with their platform.

The PUB is an independent body. It's there for a reason. It's there to listen to concerned citizens and intervenors. What we have seen in the past is when regulators have requested rate increases that would have been costly to Manitobans, the PUB rejected those requests to protect Manitoba ratepayers.

We have seen the PUB set rates far below 4 per cent, as recent as this past year; we saw a rate increase of just 1 per cent in April; Hydro themselves only requested 2 per cent. Yet the minister is now wanting to increase those rates, double from what the regulator was even asking for this past year.

So I question why the minister is wanting to give themselves the power to bypass the PUB and set rates at 4 per cent annually, which is double what the regulator has even asked for in the past.

MLA Sala: So, a few items that need to be responded to there.

One, the—bill 36, which was brought forward by the member opposite's party, actually had a 5 per cent rate cap. So we lowered that by 1 per cent as a circuit breaker to protect Manitobans from rates going beyond that 4 per cent level.

Further commentary about the Public Utilities Board is appreciated. We, of course, need to protect their important work.

Unfortunately, the bill that was brought forward by the members opposite under the Heather Stefanson government absolutely kneecapped the Public Utilities Board. And it did that by setting financial targets at the Cabinet table.

So the entire line of argument here is sort of missing a lot of what actually happened in reality, which is their party sought to set—and their government—set financial targets at the Cabinet table, which is the de facto setting rates at the Cabinet table.

Electricity rates and hydro rates should not be set at the Cabinet table. They should be set through an independent process at the Public Utilities Board. And that's exactly what we're trying to restore by eliminating the financial debt-to-equity targets, again, that the members set out in bill 36.

It's very important that we work to restore the Public Utilities Board's role as an independent reviewer of hydro rates, because we know that's how we ensure the lowest cost possible for Manitobans.

Instead, what had been brought forward by the members opposite in bill 36 was a recipe for jacking hydro rates up as quickly as possible. That's the only reason they put those financial targets in the bill.

So we're very proud to be restoring the work of the Public Utilities Board and doing away with these provisions in a bill that the members opposite had brought forward, again, with one goal and one goal only, which was to jack up hydro rates as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Stone: This minister is setting hydro rates at the Cabinet table. He is giving himself the ability to allow a 4 per cent increase in hydro rates every single year. We have seen the PUB set rates far below 4 per cent. Hydro only requested a 2 per cent.

So why is the minister increasing double what the regulator has asked for as early as this year?

MLA Sala: The member opposite knows that that is a circuit-breaker rate. Appreciate their rhetorical flourish here and what they're trying to achieve, but the 4 per cent is a circuit breaker; it's a cap.

We want to restore the role of the Public Utilities Board in rate setting, and that's exactly what our amendments do.

* (19:20)

I hope the member can support that, knowing that she seems to think that the Public Utilities Board should play a role in rate setting in Manitoba. And if she does actually believe that, she will be supportive

of the proposed amendments to the act here because, again, what they brought in were a set of outrageous financial targets set at the Cabinet table that were going to drive hydro rates faster and higher, at a rate that we've never seen before in Manitoba. That's not the right path forward during an affordability crisis or at any time.

We need to make sure we protect the role of the PUB and support their important work in keeping rates low.

Mrs. Stone: So I ask the minister, because he's giving himself the ability to increase hydro rates at 4 per cent every year, does he not believe that the PUB is doing their job to protect Manitoba ratepayers, the fact that he's giving himself and his Cabinet the ability to decide rates and not the independent body?

MLA Sala: Well, again, the 4 per cent circuit breaker is similar to the circuit breaker that the members opposite had in their version of the legislation, which was set at 1 per cent higher.

Again, the goal is to ensure that we restore the role of the Public Utilities Board in rate setting because we know that will help to ensure the lowest possible rates for Manitobans.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll move on to the question.

Shall schedule C, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say no.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: I believe the Ayes carried that one.

Schedule C, clause 1 has accordingly passed—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry—I didn't see.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Johnson: Recorded vote, please.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The question before the committee is schedule C, clause 1.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Simard, Wasyliw, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 28, Nays 17.

The Chairperson: Schedule C, clause 1 is accordingly passed.

* (19:30)

* * *

The Chairperson: Schedule C, clause 2—pass; schedule C, clause 3—pass; schedule C, clause 4—pass; schedule C, clause 5—pass.

Mrs. Stone: I want to reiterate that the last time that the NDP were in power, they put Manitoba Hydro \$24 billion in debt, and this debt and resulting debt servicing costs that Manitoba Hydro does continue to face are placed on the backs of Manitobans.

As I mentioned earlier, Manitoba Hydro is highly leveraged, and this clause essentially removes all accountability for Manitoba Hydro to improve their debt-equity ratios. The setting of financial targets are an integral part of Manitoba Hydro's role in protecting the interests of ratepayers while also ensuring that the company—can it grow and expand to meet the energy needs of our growing province.

So to remove this debt-to-capitalization requirement without a supplemental debt strategy is imprudent on the part of the minister, and it's imperative that financial targets and resulting levels of debt recovery be not just considered but to be implemented. This is one of the reasons that the former PCs included this in the act.

So I have to ask the minister: does he have a plan to require financial targets for Manitoba Hydro that are set to properly manage its debt-equity ratios?

MLA Sala: Again, one of the big concerns that we heard from Manitobans was the work that the previous

government had done to raise hydro rates in new, creative, novel ways, that they seem to continuously be finding new approaches to raising rates on Manitobans.

And one of those ways that they locked in on with this legislation was, again, to sit around the Cabinet table and decide as non-experts what Hydro's financial targets should be. They wrote those on the back of a napkin, and then they popped them in a bill.

The concern is that that is not a way of devising a financial strategy for Hydro. There's no question that debt-to-capitalization ratios can play an important role in measuring Hydro's financial health. However, we do not agree that those should be set by political figures at the Cabinet table.

We do, I think, need to point out here too, just in terms of some of the commentary we heard from the members opposite, that, you know, we spent seven and a half years under their leadership and we didn't develop one single megawatt. Not one megawatt.

And I think as the minister for Hydro, when I hear about the concern that I hear, not just from Manitoba—everyday Manitobans about how that set us back in terms of ensuring that we had the energy we need to keep our homes lit up and the energy-taking care of the energy needs of Manitobans, but also from business. And we think seven and a half years, not a single megawatt developed, the opportunities that we've missed out on as a result of their inaction and their failure to do anything to help advance Manitoba and to take advantage of that incredible opportunity.

We have. We are so proud to have brought forward an energy policy plan that will partner with First Nations and Métis here in Manitoba to develop 600 megawatts of wind. We're moving the province forward. Within less than a year, we put that plan out. It took them seven and a half years, they accomplished nothing.

We're proud of the work we're doing and we're going to continue doing that work to advance Manitoba Hydro.

Mrs. Stone: So the minister well knows that financial targets are a key part of running a business, and especially for one the size of Manitoba Hydro, with the debt it has and the needs it has in order to reduce its debt and to start improving its debt-equity ratios.

So I'm going to ask the minister again: Does he have any plan to ensure that Manitoba Hydro is property—properly managing its debt-equity ratios?

MLA Sala: Again, the proper fiscal management of Hydro is not accomplished by setting wildly aggressive financial targets, debt-to-equity targets, at the Cabinet table. That is not a recipe for moving Hydro forward. That's a recipe for jacking up hydro rates as quickly as possible.

We do know that it is important to use the debt-to-capitalization ratio as a means of understanding the general fiscal health, financial health of Manitoba Hydro. We do recognize that.

However, it is not setting Hydro ahead, it's not putting us on a good path—fiscal—good fiscal management at Hydro to have those rates, those financial targets be set at the Cabinet table.

Mrs. Stone: The last time the NDP were in power, they ran Manitoba Hydro into the ground and placed \$24 billion of debt on Manitoba Hydro and, as a result, Manitobans.

There needs to be a debt strategy for Manitoba Hydro by taking away debt equalization ratios. This does not encourage the regulator and the utility to manage its debt recovery properly.

So I ask the minister again: Does he have any plan to implement financial targets and improve Manitoba Hydro's debt recovery?

MLA Sala: Again, we do recognize the important role of debt-to-capitalization ratios in measuring the financial health of Hydro, and we believe that's important.

What we don't believe is that politicians should be setting debt-to-capitalization targets for Hydro. That's a recipe for jacking up hydro rates, as they did for seven and a half years.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, shall schedule C, clause 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say no.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say no.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I believe the Ayes carried it.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Schedule C, clause 5 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule C, clause 6 and 7 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Schedule C, clause 6—pass.

* (19:40)

Shall schedule C, clause 7 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mrs. Stone: As mentioned earlier in my comments, this clause removes the powers of the PUB, which is there to protect Manitoba ratepayers. The PUB is there to listen to concerned citizens and interveners. I've already mentioned, in the past the PUB has rejected requests from the regulator for rate increases and set them far below 4 per cent—1 per cent as earlier as this year. Hydro themselves only requested a 2 per cent. This is exactly what the PUB is there for, to be an independent rate-setting body free from political and regulator influence and to determine appropriate rates for Manitobans.

In addition, the sustained rate increases that the minister wants to implement of 4 per cent every year will hurt Manitobans who are struggling with cost-of-living increases, and it will seriously undermine the competitiveness of Manitoba's industrial operations.

So I ask the minister again—I think this is the second time—if, by including this clause in this bill, does he not believe that the PUB is protecting Manitoba ratepayers as it stands?

MLA Sala: I'd remind the member opposite again, although I know she wasn't here during this time, that

her government came forward with a 7.9 per cent rate increase where we saw the importance of the Public Utilities Board and their independence when they returned, I think, about half of that after, again, the previous government was ramming forward almost an 8 per cent rate increase.

That shows the importance of the PUB and the role that they play, and that's why it's so important that we do away with the arbitrarily determined financial targets that were put in this bill by the previous government.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll move on to the question.

Shall schedule C, clause 7 pass.

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say no.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have carried it.

Mrs. Stone: On division.

The Chairperson: Schedule C, clause 7 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Schedule C, clauses 8 and 9—pass.

Shall schedule D, clauses 1 through 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Shall schedule D, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Agassiz.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Having these labour bills tucked into the back of this omnibus bill has totally eliminated public input, resulting in lack of

transparency and, of course, limited diversity of perspectives, which increases the risk of conflict and, again, missed opportunity for collaboration and consultation, because these bills will not get to public committee.

And I believe it is very important and Manitobans want to have that open consultation and have an opportunity to speak to these bills and through the proper legislative procedures and processes. This government has taken an abundance of labour legislative changes and put it into the budget bill, like I said, not allowing it to go to the public committee. And this is very undemocratic and it reduces the transparency and accountability.

Reducing the threshold for certification from 65 to 50 per cent alters the playing field, and I've heard this from those in the industry and business owners, both large and small, with concerns related to that change and what it might pose moving ahead.

Again, rushed legislation like this, of The Labour Relations Amendment Act, could open up loopholes, potentially. And don't forget that legislation should promote fairness and equality, and the changes to The Labour Relations Amendment Act in Bill 37 does not consider fairness and equality for all Manitobans.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll move on to the question.

Shall schedule D, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Johnson: Recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested, please call in the members.

* (19:50)

Order.

The question before the committee is schedule D, clause 1.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 28, Nays 18.

The Chairperson: Schedule D is accordingly passed—schedule D, clause 1 is accordingly passed.

* * *

The Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 2—pass.

Shall schedule D, clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Ms. Byram: We know that this legislation was rushed and pushed through quickly, creating potential loopholes. And I'm just wondering what stakeholder groups were consulted in this?

MLA Sala: This was developed with support from the Labour Management Committee, which had representatives from both labour and business.

Ms. Byram: Was there consultation, collaboration with industry business owners who do not currently have organized labour?

MLA Sala: So as we said, the bill was developed with support from the management labour committee, which had representatives from both management and business and labour.

We know these changes are a long time coming and very important. It was a long seven and a half years under the last government where we saw that they were unwilling to bargain with front-line workers. They used very heavy-handed legislation that was ultimately found to be unconstitutional, and that

includes interfering with the University of Manitoba's collective-bargaining negotiations that ended up costing Manitoba \$19 million.

So we know that their Bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act that was deemed unconstitutional sought to freeze wages for workers, thousands of workers in Manitoba. They used the pandemic as an excuse but I think Manitobans know better. They know that the previous government was not a supporter of workers in this province, they didn't believe that unions had an important role to play not only in supporting workers but in supporting the success of our businesses.

We know that when workers do well, businesses do well. We know that there's an important sort of middle ground to be reached and we believe that this schedule and the changes here that are being brought forward will help to ensure support for workers and help to support peace with businesses and ensure that all parties are able to continue to successfully move forward here in Manitoba.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll move on to the question.

Shall schedule D, clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, I believe the Ayes have it.

Mr. Johnson: On division.

The Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 3 passes, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule D, clause 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala).

MLA Sala: I move

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 4 by replacing the proposed subsection 89(3) with the following:

Essential services must be addressed

89(3) A union shall not declare or authorize a strike of employees, an employer shall not declare or cause a lockout of the employees, and employees in a unit shall not strike, unless

* (20:00)

(a) the bargaining agent for the employees and the employer have made a determination referred to in subsection 94.3(1.1) that an essential services agreement under subsection 94.3(2) is not required and a copy of the determination has been filed with the board;

(b) the bargaining agent for the employees and the employer have entered into an essential services agreement under subsection 94.3(2) and a copy of the agreement has been filed with the board; or

(c) if the parties have not entered into an essential services agreement under subsection 94.3(2), the bargaining agent and the employer are subject to a determination made by

(i) the board under subsection 94.3(6), or

(ii) an arbitrator under subsection 94.3(10.2), and a copy of the determination has been filed with the board.

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance

THAT Schedule D to the Bill, The Labour Relations Amendment Act, be amended in Clause 4 by replacing the proposed subsection 89(3) with the following:

Essential services must be addressed

89(3) A union shall not declare or authorize a strike of employees, an employer shall not declare or cause a lockout of the employees, and employees in a unit shall not strike, unless

(a) the bargaining agent for the employees and the employer have made a determination referred to in subsection 94.3(1.1) that an essential services agreement under subsection 94.3(2) is not required and a copy of the determination has been filed with the board;

(b) the bargaining agent for the employees and the employer have entered into an essential services

agreement under subsection 94.3(2) and a copy of the agreement has been filed with the board; or

(c) if the parties have not entered into an essential services agreement under subsection 94.3(2), the bargaining agent and the employer are subject to a determination made by

(i) the board under subsection 94.3(6), or

(ii) in arbitrator under subsection 94.3(10.2), and a copy of the determination has been filed with the board.

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Would the minister want to speak to it?

MLA Sala: These amendments would not allow employers to lock out their employees or unions to strike unless an essential service agreement is arrived at. Our government wants Manitobans to know that their jobs would be protected during a labour dispute. We support good jobs and a growing economy, and we want to ensure fairness for workers across our province.

Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Who determines who is and who is not an essential service?

MLA Sala: The essential services are determined by the employer and the bargaining unit, and should they fail to be able to arrive in agreement, it would be determined by the Manitoba Labour Board.

Mr. Johnson: So if they don't enter into an essential service agreement, it is determined by the Labour Board, who is guided by whom?

MLA Sala: The legislation.

Mr. Johnson: Would the minister be willing to table a list or give a list of essential services here?

MLA Sala: On page 65 of the bill, I can point the member to a summary here that I think he's looking for. There is no longer a list, but that is replaced with these three conditions which outline where essential services are required.

So, firstly, that's to prevent a threat to the health, safety or welfare of residents of Manitoba; (b) to maintain the administration of justice; or (c) to prevent a threat of serious environmental damage.

Mr. Johnson: Can you lead us through if one party believes it's an essential service but the other one does not, then what happens?

MLA Sala: So, again, should either party fail to agree, it would be determined by the Manitoba Labour Board. Either party has the ability to apply to the Labour Board to have them play that role developing the essential services agreement.

Ms. Byram: Would essential services also include, like, food and supply chain and industries like that? Would that be considered an essential service?

MLA Sala: Again, I would just refer the criteria that are outlined in the bill here, and these are criteria that are used in other jurisdictions: (a) to prevent the threat to the health, safety or welfare of residents of Manitoba; (b) maintain the administration of justice; or (c) prevent a threat of serious environmental damage.

Ms. Byram: Again, I think this speaks to the fact how quickly this was rushed and pushed through, and I guess my question now is, why was this not included in the original amendment that was brought—or the original act that was brought forward?

MLA Sala: So we know for many years, Manitobans had a government that wasn't labour friendly, and we saw that over and over with just the huge number of strikes that Manitobans endured. I think of just, you know, our experience when we were on the other side, just the strike after strike that we saw impacting the well-being, the welfare of Manitobans.

* (20:10)

We're proud to be bringing forward changes that will ensure that workers are protected, but that we're also helping to set the stage for labour disputes to be as short as possible, to work in the best interests of all parties, and we want to ensure fairness for workers around the province.

Mr. Johnson: Can you—can the minister lead us through how a decision would be determined by the Labour Board. Like, how many people sit on the board; if the decision is made there on determining whether it's an essential service and does this by regulation or legislation?

MLA Sala: So it is, of course, by legislation, and the Manitoba Labour Board will operate here, as they will in all their decisions. It's driven by them, and it's no different in this instance.

Mr. Johnson: Can any of the criteria be changed by regulation for determining essential service?

MLA Sala: No. Again, the criteria are outlined within the legislation as previously reviewed.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the amendment to schedule D, clause 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Byram: Recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Please call in the members.

The question before the committee is the amendment from the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) for schedule D, clause 4.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Khan, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 30, Nays 17.

The Chairperson: The amendment to schedule D, clause 4 is accordingly passed.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule D, clause 4, as amended, pass?

* (20:20)

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Johnson: On division.

The Chairperson: On division, schedule D, clause 4, as amended, passes.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule D, clause 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

MLA Sala: I move

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 5, in the proposed subsection 93.1(3), by adding "under this section" after "new notice".

Motion presented.

The Chairperson: This amendment is in order.

Would the minister like to comment?

MLA Sala: No.

The Chairperson: The floor is open for questions.

Seeing no questions, amendment—pass.

Shall schedule D, clause 5 pass as amended?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: I believe the Ayes have it.

Mr. Johnson: On division.

The Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 5 passes on—as amended, on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule D, clause 6 pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

MLA Sala: Amendments.

I move

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 6:

(a) by adding the following after the proposed subsection 94.1(2):

Use of employees in bargaining unit prohibited

94.1(2.1) During a lockout or legal strike that is intended to involve the cessation of work by all employees in the bargaining unit, no employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall use the services of any employee in that unit for a purpose other than as permitted under section 94.2 (exception – see threat, destruction or damage) or 94.4 (return to work).

(b) in the proposed subsection 94.1(5), by striking out "subsection (1), (2) or (3)" and substituting "any of subsections (1) to (3)"; and

(c) in the proposed subsections 94.2(1) and (2), by striking out "subsection 94.1(1), (2) or (3)" and substituting "any of subsections 94.1(1) to (3)".

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance

THAT Schedule D—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Chairperson: Dispense.

* (20:30)

It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala)

THAT Schedule D—[interjection]

Could I ask leave of the committee to consider it as printed? *[Agreed]*

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 6:

(a) by adding the following after the proposed subsection 94.1(2):

Use of employees in bargaining unit prohibited

94.1(2.1) *During a lockout or legal strike that is intended to involve the cessation of work by all employees in the bargaining unit, no employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall use the services of any employee in that unit for a purpose other than as permitted under section 94.2 (exception – threat, destruction or damage) or 94.4 (return to work).*

(b) in the proposed subsection 94.1(5), by striking out "subsection (1), (2) or (3)" and substituting "any of subsections (1) to (3)"; and

(c) in the proposed subsections 94.2(1) and (2), by striking out "subsection 94.1(1), (2) or (3)" and substituting "any of subsections 94.1(1) to (3)".

The Chairperson: Thank you.

The amendment is in order, and I'll let the committee know that the minister is bringing forward two amendments, so we will deal with them sequentially, one totally and then the next one.

Would the minister like to speak to the amendment? No?

Then the floor is open for questions.

Mr. Johnson: Can the minister explain what this amendment does?

MLA Sala: This amendment prohibits an employer from continuing to have members of the bargaining unit perform work during a strike in which the union seeks the cessation of all work.

Ms. Byram: We've seen how some of these lockouts have worked in the past. Given this, what you've proposed here, how would this affect those that work in the health care?

MLA Sala: Health care will be subject to essential services agreements.

Ms. Byram: In drafting this up, I'm just curious, who was it that you were consulting with when making these changes?

MLA Sala: As I said earlier, the overall bill was developed with support from the management labour committee, which has representatives from labour and management, and I will also add—I think this is impor-

tant for the members opposite to know—that legislation like this was unanimously supported in the House of Commons by the federal Conservatives, including all seven Manitoba Conservative MPs.

Ms. Byram: Just, if you can share with us here, again, how could this impact the food supply, transportation, food industry delivery on food products, agriculture products, potentially?

MLA Sala: I said this earlier, but if matters are dealt with under the essential services agreements, then this would apply; if not, they won't apply.

Mr. Johnson: Are rail line employees considered essential services?

MLA Sala: Rail lines are under federal jurisdiction, so provincial laws do not apply.

The Chairperson: Seeing no more questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: I believe the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Byram: Recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested, please call in the members.

* (20:40)

The question before the committee is the first amendment presented by the Finance Minister for schedule D, clause 6.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Stone, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 30, Nays 18.

The Chairperson: Just a reminder to all members that you must be either in the room or in the Chamber or in the Zoom room at the beginning of the vote to cast a vote.

So this amendment presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Sala), his first amendment for schedule D, clause 6 has passed.

* * *

The Chairperson: So we have schedule D, clause 6 with one amendment currently, with the Minister of Finance presenting another one.

MLA Sala: I move

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be further amended in Clause 6

(a) by adding the following after the proposed subsection 94.3(1):

Determining if essential services agreement is required
94.3(1.1) The parties to a collective agreement must, no later than 180 days before the expiry of that agreement,

- (a) determine whether it is necessary, in the event of a lockout or legal strike, to continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to comply with subsection (1);
- (b) set out the determination in writing;
- (c) file a copy of the determination with the board; and
- (d) provide a copy of the determination to the minister if requested to do so by the minister.

The filed copy of the determination has the same effect as an order of the board.

Guideline

94.3(1.2) For certainty, the board may issue a guideline to assist parties in determining whether an essential services agreement is required.

Parties unable to make determination

94.3(1.3) If the parties

- (a) fail to file their determination by the time prescribed in subsection (1.1); or
- (b) determine that no continuation of the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods is necessary to comply with subsection (1) in the event of a lockout or legal strike, and the minister is not in agreement with that determination;

then either party or the minister may make an application to the board.

Order

94.3(1.4) If, on an application made under subsection (1.3), the board is of the opinion that a lockout or legal strike could result in a failure to comply with subsection (1), the board may, by order,

- (a) designate the supply of services, operation of facilities and production of goods that it considers necessary to ensure compliance with subsection (1); and
- (b) impose any measure that it considers appropriate for carrying out the requirements of this section.

Time limit

94.3(1.5) The board must determine the matter, make any order and send a copy of its decision and any order to the parties, no later than 30 days after the day on which it received the application.

Late order or decision not invalid

94.3(1.6) Failure of the board to comply with the time limit does not affect the jurisdiction of the board to continue with and determine the application, and any decision or order made by the board after the time limit is not for that reason invalid.

(b) by replacing the proposed subsection 94.3(2) with the following:

Time limit to enter essential services agreement**94.3(2)** If

(a) the parties to a collective agreement determine under subsection (1.1) that it is necessary to continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to comply with subsection (1); or

(b) the board makes an order under subsection (1.4) designating the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to comply with subsection (1);

then the parties to the collective agreement must, no later than 90 days before the expiry of the term of the collective agreement, enter into an essential services agreement.

* (20:50)

Content of essential services agreement

94.3(2.1) The essential services agreement must set out the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods, including the number of those employees that, in the opinion of the employer and the bargaining agent, would be required to comply with subsection (1).

(c) by striking out the proposed subsection 94.3(3);

(d) in the proposed subsection 94.3(4), by striking out "entering into the agreement" and substituting "entering into the essential services agreement";

(e) in the proposed subsection 94.3(5), by striking out "an agreement" and substituting "an essential services agreement";

(f) in the proposed subsection 94.3(6),

(i) in the English version, by striking out "an agreement" and substituting "an essential services agreement", and

(ii) by striking out "subsection (1)" and substituting "such an agreement";

(g) in the proposed subsection 94.3(8), by replacing everything after "the board may, by order," with the following:

(a) subject to subsection (10.1), specify the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue to supply services, operate facilities and produce goods; and

(b) impose any measure that it considers appropriate for carrying out the requirements of this section.

(h) by adding the following after the proposed subsection 94.3(10):

Parties may agree to proceed by arbitration

94.3(10.2) Within two days after an application is made to the board under subsection (6), the employer and the bargaining agent may serve notice on the board of

(a) the agreement of the employer and the bargaining agent to settle, by arbitration, the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue to supply services, operate facilities and produce goods in the event of a lockout or legal strike; and

(b) the name of a person who has agreed to act as arbitrator.

Arbitrator to settle terms of essential services agreement

94.3(10.2) If the parties have served a notice that complies with subsection (10.1), the arbitrator named in the notice must, within 30 days after notice is served on the board,

(a) determine the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue to supply services, operate facilities and produce goods in the event of a lockout or legal strike; and

(b) file the determination with the board.

When the determination is filed, it has the same effect as an order of the board.

Arbitrator to settle disputes re essential services agreement

94.3(10.3) The arbitrator who makes a determination under subsection (10.2) must, on application of either party during a lockout or legal strike, settle any matter in dispute between the parties respecting the arbitrator's determination within two days after the application being made.

Board may act if dispute not settled by arbitration

94.3(10.4) For certainty in respect of a matter determined by an arbitrator, a party may proceed under subsection (12) only if the arbitrator is unable or unwilling to act, and the parties are unable to agree on another person to act in the place of the arbitrator.

Jurisdiction retained

94.3(10.5) The failure of an arbitrator to issue a determination within the period of time proscribed in subsection (10.2) or (10.3) does not affect the jurisdiction of the arbitrator to continue with and complete the arbitration proceedings and to issue a final determination.

Application of provisions respecting arbitrator

94.3(10.6) The provisions of this act respecting arbitration apply, with necessary modifications, to an arbitrator acting under this section.

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala):

THAT Schedule D to the bill, The Labour Relations—
[interjection]

The motion is in order.

And I'll just request leave to consider the amendment as written. *[Agreed]*

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be further amended in Clause 6

(a) by adding the following after the proposed subsection 94.3(1):

Determining if essential services agreement is required

94.3(1.1) *The parties to a collective agreement must, no later than 180 days before the expiry of that agreement,*

(a) determine whether it is necessary, in the event of a lockout or legal strike, to continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to comply with subsection (1);

(b) set out the determination in writing;

(c) file a copy of the determination with the board; and

(d) provide a copy of the determination to the minister if requested to do so by the minister.

The filed copy of the determination has the same effect as an order of the board.

Guideline

94.3(1.2) *For certainty, the board may issue a guideline to assist parties in determining whether an essential services agreement is required.*

Parties unable to make determination

94.3(1.3) *If the parties*

(a) fail to file their determination by the time prescribed in subsection (1.1); or

(b) determine that no continuation of the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods is necessary to comply with subsection (1) in the event of a lockout or legal strike, and the minister is not in agreement with that determination;

then either party or the minister may make an application to the board.

Order

94.3(1.4) *If, on an application made under subsection (1.3), the board is of the opinion that a lockout or legal strike could result in a failure to comply with subsection (1), the board may, by order,*

(a) designate the supply of services, operation of facilities and production of goods that it considers necessary to ensure compliance with subsection (1); and

(b) impose any measure that it considers appropriate for carrying out the requirements of this section.

Time limit

94.3(1.5) *The board must determine the matter, make any order and send a copy of its decision and any order to the parties, no later than 30 days after the day on which it received the application.*

Late order or decision not invalid

94.3(1.6) *Failure of the board to comply with the time limit does not affect the jurisdiction of the board to continue with and determine the application, and any decision or order made by the board after the time limit is not for that reason invalid.*

(b) by replacing the proposed subsection 94.3(2) with the following:

Time limit to enter essential services agreement

94.3(2) *If*

(a) the parties to a collective agreement determine under subsection (1.1) that it is necessary to continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to comply with subsection (1); or

(b) the board makes an order under subsection (1.4) designating the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods to comply with subsection (1);

then the parties to the collective agreement must, no later than 90 days before the expiry of the term of the collective agreement, enter into an essential services agreement.

Content of essential services agreement

94.3(2.1) *The essential services agreement must set out the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue the supply of services, operation of facilities or production of goods, including the number of those employees that, in the opinion of the employer and the bargaining agent, would be required to comply with subsection (1).*

(c) *by striking out the proposed subsection 94.3(3);*

(d) *in the proposed subsection 94.3(4), by striking out "entering into the agreement" and substituting "entering into the essential services agreement";*

(e) *in the proposed subsection 94.3(5), by striking out "an agreement" and substituting "an essential services agreement";*

(f) *in the proposed subsection 94.3(6),*

(i) *in the English version, by striking out "an agreement" and substituting "an essential services agreement", and*

(ii) *by striking out "subsection (1)" and substituting "such an agreement";*

(g) *in the proposed subsection 94.3(8), by replacing everything after "the board may, by order," with the following:*

(a) *subject to subsection (10.1), specify the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue to supply services, operate facilities and produce goods; and*

(b) *impose any measure that it considers appropriate for carrying out the requirements of this section.*

(h) *by adding the following after the proposed subsection 94.3(10):*

Parties may agree to proceed by arbitration

94.3(10.2) *Within two days after an application is made to the board under subsection (6), the employer and the bargaining agent may serve notice on the board of*

(a) *the agreement of the employer and the bargaining agent to settle, by arbitration, the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue to supply services, operate facilities and produce goods in the event of a lockout or legal strike; and*

(b) *the name of a person who has agreed to act as arbitrator.*

Arbitrator to settle terms of essential services agreement

94.3(10.2) *If the parties have served a notice that complies with subsection (10.1), the arbitrator named in the notice must, within 30 days after notice is served on the board,*

(a) *determine the manner and extent to which the employer, the bargaining agent and the employees in the unit must continue to supply services, operate facilities and produce goods in the event of a lockout or legal strike; and*

(b) *file the determination with the board.*

When the determination is filed, it has the same effect as an order of the board.

Arbitrator to settle disputes re essential services agreement

94.3(10.3) *The arbitrator who makes a determination under subsection (10.2) must, on application of either party during a lockout or legal strike, settle any matter in dispute between the parties respecting the arbitrator's determination within two days after the application being made.*

Board may act if dispute not settled by arbitration

94.3(10.4) *For certainty, in respect of a matter determined by an arbitrator, a party may proceed under subsection (12) only if the arbitrator is unable or unwilling to act and the parties are unable to agree on another person to act in the place of the arbitrator.*

Jurisdiction retained

94.3(10.5) *The failure of an arbitrator to issue a determination within the period of time prescribed in subsection (10.2) or (10.3) does not affect the jurisdiction of the arbitrator to continue with and complete the arbitration proceedings and to issue a final determination.*

Application of provisions respecting arbitrator

94.3(10.6) *The provisions of this Act respecting arbitration apply, with necessary modifications, to an arbitrator acting under this section.*

The Chairperson: Would the minister like to speak to it? No?

Then the floor is open for questions.

Ms. Byram: While looking at these number of amendments that this government has brought forward pertaining to the labour portion of this, I think speaks to how quickly it was pushed through, and perhaps without—well, actually, without consultation.

It just raises a lot of questions, the impact this is going to have and how Manitobans feel about all these changes to labour legislation without having any public consultation and having this gone to committee. I think it leaves a lot of Manitobans feeling disillusioned, concerned, and I'm—I think it's kind of probably concerning that this has been put through as—like it has. There was no, like I said, no public consultation. This is going to leave a lot of Manitobans questioning why it happened this way, and the lack of transparency in doing so. And who was really consulted in this? Who did they speak to?

And—yes, I think there's some questions that Manitobans will have with this, moving forward.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I was just wondering if the minister was going to answer the question. Who did the minister consult with on this amendment?

MLA Sala: As I said before, the bill was developed with the management labour review committee, with the input of businesses and labour, and the bill was supported at a federal level by all seven members, federal Conservative MPs here in Manitoba.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, the question was who did he consult with on the amendment, not on the rest of the bill. The amendment. Who did he consult with on this particular amendment brought before us here at this moment?

MLA Sala: Look, for years, workers weren't treated with dignity and respect in this province. It's time that that change. We're proud to bring forward changes that will support the ability of workers and businesses to work together to minimize the impacts of labour disputes so we can ensure that workers succeed and business succeed in Manitoba.

* (21:00)

Ms. Byram: So why are these bills being—or these amendments being brought forward now if the bill was, you know, if the bill had been done right the first time, why are these coming forward now?

MLA Sala: Appreciate that. Again, we're bringing forward changes that will help to restore dignity and respect for workers in Manitoba. These are important changes that will help to ensure, again, labour disputes can be solved as quickly as possible, to the benefit of workers and businesses alike.

Mr. Johnson: Who did the minister consult with on this amendment, particularly this amendment?

MLA Sala: Again, we've already clarified: the Labour Management Review Committee developed this bill—or helped to develop this bill. Representatives from business and labour were on that committee; proud that this bill was developed with their support.

And again, members opposite should look to their federal colleagues here in Manitoba who supported this bill at the federal level.

Mr. Johnson: The member keeps talking about the bill as a whole. I find it hard to believe they consulted on BITSA. If this was a standalone bill, they would've potentially been able to come and present at committee. So that's one of the failings, one of the many failings of this government on this bill.

But the minister still isn't answering. Who did he consult with on this amendment? He keeps referring to the bill; who did he consult with on this amendment?

The Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Sala).

MLA Sala: This particular amendment was a joint recommendation from both management and labour.

Mr. Johnson: Sorry, can you repeat that?

MLA Sala: Very happy to repeat this. This particular amendment was a joint recommendation from both management and labour.

The Chairperson: Any other questions? Seeing none, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

The Chairperson: Shall the amendment—*[interjection]*

The question before the committee is the second amendment for schedule D, clause 6.

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: I do believe the Ayes have it.

The honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

An Honourable Member: On division.

The Chairperson: The second amendment for schedule D, clause 6 presented by the Minister of Finance is passed on division.

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule D, clause 6 pass as amended?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Wondering if the minister can advise the committee whether or not he reviewed the text of this bill before it was introduced in his name.

MLA Sala: Yes.

Mr. Wasyliw: Wondering if the minister can advise why it's important to ban replacement workers and how it will actually be advantageous to a Manitoba economy to do so.

MLA Sala: We know that the use of replacement workers can create a disincentive for employers to get to the table, and we know that the best deals are struck at the bargaining table. As much as possible, we want employers and workers to get to that table. We know that works to the best deals for workers, businesses; and ultimately, these changes that we're bringing forward will help, again, as I said earlier, to ensure the best possible outcomes and the shortest possible disputes between workers and businesses in Manitoba.

Mr. Wasyliw: So having said that, Minister, the Quebec law and the federal law protects replacement workers in the internal setting, meaning that middle managers cannot take a unionized job away from a union worker in order to protect the workers from these types of situations, whereas you've said it provides a disincentive for employers to come to the table and bargain in good faith.

So I guess my question is, is why does Manitoba create a loophole that allows middle managers to act as replacement workers, where workers in Quebec and

federal workers are better protected than Manitoba workers? What is the policy reason for this loophole?

MLA Sala: There is no such loophole. You know, one of the previous amendments responds to that concern.

Mr. Wasyliw: I wonder if the minister can expand. In what way do any of these amendments ban the use of middle managers as replacement workers?

MLA Sala: Yes. Appreciate the question. Again, we're proud to bring forward these provisions that will help to prevent the use of replacement workers. We know that's important because that can prolong strikes unnecessarily. These provisions will help to ensure that a deal is struck as quickly as possible at the bargaining table. That's where we know we have the greatest success of a deal being struck to the benefit of workers and businesses. And that's exactly what we're trying to achieve here with these changes.

Mr. Wasyliw: Would the minister agree that it is wrong to use middle managers as replacement workers and that practice should be banned?

MLA Sala: Again, these changes will help to, again, eliminate the use of replacement workers during strikes, which will help to ensure that deals are struck as quickly as possible. By removing that incentive for an employer to just continue to rely on a replacement worker, it will encourage them to get back to the table faster.

This is, I think, a really important set of changes that support deals being struck quickly, or as quickly as possible, and will help to support the interests of both businesses and workers in the process.

Mr. Wasyliw: Why does the minister believe that Manitoba workers should not have the same protections as Quebec workers and federal workers?

MLA Sala: What I can say to the member opposite is that we are moving forward with changes that are going to help ensure that labour disputes are as short as possible.

We're proud of these changes. These are very important changes that, again, are supported by both labour and management here in Manitoba. They go the distance to help ensure that disputes are minimized and we create the best possible outcome for workers and businesses here in Manitoba.

* (21:10)

Mr. Wasyliw: I have an amendment.

I move

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 6, in the proposed clause 94.1(2)(a), by striking out "who performs management functions primarily or".

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Fort Garry

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 6, in the proposed clause 94.1(2)(a), by striking out "who performs management function primarily or".

This amendment is in order.

Does the member want to speak to the amendment? No?

The floor is open—the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Wasyliw: So what this amendment does for the minister's benefit, it actually closes the loophole that the government put in this bill and would prevent middle managers from acting as replacement workers in the case of a strike or a lockout and would bring this legislation up to the protection levels of Quebec and the federal government.

So I look forward to the minister supporting it.

The Chairperson: The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Johnson: So in an instance where management has to go in to care for the facility to prevent catastrophic damage, do you think this legislation is still a good idea in those instances?

Mr. Wasyliw: We've had a couple amendments tonight. One of them deals with sort of emergency situations like this and is actually covered off by an earlier and amendment. So I think the MLA from Gimli-Interlake's concerns have already been addressed by the government.

Mr. Johnson: So I just want to give an example.

So if a lockout for a underground mine took place, for example, then management and everybody would be locked out. And if there was a failure in a pump, the mine could actually potentially flood.

And I'm speaking of this just because that's one of my past lives—I underground mined. And it was important for management to continue to go into that workplace to ensure that there was no catastrophic damages to the structure or any of the equipment that would've been essential for the workers to get back to work.

Mr. Wasyliw: I certainly respect the member's concerns, but again, I think the amendments are a sort of—deal with those type of emergency situations, and it's covered in the law.

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): No. Sorry.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, is the committee ready for the question?

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: Are—all those in favour, please say aye.

An Honourable Member: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The amendment is accordingly defeated.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Wasyliw: A recorded vote. I have a seconder, the MLA from Tyndall Park.

The Chairperson: Does the member for Tyndall Park support the request for a recorded vote?

MLA Lamoureux: Yes. I support the request for a recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The question before the committee is the amendment from the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) on schedule D, clause 6.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Wasyliw

Nays

Asagwara, Balcaen, Bereza, Brar, Bushie, Byram, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cook, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Ewasko, Fontaine, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Kennedy, King, Kostyshyn, Lagassé, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Narth, Naylor, Nesbitt, Oxenham, Pankratz, Piwniuk, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wharton, Wiebe, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 1, Nays 45.

The Chairperson: The amendment to schedule D, clause 6 is defeated.

* (21:20)

* * *

The Chairperson: Shall schedule D, clause 6 pass, as amended?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Ms. Byram: Recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Please call in the members.

* (21:30)

The question before the committee is schedule D, clause 6, as amended.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Narth, Nesbitt, Piwniuk, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 29, Nays 17.

The Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 6 is accordingly passed, as amended.

* * *

MLA Robert Loiselle, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair

The Deputy Chairperson: Moving on. Shall Schedule D, clause 7 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Deputy Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 7 is—

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour?

So all those in favour of passing schedule D, clause 7, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Chairperson: In my opinion, schedule D, clause 7 is accordingly—sorry, member for Agassiz.

Ms. Byram: On division.

The Deputy Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 7 is accordingly passed, on division.

* * *

The Deputy Chairperson: Schedule D, clauses 8 and 9, shall pass? Shall schedule D, clauses 8 and 9 pass?

Shall schedule D, clause 8 pass? No.

MLA Sala: I move

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 8 by adding the following after Clause 8(2):

Transitional—C—time periods

8(3) If, on the coming into force of this section, a time period for applying to the board in respect of an essential services agreement under section 94.3 of **The Labour Relations Act**, as enacted by section 6 of this Act, has already expired, a party to a collective agreement may proceed immediately to make an application to the board.

The Deputy Chairperson: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala)

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 8 by adding the following after Clause 8—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Deputy Chairperson: Dispense.

The amendment is in order.

Is there leave of the committee to consider the amendment as printed? *[Agreed]*

THAT Schedule D to the Bill (The Labour Relations Amendment Act) be amended in Clause 8 by adding the following after Clause 8(2):

Transitional – time periods

8(3) *If, on the coming into force of this section, a time period for applying to the board in respect of an essential services agreement under section 94.3 of The Labour Relations Act, as enacted by section 6 of this Act, has already expired, a party to a collective agreement may proceed immediately to make an application to the board.*

* (21:40)

The Deputy Chairperson: The floor is open for questions. Does the minister have a comment?

Is the committee ready for the question?

Mr. Johnson: Yes, can the minister explain what this amendment does, please?

MLA Sala: Yes, the amendment clarifies that when the act comes into force, if the 90- or 180-day window has already expired for an essential services agreement, then either party can immediately make an application to the Labour Board. This allows for unions and employers to fairly negotiate, as some collective agreements may be reaching the expiry when this act comes into force.

The Deputy Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour—oh, sorry.

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in opposition, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Ms. Byram: On division.

The Deputy Chairperson: So the amendment is accordingly passed, on division.

* * *

The Deputy Chairperson: So shall schedule D, clause 8, as amended, pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Ms. Byram: On division.

The Deputy Chairperson: So schedule D, clause 8, as amended, is passed, on division.

* * *

The Deputy Chairperson: Schedule D, clause 9—pass.

Shall schedule E, clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

All those in favour, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chairperson: Member for Interlake-Gimli.

Mr. Johnson: In 2022, the PC government, in seeing the need for a voice at the Cabinet table, created the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care. This move was applauded by seniors, caregivers, seniors-serving organizations and Manitobans in general. The newly appointed minister immediately got to work. The minister, along with the department and staff and community partners, engaged in a wide-range listening tour.

There were—13 individual communities were visited, including northern and rural communities; 61 focus groups were held with all stakeholders; community partners engaged with 900 Manitobans. Over 10,000 responses were received to the EngageMB survey, and that's building a better plan with Manitoba seniors.

All of this outreach and hard work resulted in the release of the groundbreaking document by the PC government called Manitoba, A Great Place to Age: Provincial Seniors Strategy, in February of 2023, which, like the creation of the Department of Seniors

and Long-Term Care was deemed a success by all. Seniors, caregivers and family members were given a voice and a say in drafting the policies that were going to impact them the most, unlike this legislation that has been slid into the back of BITSA.

The group on this side of the House are incredibly proud of the seniors strategy and the seven-point framework that it laid out for advancing improving respect, inclusion and quality of life for Manitoba seniors.

This bill shows lack of investigative powers. Unlike the Advocate for Children and Youth, the seniors advocate does not—I says does not—provide the seniors advocate with investing—investigating powers.

Seniors and their families want to see real protections for themselves and their loved ones. Advocates for children and youth, section 11(1)(c) gives the advocate the power to review, investigate and report on serious injuries and death of children and young adults, but the seniors advocate will lack that power.

There are so many parallels between vulnerable children and youth and the seniors and persons in long-term care; the latter should be afforded all the same protections.

Will this minister ensure the seniors advocate will get investigating powers?

MLA Sala: We know for a long time, Manitoba seniors, caregivers, community organizations have advocated for the creation of an independent seniors advocate, and the fact we're bringing this forward here shows that our government is listening.

We will be appointing that—this role for five-year term, and to the question that was asked, one of the important roles of the seniors advocate will be to identify systemic issues that seniors in Manitoba are facing. That's incredibly important to ensure that as a government, we're able to identify and respond to concerns that seniors have faced and continue to face in Manitoba, with the goal of improving life and responding to concerns that they're facing on a day-to-day basis.

For those types of perhaps more individualized concerns, the seniors advocate will be equipped to be able to identify those issues and then refer concerns to any number of organizations to ensure that individual issues are responded to and dealt with accordingly.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I just want to talk a little bit about the role of protection of persons in care office versus the seniors advocate.

So greater investigating powers granted to the protection of persons in care office, which include compelling documents and conducting examinations under oath. We need clarity on the distinct roles and the responsibility of the PPCO and the seniors advocate.

What will the jurisdictional dividing line be?

MLA Sala: Appreciate that, Chair. The—you know, we know that the members opposite failed to follow through on a huge number of investigations; there was a huge backlog that grew at the PPCO, resulting in potential continuation of neglect, in some cases abuse. That is hugely concerning, and that's the record that the members opposite left for Manitobans.

We know that they mismanaged things during the pandemic, they left a lot of vulnerable seniors at risk; that's their record. You know, the seniors advocate here is going to go a long distance in ensuring that seniors in Manitoba get the care they deserve. That's what our government is about. We're proud to bring this forward to support better care for seniors in Manitoba.

Mr. Johnson: What is the jurisdictional dividing line between the two?

MLA Sala: The PPCO will continue to be responsible for investigations. Again, that's something that we knew—we saw a huge backlog grow under the last government, but we do know they play an important role. But we have cleared that investigation backlog—which they allowed to grow to concerning length—because we know how important it is that allegations of abuse and neglect be properly attended to.

* (21:50)

We're proud to have cleared that backlog, and we're also proud to have brought forward and—to be bringing forward, rather—this seniors advocate position to ensure that we can respond to systemic concerns that are identified by seniors in Manitoba.

Mr. Johnson: So, so far, the minister has only listed investigations.

Is that the only role of the protection of persons in care office after this legislation moves forward?

MLA Sala: One thing that I think is important to identify here is that you can have folks aside from seniors living in personal-care homes: folks with a variety of different types of needs, disabilities.

So it is important that we have a distinction between the role of the PPCO and that we also have

this role for a seniors advocate to ensure that we have somebody who's dedicated to respond specifically to issues being faced systematically by seniors in Manitoba.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I guess the minister can't get to his entire list here or even part of it.

If it includes anything more than investigations, would he be willing to table that—the distinct line between the two and what role each will have—not today but, say, in the next—end of the sitting week?

MLA Sala: We're excited to get this office established, and we know that doing so will ensure that seniors in Manitoba and their issues are attended to.

It was a long seven and a half years, Mr. Chair, under the previous government for seniors in this province. We did see them develop a department with very little to show for it. And I know that frustrated a lot of folks, seniors in my own community that saw that many of the issues they were facing were not being attended to.

We're doing things differently. Manitobans can count on us to respond to the concerns that are—you know, they are seeing and that they're identifying as impacting seniors in our province.

We think this is the right next step. It's an important step. And this will help to ensure seniors get the care and supports they need here in our province.

Mr. Johnson: So maybe the minister can share what enforcement powers the senior advocate will have.

MLA Sala: Well, as I've said, one of the really important things that this individual will do will be to help to identify or work to identify those issues that we're seeing systemically.

That's really important because we know there are many challenges that seniors are facing, and many of those challenges were challenges that grew enormously under the last government.

That ability to review and analyze systemic problems and make recommendations to service providers or to government will have a significant impact on all Manitobans and will help to ensure, again, that the needs of seniors are met in our province.

Mr. Johnson: So we know that there's a narrow definition of elder abuse. Stakeholders' concerns about the narrow scope of the legislation which does not include both individual and organizational abuse.

Will it apply to matters and individual concerns outside of publicly funded institutional settings?

MLA Sala: We did bring forward a new definition of neglect and abuse that we proclaimed, that was failed to be supported by the members opposite, that would make it easier to report those types of instances where seniors are being impacted through abusive behaviour or neglect.

We know the importance of that. We need to make it easier so that these types of instances can be reported. Members opposite didn't support that. We're bringing that forward to make sure that, in those instances, that they are reported accordingly.

Mr. Johnson: Let me rephrase that: Local stakeholders have taken to writing opinion pieces in the Winnipeg Free Press because this government did not properly consult or introduce this bill in a way that would've allowed public feedback at committee.

The local experts suggest that the definition included in the legislation is too narrow. Why does the definition in this legislation not include both individual and organizational elder abuse?

MLA Sala: The new definition of abuse and neglect that we brought forward, which we attempted to proclaim but which was not proclaimed by the members opposite, will allow for cases or instances of neglect or abuse to be more easily investigated. And I do encourage the members opposite to support that definition.

Mr. Johnson: Stakeholders have described this legislation as toothless in its current state. It adds another layer of bureaucracy and does not provide the authority or powers necessary to investigate cases of abuse.

On March 6, 2023, the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) asked during question period to establish an independent seniors advocate to investigate problems. Yet this government has brought forward an omnibus bill that does not include the necessary authority or investigative powers to investigate problems.

Can the minister explain why this was excluded from the bill?

MLA Sala: Again, I repeat, we did bring forward a new definition of neglect and abuse that would allow for investigations, or more swiftly allow for investigations. The members opposite wouldn't support that—or the proclamation of that new definition. I suggest they get on board.

* (22:00)

Mr. Johnson: Can the minister share who was consulted when drafting this bill?

MLA Sala: The—this was developed with support from many, many seniors organizations here in Manitoba.

Mr. Johnson: Would the minister be willing to table a list of those that he's consulted with?

MLA Sala: One committee—or, one organization, rather, we can identify here is Manitoba association for seniors communities, among many others. But, again, a number of those that we consulted with were here, present on the day that the members opposite refused to support the bill.

Mr. Johnson: Well, it's—glad to hear that the government has consulted with one individual anyway, or one group.

I have one question left, but I think I'll split it into two parts. Resourcing the seniors advocate will be obviously paramount to ensure that they have the resources they need. Can the minister share the annual budget for the office?

MLA Sala: Budget '24-25 committed \$21.8 million to provide better care for seniors, including providing more direct hours of care for seniors in personal-care homes, implementing a new safe and healthy at home program to support aging in place and funding for the seniors advocate.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, so I guess the minister has confirmed a huge cut from what the previous ministry had before, so thank you for that information.

So last question: Can you give the details of the staff complement and the non-recurring start-up costs and the location?

MLA Sala: Look, the goal of this legislation is to allow us to stand up a seniors advocate office, something members opposite didn't do. We know how important this is. We're proud to be bringing this forward, to be fighting for seniors in Manitoba, and we're going to continue that good work and looking forward to seeing this bill so we can begin that process.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, I just think it's important that we define the start-up costs and where it's going to be. We've already defined that it's going to be a massive cut, down to \$21.8 million, but you can you define what the non-recurring start-up costs will be and where it will be located?

MLA Sala: Yes, so, you know, regardless of how many times the member repeats that, that doesn't make it true, unfortunately for him.

I will say that we're proud of this legislation. We're proud to be bringing forward a seniors advocate to support seniors in Manitoba. We funded that in budget '24-25, and this begins the good work of starting to turn the page on many dark years for seniors in Manitoba, with our new government focused on their well-being and ensuring that we have an advocate to review, identify and support seniors through their challenges to make sure that they have the health and support that they need.

The Deputy Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Chairperson: Schedule E, clause 1—pass; schedule E, clauses 2 and 3—pass; schedule E, clauses 4 through 7—pass; schedule E, clause 8—pass; schedule E, clause 9—pass; schedule E, clause 10—pass; schedule E, clause 11—pass; schedule E, clauses 12 and 13—pass; schedule E, clause 14—pass; schedule E, clauses 15 and 16—pass; schedule E, clauses 17 through 19—pass; schedule E, clauses 20 and 21—pass; schedule E, clauses 22 through 25—pass; schedule E, clauses 26 through 28—pass; schedule E, clauses 29 and 30—pass; enacting clause contained within clause 73—pass; enacting clause contained within clause 74—pass; enacting clause contained within clause 75—pass.

Shall the enacting clause contained within clause 76 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Deputy Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chairperson: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Johnson: On division.

The Deputy Chairperson: So the enacting clause contained within clause 76 is accordingly passed, under division—on division.

* * *

The Deputy Chairperson: Enacting clause contained within clause 77—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass.

Shall the bill as amended be reported?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Chairperson: All those opposed.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Johnson: Recorded vote, please.

The Deputy Chairperson: Recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

The Chairperson in the Chair

* (22:50)

The Chairperson: So the question before the committee is: Shall the bill be reported as amended?

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Guenter, Hiebert, Jackson, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Pivniuk, Stone, Wowchuk.

Clerk: Ayes 30, Nays 18.

The Chairperson: The bill shall be reported, as amended.

* * *

The Chairperson: This concludes the business before the committee.

* (23:00)

Committee rise and call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Speaker: Order, please.

We're back in session again.

Committee Report

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered the following: Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and reports the same with amendments.

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

Motion presented.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in the House in favour of adopting the motion, please rise. *[interjection]*

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On division, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The report of the committee is passed, on division.

* * *

SECOND READINGS

Bill 39—The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act

The Speaker: And now, as previously announced, we will move into second reading of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

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

The Speaker: Been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), seconded by the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to rise in the House this evening for the second reading of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

But I stand here today with a heavy heart, as our community once again reels from the latest acts of extreme violence involving machetes. I'm thinking tonight of Ariel Martes, a young man who came to Winnipeg from Brazil six years ago in search of a better life and in search of safety. After finishing a shift at work, he was viciously attacked by robbers armed with machetes. Even after giving up his possessions and doing what they demanded, he was left bleeding on the street; streets that I myself and my family walk on every day.

By a stroke of luck, he was able to use his watch as a makeshift tourniquet, and he's expected, thankfully, to make a full recovery after receiving surgery at HSC.

I wanted to take a moment to read into the record some of the words he shared in the aftermath of this brutal assault. Quote: It's just unfair. I go to work. I do my stuff. I do nothing wrong. It's just a shame that we need to suffer like this in Canada and in Winnipeg.

It is unfair, Honourable Speaker, and it is unconscionable that people who are going about their daily lives have to endure these random attacks of machete violence on our streets.

I'm also thinking tonight about a man whose name we don't know yet, a 56-year-old member of our community who suffered life-altering injuries from a machete attack on Friday. I know that the hearts of all members of this Chamber go out to him and his family as well today.

And we know, tragically, that these are far from isolated incidents. We have all witnessed a disturbing increase in violent crimes and especially those crimes involving machetes, knives or other bladed weapons.

In March, a brutal attack on a 19-year-old woman at a bus stop resulted in life-altering injuries. This incident was followed by vicious robberies involving youths armed with machetes and other long-bladed weapons. And this summer, a 15-year-old boy sustained injuries following a machete attack that required 20 hours of emergency surgery, Honourable Speaker.

Overall, the Winnipeg Police Service 2023 statistical report showed that there was a 21.6 per cent increase in knife violence over the previous year. We're also seeing similar trends in our First Nations communities. In June, in Nisichawayak [*phonetic*] Cree Nation they experienced two violent machete attacks that capped off a year of knife violence.

Those horrific crimes tear at the fabric of our society. They strike fear, they sow discord and they cause people to change their routine out of concern that they, too, might be at risk from criminals armed with machetes.

No one should ever be afraid to walk the streets at night or to take the bus home after a shift at work because that they worry—because they're worried that they may be a victim of a machete attack. No one should experience life-altering injuries. No one should have to live with trauma and emotional distress caused by these heinous crimes. Not in our city, not anywhere in our province, Honourable Speaker.

* (23:10)

This is not normal. We're not going to let it become the new normal. Our government will not stand idly by in the face of these kinds of unspeakable acts. Every one of these incidents involves a victim who will never be the same again.

My message to every victim who has suffered at the hands of a—of machete violence is this: we stand with you, and we, Honourable Speaker, we will act.

Bill 39, Honourable Speaker, is an important milestone in the history of our province. This legislation will make Manitoba the first province in Canada to regulate the retail sale of machetes and other long-bladed weapons, helping to get them off the streets and out of the hands of criminals.

Bill 39 creates much-needed restrictions on the availability of these dangerous weapons in our province.

First, it controls the access to these weapons, requiring retailers to store prescribed machetes, knives and swords and other edged weapons in a manner that prevents the public from directly accessing them. This will reduce theft and will keep weapons away from criminals intending to do—to harm others.

Second, the legislation limits the sale of machetes and other dangerous edged weapons to Manitobans over the age of 18 and requires all purchasers to provide photo identification. This will keep these weapons away from youth and deter the purchase of edged weapons for dangerous purposes.

Third, Bill 39 requires all retailers to retain sales records for a minimum of two years, ensuring that criminals will think twice before purchasing an edged weapon with the intent to harm others.

And fourth and finally, Honourable Speaker, the legislation establishes an inspection framework and penalties for non-compliance that will send a strong message about the importance of restricting access to these weapons to retailers.

Bill 39 is modelled after Manitoba's successful regulation of bear spray. With retailers now required to keep bear spray in a place where the public cannot access it, obtain photo 'identification' and request a declaration from the purchaser that they will only use the bear spray for its intended purpose.

Thanks in large part to these regulations, the Winnipeg Police Service has reported a nearly 25 per cent reduction in crimes involving bear spray in the last year. Restricting access works.

The introduction of Bill 39 is just the beginning of our fight against machete and edged weapon violence. We will consult with retailers, Indigenous communities, law enforcement and get the regulations right that prescribe the most dangerous edged weapons that we wish to target as a province.

We will also work with major online retailers to ensure that they are creating the age verification requirements as part of their retailing and shipping processes. And we will ask the federal government to outright prohibit some of the most dangerous machetes, knives and swords under the Criminal Code; weapons that are only used for harm on our streets.

Honourable Speaker, our government is getting tough on knife violence in Manitoba. And I believed, perhaps naively, that this was going to be a non-partisan issue, that all Manitobans stood behind this legislation.

I mused today in question period about whether the PC opposition would support this bill. And, you know, I tend to look for the best in people, and I thought that they would see the importance of this bill. But I heard further comments this afternoon, Honourable Speaker, from the members opposite, calling this legislation window dressing, suggesting that this was some kind of burden on retailers who wouldn't be able to meet these requirements.

And I find that, quite frankly, disrespectful, Honourable Speaker. It's just disrespectful to the community activists like Sel Burrows, who's talked about passing this—or for—or, asking for this legislation for years. Asked the previous government, met with the minister, met with ministers on the other side, asking for the Stefanson government to pass it to protect his community and so many communities that are at risk.

It's a—it's disrespectful to law enforcement. Law enforcement like Scot Halley, the president of the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, who stood with us and supported our legislation and called for it to be passed quickly and unanimously so that we could get this done for the people on our streets.

Disrespectful to the municipal councillors, to the mayors, to the mayor of Winnipeg who stood with us to call for this legislation to be moved forward quickly.

It's disrespectful to the retailers who are saying they're willing to work with us. They're willing to work with the government to get the regulations right, and they want to be part of the solution. The good retailers in our community want to be part of the solution. Indigenous groups, the acting grand chief of the AMC stood with us, Honourable Speaker. This is absolutely everybody in our community.

And maybe most importantly for us to consider tonight: Ariel Matesh [*phonetic*], the man that I spoke about earlier that just this weekend sustained serious injuries from a machete attack; he said these restrictions are great. He said it's frustrating a person can buy a machete and hurt another person.

So I know the members opposite played games in this last session with The Unexplained Wealth Act. They thought it was—it didn't matter; it didn't have an impact. I beg to differ, and I think law enforcement

hopefully gave them—set them straight and gave them the real impact that that had by not passing that piece of legislation.

But this is so important. And members opposite can giggle and laugh, but I think it's important for us to put the politics aside, to pass this bill here tonight, move it through committee and get it done so we can stand with victims of machete violence in the city.

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 member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): In March of this year, the Winnipeg police chief and local advocates raised the alarm at the increase in the violent attacks using machetes and knives.

Can the minister explain why it took seven months, a sessional break, before bringing forward any kind of meaningful legislation; and then it took days of advocacy by our side of the House to make sure that this 'legislation' was brought forward?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Why did the member run for a party that refused to pass legislation like this in the seven and a half years that they had control in this—of this government? Why would he put his name forward for a party that did not stand with law enforcement then?

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Can the minister provide the figure for how many long-bladed weapons are sold on an annual basis in this province and how many of those are sold to minors?

Mr. Wiebe: I can undertake to get the information to the member.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm wondering if the minister has a plan for long-bladed weapons that are currently in the hands of minors. I'd—not seeing anything in this legislation, Honourable Speaker, that addresses that at this point.

Mr. Wiebe: The member opposite should know full well that there are changes that we're asking for under the Criminal Code. We're certainly going to pursue that with the federal government.

I'll also say that other jurisdictions have looked at opportunities with municipalities. We're happy to do that work, and we're happy to work with anyone that's working to end this violence in our streets.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister share if he is taking any other steps aside from this legislation to prevent long-bladed weapon attacks?

Mr. Wiebe: We are, and I've alluded to just two of those areas that we can find improvement. What I will also say is that what we're hoping with this legislation is, as we get into the regulatory process, it will be a robust consultation. There'll be a lot of work.

As—again, as I said, retailers are willing to work with us to ensure that they're adhering to the rules. As well, we're going to seek input from law enforcement, from community activists to understand the best way to protect our communities.

* (23:20)

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): We know that bear spray is a renewable weapon. By that, they use it and then they need to purchase a new canister or a new weapon. Knowing that there's a reduction of 25 per cent in bear spray attacks from a successful PC initiative and the member from Steinbach, does the minister feel their legislation will be as successful, knowing that a criminal can reuse the weapon over and over again without having to purchase a new weapon?

What is the minister expecting for a success rate?

Mr. Wiebe: The law enforcement believes so. Community activists like Sel Burrows believe so. Mayors, reeves, councillors from across this province believe so. Retailers believe so. Indigenous organizations like AMC believe so.

We agree with them.

Mr. Balcaen: Honourable Speaker, I'm wondering, does the government have evidence to support that restricting access to long-bladed weapons will reduce the level of violence and crime that we've seen recently within our communities?

Mr. Wiebe: As I said, I'm confused, Honourable Speaker. I hoped that the member opposite would be in support of this legislation. I'm getting the sense here

that maybe he doesn't believe that this legislation should move forward.

If he believes that, I think he should put that on the record right now.

Mrs. Cook: A commonly agreed upon length for a machete begins at 10 inches, which is 25.4 centimetres. In the legislation the minister brought forward, the blade must be at least 30 centimetres long.

Will machetes under 30 centimetres but over 24 centimetres be omitted from this regulation?

Mr. Wiebe: The member's just wrong. There's no perfect definition because knives, unlike firearms, don't have distinct features and serial numbers. However, trade publications and other sources identify a machete as any—as being between 30 and 60 centimetres long or 12 to 24 inches.

I think what the member is referring to is a smaller bladed weapon. Certainly, we are looking at options to restrict their access in violent—for use in community.

Mr. Johnson: What success rate is the minister expecting with this legislation?

Mr. Wiebe: I didn't hear, sorry. Sorry, Honourable Speaker, I didn't hear the question from the member opposite. I'd ask if he could repeat it.

Mr. Johnson: What success rate is the minister expecting with this legislation for reduction in crime?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I've said many times, we concede no ground on violent crime in our communities, and we're looking at every opportunity to eliminate violent crime in our communities. And if this is one step in that direction, this is a bill that's before the Legislature; we can act today to pass it.

Mr. Balcaen: I've read through the legislation a few times, and asked the minister this, but I'm just wondering: What sort of enforcement authority has the Attorney General given law enforcement when it comes to this act? They're the ones that will be engaging with individuals that possess long-bladed weapons and machetes, and I'm wondering what alternative they have other than phoning the government to say, how can you help us?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, it's a good question, Honourable Speaker, because really what we're talking about here is a concerted effort and an effort across law enforcement, the Department of Justice and essentially our regulators or our inspectors that will be doing a lot of this work.

What we found is that when community is engaged, when they are identifying these problem spaces, they're often working with community groups, Bear Clan, with SABE Peace Walkers and others who are understanding where the problem is coming from. They're working, then, with law enforcement, and then law enforcement, under this bill, would then be able to work with our Justice folks.

You know, retailers that are doing this are not doing this in good faith. The ones that are are willing to work with us on regulations.

Mrs. Cook: Which retailers has the minister consulted with?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, we've done some consultation in terms of the basics of the bill. And some of the larger retailers we've had an opportunity to talk to. Obviously, we had the retail crime summit; over 400 folks in a room, including the Retail Council of Canada. They were very supportive and very eager to hear about this. The member from Brandon West will, I'm sure, be able to tell the member about how supportive they were in that room.

But, ultimately, we are going to be working through the regulations, and we're going to make sure that we get it right with retailers of all sizes, making sure the small, medium and large retailers are working with us.

Mr. Johnson: Does the minister expect an increase in crimes including hatchets, for example, with a 10-to-15 centimetre sharp edge?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I think there is an opportunity here, as I said, Honourable Speaker, to talk about other features—if you can consider them that—features of long-bladed weapons and to understand, again, that we're getting it right about what's being used on our streets.

But what we're looking at is any tool that we can give to law enforcement to get these things off the street and to keep them off the street by restricting their sale. That's the purpose of this bill; that's why we need to pass it today.

Mr. Balcaen: My question is around purchases of long-bladed weapons or machetes by somebody who is 18 years of age or older, commonly known as a straw purchase. If an 18-year-old purchases it for a young offender, what sort of offence is outlined within these—this bill?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, as the member opposite rightly identifies, it wouldn't be an offence under this

bill. What it would be is, is that we are collecting the names, that we're asking for photo identification and then keeping a record of the names of those individuals who are buying these weapons.

So, if there was some sort of operation, whether organized or ad hoc, where weapons were being purchased and then given to others to be used violently, we would have a record of that.

So this is a disincentive or a protection against those people who would want to engage in that kind of activity.

Mr. Balcaen: So I just want to clarify that an 18-year-old can do a straw purchase for a weapon and give it to a youth and face no consequences under this minister's legislation.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, I think what the member opposite is catching on to now is that if that weapon was used in a violent way, if it was confiscated in a crime, then that could be tied back to the individual who was—who purchased the weapon originally.

Now what that's going to do—and again, this is coming straight from law enforcement—is it's going to disincentivize anyone who wants to engage in that kind of practice. Now, there's going to always be organized crime and others who are willing to take that risk; this will give us further powers to investigate and tie those incidents together.

Mr. Balcaen: So in law enforcement terms, purchasing that weapon and then a crime occurring would be aiding and abetting, and I've seen this NDP's record on supporting aiding and abetting a crime. Matter of fact, we had a whole session on that here in this legislation—this Legislature where it was talked out.

So what enforcement will this bill have for people who purchase it for a young offender?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, if it's used in a crime, Honourable Speaker, it would be—we would then have the information available to be able to tie those incidents together.

I'm very surprised the honourable member opposite is not in support. We have the Winnipeg Police Service. We have the Brandon Police Service. We have the Morden Police Service. We have police services from across this province who are supporting this bill. And I'm very, very surprised that this member is offside with all of his former colleagues.

Mr. Balcaen: I don't think at all—I could check Hansard tomorrow—but I don't think at all I've stated

that I'm not in favour of this bill. What I'm in favour of is making sure that it's robust and it protects the citizens of Manitoba: the vulnerable citizens, the ones who are writing into the paper, the ones who are suffering grievous bodily harm.

So I'm wondering if the minister can answer how this will protect those defenseless individuals that suffer these crimes.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, of course, I've answered that clearly, Honourable Speaker, and, you know, offered the member a bill briefing. I think he clearly understands this bill.

The only thing I can possibly surmise this evening is that the members opposite are engaging in the kind of delay that we saw under—with The Unexplained Wealth Act, because honestly I cannot understand why the member opposite isn't willing to work with us to get this right, to assist law enforcement across this province.

And I just invite him to quit with the political games; let's get this passed and let's get this moving here tonight.

* (23:30)

Mr. Balcaen: I'm looking forward to making this non-partisan, non-political, but I've seen in the past when we offer suggestions on these crime bills and they're denied. And so, 'shimply' what we're doing today is offering suggestions, ways to build a bill that will actually be representative of the safety that Manitobans deserve.

Will the minister work with our party to make sure that all of these suggestions end up in the bill for safety of Manitobans?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, the member opposite is continually confused about what we have jurisdiction over here in the province of Manitoba and what is a Criminal Code act. We continue to communicate to the federal ministers and to the federal government about our intent to go further on this. I hope the member opposite will stay tuned, because we've got more to say with regards to long-bladed weapons.

But what frustrates me here, Honourable Speaker, is the member opposite isn't giving real suggestions here; he's simply trying to delay, once again, like he did with The Unexplained Wealth Act. He called—he went out in the media and he said that this was window dressing; that's shameful.

Mr. Johnson: Does the minister expect to restrict hatchets or sharp edges that are, say, 10 to 15 centimetres in the future?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, Honourable Speaker, we're going to be looking at all bladed weapons and understanding the impact that they're having in violent crime on our streets.

Again, what I've said many times is retailers are willing to work with us. They understand what's being sold as a proper tool or for outdoor recreation. There is a fine line that they are willing to work through some of the details with us on.

But when it comes to these kind of machetes that are being sold in community, that are being used in violent attacks, this a totally separate set of circumstances. That's what we're cracking down on. That's what we're asking members opposite to stop playing political games with and get to work.

Mr. Balcaen: I would like to remind the minister that some people work in the system and some people work for the system. And I worked for the system and understand what is Criminal Code and what is provincial legislation.

So once again, I will ask the minister—he's put it out here: Will he work with me and our party to make sure that this legislation is robust enough to protect all Manitobans?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, I'm proud to be able to bring this legislation forward here tonight. This represents a lot of hard work. This represents a lot of important collaboration with law enforcement, with community and with so many others.

This goes beyond politics. This goes beyond, you know, any kind of games or strategy in the political sense. This is really about keeping our community safe, and it's a small piece of what we can do right now, and that's why we're so eager to get this passed. I hope that all members will see the light, support us in this legislation and get to work.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It is a pleasure to rise on a bill that I think our party can look at adding some robustness to, to make sure that Manitobans are kept safe—and kept safe in our province, not only in

the city of Winnipeg, which this government seems to focus on, but there is so much more outside of the Perimeter; areas that need safety all throughout Manitoba.

When I talk to my colleagues in various police service, the rural police services, they are calling for action from this government. I'm willing to support that call. I'm willing to help out where we can. But what we've found—or, what I've found since I've joined this—and I'm fairly new, I think the minister of—or, sorry, our previous minister of Justice, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) called it, I've been here for a cup of coffee. And so, you know, it takes a while to learn the processes.

But what I've seen is every time a process avails itself to work with government, the curtains are closed; the window dressings drop down and we're not allowed to voice our opinions and help out this government to move legislation forward.

Manitobans expect that, and Manitobans actually deserve that, Honourable Speaker.

They deserve safety. It's one of the pinnacles of a great province, is making sure that you have safe streets. I think the minister said in his opening remarks that nobody wants to walk on the streets and feel jeopardized, feel that they're in danger. Nobody wants to walk on the streets here or anywhere in rural Manitoba or anywhere in this great province and feel danger.

The issue that we have with this legislation—and I was the first one in this Chamber when I was asking questions and imploring this minister to bring this legislation forward. After sitting for months and months of doing nothing, I was the one that asked him in question period many times, please, bring this forward, bring a robust legislation forward.

And instead we got a legislation that restricts the sales at a retail level. That is new weapons, knives, machetes, long blades, however you want to name it; that's all it's restricting. There is no prohibitions for adults buying these for youth. The minister himself said, okay, we can track it. Okay, we can track it, but it doesn't prevent it. It doesn't allow any prevention, Honourable Speaker.

The safety of Manitobans are in the hands of government, and it is imperative that they write legislation that will fulfill the needs of Manitobans. This includes the retailers, and it includes the police officers and emergency services that will be dealing with this on the street. They're the ones that face this on a daily

basis, never mind the victims that are seeing this almost daily throughout our province.

If you open the Winnipeg papers, you read about machete attacks, and I know when I read the Brandon Police Service reports, of the RCMP reports—*[interjection]* Sorry if I was upsetting you.

If you read any of these reports then you will see that machete attacks are on the rise, and they've—continue to rise under this minister's watch. And so he quickly scribbled on a napkin, talked to legislative services and said, let's put this together, and came up with a bill that reflects the sales only.

But what I can say is that in most sheds and in most outbuildings and in most garages, there are long-bladed weapons, there are machetes, there are filleting knives, there are a plethora of weapons or available instruments that would meet this legislation. So how do we control those getting into the hands of individuals?

The very, very successful—the very successful—bear spray legislation that was brought in, Honourable Speaker, by this PC government, was brought in because it was a consumable commodity. It was something that had an expiration date and the active ingredients, oleoresin capsicum, inside of pepper spray or bear spray has an expiration. And after a while, it's not a—not as effective as it was two years previous or three years previous. So they're all marked for ready identification, and they're all serial marked, so it's easy to track.

The minister talked about being able to track blades, but all you're going to be able to say is a 22-inch blade or a 23-inch blade on a filleting knife. So I've had people ask me in fear, if I'm out fishing, am I going to get stopped? Am I going to get harassed because I'm carrying a fishing knife to go and clean the fish that I've just caught? So there's real concern with people within society that are worried about this, Honourable Speaker.

So we must act quickly. I've said it in this House many times: justice delayed is justice denied. And this has been delayed for nine months, since the alarm bells were rung with this rise in crime since this government has taken power and this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has assumed his role. We've seen an exponential increase in violent crime, using knives, using machetes, using any long-bladed weapon. We've seen that increase.

* (23:40)

So this minister's answer is to restrict the sales of new weapons. But there is so much more. What about the weapons that are already out on the streets, that are available every day? What about the youths that are carrying these weapons? What about the adults that are carrying these weapons? Where is the prohibition put on this?

Honourable Speaker, I might add, a responsible government may have looked at an amnesty program to rid some of these weapons of people that voluntarily wanted to rid of them. They could make some sort of a program, some sort of a social program to help individuals out who want to bring these—who are in difficult and dire situations, that are committing robberies, that are committing the thefts and the violent offences—turn in your machetes and get a certificate so you can get some groceries, so you can get some food. That may be something that we could do on a long-bladed weapon bill such as this.

In March of this year, nearly nine months ago, as I previously stated, the Winnipeg police chief called on the government to take action to reduce violent crime being committed with machetes and long-bladed weapons; nine months. And I'm just wondering how many victims have suffered, how many people have been attacked, how many people have been the subject of a violent interaction because of the delay in this bill because of a government not putting a bill forward to protect individuals?

I will reiterate that I'm in support of any legislation that will help individuals and help the safety of our province. And I know law enforcement, security, front-line services are all in support of that sort of area. But what they're not in support of is just window dressing thrown up to make sure that they can have a piece of legislation put forward. What they want is a real piece of legislation that will help individuals move forward to the safety of not only their community, but all of Manitoba.

And so if the minister's true to his words in saying that he would like to make this non-partisan and make this both sides of the House; a team effort, then he will listen at committee and he will listen at a number of these—sorry, to a number of the suggestions that are going to come forward to help out in the safety of all Manitobans.

So, for under \$40, a 12-and-a-half-inch machete can be purchased on Amazon and delivered to your door in a matter of a few days. Doing Internet purchases, how is that controlled by this legislation? There is more online shopping than retail shopping, according to a number of polls. So if you're ordering on the Internet, how is that going to be stopped within Manitoba?

Honourable Speaker, there is just so many questions that need to be answered. Again, I will support any legislation, I know our team will support any legislation that helps the safety of Manitobans. This misses the mark, but we can move it forward collectively to make sure that it helps all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there no other members wishing to debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

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

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I would like to announce that in addition to the bills previously referred, Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act will also be considered at the October 30, 2024 meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

The Speaker: It has been announced that in addition to the bills previously referred, Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act will also be considered at the October 30, 2024 meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

* * *

* (23:50)

The Speaker: The hour—the honourable official—oh.

The hour now being somewhat past 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 28, 2024

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