



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
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
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	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	Ind.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	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
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	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
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas-Kameesak	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 20, 2026

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, 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 that 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.

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

House Business

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Johnson: I would like to table a list of bills designated by the official opposition for this Third Session of the 43rd Legislature. Our designated bills for this session are Bill 13, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; Bill 21, The Drinking Water Safety Amendment Act; Bill 47, The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act.

Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Fourth Report**

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports? [*interjection*] No.
The—[*interjection*]

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee—
Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 17, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report – Managing IT Security for Remote Access dated March 2024*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BRAR*
- *MLA CHEN*
- *MLA COMPTON*
- *MLA DELA CRUZ*
- *MLA DEVGAN*
- *Mr. EWASKO*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN (Chairperson)*
- *MLA LAMOUREUX*
- *MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. OXENHAM*
- *Mrs. STONE*

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- *Mr. WHARTON for Mr. EWASKO*
- *Mr. GUENTER for Mrs. STONE*

Officials Speaking on Record

- *Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General*
- *Tyler Gooch, Deputy Minister of Innovation and New Technology*
- *Dana Rudy, Public Service Commissioner*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Managing IT Security for Remote Access dated March 2024

Mr. Goertzen: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, again—

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

The honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Goertzen: I wish to present the fifth report on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker: So just to back up a stage, when I asked if it was the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion, nobody responded.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Fifth Report**

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Chairperson): Such excitement about PAC.

I wish to present the fifth report on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk: Your Standing—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated March 2023
 - Vital Statistics Agency

- Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2025

- Vital Statistics Agency

Committee Membership

- Mr. BRAR
- MLA CHEN
- MLA COMPTON
- MLA DELA CRUZ
- MLA DEVGAN
- Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GOERTZEN (Chairperson)
- MLA LAMOUREUX
- MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. OXENHAM
- Mrs. STONE

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- Mr. WHARTON for Mr. EWASKO
- Mr. GUENTER for Mrs. STONE

Officials Speaking on Record

- Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General
- Brenda DeSerranno, Deputy Minister of Public Service Delivery

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapters as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated March 2023
 - Vital Statistics Agency
- Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2025
 - Vital Statistics Agency

Mr. Goertzen: And I move, seconded by the honourable member for Elmwood, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Labour Board Annual Report for 2024-2025.

The Speaker: Further tabling of reports?

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to table the 2025 Report: Implementation and Effectiveness of The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act.

The Speaker: No further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Tourism Week

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Today, I rise in the House to recognize National Tourism Week from April 20 to 24, 2026. Now in its 16th year, tourism week celebrates the crucial role that tourism plays in our economy, our communities and our way of life.

Honourable Speaker, tourism is not only an economic pillar for our province; it also supports job creation, community development and cultural enrichment. In 2024, Manitoba welcomed 10.7 million visitors, who collectively spent over \$1.9 billion in our province.

This represents a significant contribution to our local businesses and the broader economy, sustaining over 25,000 industry jobs. These figures clearly demonstrate how tourism is continuing to fuel Manitoba's growth.

Since taking government in 2023, we have increased our funding to Travel Manitoba by almost \$5 million a year. This investment highlights the importance of tourism to our economic growth and the vital role it plays in driving our province's prosperity.

This funding boost has helped to strengthen Manitoba's tourism marketing efforts, promoting in-province travel, attracting out-of-province visitors and growing Indigenous tourism.

Honourable Speaker, tourism brings people together and fosters cultural exchange, creating meaningful connections between locals and visitors. It provides opportunities to explore Manitoba's rich Indigenous heritage, historical landmarks, the creative arts and our breathtaking natural beauty.

I recently sat down with the Tourism Industry Association of Manitoba and talked about where we see the sector going and our experiences in Manitoba that are truly world-class and unique to our province.

From the shores of Clear Lake to the scenic trails of Whiteshell Provincial Park, to the majestic wilderness in Churchill, Manitoba's tourism offerings highlight the province's diverse landscapes and vibrant communities.

Manitoba is home to countless attractions that offer unforgettable experiences: the cultural vibrancy of the Exchange District, the iconic Canadian Museum for Human Rights, our thriving and diverse arts and music scene and our outdoor adventures such as fishing, kayaking and wildlife viewing in places like Riding Mountain National Park. There is something for every traveller to enjoy.

* (13:40)

Whether you're visiting for the first time or rediscovering a favourite destination, Manitoba is sure to leave a lasting impression.

Honourable Speaker, as we celebrate tourism week, I encourage all members of this House and Manitobans everywhere to take advantage of the many incredible tourism experiences in our province.

Thank you.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Manitoba is worth exploring. As we deliver this message across Canada and the world, I hope this sentiment is felt by all Winnipeg and Manitoba families first and foremost as we celebrate tourism week here in the province of Manitoba.

Wherever you go, whichever time of the year and whatever the taste, there is something here in Manitoba for you.

Nature lovers can enjoy our endless skies, golden prairie grasses, countless lakes, diverse wildlife and iconic campgrounds in the Interlake, Parklands, the Whiteshell and Riding Mountain National Park.

Take a family road trip through Agassiz and stop by our beloved roadside attractions like the Happy Rock in Gladstone, the largest crocus monument in Canada is in Arden, Manitoba, and Sara the Camel is in Glenboro.

If you're interested in Manitoba's rich heritage, every community from Transcona to Treherne has a story to be told and a local museum to tell them.

Movie buffs can enjoy cinema under the stars at the Starbust *[phonetic]* drive-in theatre in Morden and the Gimli International Film Festival.

We also can't forget the performing arts, all the way from Winnipeg's folk and fringe festivals to the Rainbow Trout Music Festival in St. Malo and the Whoop & Hollar fest in Portage la Prairie.

If cowboy culture is more your style, come to Dauphin's Countryfest or the Manitoba Stampede in

Morris, the Triple S Fair & Rodeo in Selkirk and the Virden Indoor Rodeo. If country isn't your style, check out rocking the fields in Minnedosa.

Northern Manitoba is also calling, from polar bears and beluga whales to the northern lights and trappers fest.

This is just a small, small list of examples of why investing in tourism in Manitoba is important.

And by making life more affordable, we can assure Manitobans can afford to take their families out and explore our beautiful province.

Thank you to Travel Manitoba and the regional tourism organizations, businesses and the countless volunteers who drive our growing tourism sector right here in Manitoba.

And we want to encourage all Manitobans to get out and explore what we have here in our great province in our own backyard.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Order, please.

Just before moving on, there's some guests I'd like to take a moment to introduce. Seated in the loge to my left is the former MLA for Radisson, James Teitsma.

And we welcome you here today.

And seated in the public gallery from École River Heights School, we have 45 grade 7 students under the direction of Kyle Spencer. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (MLA Moroz).

And we welcome you here today.

And further guests in the public gallery we have from the university of Brandon, young democrats Emmanuelle Shatoko [*phonetic*], Anrique Shatoko [*phonetic*], Abdul Nadeem Myireh, Kristen [*phonetic*] Garbutt, who are guests of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard); and from the University of St. Boniface, young New Democrats Gabriel Gagnon, Christine Lesage, who are guests of the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

And we welcome you all here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Transcona Museum

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Transcona Museum, an organization that has been collecting, preserving and sharing the stories of my community since 1967.

Transcona has always had a strong identity. We're a community built by working families and neighbours who look out for one another. For decades, the Transcona Museum has been a place where folks can come to learn, to reflect and to better understand that history.

The museum has deep roots in Transcona. It began as a Centennial project, supported by local leaders and community members who saw the importance of preserving our history. At every step, it was community members who made it happen.

Today, the museum cares for more than 53,000 artifacts that tell the story of Transcona and the people who built it. The museum's collections truly bring our history to life. Through exhibits, events, local walking tours and programming, the museum gives folks a reason to come out, spend time together and connect with their community. You see folks sharing stories and different generations learning from each other.

Over the years, it has grown and it has moved, but that commitment has always stayed the same. It has always been driven by folks who care about our community and about making sure its stories continue to be told. In the early days, volunteers went door to door collecting artifacts and stories.

The museum first opened in the basement of the Transcona Public Library, and as it grew, it moved into the Roland Michener Arena before finally finding its home on Regent.

Transcona is proud to have the Transcona Museum, and we are stronger because of the work that they do.

I ask my colleagues to please rise and join me in recognizing the Transcona Museum and all those who continue to support it.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Rural Health Care

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to speak about what health infrastructure means in real human terms, especially for families in rural Manitoba who face distance, delay and uncertainty.

In Swan River, the CT scanner at the Swan Valley Health Centre was announced and funded under the former PC government. Those scans are happening closer to home, in real time, where minutes matter. That CT scanner, in many cases, is the difference between life and death. It means diagnoses are made faster and treatment is started sooner.

In Russell, the CancerCare expanding community-care initiative, also advanced under the PCs, and it's delivering similar hope. For cancer patients, having care closer to home means not having to travel for hours after chemotherapy and spending less time away from loved ones.

In Dauphin, once again under the PCs, upgrades were done at the Dauphin Regional Health Centre that focused on improving capacity and expanding services so that more care can be delivered closer to home. That included the expansion of in-patient capacity and the modernization of chemotherapy services. It also included movement of endoscopy services out of operating rooms to free up surgical capacity.

But despite this important progress made under the PCs, the NDP are now hindering that momentum. Their decision to delay the Portage hospital until 2027 and their refusal to add an MRI into the new facility is deeply troubling. These delays widen the gap of care and leave too many families feeling as though their communities are not being treated with the urgency they deserve.

We need to make sure rural Manitobans have fair and equal access to health care so that where you live does not decide how quickly you get care or how far you have to travel to get it.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

CN 2747 Steam Locomotive

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Honourable Speaker, the story of northeast Winnipeg has always been written in steel, sweat and the pride of working people who built things meant to last. And sometimes that story is told by a steam locomotive.

One hundred years ago, 1926 was a year of both constitutional crisis and economic expansion. It was a year that solidified our Canadian legislative independence. It was also the year that our nation met the CN 2747.

Long before today's buzz about nation-building projects, the CN 2747 was Transcona's very own. Built in April 1926 at the Transcona Shops, CN 2747 was the first steam locomotive constructed in all of western Canada. It came together in just 27 days, built by skilled local workers whose craftsmanship and pride taught the nation who Transcona was.

* (13:50)

Over 30 years—for over 30 years, CN 2747 travelled across the prairies, helped connect communities, move goods and create opportunities in the wake of the First World War. When the steam era came to an end, our community made sure that its story didn't end with it. In 1960, thanks to the advocacy of local leaders—many of whom join us today—and the Transcona Museum, the locomotive was brought home to Transcona and placed on permanent display. For decades, generations of families cared for it, painted it, protected it and made sure that it remained part of our shared story.

CN 2747 is a present-day reminder that our community is something we build together, protect together and carry forward together. It is no coincidence that during a time that our country needs it, the CN 2747 is bringing us together once again.

So I invite all members of this House to join us in recognizing the 100th anniversary, the CN 2747 and the legacy preserved by our neighbours and the Transcona Museum.

Edna Nabess

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honour a very special woman, Edna Nabess, a respected member of the Manitoba community and a proud constituent of Morden-Winkler. I am honoured to have Edna here today and to call her my friend.

Edna is a Cree Elder, artist and community leader, born in Cormorant, Manitoba, and a member of Mathias Colomb Cree Nation. She learned traditional ways from her mother and grandmother, growing up on the trapline and at fish camp. From a young age, she worked hard, filleting fish at just 11 years old, and later became a skilled in sewing and beading.

As a single mother, Edna moved to Winkler, where she supported her family by making and selling moc-casins from her small shop called The Shack. She built a life through hard work, strength and pride in her culture.

Edna has a deep faith and a passion for sharing it. She speaks openly about Jesus and how her faith has shaped her life and her family. She loves her family deeply and often shares how proud she is of them and her grandchildren.

Her memoir, *The Woman in the Polka Dot Dress*, shares her powerful life story. In her book, she speaks honestly about the challenges and her faith and her journey forward. The book is aspiring and gives readers a deep understanding of her strength and resilience. I encourage everyone to get a copy of the book.

I was honoured to attend her book signing on Thursday evening in Winkler, along with a room full of Edna's friends and family.

Edna continues to give back, recently sharing through her book and opening the Oji-Cree market to promote Indigenous culture in Clear Lake. She was also honoured with the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Edna's life is one of faith, strength and service. I ask all members here to join me in thanking her for her contributions.

Edna, you are a true inspiration to all of us.

Thank you.

Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba as they celebrate 75 years of service to Manitobans.

Since its founding, IBAM has represented the interests of property and casualty insurance brokers across our province. Today, there are more than 2,300 brokers and approximately 2,700 folks working in brokerages across Manitoba, with over 300 storefronts in more than 120 communities. From large urban centres to small rural towns, these professionals are a trusted presence in the lives of Manitobans.

Their impact goes beyond insurance. Brokerages create meaningful jobs in the financial services sector. Brokers live and work in the communities they serve. They shop locally, support small businesses and raise

families here. In doing so, they help strengthen the economy and social fabric of our economy.

Earlier this month, IBAM celebrated their 75th anniversary at their annual Brokercon conference, celebrating under the theme *Treasured Past, Brilliant Future*. For 75 years, IBAM has supported its members, advocated for consumers and helped build stronger communities across Manitoba. Their work is a testament to the value of trust, service and local connection.

Insurance touches every aspect of life. Strong communities are built by people and organizations who show up every day to support their neighbours, help families plan for the future and keep our local economies moving.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in celebrating and congratulating IBAM on celebrating this remarkable anniversary and thanking them for their continued contributions to our province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, there are some guests in the gallery I would like to introduce.

Draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Chris Barrett, Keith Proulx, Bobby Lee Proulx, Dahlia Proulx, Dorothy Dolby, John Pryorstanski [*phonetic*], Anthony Proulx, Patrick Proulx, Connie Bunocore [*phonetic*], Iris Lauzon, Dianne Bear, Francis King, Ashley Smith, Jaylee Smith, Dawn Jay Smith, Annabelle Little, Lorraine Daniels, Myra Proulx, Faith-Hannah Wilson, Chantel Wilson, Taytum Assiniboine, Kayden Young, Jason Knight, Andrea Knight, Cynthia King, who are guests of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert).

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

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Grant Wainikka, Rey Girardin, who are guests of the honourable member for McPhillips.

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

And I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we

have with us today the National Council of Canadian Muslims, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy).

We welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economic Development in Manitoba Securing Federal Funding for Major Projects

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to take a moment and welcome all of our guests to the gallery: École River Heights, Transcona Museum, Edna Nabess and all her guests, IBAM and NCCM and thank them for the important work that they do.

The Premier went to Ottawa last week and all Manitobans got was a picture and a memo, not a single dollar committed to infrastructure, no investments in Manitoba and not a single project greenlit.

But wait, Manitoba was seventh out of ten provinces to sign a memorandum of understanding. Let's be clear, that is not a deal, and that is not a firm commitment to move forward. While other provinces are securing concrete commitments, this Premier is simply taking a photo op and getting a memo from the Prime Minister.

Six months ago, this Premier promised three megaprojects that would make Manitoba a have province immediately but has said nothing about them.

Why is the Premier failing Manitoba's economy so badly?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The three megaprojects are the wind projects in western Manitoba, the combustion turbines in Brandon and the Port of Churchill, which the Prime Minister and I agreed will be shipping LNG by 2030. Good news.

I want to table some really concerning documents. This is an affidavit signed by the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt). In it, he states: I am aware that the applicant was convicted before the Provincial Court of Manitoba of sexual interference and sexual assault.

* (14:00)

Long story short, the member for Riding Mountain, who's sitting right there in the second row, acted to get bail, willing to post up to a million dollars for his niece, who had sexually assaulted a minor. He has since been renominated by the PCs to run in the next election.

I want the member for Fort Whyte to tell everyone today whether he was aware of this affidavit when he allowed that member to be renominated.

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

Mr. Khan: I'll clarify. I'm asking the Premier a question about our economy. Liquid natural gas in BC, a nuclear project in Ontario, a pipeline in Alberta, a 60 per cent expansion of the Port of Montreal, copper mines in Saskatchewan and BC—those are the nation-building projects the Major Projects Office supported.

But what's missing from that list? Manitoba—the Port of Churchill. By the Premier's own admission, there's a small window to capitalize on that opportunity to ship materials from Churchill. But in two and a half years, we have no firm commitment from the federal government. The Port of Montreal is actively working on its upgrades and Americans are starting physical work on their own Arctic deep-water port.

Why is the Premier—or I should say, why isn't the Premier doing more for the development of Port of Churchill and growing Manitoba's economy today?

Mr. Kinew: Prime Minister and I—Port of Churchill by 2030; you can judge me on that. The justice system judged the member for Riding Mountain's niece, found her guilty of sexually assaulting a minor. He tried to post bail for her during this legislative session, since the last election. The member for Fort Whyte has allowed this person to be renominated for the PC Party of Manitoba.

If you are a PC Party member, does that align with your values? Somebody who's posting bail for a sex offender who's assaulted children?

Here's what the Leader of the PC Party said in the media when this story broke on Friday. Again, he said that this is something that any aunt or uncle would do for their niece or nephew.

No, that's wrong. Logic like that would lead you to excuse Peter Nygård, like the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) has defended—or made money off of, I should say, to be clear—or to excuse Jeffrey Epstein—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Khan: The Premier is all too familiar when it comes to criminal records and bails. You don't have to look any farther than his own past, Honourable Speaker.

The second round of major projects came out, and once again, this Manitoba NDP government was nowhere to be found. The North Coast Transmission Line and a separate LNG project in BC; a nickel mine in Ontario; a graphite mine in Québec; a tungsten mine in New Brunswick and a hydro program in Nunavut.

I will table a map for the Premier to look at all of the federal projects put forward by this Prime Minister and the Major Projects Office, and he will notice one thing that's missing from here: Manitoba. Not one mention of Manitoba under this NDP government.

When will the Premier get serious about Manitoba, start thinking about Manitobans and get Manitoba back on the map the Prime Minister of Canada has so blatantly left out under this NDP government's leadership?

Mr. Kinew: Since taking office, we've got mines to shovels in the ground. We didn't need Mark Carney in order to do that.

On that side of the House, they keep digging themselves deeper. When it comes to the actions of the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) trying to post a million dollars to cover bail for a sex offender in his family, what did the member next to him know? The member next to him for Lac du Bonnet was Education minister when some of these charges were being brought forward.

Did the member for Riding Mountain recuse himself from discussions about the former bill 35 which brought in a framework to address teacher misconduct? This person we're talking about here was actually a former teacher before their licence was stripped by the current Education Minister.

Has the member for Fort Whyte asked either of his MLAs what they knew about this case and what they did at the Cabinet table? Or perhaps he, who was also a member of Cabinet at the time, has direct knowledge whether there were or were not any recusals. He should share with the House today.

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

Port of Churchill Development Concerns About Project Delays

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): We want to talk about sharing, maybe the Premier can share his own criminal record with Manitobans once again. And the only mine that he's referring to was a gold mine that was started under the PC government.

When we look at the Major Projects Office, when it comes to the Port of Montreal, on September 11, 2025, the project was referred to the project-Major Projects Office. Eighteen days later, on September 29, the major projects offer signed a memorandum of understanding.

On April 6, the funding was secure for the Port of Montreal. On April 9, the Government of Canada announced the start of construction, all within seven months. Two and a half years under this NDP Premier and government, nothing has moved forward when it comes to the Port of Churchill, and Manitoba's economy has only gotten worse.

Why has the Premier been unable to accomplish even the first step of this process for the Port of Churchill in two and a half years?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, I'm directing the member to 2024. Of course, we know that the mine started construction under us. You ask the PCs what it took to get this thing going, none of them would know any of the details, which speaks to the veracity.

But you know what people on the right wing say? They say, I wish politicians would look out for miners instead of looking out for minors on an island somewhere. Look at yourselves in the mirror with those lines in place. We got a deal to save the Thompson mine. We have built a mine in Lynn Lake. What are they doing with minors? Gross.

When it comes to the member for Riding Mountain, experts say he's lending his reputation and the goodwill that comes along with being an elected official to help someone in his family who is a sex offender convicted here in Manitoba.

Was the member for Fort Whyte aware of this when he allowed him to be renominated?

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

Defence and Aerospace Sector Economic Opportunities for Manitoba

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): When it comes to looking out for minors, maybe this Premier should look at his own drug policy for the drug consumption site where he wants to allow minors, pregnant people and first-time users into a drug consumption site to consume drugs. That's on this side of the House looking out for minors.

The Premier could have come back from Ottawa with a deal and he only came back with photos and a memo. The Premier did not go to Ottawa with a plan, and it shows.

It's been two and a half years since this Premier took office. Two and a half years since he talked about the Port of Churchill and two and a half years, he has done absolutely nothing to grow Manitoba's economy. At every turn with this NDP government, there's a big flashy announcement but no hard work to get it done.

At a time when global uncertainty has resulted in a renewed look at Canadian Armed Forces right here in Manitoba, how is this Premier doing—what is this Premier doing to support CFB Shilo or—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I support our military by making sure that I protect a democracy that our troops are willing to lay their lives down for. What are they doing to that democracy on that side of the House? You have in this current Legislature a member of the PC party willing to put up \$1 million towards bail for a sex offender, a child sexual abuser. Not somebody with the presumption of innocence. Somebody who was convicted in a court here in Manitoba.

The leader of your PC Party, if you're a PC supporter, saw fit to let that person who's done this during this legislative session allow them to run again in the next election. I don't know about you and the PC Party membership, but that does not align with my values as a Manitoban.

Now what did the leader of the PCs have to say about all this? He said, and I quote: I think the MLA did whatever any loving uncle, aunt or relative would do for their niece. End quote.

That's terrible. But here's the thing that it misses. The member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt)—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Khan: Manitoba has historically punched well above its weight class for defence and aerospace projects. Manitoba has a reputation for delivering consistent quality, but this Premier has failed to trade on that reputation and failed to work to create opportunities for Manitobans.

* (14:10)

Under this NDP government, opportunities are going everywhere else across Canada, but not here in Manitoba. Manitoba hosts one of Canada's largest aerospace sectors, which contributes significantly to Manitoba's economy, to employment for Manitobans and to innovation right here at home. But this Premier has been silent on these opportunities because he seeks the spotlight instead of substance. He wants to stand up and grandstand instead of answering the questions.

Other provinces are securing projects and investments. Why can't the Premier deliver real results for Manitobans by following through on the Port of Churchill and making real change in the province of Manitoba's economy?

Mr. Kinew: So which one is it? Are you for Churchill or are you against Churchill?

Where do you stand on child molesters, for or against? I can't believe that I'm asking that of the PC Party of Manitoba in 2026. Now, they were all elected in 2023 during a very nasty, ugly election campaign that falsely tried to accuse LGBT people of being involved with pedophilia.

Well, it turns out, look what was happening in their own house at the same time. Absolutely hypocritical, Honourable Speaker. I think that we all know that.

When it comes to the member opposite and their current record, it's terrible. With us, we're clear: under the prison. What can they say on that side of the House?

Concern for Manitoba's Small-Business Community Decline in Start-Ups and Regulatory Environment

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, we can all agree that Manitoba's strength has always been our economic diversity, built by small businesses that grow into world-class leading companies, like Versatile tractors and New Flyer Industries, along with many others.

But, today, that foundation is weakening. Manitoba is now experiencing what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business calls an entrepreneurial drought, with more businesses closing than opening. A staggering statistic is: within the last year, Manitoba machinery manufacturing has dropped by a staggering 28.3 per cent.

Can the Premier explain why, under this government, fewer Manitobans are starting businesses and more are being forced to close their doors?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, I'm glad the member brings up NFI Group because our government supports the work that they do. We worked with them to start an all-Canadian build, where they're building electric buses right here for the Canadian market. That's taking jobs from the US and putting them right here in Winnipeg, in Transcona.

That's how we grow our economy, by putting more people to work with good jobs, investing in our own economy—a clean economy.

Honourable Speaker, we'll continue to do the work to support manufacturers, homegrown businesses, small businesses right here in Manitoba. That's how we grow an economy that works for everyone.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, we're simply not seeing that. And when it comes to Versatile tractors, the founder of that company actually moved from Saskatchewan to Manitoba for the entrepreneurial future of our province. It's going the other way today.

And, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, this government has lost the confidence of Manitoba's small-business community. Nearly 70 per cent of Manitoba's small businesses feel unsupported by this NDP government, and almost none believe that there's any real plan for entrepreneurship.

Why did Budget 2026 so badly address the concerns of our small-business community?

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, we support small-business growth. We support manufacturers growing our economy, day in and day out. We put our proof in the pudding: We took the tax off of equipment for all manufacturers in Manitoba. We took the PST off of all equipment for manufacturers.

That's real action. That's incentivizing them to double down and invest on creating more jobs here for Manitobans.

So Manitobans know. Manufacturers know. Our government is behind them and supporting them for creating more jobs, growing our economy and ensuring that everyone has a role to find success right here in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, it's no surprise that we've lost confidence, that businesses have lost confidence.

A staggering statistic is that the drop of machinery manufacturing in Manitoba is down 28.3 per cent in one year under this NDP government. The same Canadian Federation of Independent Business gives Manitoba an F grade on red tape and another F on political priority for reducing it. Small businesses are being hit with higher costs, more regulation and an anti-business tax structure, and they're voting with their feet.

Will the government finally admit their policies are driving away investment and commit to reducing red tape so small businesses can once again grow in this great province?

Mr. Moses: Well, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans should know that small businesses, manufacturers are growing because of our government policies, including our tax cut to equipment for manufacturers, including our payroll tax cut, including our changes to the SBVCTC and including the fact that we're supporting them with safer opportunities for equipment and safety products through our wonderful Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe).

This is how we grow an economy that works for everyone, for small businesses, for manufacturers, for exporters. Our government is listening; not listening to the failed policies of the former failed PC government, but instead listening to the business community and growing an economy that works for all workers and all businesses.

Manitoba's Inflation Rate Impact on Cost of Living

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): The numbers are in, and the reality is Manitobans are worse off under this NDP compared to other provinces. Manitoba has the highest inflation under this NDP, surging to 3 per cent, a significant 1 per cent increase since just last month.

Families are paying more for nearly everything: housing, fuel, energy. Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting that there are over—within \$200 from insolvency, yet all this NDP government is offering them is less than \$2 a week in savings at the grocery store. Education property taxes are the highest in the country, income taxes are among the highest west of the Maritimes and electricity costs are skyrocketing, all under this NDP.

Why is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) allowing Manitoba to become one of the most expensive places to live in the country?

The Speaker: Member's—the honourable Minister of Finance.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, when our government came in, we stopped runaway PC inflation dead in its tracks. And that's thanks to us taking action that they never did for years.

For seven and a half years, were they willing to take any action on Manitobans' energy costs or helping them to reduce their gas bills? No.

What did we do as soon as we got into government? We brought in a one-year fuel tax holiday followed by a permanent 10 per cent cut that continues to benefit Manitobans, reducing their energy costs. We're talking about us—other things we're doing to reduce costs; of course, our last budget raised our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,700. We're going to make child care free for the lowest income families. We're taking the PST off all food at the grocery store.

They made life more—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: The minister can try and spin all he wants, but the reality is that Manitoba has the highest inflation in the country and the highest food inflation in the country.

Manitoba families are struggling, thanks to direct decisions that this NDP government made. They removed indexation, causing an increase in income taxes. They removed the education property tax rebate, thus has led to a 'jacking,' skyrocketing cost of education property taxes, the highest in Canada. And energy costs are increasing thanks to a phony rate freeze that this minister implemented this year.

So why are Manitobans struggling so much, more than any other province in the country, thanks to this NDP government?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, in the last two years of their government, food inflation was about 8 to 10 per cent. And, right now, food inflation is trending down between February and March.

Honourable Speaker, you know, we're going to do more to help reduce that inflation, because this government is taking action to do something that they never did, which is to actually help Manitobans reduce their food prices. How are we doing that? We're going to eliminate PST off all food in grocery stores. We froze the price of a one-litre jug of milk. We're creating more competition for grocery stores in our communities. We're bringing in legislation that is going to stop and ensure Manitobans are protected against surveillance pricing.

Again, that team did absolutely nothing for seven and a half years to take action on reducing food costs. What have we done in two years? We're doing the work. We're going to keep doing that work—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

* (14:20)

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

Mrs. Stone: The numbers tell a very different story. Manitoba's inflation has skyrocketed to 3 per cent, a significant 1 per cent increase since just last month; a 4.9 per cent food inflation, the highest in the country. Education property taxes are the highest in Canada. Energy costs have been jacked up by 12 per cent, all under this NDP government. At the same time, Manitoba's income taxes are the highest west of the Maritimes.

This is the reality. These are the numbers that this NDP government has created, and Manitobans are paying the price. Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are within \$200 of insolvency, and this NDP government is offering less than \$2 a week in savings. Our plan would put an additional \$3,500 back in the pockets of Manitobans.

Why won't—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we know that one of the biggest drivers of inflation are, of course, gas prices, and what's driving that? The decisions by the President to the south of us, a President that the members opposite thanked. That's their approach. They're thanking Donald Trump for his initiatives.

On this side of the House, we're doing the work to reduce costs for Manitobans and to especially do what we can to reduce the pressures driving inflation, like fuel costs.

Of course, we brought in a permanent 10 per cent. Like your taxes, we brought in reductions to your home education taxes, this team lowering them.

Again, the member opposite, nine out of 10 people—nine out of 10 people—in her community are better off as a result of our education property tax credit.

We're doing the work. We're going to keep doing that work because we know Manitobans are facing those challenges. Our government is—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Concern for Project Costs and Competition

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): This government is actively working against Manitoba's construction sector. Here's what one industry leader had to say: Our industry literally builds Manitoba, yet our current provincial government is limiting access to projects by using the Manitoba jobs agreement, which reduces competition, increases costs and favours unions.

Eighty-eight per cent of the construction industry in Manitoba is open shop, which means our government is making policy based on 12 per cent. This is not how a democratic system is designed and is a huge red flag.

We didn't agree to this. Manitobans can't afford it.

Who said this? Shawn Wood, president of the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba.

So why is this minister not listening to the people who actually drive our economy?

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Borderland was quoting from something. Was it a private or public document?

Mr. Guenter: Public document.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Every single worker who works on MJA project is better off because MJA, Honourable Speaker.

We will continue to listen to Manitoba workers, Honourable Speaker. That's why we got elected to do this. We are listening to both—MJA team is going out and working with the Manitoba Heavy, WCA, and we have many, many meetings with those folks.

We will continue to listen to Manitoba workers. We want to make sure we train the people to work—

workforce for the future. That's exactly what we are doing.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: Well, the minister needs to update his tired political talking points. I'll give him some more quotes.

Here's Darryl Harrison, incoming president of the Winnipeg Construction Association, who said recently that the Manitoba jobs agreement is having, and will continue to have, negative impacts on the delivery of these projects. Less contractors will pursue these contracts because of the price and schedule risk created by the MJA. This will lead to much higher costs for Manitoba taxpayers.

So where's the common sense in this government? Why aren't they listening to the Manitobans who actually build our schools, hospitals, bridges and roads?

MLA Sandhu: We are listening to Manitobans, Honourable Speaker. Those are the people who are building Manitoba. We want to make sure that they are the ones paid properly, as well, they have a safe work site and real training opportunities as well.

We will continue to listen to Manitoba workers, Honourable Speaker, but we are there for them and every single day. Again, we had a meeting with WCA, we had a meeting with the Manitoba Heavy and we are turning a construction site into training site. We will do that every day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Guenter: You know, again, the folks in the construction industry say this Manitoba jobs agreement is a bad deal for Manitoba, it's bad for Manitoba workers. And every day, this minister gets up in this Chamber and talks as though it's a good thing. And so it's clear he isn't listening. This government is not listening.

In fact, they say one thing and then they do another. They talk of one Manitoba, but then they secretly set up a deal that allows their political friends to skim a little off the top of public projects even though it disadvantages 88 per cent—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —of the 60,000 Manitobans who work in the construction sector.

So why is this government putting their—the financial fortunes of their political allies over the financial needs of Manitoba workers and their families?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Public Service Delivery. *[interjection]*

Order.

MLA Sandhu: We are listening to Manitoba workers; we will listen to them every day, Honourable Speaker. Manitoba jobs agreement means good jobs, fair wages, safe worksite and real training opportunity. We are turning the train—we are turning construction site into training site. This is what we do every single day.

Everybody can bid on these contracts, Honourable Speaker—open shop, unionized shop—there—these bids are open for everyone. We will continue to listen to those folks.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Manitoba's Defence and Aerospace Sectors Government Action to Attract Federal Investment

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Honourable Speaker, Manitoba is home to two critical defence assets like CFB Shilo and 17 Wing Winnipeg, facilities that support national training, logistics and aerospace operations.

At a time when Canada is increasing defence spending and modernizing its military, provinces across the country are aggressively positioning themselves to capture those investments.

Can the Premier (Mr. Kinew) explain what specific actions this government has taken to advocate for increased federal defence and aerospace spending in Manitoba?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): First of all, I want to thank all of our service personnel who are right here in Manitoba and across the country for the work they do to defend our nation. It's very important.

Second, Honourable Speaker, I want to make sure that we understand that we are seeking and working with partners right across the industry and right across the country to materialize those investments in the defence sector right here in Manitoba, including folks at Southport, at 17 Wing, working within—folks within our aerospace sector, including the aerospace sector council right here in Manitoba.

We are setting up those tables. We're working collaboratively with people right across military backgrounds, aerospace backgrounds to advance our opportunities to get major projects here in Manitoba, in the aerospace sector that help defend our country, support our military and make sure that we support our freedom for our nation.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Robbins: Honourable Speaker, the economic impact of CFB Shilo extends far beyond the base itself; it supports hundreds of direct and indirect jobs, sustains local small businesses and provides long-term economic stability for Brandon and communities across western Manitoba.

At a time when the federal government is increasing defence spending and other provinces are aggressively positioning themselves to capture those dollars through targeted partnerships, infrastructure, readiness and workforce development, Manitoba risks are being left behind.

Can the minister clearly outline what this government is doing right now to ensure that Brandon and western Manitoba—

* (14:30)

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations. *[interjection]*

Order.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): All I can say is thank God we're building two new schools in Brandon to be able to accommodate these students. Thank God we're investing \$22 million in the city of Brandon's infrastructure to make sure that they can build to suit the new families' needs in the region.

And I'm so very pleased that our Minister of Education has announced free child care for our families that need it, increasing daycare pace—spaces across Westman, across the province, because we know to build one Manitoba we have to be a welcoming—a welcoming—place so that people feel comfortable.

I know what doesn't make me comfortable: the PC record. The PC record is not very—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Robbins: Honourable Speaker, rural Manitoba communities depend on stable, long-term economic drivers to sustain jobs, attract families and keep local businesses alive, and the defence infrastructure, like C-F-B-I Shilo, is one of the most important economic anchors in Spruce Woods.

Unfortunately, many rural Manitobans are not seeing a sense of urgency from this government, and there is growing concern that opportunities tied to defence and aerospace investment are being missed.

So I'll ask the minister this: Has the government secured a single new measurable federal investment tied to C-F-I-B Shilo in the past year? And, if not, will the minister commit today to a clear target, a public timeline—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, we support our military, and we support our ability to get those opportunities here in Manitoba, working with CFB Shilo, working with 17 Wing, working with Southport and many other players within our aerospace sector, working with the federal government as well.

And what we learned and we heard from seven and a half years of the former failed government not working with the federal government, refusing to work with them, is that's how projects fail; that's how projects don't come to Manitoba. Instead, we're taking a collaborative approach, working with the federal government—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —with partners in the private sector, with communities and with military to understand how we can help support our national interests, how we support freedom in our country and how we can support the good work of every single military serviceperson that serves this great country.

Manitoba Menopause Clinic Reopening Announcement

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Honourable Speaker, in 2017, the previous government closed the mature women's clinic, leaving women across Manitoba without access to specialized menopause care and forcing many women to wait, travel or simply go without support.

But our government is taking real action to restore these critical services. And earlier today, we had an exciting announcement.

So can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans more about this important announcement?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I want to thank my friend from Tuxedo for that really important question.

Honourable Speaker, the previous government attacked women's health care and cut the specialized menopause care that they count on. And now our government is fixing that with a \$5.2-million investment to establish a Manitoba menopause clinic right here in Winnipeg.

We're restoring care that was cut and lost, and we're expanding it with a modern team-based model. Now, alongside historic investments in free birth control and free hormone therapy, we're sending a clear message to Manitoba women and women across this great country: women's health matters. And we're investing and making it better for generations to come.

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Provincial Funding Commitment Concerns

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, when a reporter pointed out that there was no new funding for the North End Water Pollution Control Centre in this budget, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) once again showed his disrespect for the press and cut her off to bark his canned speaking lines.

Regardless of what the Premier wants to say, there is no new funding for NEWPCC in this budget; telling them that they can use some already-allocated investment dollars for it isn't new.

So what projects is the Premier suggesting the City cancel to free up those funds?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, I'm so glad that the Conservatives have finally recognized the importance of building NEWPCC and protecting our water.

But where was the concern over their seven and a half years in office? Instead, they dithered away. They sat on their hands and they did nothing.

Now, they get up in the Chamber, day after day, and they feign interest like this is a priority. Manitobans know who they can trust, and it sure as heck isn't the PCs.

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

Municipal Infrastructure Projects Provincial Funding Commitment Concerns

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, seeing as how the minister will not answer my question, I can answer one of his: Where were we in phase 1 and 2? It was the PC government that funded that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. King: This is the fact. Just like last December, when the City finance officials say the Province did not approve 2 and a half million worth of city road safety projects, 2 and a half million dollars worth of spray pad improvements and reduced provincial funding for a Waverley West fire-paramedic station by a half a million dollars. This Premier is playing fast and loose with infrastructure commitments.

Can the minister explain why he can't be straight with the City?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, our government knows that Manitobans care about the lake. We're going to keep working to keep it clean and healthy.

And our government has committed \$335 million for this important project, as well as securing \$367 million from the federal government. This is multi-year funding; we're going to get it built.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, that is how the NDP works with municipalities. They refuse to engage as partners. This is the same NDP that forced municipalities to merge and called them howling coyotes when municipal leaders raised concerns about the loss of local autonomy and smaller communities losing their representation.

The minister stands by his—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. King: —decision to revoke funding at the last minute.

Will he stand up at AMM this week and confirm to municipalities that he doesn't care what their citizens think? His office will tell him: look, projects get done.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Is the member going to stand up at AMM and talk about what the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) did? A million dollars

bail for a convicted sex offender? Is he going to go to AMM and talk about what his leader said, that any aunt or uncle—that's offensive to aunts to uncles—no, we wouldn't. It's completely gross what they're doing.

Just like they gave up public safety to us; just like they gave up tax cuts to us; now, are they going to give up child safety to the NDP? That's our issue now? Good; we're going to keep kids safe.

I want to take this opportunity, Honourable Speaker, to congratulate you on the 10th anniversary of your election, which happened yesterday. You've done a great job here in the Chamber. You've set important precedents. However, I'm always going to like you as somebody who stands up for—

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

I would just remind members to please leave the Speaker out of their comments.

The honourable Government House Leader—*[interjection]*

The time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, I just wanted to rise on a point of order. It was quite apparent today that members opposite were excessively clapping at every question that was posed.

Honourable Speaker, you know, it's not lost on us that that was done intentionally to ensure that the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) didn't get to his question today—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

* (14:40)

MLA Fontaine: —which is quite ironic when members opposite—every time it's the member over there that we kicked out of our caucus; every time there's an opportunity for that member to get up to ask his questions, they run out of questions to ask for the member of our—former caucus member.

So, Honourable Speaker, I'm asking for more time for the member for Dawson Trail to be able to ask his question. Otherwise, I'm assuming that members opposite want to continue to thwart the democracy in this Chamber.

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order.

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Johnson: Well, obviously this is rich, coming from the members opposite, who took probably 20 seconds giving a standing ovation for a pitiful, pitiful answer. The irony over there is—

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —ridiculous, Honourable Speaker. It's our time to ask questions. We ask questions. They can shorten their answers if they choose, but this is not a point of order. It was almost 41 minutes—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —for a QP, including the last answer where the Premier (Mr. Kinew) went in his diatribe.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would point out that it's not a point of order.

* * *

The Speaker: It's unfortunate, to say the least, but just a quick question: Did anyone ask for leave? Did the honourable—so, the honourable Minister of Families, the Government House Leader, asked for leave to allow the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) to ask one question.

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): In accordance with rule 2(10), I am announcing the following bills will be considered by the government as specified for this Third Session of the 43rd Legislature: bills 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51. And I table this list.

The Speaker: So it has been announced that in accordance with rule 2(10)—I'll just remind everyone that the Speaker is standing. Everyone else should be sitting and be—being quiet.

Been announced that, in accordance with rule 2(10), that the following bills will be considered by the government as specified for this Third Session of the 43rd Legislature: bills 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50 and 51.

And just for the record, the list was tabled.

MLA Fontaine: I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 14, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act; Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Bill 39, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act; Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act; Bill 51, The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act.

I would also like to announce the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 15, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act; Bill 48, The Real Property Amendment and Planning Amendment Act (Land Conveyed for Public Purposes); Bill 49, The Business Practices Amendment Act.

The Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 14, Bill 20, Bill 39, Bill 46 and Bill 51.

Further, it has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 15, Bill 48, Bill 49.

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

* * *

MLA Fontaine: I'm announcing we will be calling for debate today the following specified bills in this order: bills 8, 9, 34, 42, 44, 26, 27, 28, 32, 50, 18, 37, 29, 35, 45.

The Speaker: So it's been announced that the specified bills that will be debated today will be called in the following order: bills 8, 9, 34, 42, 44, 46, 27, 28, 32, 50, 18, 37, 29, 35 and 45.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And while I have everyone's attention, we have with us in the public gallery the regular weekly Monday 2 p.m. public tour group, who are watching for a few minutes of the proceedings as part of their tour.

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

SECOND READINGS

The Speaker: So then, as previously announced, we will now prepare for—or proceed to the specified bills at second reading.

Bill 8—The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Amendment Act

The Speaker: So, Bill 8.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, that bill 8, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

The Speaker: It's been announced—moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 8, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

* (14:50)

Mr. Wiebe: I'm so pleased to bring forward the second reading of bill 8, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, for debate here in this House. This bill delivers on our government's commitment to keep Manitobans safe by keeping machetes and other long-bladed weapons out of the hands of youth and criminals.

At the end of 2024, our government proclaimed The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act, which banned the sale of machetes and other long-bladed weapons to minors. We also required retailers keep those machetes off of their store floors and keep sales records for long-bladed weapons that were sold in the province. The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act was

primarily intended for brick-and-mortar retailers and—including convenience stores selling these dangerous weapons who were doing so in inner-city communities.

Last year, our government worked with the Retail Council of Canada to engage with some of the largest online retailers who were shipping products into our province, to restrict minors' access to those long-bladed weapons.

Thanks to our government's direct intervention with the online retailers, Amazon and Walmart Canada proactively announced that they would stop all sales of machetes and other long-bladed weapons into our market. Encouragingly, Winnipeg saw a 14 per cent drop in knife crime in 2024, which the Winnipeg Police Service directly credited to the work that we did around the successful Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

While our government has greatly reduced the number of dangerous weapons in the hands of youth over the last year, we recognize that there are many other online retailers that are not verifying ages despite selling dangerous weapons into our province.

And we know that there is also a thriving resale market on Facebook Marketplace, Kijiji and other platforms where young people and criminals can still access those long-bladed weapons.

Honourable Speaker, for too long, online retailers and secondary marketplaces have operated in a grey area, selling dangerous weapons without the accountability and age verification that we want.

Bill 8 puts an end to that. The bill furthers our government's commitment to reducing violent crime by ensuring that online retailers are subject to the same rules as those brick-and-mortar stores, and it also adds pepper spray to the long-bladed weapon control weapon act, an important step in keeping that out of the hands of young people.

While members opposite have a record of firing 55 police officers and cutting front-line safety resources, this government is choosing a targeted and evidence-based action to make our communities safer and reduce the rate of violent crime.

If passed by this House, Bill 8 would make our communities safer by prohibiting online retailers and secondary sellers from selling those machetes and other long-bladed weapons into our communities and especially to minors. This ensures that smaller online retailers will follow the lead of Amazon, Walmart and

others who are keeping these weapons out of the hands of young people.

And we will require online retailers to keep records and ensure that purchasers have the proper ID when the purchase is delivered to them, requiring secondary sellers, including those shipping these products into Manitoba, to verify the age of the purchaser before the sale is finalized.

And we will bring the legislation of pepper spray under the same law as the dangerous weapons so that it is monitored by Manitoba's Public Safety Investigations Unit, who is doing an incredible job of ensuring that this is being implemented in community.

Bill 8 answers the call of so many in community who are asking government to step up to the plate, and, of course, our government has done that. This is a common sense measure to combat violent crime in the streets, and I'm proud to inform the House that the legislation has the support of law enforcement and community leaders who helped craft and develop this legislation. This includes the Retail Council of Canada, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, the Winnipeg Police Service, the RCMP, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the Southern Chiefs' Organization and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

Manitobans are watching, honourable Speaker. They want safer streets, responsible laws and a government that's willing to act. I encourage all members to stand behind this legislation, get it passed and make Manitoba a safer place.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): A number of questions on this bill. I'm just wondering, with the budget that was presented by the NDP government and the 12 whole police officers that are going to be afforded to the Province of Manitoba, what enforcement

mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance by online retailers operating outside Manitoba, inside Manitoba, garage sales, secondary sales, are going to be followed? Is the minister going to appoint those 12 whole officers to investigate all of these sales?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): What an unbelievable, condescending, disrespectful tone this member takes with regards to law enforcement.

Mr. Balcaen: If the Justice Minister actually knew how policing in Manitoba worked and didn't just sit behind a desk his entire career, he would understand that 12 officers is 0.0034 per cent of the police officers here in Manitoba. So maybe he should step up and actually add to a Justice portfolio rather than taking away from it.

How will the government ensure that required retailers collect names, addresses and other personal data does not create a new privacy risk or data breaches for Manitobans?

Mr. Wiebe: This is the member opposite who calls law enforcement window dressing. He calls record investments in law enforcement and partnerships that never existed under the party that he chose to run for. He calls that window dressing and disrespects law enforcement.

Again, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) said it best: The members opposite have totally abdicated any moral high ground that they had when it comes to supporting law enforcement or being champions of justice.

It's this party that's taking the steps necessary to make our communities safer.

Mr. Balcaen: That's rich coming from the member opposite, honourable Speaker, but really hasn't left his office. And I would actually question: Has he ever even gone on a ride-along or spent any time in a police car and seeing what happens out in the realities of the policing world?

What evidence does the government have that minors are currently obtaining pepper spray or long-bladed weapons in significant numbers through the channels that this bill targets? He talks about taking an education approach or a data-driven approach. What data is there?

Mr. Wiebe: He keeps using that phrase: It's rich. Like members of his caucus, members of his team that stand up and willing to put up a million dollars to bail somebody out, what does he think about that? Maybe he now has a chance. He won't ask me a question

during question period. Maybe he'll stand up and answer that question here today.

Mr. Balcaen: You know what, I've only been here for a short time in this Chamber—*[interjection]*—and as my colleague from Steinbach said, maybe a cup of coffee or maybe now I put that cream and sugar in the cup of coffee. The member opposite has been here for years and years and years and should know the rules that opposition asks questions and government is supposed to answer them, which he never does.

What limits, if any, will be placed on how long retailers must retain purchaser records and who will have access to that information?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, he won't answer the questions because he's scared. He's hiding behind the rules of the House because he won't have any accountability to Manitobans.

Like, where is the moral courage of this member? Other members of his caucus have stepped back and said, that's not for me. And yet this member, who claims to be this—somebody who knows law enforcement, he didn't do a darn thing to advocate for law enforcement in this province. And now when he's got a chance, he steps back and he's quiet. I think he needs to stand up. He needs to answer to Manitobans.

* (15:00)

Mr. Balcaen: You know what, I'm not going to continue engaging in this childish game. The minister knows that I spent 33 years in law enforcement and contributed greatly at the local, provincial, national and international level in law enforcement. I don't know what his record says on that.

What limits, if any, will be replaced—be placed on how long retailers must retain purchaser records and who will have access to that information? I will ask again, because instead of answering the question, this minister would rather be divisive.

Mr. Wiebe: The member opposite has the chance to get on the record and actually make a stand for the safety of Manitobans. And he refuses to do that, over and over again. He mocks law enforcement. He calls them a pittance. He says they're window dressing. He makes fun of 12 new officers being deployed in his community and across this province. He needs to be accountable for that.

And maybe he could start holding the law in his own caucus. His own caucus. Does he ever speak up? He won't speak up publicly. He can answer—does he actually stand up and speak up in his own caucus?

Mr. Balcaen: Manitobans, you can see just how unhinged this Minister of Justice is and this NDP caucus.

I have no further questions.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, honourable Speaker, the steps that our government is taking with regards to making our communities safer are historic. And I ask all members: take personal account, be honest with Manitobans, and maybe show up to a bill briefing every once in a while so that we can actually answer the questions the member has. I'm happy to do so in public committee.

I look forward to this bill moving forward. But I think that to have the kind of moral authority this member wishes he had, he needs to answer to Manitobans first, and I encourage him to wipe his conscience clean and speak up when members of his caucus make really bad decisions about their moral path.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: No further questions before we move on to debate?

To ensure clarity of the record, the bills for debate today include Bill 26 and not Bill 46.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: So the floor is open for debate on Bill 8.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'd just like to put a few very short words on the record today, because it's my hope that we can move a lot of these bills forward to committee, where people of Manitoba will have their opportunity to ask their questions and to present at committee. Not that any questions asked are ever answered by this minister, but it's a good opportunity for the public to state on record what they think regarding these bills that are put forward.

There are going to be challenges on this bill, and I have to bring that forward. The fact that this is going to online sales and areas such as garage sales or third-party providers is not something that, really, the public is going to fully understand. And I would certainly hope that this government does a long, long educational campaign before this bill is put into the public realm.

If I'm running a garage sale or I'm offering something for sale on one of the local e-commerce areas, I'm not going to know the law and I'm not going to understand the law that's come in. I'm used to selling items, I'm used to having them set up at my garage

sale, and all of a sudden weapons can be designated or put forward by this minister and I'm going to be at fault.

And as I asked earlier and the minister couldn't answer and went into his tirade, which—I'm not understanding why he does this. Maybe he's got law enforcement envy because he's never been there or has never actually worked a day in his life in that realm. Maybe it's opportune time for a career change. I don't know. Maybe that's what he's wanting to do.

But there is not enough time in the day for police officers to investigate this sort of crime, this sort of incident. So if you have a number of people tied up, they're not going to be able to get to the very serious crimes that are happening under his watch and under his government, crimes that have skyrocketed under their time in government.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, Bill 8 expands The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act to include pepper spray and to address modern retail practices such as online marketplaces and informable resale. The bill seeks to prevent minors from obtaining regulated weapons by encouraging age verification requirements.

And, again, if I'm working a garage sale or I'm going online, am I really going to take all of this time and effort, and will I even know that I'm supposed to do that? This government needs to make sure that they are forthright with people and not putting them into a spot where they can be charged.

While the bill aims to strengthen public safety and modernize existing legislation, it raises concerns related to privacy, enforcement and the regulation of personal safety devices. Legislators may wish to assess whether additional safeguards, clearer messaging or targeted exemptions are needed to ensure the law is effective, enforceable and proportionate.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): This bill is cynical political theatre. It is legislation that is absolutely designed to fail, that—it won't actually accomplish its stated purpose. It will not make Manitobans safer. The real purpose is virtue signalling. It's about issues management, and no one asked for this bill. There are no stakeholders, no experts; nobody's out there saying that this is a good idea.

This is a response to negative headlines about machete attacks after machete attacks in Manitoba. This, after the Kinew government, in its first session,

brought in the long-blade weapons act, which did nothing to stop the use of machete crime. In fact, I don't think a week goes by in Manitoba that there isn't a horrific news story about yet another machete attack.

The Province has shown no evidence that this policy was at all effective the first time around, and it's no evidence at all out there that this has reduced machete attacks. And despite that, they're doubling down in this bill, extending the rules to secondary sellers.

There is no enforcement mechanism in this bill, meaning that online sellers or private sellers will ignore this law without consequence. No one actually is going to go out and police the sale of machetes. There is no money set aside to do so. No policing or investigative unit is actually tasked with the responsibility of doing that.

The only thing that could possibly happen is, when there is yet another tragic machete incident, the police may—and that's a big if—investigate where the weapons came from. And without serial numbers, it will be absolutely impossible to trace.

If, in the rare case they're able to trace where the weapon was obtained, (1) it would most likely not be obtained legally, and which means that the sellers, either second-hand or original, won't be liable; and (2) if they are, they may face a minor fine at that time.

If the purpose of the bill is to prevent crime, no money or enforcement regime to actually do that means that it will accomplish nothing. It will not prevent machete crime, will not keep Manitobans safe. This bill is dead on arrival and it's set up to fail from the get-go. A lot of smart people in the justice system that would've told this minister those very facts. The minister would have promptly ignored them and not listened.

The goal of this legislation is not to prevent crime or even to work, for that matter. The goal of this legislation is to be seen to do something, anything, in relation to machete crime, even if the government knows that it actually has zero chance of working. It's cynical political theatre, and it's designed to give this struggling minister something to say to the media in response to the next and foreseeable tragedy that awaits our community.

But what he won't be able to say is that he actually did anything meaningful to protect you and your family from harm. This Justice ministry knows full

well that gimmicky legislation will not protect Manitobans, but the Knew government will not invest in actual preventative justice measures. This will not work, this won't have any money behind it and this will not keep families safe. Instead of real solutions, they offer you this.

* (15:10)

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no one else—ready for debate?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 8, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

I declare this motion passed.

Bill 9—The Street Weapons Control Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 9, The Street Weapons Control Act.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation and New Technology (MLA Moroz), that Bill 9, The Street Weapons Control Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I am pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of Bill 9, Street Weapons Control Act.

In our Speech from the Throne this year, we promised Manitobans that we would introduce new legislation to ban dangerous weapons from public places. We are committed to building the kind of safe communities that foster real growth after the almost decade of cuts from the members opposite where they cut front-line services and safety resources, including firing 55 police officers here in the city of Winnipeg.

Bill 9 is about keeping our promises to Manitobans, about giving law enforcement and community leaders the tools that they need to keep Manitobans safe, and it recognizes that street weapons like machetes and pepper spray make our province less safe for everyone.

Gang members and other offenders who are wielding these dangerous weapons keep families away from our beautiful parks and our playgrounds and other public spaces. And individuals armed with street weapons can make our hospitals, our transit buses and our libraries unsafe for the staff that work there and the many Manitobans who access these vital public services.

Last year, our government banned the sale of machetes and other long-bladed weapons to minors, and we've also taken meaningful steps to keep these dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals, including retailers—requiring retailers to keep machetes off their store floors.

Thanks to our direct intervention with online sellers, Amazon and Walmart Canada are part of the solution where—and they announced that they would cease all sales of machetes and other long-bladed weapons to the Manitoba market.

Because of these steps, because of the actions of our government, in 2024 we saw a 14 per cent decline in knife crimes and a 23 per cent decline in youth crime with a weapon here in Winnipeg. That's not us saying that; that's the facts; that's the statistics. But it's also, of course, the Winnipeg Police Service who made a direct link between the work that we're doing as government and the safer streets that we're seeing.

But we still know that street weapons are a major problem, and with machete attacks that create widespread fear in our communities, it's important that we continue to take steps to make our community safer. Bill 9 is that next step in our plan to get tough on street weapons in Manitoba, giving our valued police and

safety officers the tools that they need to keep weapons out of hospitals and off our streets.

When passed by this House, The Street Weapons Control Act would do several important things. First, the bill would make it illegal to carry street weapons in public spaces like parks, buses and shared spaces in cities and towns.

Second, Bill 9 gives police officers and safety officers the ability to step in before someone gets hurt. Officers would be allowed to seize these weapons or, without charging an individual under the act, be able to seize the weapons and get them off the street.

This will empower community safety officers to seize weapons in city parks, First Nations safety officers to disarm people who are harming their communities and institutional safety officers to just get those machetes and other dangerous weapons, including pepper spray, out of our hospitals.

Third, Bill 9 would protect the due process for individuals and the self-determination of First Nation communities. It would allow individuals to request their weapons back from law enforcement if they're not convicted of an offence under the act, and it would make exceptions for couriers and other authorized individuals who use these items to carry out their duties. Out of respect for First Nations, this law will only apply to those First Nations if they choose to opt in.

Bill 9 is a made-in-Manitoba approach, furthering our commitment to addressing public safety deficit that was left by the previous government. Over the last year, we've consulted with organizations across the province to determine what would work in Manitoba.

As a result, I'm proud to inform the House that this legislation has the support of law enforcement and community leaders throughout this province. These include the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, the Winnipeg Police Service, the RCMP, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, Southern Chiefs' Organization, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. And the list goes on, honourable Speaker.

I encourage all members to support Bill 9, to support the work that we're doing to make our province a safer place and partner in a real way with law enforcement and communities to make a difference.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): This bill defines street weapons broadly to include tools like axes and pepper spray. How does the government justify restricting everyday items that have legitimate and non-violent uses as they put into this bill?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, again, mayors, reeves, councillors from across this province are in support of this, the AMM more broadly. They understand there's a big difference between having one of these items in an urban space, in a public space, in a space where people need to be safe, feel safe. It is a big difference between that and using them as a tool.

Certainly, we look to law enforcement to enforce this in a way that makes sense in community but, ultimately, gives the public the confidence that these street weapons won't be used in a violent manner across the community.

Mr. Balcaen: I understand the difference between rural and urban, but I'm wondering if this law sees the difference between rural and urban. And that's the difference that we have to talk about on this bill, honourable Deputy Speaker, is that you can't write a bill for one Manitoban and not the other. So how will the minister ensure that this is properly enforced throughout Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I mean, again, it's in the bill.

Member opposite, if he needs to be brought up to speed, I can spend some time with him. He seems confused. He should talk to mayors and reeves who are asking, begging for the government to continue to get tough on crime and get tough on criminals. That's who we're going after.

Reeves, mayors, councillors across this province get it. This member opposite doesn't. His party did nothing. They had the opportunity. This is novel, but it's not something that they couldn't have done, and

they didn't do it. That shows where their priorities are. We're standing with community. We're standing with law enforcement.

Mr. Balcaen: This is very rich, coming from a government that sat there for 17 and a half years, sat on their hands, did nothing for public safety until the Progressive Conservative Party took government and public safety was then well under hand.

However, this government fails even now in their first three years. If you look at the statistics, crime is increasing rather than decreasing. So what evidence demonstrates that simply possessing these items in public spaces without criminal intent is a primary driver of violence in Manitoba?

* (15:20)

Mr. Wiebe: Again, he uses that phrase. Isn't that rich, he says. Does he talk to the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), huh? Does he talk to people in his caucus and stand up for those that have the means to start to bail out convicted sex offenders? He can answer that right now. He can just make a firm stand and he can be clear with Manitobans; he refuses to do that.

We're going to continue to work with community to make it safer and, of course, we're doing that with the guidance and with the encouragement of reeves, mayors, everyone at AMM and law enforcement—something the members opposite never did.

Mr. Balcaen: To coin a phrase that I heard last year, somebody's living rent-free in this minister's head. I'm just wondering what else is living in this minister's head, because we're hearing lots of different things that are pretty deplorable to Manitobans.

Why does the bill not require proof of intent to use an item as a weapon before making possession—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —in public illegal? I'll ask it again because I'm not getting an answer from a minister who's—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —never been on the street and never knows how to enforce rules. He can talk about making them, but his socialist area, he is—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —not able to actually do any work.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Still have about 10 minutes of questions; would love to get through these questions without yelling back and forth.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, a million bucks from one of his current caucus colleagues to bail out a convicted sex offender. Like, really, does anything else need to be said?

What I think it highlights is that members opposite, of course, during their time—seven and a half years—they cut; they froze; they literally lost—we lost officers in the city of Winnipeg. We lost them across this province.

Now he comes in here and he says, it's window dressing; it's a pittance. He makes fun of law enforcement. He makes—he jokes about them.

Honourable Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. We are making the—not only investments in dollars, but actual legislation that he could get out of the way and he could support. He continues to want to hold this up because he wants to play games. He needs to be accountable first to Manitobans, and then we can start—

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

Mr. Balcaen: Well, there you have it, Brandon and Westman. Is this the type of government that you want to have representing you in these areas? This is what you see when the curtains are pulled back.

So I ask the member: Why does the bill not require proof of intent to use an item as a weapon before making possession in public illegal? I'll ask it for the third time and maybe, just maybe, we'll get an answer this time.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, like I said, the member opposite needs to come clean with Manitobans.

And, you know, he talks about pulling the veil back or allowing people to see. We're seeing what happens in their caucus room because they've got this member who was sitting at the Cabinet table.

Now he can say: I wasn't there; I don't know, I don't know. Well, members of his caucus, of course, knew, and they saw the member opposite at the Cabinet table while bills were being discussed that are in direct conflict of interest with their actions.

But now, he sits in that caucus. It's now—it's not theoretical—it's now. What is this member opposite going to do? Is he going to answer for his members in

his caucus? Or is he going to be quiet and he's going to have no moral authority whatsoever?

They want to joke; they want to laugh—go for it. Manitobans are disgusted with the actions—

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

Seeing no further questions—*[interjection]*

Order. Order.

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Seeing no—the honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Now, you know what, I can hack—I can hear—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) and the member—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

We're one bill into many bills for the day, so we have a long night ahead of us.

Mr. Balcaen: As a deaf and hard of hearing member of the community, you know, it's pretty bad when we have the minister responsible for that yelling at me across the way when it's just absolutely inappropriate for the Minister of Families to be doing that. And I'm glad that she was called to order because it's disrespectful in this Chamber to have that sort of actions happening. *[interjection]*

And it's happening again, honourable Deputy Speaker.

And it's a shame, really, that this minister doesn't take her job serious and is constantly, constantly causing issues for people within that community. It's been noted, and she continues to do it and doesn't take that warning. So it's embarrassing, quite frankly, honourable Deputy Speaker.

So, getting back to this bill, it's important to put some words on the record about this bill and the fact that street weapons have been talked about on this, but it's such a broad issue on this. It's so encompassing that tools that people use for their jobs, tools that they use to effectively do the work that they need to do, could actually be held accountable or criminally charged—not so much criminally charged, but under this statute, and have those items seized from them.

This is actually going past what a government should do. It's extending into areas that government

ought not to be involved in, and this is why individuals in Manitoba get upset with a number of these bills that are proposed by this government, because they're overreach. They're stretching much too far, and individuals are starting to be very concerned about this government and their overreach.

Bill 9 proposes a new provincial framework to regulate the possession of certain weapons such as machetes, swords, axes and pepper spray in public spaces within populated areas and, again, it's very difficult to talk about what is a populated area. In different communities, populated areas are vastly different. For example, in Winnipeg, an area having 100 people may not be vastly populated, whereas in somewhere like Gimli or Lundar or somewhere there, having 100 people would be a very populated area.

So, again, they're pitting one Manitoban against another Manitoban, one community against another community. It's government overreach at the best and it's an area that ought not to be really looked at by this government, the overstretch that this government is having.

So this bill raises several considerations, including the breadth of items classified as street weapons, the inclusion of pepper spray used for personal safety—and, as many of us know, pepper spray can be purchased for safety reasons against dogs and animals and—vicious animals doing these attacks.

The inclusion of this and the significant regulatory powers granted to government to expand the scope of the law, MLAs may wish to consider whether additional safeguards, clearer definitions and stronger oversight mechanisms are needed to ensure the legislation effectively improves public safety while avoiding unintended impacts on lawful activities.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Again, this is another cynical, do-nothing bill with the stated purpose of prohibiting the possession of machetes or bear sprays in public spaces.

And the assumption that's problematic in this bill is, like, they weren't already prohibited. They were. There is a Criminal Code charge called possession of weapon dangerous to the public peace that has been around for decades. And the police use this offence to arrest people if they are in possession of bear spray or machetes in public, if they have the intention of disturbing the public peace.

* (15:30)

Again, nobody asked for this bill. There's no experts, no stakeholders behind this bill. There's no consultation. This is a solution looking for a problem, and existing laws already cover this. But the reality is, there's a dark side to this because if it ever gets used—and it's unlikely that it ever actually will get used—there's no safeguards in place. And that means that vulnerable Manitobans will be the ones that will get the enforcement on this and will get harassed and will feel the negative effects of this bill. This is a government that punches down routinely. There's an element of cruelty and mean-spiritedness to this government, and this legislation certainly becomes symbolic and reflective of a general tenor.

I doubt this bill will even survive constitutional scrutiny. I suspect the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) never even asked for an opinion from his constitutional law branch, because they really don't care if this bill works. And like the other Justice bill, there's no money attached to it for enforcement, so there's no dedicated investigative unit to enforce the law, and that means it won't be enforced. The police already have tools; they don't need this, they won't use it and it will just go on as a dead-letter law.

You know, the other cynical bill designed to fail—there's a pattern here—if you remember the fortified vehicle and Unexplained Wealth Act in the first session of this government. Big fanfare, the government was cracking down on organized crime; they're getting tough.

Did a FIPPA on that bill, and after a year, turns out, it hasn't been used once. Not once. So much for organized crime, I guess they're enjoying a bit of a renaissance under this minister. It means it's not being used by law enforcement.

Oh, but remember The Unexplained Wealth Act, again, that was going to save us all; this was going to crack down on organized crime, we're getting tough, we're tough guys, we're tough on organized crime. Did a FIPPA on it, it turns out, not used—not used. In fact, there's one case in Manitoba where the act was used, was it this, you know, Michael Corleone gangster figure? No, it wasn't. It was an alleged corrupt minister at a gurdwara who had the allegations that he embezzled from his congregation. That's hardly Al Capone, that's hardly organized crime.

That's who this minister is targeting with his legislation. It's not organized criminals; they feel very safe under this government. The real purpose is not to actually have effective laws or to prevent crime, but this is simply, so the minister actually has something

to say to the media when they say, hey, crime has been going up under your watch significantly, why aren't you doing something? Well, I have—I brought in all this, like, empty political theatre, all this legislation that doesn't actually do anything. Look, I'm working.

This is to provide cover to a minister who Angus Reid says less than 27 per cent of Manitobans believe that this government is doing a good job in public safety and crime. That's even less than the 29 per cent of Manitobans who approve the job this government's doing.

So think about that number for a bit. That means NDP voters, people who supported this government, do not believe this government is effective in doing a good job on public safety and crime.

Imagine living in a world where a government wants to solve problems, bring in actual solutions and really want to keep Manitobans safe. I mean, the solutions are out there. What's missing from this minister and this government is the political will. And it's at the point now where Manitobans are starting to tune this minister out. This is not a serious piece of legislation. In fact, it insults Manitobans who are concerned about public safety and want their government to take real action.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no one up for debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 9, The Street Weapons Control Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

This motion is passed.

Bill 34—The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 34, The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Public Service Delivery (MLA Sandhu), that Bill 34, The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of Bill 34, The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act. The interprovincial subpoena legislation allows courts to enforce subpoenas from other provinces or territories, requiring witnesses from other provinces or territories to attend hearings in Manitoba and ensuring that Manitoba subpoenas are respected elsewhere in Canada.

Currently, The Interprovincial Subpoena Act only applies to subpoenas that are issued by the court. It does not clearly cover subpoenas issued by boards, commissions or tribunals. As a result, subpoenas issued by boards and commissions cannot be currently enforced outside of the province.

The Bill will update The Interprovincial Subpoena Act so that the same enforcement rules apply to subpoenas issued by boards, commissions, tribunals and other similar bodies, whether in Manitoba or in another province or territory.

As a result of these amendments, boards, commissions, tribunals will be able to require witnesses from outside Manitoba to give evidence, supporting them in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. These amendments will strengthen the ability of boards, commissions and tribunals to do their work by ensuring that they can hear from all necessary witnesses even when those witnesses live outside of Manitoba.

It's important that—to note that the proposed amendments do not create any additional powers to issue subpoenas, they simply improve the accountability and bring our legislation in line with other provinces. Members opposite should be on board with the increased accountability, especially with their record of having a premier who has actually been fined for violating the Constitution here in this province, an unprecedented situation.

I encourage all members of this House to support more accountability through Bill 34, which will strengthen the ability of boards, commissions and tribunals to carry out their important mandates with improved accountability.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Given that this bill expands the recognition of subpoenas beyond traditional courts, can the minister outline which provinces already allow tribunals and administrative bodies to issue interprovincial subpoenas, and how Manitoba compares to those provinces?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As I said in my opening comments this does bring us in line with other provinces. Manitoba, of course, is part of this national framework but it's important that we stay current and relevant to what other provinces are doing.

This will give tribunals and inquiries other abilities to subpoena that I think other provinces will appreciate. We're working with other Canadian provinces and the federal government. We're making Manitoba a more accountable place because of it.

Mr. Balcaen: As Manitoba expands the scope of who can effectively compel attendance across provincial lines, what consultation occurred with the legal community and administrative tribunals regarding this bill?

Mr. Wiebe: This conforms with the uniform law conference recommendations. It, of course, again aligns us with other provinces.

* (15:40)

We are in support of this Canadian project with our neighbouring provinces. This is a part of that work. We want to make sure that there is, of course, a lining up of priorities. This is one way that we can

show accountability to Manitobans. I hope members opposite support it.

Mr. Balcaen: Recognizing that individuals may now be compelled to attend proceedings initiated by non-court bodies in other provinces, what protections are in place for our Manitoba citizens to ensure fairness and prevent overreach by other provinces or tribunals?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, no new powers are being 'conferred'—conferred here in terms of the role of those bodies and their ability to issue a subpoena. What is being changed is that there is an ability to now simply extend that outside of the boundaries of the province.

I think most Manitobans would understand that just because you're living in Saskatchewan, doesn't mean that if there is a legitimate reason for you to be subpoenaed, that you should then adhere to that request. That's what this legislation does. We ask members opposite to get on board.

Mr. Balcaen: As provinces continue to co-ordinate on legal matters, does the minister see a need for a broader national framework governing interprovincial evidence and witness compelling?

Mr. Wiebe: Hey, now the member opposite is getting it. We work with provinces across Canada because we know when it comes to accountability, it's so important to protect our democracy, to show accountability to Manitobans and to Canadians. We're going to help encourage other provinces follow our lead and Nova Scotia's lead and continue to build up this regime.

What I hope members opposite will see is the value of being honest and transparent with voters to ensure that people know exactly which members of which party broke the law here in Manitoba.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions, the floor is open for debate.

Seeing no debate, is the floor ready for the question—or is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 34, The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 42—The Motor Vehicle Statutes Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 42, The Motor Vehicle Statutes Amendment Act.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): I move, seconded by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, that Bill 42, The Motor Vehicle Statutes Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of Bill 42, The Motor Vehicle Statutes Amendment Act. The bill improves four key areas within Manitoba Public Insurance to strengthen the supports for Manitobans to make our roads safer and to reduce red tape.

First, the bill improves Personal Injury Protection Plan, the PIPP, which is already one of the best no-fault insurance coverage programs in Canada. We want to build on that, and this means that anyone injured in an automobile accident in Manitoba, elsewhere in Canada or in the United States, is provided with comprehensive benefits from PIPP without having to sue.

This bill would improve PIPP by ensuring that Indigenous and other forms of culturally relevant care can now be paid for by the PIPP, answering to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 22nd Call to Action and making an important statement about our values here in the province of Manitoba.

It will also expand counselling eligibility to family members of individuals who are seriously injured in accidents and removes the requirement for a prescription to access those so-vital counselling services. This ensures that benefits that are provided in a culturally appropriate and timely manner is available to Manitobans and it's a particularly important to those who live in rural and northern areas. This will make important changes.

It also allows for coverage for witnesses to traumatic motor vehicle collisions, like the bus crash in Carberry—near Carberry, that killed 17 seniors and injured eight others.

Or another example: the Lapu Lapu tragedy. I know we just recognized the anniversary of that tragic event. This would allow MPI to directly pay for

the care of providers, which will make it convenient for Manitobans who are struggling to get the counselling that they need.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 42 ensures that every Manitoban has access to those essential supports that they need after a collision and it reduces red tape and allows MPI to better serve Manitobans.

The second area of major focus for this bill improves the professional truck driver training regime here in Manitoba. There are currently two truck driver training programs: a mandatory entry-level course, the MELT program, and a longer professional training program.

While MPI currently oversees driver training, they no longer—the longer program is also regulated under a separate branch of Advanced Education and Training, and this adds to the duplication and administrative burden of delivering this important training. That's why our government is reducing the red tape, making MPI the sole regulator of the driver training sector here in the province.

It also amends the driver training and vehicles act, so that MPI can apply the same student protections to both truck driver training programs so that there's transparency. And the safeguards will help protect and inform students and eliminate fraud and help keep our roads safer by ensuring that those who graduate and get behind the wheel of a semi-truck are well-prepared and they are well-trained.

The third topic that Bill 42 is focused on is antique vehicles. Currently, vehicles 30 years or older can be registered as antiques based on the age alone, and I don't know what that says about myself when I look at that; 30 years ago doesn't seem that long, Honourable Speaker. I think to most Manitobans it doesn't, either.

Are those antiques, Honourable Speaker? They, of course—the program now offers considerable benefits such as exemptions from safeties and reduced insurance programs, but of course those vehicles are supposed to be limited in their use and can be only driven to and from certain events. This was not updated under the previous government. The 30-year timeline continued to be a bit of a puzzle to most Manitobans and that meant that more non-antique vehicles were qualifying for the antique vehicle benefits and it was creating significant road safety risks.

Bill 42 gives MPI the flexibility to work with stakeholders directly, to update that definition over time, increasing the maximum age to at least 35 years,

Honourable Speaker. It doesn't seem that long ago. These changes will reflect our commitment to keeping the roads safe while protecting benefits and cutting red tape for antique vehicle owners.

The final important major topic this bill covers is permitted use of farm trucks under The Highway Traffic Act. The farm truck rules haven't been updated in over 50 years, so bill 50–42 modernizes them to make life easier for modern farm families. Farmers, their families, their employees will now have more flexibility to use those farm trucks for limited personal purposes beyond a strict farming definition.

These changes will reduce red tape and make the everyday life of farm families in our province simpler while also keeping appropriate limits in place.

Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to recommend Bill 42 to the House today. The bill will strengthen support for Manitoba victims to truck drivers, antique vehicle owners, make our roads safer and support farm families. It reduces red tape.

Honourable Speaker, let's pass this bill and let's make Manitoba a better place.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): My first question for the minister is: What specific problems or complaints led to the overhaul of driver training school regulation?

* (15:50)

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Yes, I hope the member opposite will join us in supporting this legislation because it is important. It is something that is on the minds of Manitobans. The safety of our roads is paramount. And when we're talking about those who are operating the biggest and most potentially dangerous vehicles on our roads, we've got to make sure that the training that's provided is top-notch.

That what—that's what this change is going to do. It's going to allow MPI to be more proactive. It's going to root out these companies that are coming into Manitoba and not providing good training.

We want safe roads. Members opposite should join us.

Mr. King: I couldn't agree with the minister more on the reasons why this legislation comes in, but what he didn't answer—what the specific problems or complaints that led to this. That was the question that I asked.

Maybe I'll give the minister another opportunity to answer that question.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I mean we've seen some absolutely terrible tragedies on our roads. Member opposite sits next to a member that represents a community that was very hard hit by a recent tragedy and a family that's seeking justice.

We can do a small part here by changing some of the driver training requirements, making sure that it's uniform and that the information, the transparency is available to Manitobans.

But I ask all members to join us in this work because we don't want companies who are, you know, not training properly, who have very high rates of failure, for instance, and continue to put the same students back through the same programs that result in those failures. We need to do better.

Mr. King: What consultation occurred with driver training schools regarding the new reporting and contract requirements?

Mr. Wiebe: We're working very closely with industry on making these changes. Manitoba is home to some of the best-in-class trucking companies anywhere in North America, I would argue. So it was important for us to listen to them, listen to the Trucking Association, and make sure that these changes are in line with the expectations they have in developing the industry.

They are in support of this legislation because it gets that balance right, and it roots out those companies that are giving everybody a bad name. I would say, you know, a few apples can spoil the bunch. We want to work with the good apples and make sure we get this legislation passed.

Mr. King: How many schools are currently regulated under The Private Vocational Institutions Act, and how will the transition occur?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I don't have that number in front of me, and I can't remember if the member opposite asked this during the bill briefing, but I'm happy to get him that information and work with him as we work with industry to make these changes.

In terms of how the transition will happen, we are already working with industry; we're working with the schools. We want to make sure that we get this right in terms of the regulations about what information is shared with the public.

We're going to do that work, and we want to do it in collaboration, so I ask members opposite to get on board.

Mr. King: Will the private use of farm vehicles impact the eligibility to use dyed gas?

Mr. Wiebe: No, and that's something that we want to be clear about. We're making sure that this bill is simply expanding the definition about how these vehicles are used. This reflects, like, the modern farm family, right? This vehicle is used to get the kids to soccer practice in the same way that it's used to get out in the field and do some work.

So we want to make sure we're giving more options to families, not taking them away.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, what metrics will be used to evaluate the success of these amendments?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I guess there's four major changes that are being made with this bill, so if the member opposite wants to be a bit more specific, that'd be helpful.

For the Personal Injury Protection Plan, for instance, I would say the number of victims that we help, the number of folks that are able to access that culturally appropriate counselling. Those are metrics that I think all members can agree would benefit all Manitobans.

And so I'm happy to continue that conversation as we see this now-expanded service and expanded support for Manitobans roll out to everyone.

Mr. King: Yes, sorry, I got one more question, honourable Speaker.

Just wondering, how many additional individuals does MPI expect to become eligible for counselling under these changes of—is there a number, is there a cost budgeted for this?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. The short answer is, yes, there is a budget for this within MPI.

The expectation is not that there will be a number of new claims being made. Certainly the most extreme vehicle collisions—I mentioned the Carberry crash—you know, that's where we want to support those who have witnessed this and responded to these tragedies. The expectation is these are not normal events, so there's not a big ask there.

And, in terms of the culture, I think it—what it would mean for most victims is they have easier access. Instead of going to MPI, instead of asking for these on the back end, they can at the front end be provided these counselling services. And I think it's just going to make everybody's experience a lot better.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further questions?

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I want to thank you for the opportunity to put some words on the record here for some much needed housecleaning in this legislation that—realize it's a multi-part modernization bill that touches the driver training, the transportation rules and insurance coverage that brings forward a number of updates at once. So it is important to ensure that each piece is properly thought through. We need to understand how these changes interact in practice.

The Speaker in the Chair

Now, a very important part to this legislation that they brought forward is—and the most 'substantive' change—is the new regulatory framework for driver training schools. Now, it introduces the contracts, the reporting requirements of greater oversight of how schools operate, and, Honourable Speaker, that's a significant shift in how this sector is regulated here in this province.

I know the member opposite talked about the accident with the Humboldt Broncos and, of course, the member from Borderland here had a very tragic accident in his community. So these are certainly some regulatory frameworks that will help maybe make life better and safer on our Manitoba highways.

Is—improving consumer protection and transparency for students is a reasonable objective. People are investing significant time and money into training, and they deserve clear information and fair treatment. The question is whether the framework strikes the right balance, of course.

Now, a number of key elements are being left to regulation rather than set out in the legislation, so regulations aren't subject to the same level of debate or scrutiny in the Legislature, which is disappointing. It leaves open questions about how these provisions will ultimately be implemented.

We know other provinces take different approaches depending on the class of licence being taught; some have more tailored contractual requirements for

commercial training versus standard driver training. That's something Manitoba should carefully consider, because what is appropriate for a class 1 commercial driving school may not be appropriate for a class 5 program. The regulatory framework needs to reflect those differences to avoid unintended consequences; one-size-fits-all approach just may not work in practice.

Now, the farm vehicle amendments—recognizing how these vehicles are actually used in rural Manitoba—many felt the previous rules were overly restrictive and didn't reflect our day-to-day realities. And, coming from the farm, these changes will likely be welcomed by rural stakeholders and then we'll all be falling within those regulations now and abiding to them.

You know, I think back years ago when we would send our cousins or girlfriends or whoever it may be to get parts for us in our farm truck—that they most likely weren't covered if they were to be in an accident, but this legislation certainly gives the opportunity for us to make our farms more efficient.

The MPI changes expand—

* (16:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

Today is the 14th sitting day after the first reading completion day. All government bills that had first reading moved within 20 sitting days of the Throne Speech and have been identified by the government as specified but not selected by the opposition as designated bills are eligible to have second readings moved today and have the question put. For each such bill, the minister may speak for a maximum of 10 minutes, followed by up to 15-minute question-and-answer period. Critics of recognized parties and independent members may then speak for a maximum of 10 minutes per bill, following which I will put the question on second reading of the bill.

If such a bill had previously called for debate, any remaining actions just identified for each bill will be dealt with before the question will be put. The House shall sit until midnight, and points of order and matters of privilege are deferred until all votes have been completed.

As announced, the list of bills that will follow this process today will be the following: bills 42, 44, 26, 27, 28, 32, 50, 18, 37, 29, 35 and 45.

So we will now resume debate on Bill 42, standing in the name of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. King), who has seven minutes remaining.

Mr. King: I thank you for giving me the opportunity to—a few more minutes here—just going to conclude on my comments here.

Going back to where I was, one of the very important changes that—made to this legislation, of course—is to support—expand the support and recognize the mental health impacts of serious accidents. Extending coverage beyond direct victims to witnesses, family members reflects a broader understanding of trauma, and that most certainly is an important shift in policy direction.

Again, going back to the horrible, tragic accidents in Carberry and in Borderland when—now, I guess the question is: Would our first responders be involved in that, because our first responders in our rural communities see an awful lot of awful, horrific scenes when they come up on this. So if it's extended to them, that's going to be welcome.

Now, there's still questions about how some of these provisions are going to be applied. It's not clear whether a witness would include those first responders, who may already be covered for stuff like that through employment benefits or the Workers Compensation Board. So clarity on eligibility for that in this legislation is going to be important for those people.

Just in conclusion, Honourable Speaker, overall, much of this bill is modernized in alignment with practices seen elsewhere. The key will be in the details, though, particularly those set out in the regulation. We want to ensure that the end result is fair to students, workable for the providers and, most of all, clear for Manitobans.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 42.

The Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak?

No other members wishing to speak, then is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 42, The Motor Vehicle Statutes Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 44—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2026

The Speaker: We will now, as previously announced, move on to Bill 44, second reading, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2026.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie)—that part I knew, Honourable Speaker—that Bill 44, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Welcome to my world, trying to remember all those names.

It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, that Bill 44, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2026, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Wiebe: It's everyone's favourite time of the year again when we talk about minor amendments and corrections in our statutes throughout the province here, an important activity and maybe not one that gets a lot of attention.

But I just want to take a moment, I won't name them, but our Legislative Counsel does incredible work every single day. They do this work throughout the year. This is a reflection of their work and they do it beyond reproach in a way that really just speaks to, I think, what Manitobans expect of their government, and that is to make things better every single day. I will hopefully have more to say about their work at a future time, but right now I'll leave it to just say thank you the team at Legislative Counsel for doing this work.

This bill, this omnibus bill, again, reflects the typographical and numbering and minor drafting and translation errors that accumulate over time and are only addressed when that work is done by our legislative team. Throughout the year, these small mistakes are found, they're gathered, they're evaluated, they're discussed before the drafting amendments are then brought forward here to the Legislature.

It allows for these minor amendments in the—to acts that go beyond those typographical or grammatical errors, and MACA 2026 includes some of these types of amendments.

I'll just highlight a couple, and then, hopefully, we'll get unanimous support to move this legislation through.

The Provincial Offences Act, which is amended to set a deadline for persons to apply to set aside a default conviction: the court can still give someone extra time but only if they can show that they missed the deadline for reasons that are truly outside of their control and they ask for more time as soon as they reasonably could. This is an amendment that's important.

Changes to The Social Services Administration Act, which is an update to a residential-care facility, the definition that's provided in legislation. It will no longer include places that are care for adults who need support because of age-related frailty or cognitive decline, which is an oversight in the current legislation.

And finally, the Criminal Code recently replaced the term child pornography with the new, more current, child sexual abuse and exploitation material. And so MACA, the minor amendments and corrections act, is updating several laws so that the definition can use this new wording.

Honourable Speaker, I encourage all members of this House to support this legislation and I look forward to seeing it move through the legislative process.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): If this bill is purely technical, what safeguards were in place to ensure no unintended legal consequences are being introduced in it?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Okay, so we started this debate here today by talking about how our Legislative Counsel group is beyond reproach, and I would hope that all members would join in sending that clear message to Manitobans. This is about making changes that streamline and modernize our legislation and is done in a non-partisan way. We need to support those civil servants.

I implore all members to simply be clear that we support that work and we want to see this bill passed.

Mr. Balcaen: Were any stakeholders or legal experts besides Legislative Counsel consulted before making these changes?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, this is in, oftentimes, in response to concerns coming from community. Again, this is, you know, brought together throughout the year. It's compiled in a way that is responsive to the changes in community and with application of these statutes.

But, of course, we trust the work of our Legislative Counsel. If there's a specific piece that the member opposite has issue with, I think he should put it on the record.

* (16:10)

Mr. Balcaen: How will these changes be communicated to professionals and organizations affected by them?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I think it's by the important work that we do here in the Legislature as a starting point, sending that clear message that we support this work and support these changes.

As the statutes are implemented and changed and communicated more broadly, it's important for all community groups, all public entities and the public in general to just be a part of this process.

This is how we make legislation better, and it's a uniquely Canadian—maybe even Manitoban, but certainly Canadian—perspective, one that's not shared in other jurisdictions. And, again, I hope that we can be very clear that when there's enough to talk about on a partisan level, these are changes that are important that we need to make.

Mr. Balcaen: Just wondering why these specific five private acts were chosen to repeal at this time, and has the government confirmed that the organizations affected are no longer relying on these acts?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, so to be clear, this isn't driven by government; it's driven by our Legislative Counsel, by the drafters, by the folks who pore through and work on this legislation on a regular basis. Yes, we've been working with community, ensuring that there's full visibility and full work on implementing these changes.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Is the House ready for the question?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate, sorry.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I, as well, would like to thank the Legislative Counsel. *[interjection]* Thank you. Thank you. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: And you can see Leg. Counsel got a huge applause here from our PC caucus for the work that they do, and we certainly appreciate that. And again, on behalf of myself, I would also like to thank them. I've met with them a number of times during different bill briefings and particularly on this minor amendments act. And, you know, they do a lot of work that is behind the scenes, and it's important that we make sure that we recognize their work.

And this is a housekeeping bill that cleans up Manitoba's statutes to ensure that they are clear, accurate and up to date. We support these efforts to keep Manitobans' laws clear, concise and relevant. These technical amendments help ensure the system works as intended. Government has time to fix wording in this legislation, but Manitobans are still waiting for them to fix the real issues they're dealing with every single day, like affordability, health care, the economy and crime.

Thank you, Honourable deputy Speaker.

The Speaker: No further people—persons wishing to debate?

Then is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 44, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2026.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 26—The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Eliminating Mandatory Overtime for Nurses)

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 26, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Eliminating Mandatory Overtime for Nurses).

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour, that Bill 26, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Eliminating Mandatory Overtime for Nurses), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Labour—the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

MLA Asagwara: The use of mandatory overtime, we know, has had major negative impacts on nurses and health-care workers across the province. And, so, it's my pleasure to bring forward some brief remarks on Bill 26, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Eliminating Mandatory Overtime for Nurses). This is something nurses have been advocating for, unions have been advocating for, because we know that the use and overuse of mandatory overtime has a big effect on the quality of patient care, puts patient safety at risk, affects the well-being and work-life balance of nurses and it leads to nurse and staffing burnout.

This bill declares that it is a provincial objective and priority that health services are provided in a manner that does not require nurses to work mandatory overtime.

And to achieve that, the bill provides that regulations can be made that set benchmarks for eliminating mandatory overtime and outlines expectations—rather, exceptions, apologies Honourable Speaker—when overtime can and cannot be mandated. All health authorities, health-care organizations and health corporations in receipt of funding from a health authority and from the government will require—be required to prepare and implement an overtime compliance plan to ensure steps are taken to limit mandatory overtime.

This legislation addresses commitment from the Throne Speech to end the practice of mandatory overtime for health-care workers, starting with nurses. The bill will promote the recruitment and retention of nurses and other health-care workers and attract health-care professionals to Manitoba by providing reassurances that they can expect a fair and much better work-life balance and better overall work—well-being, rather, while working in Manitoba's health-care system.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period will—questions—a question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the Minister in the normal rotation and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): This bill is centred on benchmarks that will be established by the minister in regulation. I'm just wondering if the minister can elaborate on what is meant by the term benchmarks.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Yes, I don't have a definition of benchmarks right in front of me. I think the member for Roblin knows what benchmarks are.

But what I can say is that this legislation is being brought forward after many conversations and consultation with nurses themselves, health-care providers, unions. We know that mandatory overtime has been used in some cases, unfortunately, as a proactive staffing tool, and that's unacceptable. It's inappropriate. We can do better than that.

We also know that for many years, because health care was cut, nurses were leaving the health-care system, nurses lost their jobs, that there's a lot of work to do to make sure that we move in a better direction.

And that, first and foremost, is done by staffing the health-care system. We've taken a lot of steps to staff, record numbers of nurses being trained, retained and hired in health care, and this is just another step to support that good work and make sure nurses can enjoy being nurses on the front lines in Manitoba.

Mrs. Cook: Building off the minister's answer, we know that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has stated unequivocally that there are enough nurses in Manitoba to effectively eliminate mandatory overtime across the province. I'm just wondering if the minister agrees with the Premier's assessment.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I really appreciate that the members opposite are clapping for that member for Roblin's question, where the Premier talked about the fact that our government has done really monumental work to staff the front lines of the health-care system in conjunction with nurses themselves. I think that the Premier's comments regarding all of those efforts and that we are moving in a better direction in health care is worthy of applause.

It's a real all-hands-on-deck approach here in Manitoba—[interjection]

I'm not sure that—the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) is heckling me for some unknown reason. He ran under our banner to staff the front lines of the health-care system. We're doing that work. We're better off doing that work without him in our caucus, I might note. But we're getting that work done. We're training more nurses than we ever have before, we're hiring—

The Speaker: The member's has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I think the minister just ran out of time there to complete their response. So I'll give them another opportunity with the same question.

* (16:20)

Is the Minister of Health confident that there are currently enough nurses working in every region of the province that they will be able to eliminate mandatory overtime.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I want to thank the member for giving me an opportunity to follow up on what I was saying. I was interrupted by the member for Fort Garry, but I welcome the opportunity.

You know what, we as a government have taken the right steps and there's more work to be done to fill the massive hole that was created by the previous government, firing hundreds of nurses, cutting their jobs, closing their workplaces.

But, certainly, we have done the work required and we're going to keep our foot on the gas to continue to train record numbers of nurses, retain record numbers of nurses and recruit them to Manitoba and to the front lines to make sure that of course we can continue to take these steps, like bringing forward legislation to ban mandatory overtime. We're able to take this step because we've done all of that work with our partners, because we're training—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: So when then exactly does the minister envision having mandatory overtime completely eliminated?

MLA Asagwara: I think the member for Roblin having, you know, gone over this, the legislation and had a briefing on this as well, I think she knows and understands that in the legislation it articulates that we understand there will be circumstances where mandatory overtime is required. I'm a nurse myself. I've been in those scenarios. If there's a code orange that's called or some sort of emergency or some sort of event that requires, you know, for mandatory overtime to be utilized to make sure that life and limb is preserved,

to make sure that patient safety is always the top priority.

So there are going to be circumstances, of course, aligned with collectively bargained agreements, where mandatory overtime is still required. We know that. We just want to make sure that mandatory overtime isn't being used as a staffing tool. And those conditions were created—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, again, I know the 30 seconds or the 45 seconds is short. So, again, I just want to ask the minister: When they envision having mandatory overtime completely eliminated?

MLA Asagwara: I appreciate the member for Roblin didn't say I was being long-winded. She was being very gracious in recognizing that, you know, I want to talk about this all day, but we only have limited time.

You know, what I would say is that this is an important step that we're taking in the right direction. We're going to work directly with nurses, with unions, with our post-secondary institutions, with our partners, to make sure that we can roll out the steps necessary to ban mandatory overtime in a responsible way.

Of course, patient safety is going to remain our top priority, and the well-being of nurses delivering care. And so this is a really important step that we're taking, knowing that there's more work that has to be done with our partners to make sure that we do this responsibly and safely. But this is something we're doing in Manitoba because we know nurses have been asking for this for a long time.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: If health authorities find themselves in a position where they have to use agency nurses to ensure that they are not mandating overtime, will the minister allow them to do so?

MLA Asagwara: We already do. We work with all partners in the health-care sector to make sure that patient safety is top priority.

What we've done in terms of agency is we've moved away from this cottage-like, for-profit, manufactured industry under the previous government, where it was running wild and unchecked. We've made sure that there's standards and deliverables in place. And we're working with our regional health authorities, our partners, who are doing a phenomenal job recruiting nurses to the front lines and retaining them. So we're seeing those vacancy rates improve,

staffing improve in some of the hardest to staff regions of the province.

But, again, foot on the gas, more work to do, and we're going to keep doing this work so that Manitobans, no matter where they live, have nurses at the bedside.

Mrs. Cook: I'm wondering if the minister expects that the elimination of mandatory overtime will advance faster within certain health-care settings or certain regions of the province, or if they expect these benchmarks to be applied uniformly across all health-care settings and across all regions at the same time?

MLA Asagwara: That's a really good and important question; I want to thank the member for asking it. We know that, you know, not all regions are the same, not all sites are the same; the needs, capacity challenges aren't the same everywhere.

And so we want to make sure that we roll this legislation out responsibly and that we work with our partners so that the nuance and the nimbleness that was going to need to be in place so that we can meet the needs, site by site, region to region, that that is done the right way.

And so we are going to work with our partners very closely in the regional health authorities and make sure that banning mandatory overtime rolls out in a way that really meets site-specific needs. And we're going to keep ourselves open to being able to pivot where we need, be nimble and adapt because the health-care system changes.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: The bill enables the minister to establish an oversight committee. I'm just wondering if the minister can elaborate what the membership of that committee will be, how often they'll meet and tell the House if this is going to be a permanent committee.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, certainly an oversight committee, as the member can imagine, would be a—really important for something like this. This is a significant amount of work that's being undertaken. And having an oversight committee with experts who understand the health-care system, understand nursing, understand the uniqueness in terms of every region's varying needs, that membership is going to be really, really important.

And it is going to be an oversight committee that will remain in place. This is work, as I said in my last response, that is long-term. There's no finish line in terms of, okay, we've done everything we need to do

and we're not going to look at this again. We need to make sure that there's a mechanism in place that can continue to evaluate, assess, review and make improvements to the way that we ban mandatory overtime in this province.

Mrs. Cook: What happens if a health-care organization or corporation, as it's defined in the legislation, fails to meet the benchmarks?

MLA Asagwara: Well, certainly accountability is a big part of this framework. And accountability, quite frankly, is why we've brought this forward. We know that it's really important to have legislation that holds the system accountable and prescribes and outlines some expectations and standards that can be met and are in black and white.

And so our expectation, of course, is that leaders are going to be doing everything they can to achieve those targets and benchmarks. We also recognize, again, that there are different needs in different parts of the province.

And so we're going to work with every regional health authority and sites to make sure they have the right supports in place and resources so that they can be successful. But this is a journey with all partners. We're on this road together, but we know that we're—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I will acknowledge that eliminating mandatory overtime is something the minister's been advocating for, for quite some time, including when they were in opposition. And at that time, they introduced a bill themselves more than once, I believe.

But there are some notable differences between that bill they introduced as a critic and the bill that they have now introduced as a minister. One of the notable differences is the absence of a reporting requirement. I'm going to run out of time to detail it, but I'm wondering if the minister can indicate why they didn't feel it was important to include a reporting requirement in this iteration of their bill.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I really appreciate that question from the member.

A lot of things have changed from when we were in opposition. I certainly have more grey hair now than I did when we were in opposition, you know, but being in government gives us the opportunity to bring forward legislation, but from the perspective of government and understanding where some of the biggest opportunities reside in order to make sure that we can bring this forward successfully.

You know, I wish this was legislation that had been supported while we were in opposition. Quite frankly, I do wish the previous PC government had supported this because we'd be much further along in the health-care system in a better way, in terms of staffing, addressing mandatory overtime.

So we hit the ground running as a government. We've done a lot of work to make sure we can get to this point in bringing this legislation forward. And we're going to move forward—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: One of the other differences between the bill the minister introduced when they were in opposition and the bill that we are debating today is that the previous bill contained a provision that employers could only mandate overtime, quote, if the employer could not have anticipated or planned for increased demand for services beyond that provided by normal staffing levels.

That's a pretty critical proviso that's not included in this version of the bill. And I'm just wondering if the minister could tell us why.

* (16:30)

MLA Asagwara: I may actually need the critic to ask that question again; I kind of missed the first part of it.

But if I'm capturing what she asked, the bill as it's outlined right now also takes into consideration what's already articulated in the collectively bargained agreements. There's already provisions that exist that outline some of the circumstances where mandatory overtime would be required in order to keep people safe.

So there's—thankfully, you know, there's mechanisms in place, there's levers in place that we can pull should we need mandatory overtime. But this legislation builds on that and also really outlines very clearly the recognition that there are circumstances where that might be required—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin.

The honourable member has no more questions.

Is there any more questions?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?
It—[interjection]

Apparently, I'm trying to rush us along here.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm very pleased to put a few words on the record today with respect to Bill 26. Certainly, eliminating mandatory overtime is something that nurses have been asking for; I want to acknowledge that.

And I alluded to this a little bit in my questions just now, but this is certainly something that the now-minister was advocating for when they were Health critic in opposition. And at that time, they had introduced their own bill to try to eliminate mandatory overtime.

And some of the parts of that bill have stayed the same in Bill 26. For example, there is an important provision that notes that the refusal of a nurse to work overtime in non-urgent circumstances is not professional misconduct or a breach of duty. That's important. But there are some notable differences between the bills, and I am not sure why certain provisions were left out of Bill 26 that were present in the minister's previous bills.

Most notably is a reporting requirement. The previous bill required the minister to prepare a nurse position vacancy report and table it in the Assembly twice a year. That report would have included the number of nursing positions, the number of vacant nursing positions, the number of nurse positions calculated on an equivalent full-time basis, the number of vacant FTEs and the progress the government has made to fill those positions. And that report was to be published and made public. But there is no such provision in this report—pardon me, in this bill, which I think is a notable omission. I think that reporting would actually be quite valuable to Manitobans.

And the bill that the minister crafted when they were in opposition was clearer. It explicitly laid out and limited the only scenarios in which the employer, which is to say the government, could require mandatory overtime. The previous bill said that overtime could only be mandated, quote, where it is urgently required because of a present or imminent situation or condition that requires prompt action to avoid or limit loss of life or harm to an individual's health.

But even then—and this is the key—quote, only if the employer could not have anticipated or planned for increased demand for services beyond that provided by normal staffing levels. There is no such proviso

in this bill. This bill, Bill 26, contains no such strict limit on mandatory overtime.

So it does raise the question of why the NDP, now that they're in government, felt that that was perhaps not feasible or not advisable. I suspect that we might delve into those issues a little bit more during the committee process.

And, certainly, nurses have expressed that they want to eliminate mandatory overtime. But front-line nurses have also indicated publicly that current vacancy numbers are such that it may not be possible to do this, at least not right now, which is at odds with the NDP Premier (Mr. Kinew) telling—I think it was CBC, a couple of months ago—stating unequivocally that Manitoba has enough nurses in order to do this. And I think we saw this with the NDP's failed attempt to end agency nursing in Manitoba. They put the cart before the horse, so to speak.

You know, they went out and they prohibited agencies from—or, pardon me—prohibited services delivery organizations from using agencies without first ensuring that there were adequate nurses in the system. And that didn't work.

In Prairie Mountain Health, in particular, it resulted in absolute chaos in a number of health-care facilities. And the government had to backtrack on that commitment. And now there is no such ban on agency nursing in Manitoba because it wasn't feasible to do at the time when the NDP wanted to do it.

And I just hope that sufficient planning and foresight has been put into this plan to end mandatory overtime so that it doesn't result in chaos and disruption for both staff and for patients. I hope that if the NDP is confident that they can do this, that the numbers and the data back that up.

The only other comment I want to make on this bill is that there are no consequences in the bill for RHAs or—I forget how it's worded in the bill—health organizations or corporations, I think is how it's defined in the legislation. No consequences if they fail to meet the benchmarks, if they fail to effectively eliminate mandatory overtime. I did ask this question in the bill briefing and there was no ready answer for how that would work if they failed to meet the benchmarks. I think that's an important question that needs to be answered.

But I think with that, I think, you know, we're ready to move this bill forward to committee.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No further speakers?

Then is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 26, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Eliminating Mandatory Overtime for Nurses).

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 27—The Declaration of Principles for Patient Health Care Act and Amendments to The Health System Governance and Accountability Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 27, the declaration of principles for patient health care and amendments to the health system governance and accountability act.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 27, The Declaration of Principles for Patient Health Care Act and Amendments to the Health System Governance and Accountability Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: I'm really pleased to bring forward this legislation for second reading.

You know, I just want to comment, there's comments sometimes brought forward by members of the opposition, the critic, and I know they have a role to play. But I just—I'm truly fascinated by their criticism of work that we're doing that's making a real difference, that is fixing the damage that they did to the health-care system.

It's amazing to me to have members opposite condemn what we're doing—that is, we're making health care better—but then in some ways saying, but do it faster. You're not fixing our mess fast enough. You're not cleaning up our mess quickly enough. You're not repairing the health-care system we tried to destroy as expeditiously as we tried to destroy it for seven and a half years.

* (16:40)

So I'm a bit taken aback by that, I have to say, but we're going to keep bringing forward legislation like this bill that takes real steps to not only fix the damage

they did but to strengthen health care for the long term in this province.

So this particular bill, The Declaration of Principles for Patient Health Care Act and Amendments to The Health System Governance and Accountability Act, is going to establish guiding principles for our government and future governments, guiding principles so that in making decisions about Manitoba's health-care system, there'll be an outline for what patients can expect when accessing health care.

That's a question I get from patients pretty regularly: expectations around, you know, what they can expect from advocates, different parts of the systems, what are the standards. This legislation really makes a clear declaration so that patients and their communities and families can know what to expect in accessing care.

This act affirms Manitoba's commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act and emphasizes patient-centred care, safety, accessibility and transparency. One of the greatest aspects of living in this country, being a Canadian, is the Canada Health Act. It is the fundamental value that health care should be universal and free.

And always, of course, we want to do our part to strengthen that and make it better, and that's what this legislation does. The act outlines clear expectations for how patients should be treated within the health system. It highlights respect, dignity and privacy, informed decision making and the ability to raise concerns without fear of reprisal.

Bill 27 will ensure support is transparent, that the measures are transparent and that the steps taken on the part of the government are clear, transparent and accessible. Health authorities, health-care delivery organizations in regulated health professions will all have that same level of transparency as an expectation that patients can count on.

The act also creates patient advocacy resources, including a designated office within the Health Department and patient advocacy officers within each health authority. These roles are intended to support patients in navigating concerns about the delivery of their care.

The additional amendments to The Health System Governance and Accountability Act will enhance the sharing of information about critical incidents within Manitoba's health system for the purpose of learning from each other and improving our health system province-wide.

Really looking forward to this legislation having the full support of this House and thus continuing to do the work that's necessary to strengthen health care for Manitobans.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): On November 19 last year, following the Throne Speech, the minister said, in the Chamber, quote: "We're introducing a patient safety charter to enshrine your rights as patients into law." Unquote.

Does the minister stand by that statement, and do they believe that Bill 27 enshrines patient rights into law?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Yes.

Mrs. Cook: That being the case, what recourse is available to Manitoba patients who feel that their rights under this proposed law have been violated?

MLA Asagwara: I think that one of the most important aspects of this legislation is actually around establishing the patient advocate officers—patient safety advocate officers in every regional health authority and then certainly in our department. These are really, really important roles that should have a clear mandate and deliverables that Manitobans can count on and previously have not.

So this is a really important step that Manitobans can count on, and we'll have very clear expectations in terms of how to utilize those resources and supports. And the role of these folks is going to be, you know, solely on the side of advocating for these patients and making sure that they understand what their rights are in front of them.

Mrs. Cook: I'm glad the minister mentioned the patient advocates that are proposed in this legislation, because I do wonder how they differ from the patient relations or client relations officers that already exist in each RHA. What are the differences between the positions? Will the RHAs be eliminating existing patient or client relations staff and replacing them? What is the relationship between those two roles?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, really appreciate that question. I apologize; I may have to answer this in two parts. But first, I want to start off by thanking the existing patient relations folks. They work really, really hard. They are an important resource in the health-care system. These are folks who we are going to make sure have an expanded and more clearly defined mandate in terms of what Manitobans can expect from them and their services.

We also want to make sure that those folks are more available. Currently, right now with the model as it stands, they are not available all the time when patients need them. So we know there is more work to do as well in terms of their availability and accessibility.

Mrs. Cook: For these new patient advocates, what is the timeline on having those positions up and running? I'm just thinking of the Seniors' Advocate, which is a position that—it's taking years to get that office up and running and functional for Manitobans.

Does the minister foresee a similar delay for the patient advocates proposed in Bill 27?

MLA Asagwara: Oh, the member for Roblin, bringing up the Seniors' Advocate and the time it's taking. Come on, she was advising the previous government. She was advising Heather Stefanson.

Why was she advising Heather Stefanson and the previous government to not establish it then? Like, the office would be up and running, have brick and mortar, fully staffed, and we'd probably have reports and recommendations from them if she hadn't gotten in the way previously, if they had done something for seven and a half years.

I mean, you—she walked into this one, she knows it, talking about the Seniors' Advocate. We are working very hard to establish that as quickly as we can. We've got a great lead in that office who's doing a phenomenal job. And I do wish it had been set up under the previous government. They didn't care about it, they didn't bother, we're getting it done.

Mrs. Cook: Oh, Honourable Speaker, the minister didn't answer the question.

How long will it take to get the patient advocate officers up and running?

MLA Asagwara: And I also want to say that the independent office of the Seniors' Advocate—when we introduced that bill for the first time, there were seniors in the gallery. It's like—it's seared on my brain, Honourable Speaker, because it was such a nice day. Seniors were here, they were so excited to watch this

legislation be supported and moved along. And instead, they watched every member on that side of the House delay that bill.

It was really, really surprising, disheartening, and it should be something that just is a permanent embarrassment for the PCs. We found a way to make sure that legislation got introduced and passed anyway, they couldn't get in the way of it and now we're making sure that this office is being stood up to the benefit of all Manitobans.

So, promise made, promise kept. This legislation that we're introducing here is another step—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Oh, I remember very well. They stapled it to the back of BITSA and prevented the public from having any ability to speak on that bill or provide any input. They passed it, and then they weren't prepared to actually staff an office for the Seniors' Advocate. We learned that at the most recent committee, that it's going to be months before they even have staff in a permanent office location.

But I want to get back to Bill 27, which is what we're supposed to be discussing here. And what is the timeline for having new patient advocates in place in each RHA under this legislation?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I am stunned that the member for Roblin would mock the way that we were able to get legislation established for the independent office for the Seniors' Advocate. I can't believe that. I can't believe that not only would she be a part of a caucus that would deny the legislation being introduced, and do it in the presence of seniors who have advocated for us all to have a better province to call home, but then that she would mock the way that we got that legislation done on behalf of seniors. I think it shows a fundamental disconnect between understanding what seniors need and being a part of those solutions.

So, Honourable Speaker, I won't take any lessons from the member for Roblin on how to meet seniors' needs. We're getting the work done that she refused, to support the previous governments in getting them—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I have tried three times now to get an answer as to when Manitobans can expect the patient advocates outlined in Bill 27 to be up and running and have not got an answer from this minister.

So I'm going to move on. Section 3 of the bill lays out, quote, expectations—not rights, but expectations, and states that patients can expect, quote, reasonably timely access to quality health care.

What is the definition of reasonably timely access?

* (16:50)

MLA Asagwara: So, I do want to—the member has moved away from talking about the Seniors' Advocate, so I'm happy to do the same, and I will talk about the question she asked around establishing these offices.

Again, we know that patient relations folks already exist in the health-care system. What we're doing is we're establishing new roles with new mandates. That's going to require folks to get additional training. There's going to be a bit more resource that's required, again, including enhancements and expansions of access for patients and their families.

So, that work is actively under way. We will be bringing forward more clarity on an exact timeline, but I can tell you the work has actually already started. So now the regional health authorities obviously have a big role to play in this. We're going to be working very closely with them.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Can the minister tell us, under this legislation, what do they mean by, quote, reasonably timely access? It seems a very important part of this bill, and I think Manitobans are wondering what the minister considers to be reasonably timely access to quality health care.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I appreciate that question from the critic on this.

So, as the critic can imagine, their—the health-care system is enormous. The types of care are also enormous and incredibly complex.

So, there's any number of different aspects of health care that people access on any given day that have their own standards in—and expectations in terms of meeting timeliness guidelines.

So, you know, our goal in this is making sure that when Manitobans are accessing any type of health care that, of course, they can access that care in a reasonably timely manner and the type of care and the standards attached to it are really what inform what that standard is.

So, again, it's, you know, countless really how—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I can appreciate that the definition of reasonably timely access differs depending on the patient and the procedure or the diagnostic test they require, but where can patients access this information?

I guess what I'm getting at is, how are they to know that their right of timely access has been violated if they don't even know what timely access is under this bill?

MLA Asagwara: That's a great question. Our government has been doing the work, actually, of, again, not only fixing the damage that the previous government did to health care, but making sure that Manitobans have more access to the information they need to understand their health-care journey.

And a really good example of that would actually be us restoring the Cardiac Centre of Excellence with Heart Care Manitoba. That whole process will ensure that a cardiac patient, every step of the way, understands what their care journey is, understands when they can expect to receive care, when they should be concerned, if that care timeline may not be met.

So, that's just one of many examples I can give the member in terms of how Manitobans get access to that information and stay informed in terms of what timely care means—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Another example that Manitobans might encounter is the wait for emergency care, which, unfortunately, is right now at record highs, at median wait times in Winnipeg over four hours, which is longer now than it was when the NDP took office.

And in 2023, the minister said that they were looking at reducing that wait time by about an hour. So, I'm wondering where in this legislation Manitobans can find what is considered reasonably timely access in an emergency care setting.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's an important example. When you're talking about emergency departments here in Manitoba, you know, we have the unfortunate distinction of having had a previous government who made a decision that everybody else across the country looks at and points to and says, what the heck were they thinking?

They closed our three largest emergency departments. And, you know, what we've learned, Honourable Speaker, is that it wasn't just the emergency departments being shuttered that did the catastrophic damage it did and has resulted in these increased and challenging wait times; it's the fact that we lost a ton

of health-care infrastructure at every single one of those sites as well. In some cases, up to 25 per cent of their workforce at that site was gone.

And so our government is doing the work of restoring those—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I asked this question a little bit earlier in the questioning, but we didn't really get a clear answer.

And I think, you know, when I brought this legislation to stakeholders and constituents and asked, what do you think about this, the main question I got was, okay, so they've laid this out. What happens if my—if these expectations laid out in section 3 aren't met? What recourse do I have? And it's not clear in this legislation what recourse is available to Manitoba patients whose rights under this legislation have been violated.

So can the minister please indicate what a patient should do if their rights or expectations under this legislation have been—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, absolutely. I mean, this is a step that we've taken as a government. Bringing forward this legislation was a very clear way for us to also set the tone in terms of what Manitobans can expect from their health-care system moving forward.

We started with this piece of legislation. We've also introduced banning mandatory overtime, nurse-to-patient ratios, breast cancer screening and improving access to breast cancer screening and improving those who historically have not had the right access to breast cancer screening in a timely manner.

And so every step of the way, in terms of patients seeing a shift in the culture and the accountability of the health-care system, of course, it's so important that they fundamentally understand who it is that they can reach out to, what the steps are—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I just want to draw the Chamber's attention to subsection 5(2) of this bill, which states that a failure to comply with this act does not give rise to a cause of action or other claim or to a proceeding in any court or before any body or person having the power to make decisions under an enactment.

I'm not a lawyer, but that looks to me like there is no recourse. There is no recourse under this act for

somebody whose rights—as the minister acknowledges they're establishing here in legislation—their rights have been violated.

I'm just wondering if the minister can explain why they would put these rights into a bill if there's no recourse available to a patient whose rights have been violated.

MLA Asagwara: The member's question, I think, shows a fundamental lack of understanding of actually how the system functions. The system is huge, complex.

Many, many different reasons why someone may have concerns or want recourse in terms of an experience they've had. And that is where the role of the officers are so important. Because those are the folks that will inform these patients, should they have questions, concerns or want to take other steps, every step of the way, what those accountabilities, what those processes and procedures are, and will ensure that they are fully informed, fully supported and can be guided through that process, which right now many folks say is unclear to them.

These officers are going to be given—have been given a clear mandate and deliverables around being that person that informs—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for—oh, time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record about Bill 27. And I'm not at all opposed to the principle of the bill, I'm just a little concerned that the bill, as written, is weak. And I'm not sure that I understand what the government is trying to accomplish.

I hear the minister say they want to set the tone, and I guess they can set the tone, I don't know that they need legislation to do it, but this isn't what they promised Manitobans. They promised Manitobans a patient safety charter; this is not a patient safety charter. It has no teeth. There are no accountability mechanisms in this bill. I'm concerned that it is just words on paper.

The NDP said that this bill would, quote, enshrine patient rights into law, but I don't believe that this bill does that. And, as I was getting at in my questioning when the minister chose to just talk down to me and tell me I just don't understand it, section 5 states explicitly

that a failure to comply with this act give—does not give rise to a cause of action or other claim or to a proceeding in any court or before any body or person having the power to make decisions.

* (17:00)

If I'm not understanding that clause of the bill correctly, then perhaps the minister would like to tell the House exactly what is meant by that. Because making declarations in law like this and stating principles without any accountability mechanisms is just window dressing. This bill won't hire more staff, it doesn't create more surgical or diagnostic capacity, it doesn't lower wait times for anyone.

Wait times at Winnipeg emergency rooms continue to exceed the national average, and doctors have publicly expressed their concerns that this situation has become normalized under the current government. We're currently experiencing record-high wait times in Winnipeg ERs, wait times that have gotten worse since the NDP took office. And they can attempt all they like to deflect blame for that, but it doesn't make any sense, Honourable Speaker.

More than one in four patients are leaving Winnipeg emergency rooms without being seen, and Bill 27 does nothing to address that. The Manitoba Nurses Union has greylisted three hospitals in Manitoba and is now considering greylisting a fourth. That is unprecedented in Manitoba's history, and Bill 27 does nothing to address that.

We have some of the longest wait times in Canada for diagnostic tests and surgeries. Patients are waiting an average of over 33 weeks from referral to treatment, and that doesn't even include the wait time to see a specialist in the first place. That's significantly higher than the national average of 27.7 weeks. Wait times for diagnostic procedures in Manitoba are particularly and troublingly high, and Bill 27 does nothing to address that.

Five out of 16 people whose deaths were ruled critical incidents between April and September of last year in Manitoba were linked to care delays. This bill does nothing to address that and it raises the question of what is meant by the provisions that talk about, quote, reasonably timely access. It's not defined anywhere.

I can appreciate that clinical experts determine what reasonably timely access is, but I think that needs to be—if this is going to be in law, it needs to be publicly available to patients somewhere so that they

can understand what's considered reasonably timely access to a test or a procedure.

You know, if a patient learns that they're going to be waiting six, seven months for an MRI, I think they might consider that to be unreasonable and not timely access to care. But they have no way of knowing if that's not publicly available to them somewhere. So, I don't know that it represents a right at all if it's not clearly defined.

We talked about this a little bit during the question period as well, but section 4 requires the government to designate an office of patient advocacy, experience and quality within the department. And I do note that all of the RHAs currently have patient or client relations staff, so it's not clear to me—other than, you know, I appreciate the minister's comments that the new patient advocates might be available for perhaps more hours of the day than the current patient relations staff—I'm not sure what else is different in those positions or if the current staff in those positions will be retained or transition to new positions or, if they're going to be let go and new people hired, what the size of those offices will be and when they'll be fully operational and, again, what Manitobans can expect from those staff.

Because I think the most important question about Bill 27 is, what is it going to change for patients? It's a lot of words, you know, Bill 27 is nine pages of words, but it doesn't create accountability and it does not in and of itself improve patient care. You know, just like a bed is just a bed without a nurse to staff it, a patient safety charter is just a piece of paper without the staff and the system capacity to actually provide care in a safe and timely manner.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I was 'liffing'—listening with some interest of the Minister of Health and her—or the comments of the opposition health-care critic. And there's a little bit of hypocrisy there. And I think the record needs to be clear.

The Minister of Health was lecturing the opposition critic about the previous government's decision to shut down three emergency rooms. I will remind the minister that in the 2019 election, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stated publicly that he agreed with the decision of the previous government to close those three ERs and pledged in 2019 that an NDP government would not reopen those ERs.

It was only four years later, in 2023, when the Premier had targeted Fort Richmond, Waverley and

Seine River, that he became a recent convert to the idea of reopening ERs, including Victoria hospital. In fact, the first fight that I got into with the Premier was over the Victoria ER. I was advocating to the Premier—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —to switch his position and to double back and say that he was going to open the ER. He got so mad that I was taking that position that he assaulted me during that conversation. So that brings us—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —to this. Another disappointing—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The NDP bench needs to calm down.

Mr. Wasyliw: Another disappointing bill that is basically dead on arrival, but worse yet, this is a broken promise.

Now, only 29—or, sorry, 26 per cent of Manitobans believe this government is doing a good job in fixing health care. So that means NDP stalwarts, people who voted for this government, do not believe this government is doing a good job on health care.

But here's the problem with this bill: it was a promise in the Throne Speech. And I quote, verbatim: "We will improve safety for patients and staff with a patient safety charter, enshrining into law your right to good health care."

Those words were chosen very carefully. They include both charter and rights. That's a legal binding document that protects Manitobans' rights to health care for the purpose of improving patient safety. That's the promise: a charter of health-care rights.

But that's not what Bill 27 is. It's 'cymical'; it's empty, performative politics; it's meant to grab headlines. But it actually goes further: it's a betrayal of Manitobans; it is a broken promise. It does not create any rights. It will not do anything to improve patient and staff safety, and you will not get good health care as a result of this bill.

And, in fact, the bill expressly states that there are no, and I quote, rights or remedies under the bill. When the bill says that, it is not a charter of rights. It also says that you can't sue the government if your non-existent rights under the bill are violated.

So, what right do you have if you can't sue a government for violating those rights? You don't.

This is the worst kind of virtue signalling. It's a serious betrayal of Manitoba voters and it's an insult to the intelligence of Manitobans. Where this Premier (Mr. Kinew) claims he's bringing in a health-care charter, instead we have empty legislation that really does nothing to state some principles for the government that they hope to aspire to someday, whenever.

The government bench should be embarrassed voting for this. I don't know how they can look into the eyes of their constituents and swear what was promised and what is actually been delivered. It's very telling that this government is not serious about actually fixing health care. They're not accountable; they don't want to be held to account. If they did, they'd bring in enforceable rights where Manitobans could sue this government for failing to provide effective health-care systems.

This is an admission on the Kinew government's part that they have failed miserably in fixing health care and they are not confident that they ever will. They are not prepared to have legislation that would make this government accountable in the courts and to Manitobans. This legislation says the Kinew government has given up. It doesn't believe they have the answers and they just hope you won't notice; 74 per cent Manitobans have noticed that the numbers—that the Kinew government is failing on health care.

* (17:10)

You know, this is a government that has four deaths in Manitoba ERs' waiting rooms for treatment in the last few months. We've had five out of the last 16 critical inquiry reports for people who have died from preventable causes because of understaffing in the health-care system. We have four of the worst eight hospitals in Canada located here in Manitoba. We have a paramedic shortage that's gotten worse despite a promise—again, broken—of 200 new paramedics. We are losing more nurses than we can hire.

And this government thinks we have enough. And despite the Premier and the Minister of Health saying we have hired enough nurses, there are currently over 400 vacancies.

So the Minister of Health standing in this Chamber and saying that there are actual rights under the bill, well that just isn't on. This is a terrible bill and the government should scrap it and do it right.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Is the House ready or the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is—
[interjection]

Order.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27, the declaration of principles for patient health—for principles for patient health care act and amendments to the health system governance and accountability act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in the House 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.

The bill is accordingly passed.

Bill 28—The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios)

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 28—
[interjection]

Order.

We will now move on to Bill 28, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios).

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour, that Bill 28, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: It's my pleasure to rise and bring forward some brief comments in respect to Bill 28, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios).

Nurse-to-patient ratios are a key indicator of quality health-care services. It promotes patient safety, reduces medical errors and supports the well-being of health-care staff. This bill proposes that nurse-to-patient ratios be prescribed in regulation. These ratios will vary based on the types of service provide—services provided, rather, acuity levels of patients and other relevant criteria. Health-care operators will be required to plan for and meet these criteria, and the minister will be notified of incidents of non-compliance. Incidents of non-compliance can be dealt with through the enforcement mechanisms already in place under The Health System Governance and Accountability Act.

Legislation on nurse-to-patient ratios sets the foundation for the commitment made in the Throne Speech to legislate staff-to-patient ratios. This legislation explicitly recognizes this government's commitment—our government's commitment to other health-care staff by providing that their numbers will be taken into consideration when setting nurse-to-patient ratios. Manitoba would be leading the country, leading all of Canada in the implementation of legislation to establish nurse-to-patient ratios.

Honourable Speaker, I just want to take a moment to thank the nurse-to-patient ratio committee, which has been chaired by the MLA for Tuxedo, who is a nurse herself—has partners in terms of employers, the Manitoba nursing union, folks on the front lines of our health-care system, all coming together to bring forward a report—and will be working together to form an implementation committee, which will inform the prescribed ratios in regulation.

I also want to take a moment to thank the Canadian Federation of Nurses Union and President Linda for the invitation to serve on their committee. I am the only Health minister in the country who is serving as part of that committee, and that step they've taken is not something that I take for granted or take lightly.

Manitoba takes staffing the front lines and supporting nurses very seriously. I'm thrilled to be a part of that work, and we're thrilled to be leading Canada in these efforts. I look forward to the entire—the entirety of the Chamber supporting this bill as it moves forward.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): In their opening statement, the minister mentioned that for service delivery organizations that are not in compliance with the ratios established in regulation, there were compliance mechanisms available already under The Health System Governance and Accountability Act.

Can the minister just indicate, what are those compliance mechanisms?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the critic for that question.

So, she's correct; there are compliance mechanisms already outlined in the governance and accountability act. This is something that we recognize as being very important to articulate in this legislation, to reinforce that we will be taking steps to make sure that the health system and leaders are accountable to these ratios being implemented and maintained.

We also recognize that there's a lot of work to do here to make sure that we take an approach that meets the needs no matter where this is being rolled out in the province. So more work to do. The implementation committee is going to lead the way and we look forward to working very closely with them to get that done.

Mrs. Cook: The reason I'm pressing on this question is because I think, you know, a nurse-patient ratio is only as effective as the mechanisms that are in place to enforce it.

So I again want to ask the minister: What exactly are the compliance mechanisms available to the minister if service delivery organizations aren't in compliance with the ratios?

MLA Asagwara: I want to thank the member for that question. So, as outlined in the governance and accountability act, there are a few different mechanisms, levers that can be pulled. There is a level that can be escalated, actually, to the power and the authority of the minister.

Now, my hope here—I think all of our collective hope—is that we will ensure that the implementation committee and the frameworks put in place see that if

there are concerns in terms of a site being able to achieve and sustain those nurse-to-patient ratios, that that will be sorted out in terms of the employer working with the union, working with government, the department, et cetera.

Now that can be, of course, escalated to the level of the minister, and by no means—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: Are service delivery organizations at risk of having their funding cut if they aren't in compliance with the ratio?

MLA Asagwara: Our priority is to make sure that we have more funding in health care, not less.

You know what, I would say that regional health authorities and our partners lived under health-care austerity and cuts for seven and a half years and they, very early on, you know, wondered whether or not there'd be a true change when government changed. And we have shown them, we have proven to them, that our government's commitment is in investing in health care.

We have spent, year over year, an additional \$1 billion in every budget to strengthen health care, including, you know, 80 per cent of our budget or more going directly to the front lines, to staff.

So we're going to continue to fund and invest in health care. This accountability is really about making sure that people can achieve successfully those nurse-to-patient ratios.

Mrs. Cook: The reason I ask the question is because I don't hear an answer from the minister in terms of what the compliance mechanism is.

So, you know, the government can establish all the patient–nurse-to-patient ratios it likes and regulation, but if there's no mechanism to enforce it, you know, I do have some concern about that and I do have some concern about what those compliance mechanisms might be.

* (17:20)

But I'll move on to another question. The act requires health authorities to prepare compliance plans and share them with the minister. Would the minister commit to making those compliance plans public?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I really appreciate that question. Certainly, our government is committed to being forthcoming and transparent with the health-care system, with health-care providers. We've already,

you know, articulated and outlined that the reporting on this will be transparent.

Certainly, we recognize that, actually, the plans and the approach are going to vary region to region and even site to site. They're going to be pretty comprehensive, but we are going to be keeping the lines of communication and the approach on this wide open with our partners. We're going to be—I mean, we're working directly with them to make sure this is done the right way.

And so as those plans are developed, we're going to be sharing them transparently with our partners and making sure that we can—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I'm just wondering how the minister envisions this rolling out—recognizing, you know, they've already acknowledged that this will differ by region, by facility, by health-care setting.

So I guess my first question in this particular line of questioning is: Will ratios be rolled out eventually across all health-care settings and all regions of the province?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, absolutely. This is going to be—nurse-to-patient ratios is going to be a provincial approach. We know that it needs to be. We also recognize that it's incredibly complex.

We have the benefit of British Columbia having done this work for years already. And so we're learning from a lot of the ways that they've been able to implement this. And we're also—we have the benefit of a lot of research in this space having been done already.

So our goal is making sure that we can roll this out with patient safety and patient care being the top priority. We want to roll this out responsibly, safely and sustainably. And the implementation team is going to make sure—the committee, rather—is going to make sure that that's the approach that we take.

Mrs. Cook: Similar to the discussion around eliminating nurse mandatory overtime, some front-line health-care workers have expressed concern about the ability of government to actually implement nurse-to-patient ratios. And in response to that, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stated unequivocally that Manitoba has enough nurses.

Again, does the minister agree with the Premier that there are enough nurses to implement nurse-to-patient ratios across Manitoba at this time?

MLA Asagwara: Again, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) made a statement which reflects the fact that we have done a tremendous amount of work with our partners to get to a place—*[interjection]*—finally, where we can take this step—*[interjection]*—in Manitoba.

I'm not sure why the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) is heckling me right now. Talking about recruiting and retaining nurses is an important step that we're taking. I'm not sure what he finds offensive—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: I'm not sure what he finds offensive—*[interjection]*—about retaining and recruiting nurses. If he wants to put words on the record—*[interjection]*—he should get up and do that instead of heckling me when I'm trying to deliver a response.

So I'd encourage the member for La Vérendrye, don't heckle me. Get up, say it with your chest, put the words on the record.

Mrs. Cook: Does the minister agree with front-line nurses who are saying we need to bolster nursing numbers—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook:—before we can effectively implement nurse-to-patient ratios? Or does the minister agree with the Premier who says Manitoba has enough nurses already?

MLA Asagwara: Thank the critic for the question. The member for La Vérendrye is going to keep heckling, but he won't stand up in his place and put words on the record. I don't know what that's about.

But, Honourable Speaker, what I can say is that our government has taken huge strides with our partners. We're training more nurses now in Manitoba than we ever have before, and our retention rate for new grads is over 90 per cent. We're recruiting more nurses than we ever have. Over 4,000 net-new health-care workers, and over 1,400 of those are nurses here in Manitoba.

All of this work—which is not going to slow down, it's only going to ramp up—has allowed us to take this really important step of advancing nurse-to-patient ratios, which if you go to any corner of this province and talk to any nurse, they will tell you this needs to happen. They've been asking—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: The minister mentioned that the—I think they said the implementation committee is already in place and is chaired by the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton). Can the minister indicate who else is on the committee?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I thank the member for Roblin for that question. I think she just maybe misheard what I said in an earlier response.

So what I said was that the member for Tuxedo chaired the nurse-to-patient ratio committee that brought forward the report that helped inform the next steps that would be taken. And their—in legislation—in this legislation, it prescribes that we must stand up an implementation committee.

And so, what I referenced earlier was that the members who were part of the nurse-to-patient ratio committee have thankfully committed to being a part of that implementation committee, and it will be rounded out with other representation.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that clarification. I did mishear the original response, but that answers my question.

Will the recommendations of the implementation committee be made public?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, that's a really good question. I anticipate that they will. You know, it's important for us—for nurses, in particular, health-care workers to see the recommendations that are being brought forward and to understand why those recommendations are—and how those recommendations are informing the work and how it proceeds.

You know, sometimes these recommendations may come in the form of a report that is quite extensive, and so we may look at doing is making sure it's digestible for folks, as you can imagine. But, certainly, the recommendations that get brought forward, you know, we're going to communicate that to the public.

But I would say, most importantly, we're going to communicate it to nurses and to health-care workers. And I can't emphasize this enough: Nurses are at the heart of this work. They're at—have a seat at the table. They're informing it every step of the way.

Mrs. Cook: How soon after passing this legislation does the minister think regulations establishing nurse-to-patient ratios will be in effect?

MLA Asagwara: Well, we certainly are moving as quickly as we can to get this going. This legislation's a really important part of this.

If the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) has had the opportunity to take a look at other jurisdictions—British Columbia, who's done this work—she will know that it's taken them years to get some of these ratios implemented. It's a monumental amount of work and that's where the implementation committee is going to be really, really invaluable in this process.

But we know that nurses have been waiting a long time for this; health-care workers have been waiting a long time for this, so we're moving as quickly as we can. And we know there's some key areas—priority areas that we can move on more quickly. So we look forward to getting those ratios established as soon as possible.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin, no further questions?

Then is—the honourable member for Waverley.

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Waverley, on House business.

MLA Pankratz: Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave for a one-hour recess, with the bells to ring for the last five minutes of that hour to call members back to the House.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a one-hour recess, with the bells to ring for the last five minutes of that hour to call members back to the House?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

The House will now recess for one hour, with the bells to ring for the last five minutes of that hour.

The House recessed at 5:29 p.m.

The House resumed at 6:29 p.m.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The time for the ringing of the bells has run out. We are now back in session.

And I believe the point we're at is the question before the House is second reading of Bill 28, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[interjection]* Oh, I don't want a debate.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

* (18:30)

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I would have been very sad to miss my opportunity to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 28.

Like Bill 26, we know that this is something nurses want. And I recognize, as the minister mentioned in their comments, this is a huge undertaking.

But I think it's really important that we scrutinize Bill 28 to make sure that it's more than simply symbolic and more than simply the NDP checking a box to say that they've fulfilled this promise that they made. I think it's important that Manitobans are aware that this legislation doesn't actually establish nurse-to-patient ratios; it establishes a committee. And I'm sure that committee will do good and important work, but this legislation is not a fait accompli on its own.

We asked some questions today during second reading, and so it's not clear when nurse-to-patient ratios will be established or where in terms of which health-care settings, which facilities, which regions of the province can expect to see these implemented first. And it's not clear what mechanisms are available under this legislation or what recourse is available to nurses themselves or to patients who are impacted by a health authorities failure to comply with those ratios.

And I would say, most importantly, it's not even clear that Manitoba has enough nurses to actually implement these ratios. Front-line nurses have said, as much as they want to see nurse-to-patient ratios implemented, they're not confident that staffing levels are such that this can actually be implemented. Contrast that with the Premier (Mr. Kinew) who goes out and tells media, no, we have the nurses; that's not in question. There's a disconnect there.

So it sounds to me like there's a lot more work to be done before the NDP can actually hang the mission accomplished banner on this one. And again, I mentioned this when we talked about ending mandatory overtime. But we've seen that disconnect before between the NDP promising what they want to do, and then that butting up against the reality of their health-care system. We saw it with agency nurses. They wanted to cut agency nurses out of Manitoba, and they did so without first ensuring that there were adequate nurses in the system.

If they were to implement ratios without first ensuring that there were adequate nurses in the system, that's going to cause problems. And, you know, hopefully, they've learned from that experience and that they will listen to front-line nurses this time who've said we need more nurses, despite what the Premier (Mr. Kinew) says.

And with that, Honourable Speaker, I think we're prepared to move this bill to committee.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 28, The Health System Governance and Accountability Amendment Act (Nurse-to-Patient Ratios).

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 32—The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act

The Speaker: We will now move on to second reading of Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my colleagues for that tepid applause. Thank you so much.

Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: It is my absolute pleasure to rise and bring forward some brief remarks in respect of Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act.

First, I'd like to thank all of the women and those affected by breast cancer in Manitoba who have worked with our government to bring forward this legislation. Folks who have been tremendous advocates for years, calling on our government here in Manitoba to do more to support women and those who are diagnosed with breast cancer, but to also take the necessary steps to prevent and to identify and detect breast cancer as early as possible.

I want to thank the experts and the advocates who have made very clear that we have to do more to make sure that access to breast cancer screening is equitable and that by working together we can save lives and improve outcomes for countless women and those who are affected by breast cancer across this province. And I want to thank the experts who have been working with our government as far back as when we were in opposition to take the steps that are needed in Manitoba to improve breast cancer screening and 'improve'—improve access to breast care, breast health care in our province.

These proposed amendments will support the expansion of access to breast cancer screening services and promote the early detection of breast cancer in an accountable, accessible and equitable manner. CancerCare Manitoba will be required to develop a screening plan to increase screening for individuals at increased risk of breast cancer and an access plan to increase routine breast cancer screening overall. This establishes a clear mechanism to expand access, to expand uptake, particularly for populations with traditionally lower participation in screening programs, including Black, Indigenous and people of colour. These plans will be reviewed every five years.

This bill will also increase transparency and accountability by ensuring that the cancer authority and the provincial health authority provide annual public reporting on breast cancer screening.

Again, Honourable Speaker, this bill represents thousands of voices across this province who have been advocating for improvements to breast cancer screening for years. We are going to continue to work with our partners, listen to women's voices across this province, to take more steps to improve access to breast cancer screening and to do everything we can to improve the health outcomes of the women—of women across this province and ultimately to save lives.

Thank you so much.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): When this bill was tabled in the House, I did—as you do, as an opposition critic—and shared it with some stakeholders to get their

thoughts on the bill. And I was surprised that some of the more prominent stakeholders in this space were completely blindsided by the bill. They were unaware that it was coming. They were not consulted. So I'm just wondering, who did the minister consult with before they drafted this bill?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): We consulted key stakeholders in the development of this legislation. We consulted the Breast Cancer Canada organization, local Manitoba advocates who are the arm of that chapter in Manitoba. We consulted local experts, clinical experts. We consulted equity-rooted organizations who have been asking for this approach to be taken for quite some time. We consulted regional health authorities and, of course, our greatest partner on the cancer-care front, and that is CancerCare Manitoba.

So we've worked with experts in drafting this legislation, and we're going to keep working with experts to make sure that we improve access to breast cancer screening here in Manitoba. And again, this is about saving lives and making access to this care more equitable.

Mrs. Cook: I thank the minister for the answer, but I'm just wondering if they could actually name any of the organizations or experts outside of government and CancerCare that they consulted with.

MLA Asagwara: Oh, of course. You know, Honourable Speaker, I would be more than happy to provide a really comprehensive list to that member. I mean, there are a number of organizations who came out and enthusiastically supported us bringing forward this legislation, many folks that the member of the opposition caucus is well aware of.

It's been wonderful to see how well received this legislation is, and again, it reflects the voices of Manitobans; it reflects the voices of organizations. The Cancer Society of Canada for—as just one example; the Daffodil society, folks who've been asking for this for years and we're going to continue to work with to make sure that this rolls out in the most supportive and effective way.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you. I'm just wondering if the minister considers that a bill is actually necessary in order to improve access to breast cancer screening in Manitoba.

* (18:40)

MLA Asagwara: Yes, absolutely. I mean, when we talk to Dense Breasts Canada, Cancer Society, Manitoba breast cancer screening advocates, you talk to any of those organizations and many others, Dr. Marcia Anderson, many other folks, CancerCare Manitoba themselves, they are all in support of us taking this step because they recognize that when government establishes law that articulates the way in which we can achieve more equitable access to an essential life-saving screening tool like this, that we should do so.

So we were very pleased to bring forward this legislation through the lens of equity and to also back that up with real resources and investments in the breast cancer screening space to make sure that this can be delivered on across the province.

Mrs. Cook: I noticed that one of the plan requirements that's required under the legislation is annual targets for screening participation rates. I'm just wondering how those targets will be monitored and what action will be taken if those targets aren't met?

MLA Asagwara: The member, I think, is already aware that those targets are already monitored and they are reported on nationally and by jurisdiction. The national target for breast cancer screening for eligible constituents is a target of 70 per cent.

Manitoba has fallen well short of that target for many, many years. Under the PCs, services to deliver breast cancer screening were cut. We're restoring those cuts and we're going even further. We've made sure that in every region of this province we have educators, we have advocates who are going out in communities and making sure that that percentage of folks who are the gap to close to get to that 70 per cent are being reached, informed and educated to make sure they know that breast cancer screening is important, that they are eligible and how to get that screening.

Much more work to do, much more—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I note that, you know, this is a bill focused on screening and certainly the primary screening tool used in Manitoba is mammography. But there are other screening tools that are available and are actually necessary for effective screening of particular populations that are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer.

For example, women with dense breast tissue may require additional screening tools such as ultrasound or MRI, but this legislation is silent on

those screening tools. I'm just wondering if the minister can indicate why.

MLA Asagwara: Yes, I want to thank the advocates at Dense Breasts Canada for working with our government. They've been a wonderful partner in bringing this legislation forward and again their enthusiastic support publicly on this legislation has been very welcome and we're going to continue to work with them as a partner as we move forward.

There are different modalities. There's emerging technologies in terms of how we screen for breast cancer in this province. That's why this legislation specifically ensures that there's reporting on folks who are at higher risk to make sure that we understand what screening is happening and what screening is not happening so that we can continue to build on the capacity in this province and meet those important needs of folks in higher risk categories or who need different modalities.

So our government is going to continue to invest in this space and we are going to be innovative—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I'm making an assumption that the department has done some work to anticipate what additional resources might be required in order to increase both screening capacity and screening uptake in underserved populations and I'm wondering if the minister can share what resources, whether it's financial resources or personnel or equipment that might be required in order to achieve the objectives laid out in this bill.

MLA Asagwara: I've already articulated some of the steps that we've taken that we know are necessary but I think it's also important to note that today we announced that we are re-establishing the Manitoba Menopause Clinic. That is a clinic that is going to be providing early intervention care for women across this province including in the space of breast cancer screening.

The closed mature women's clinic by the previous PC government in 2017 was a clinic that delivered that kind of care to Manitobans. So we're restoring the care that was in place that met this particular need for women in this province. We are building on not only restoring those callous cuts but expanding more capacity to meet the needs of folks across this province.

So this is work that's being done with our partners and we made a huge announcement today and there's more to come.

Mrs. Cook: That didn't really answer my question. I was speaking specifically about breast screening capacity, and I asked the minister what additional resources they anticipate are going to be necessary to fulfill the objectives laid out in this legislation.

Where, geographically, is more capacity required? What types of staff are going to need to be hired? What kind of financial resources does the government anticipate allocating towards expanding screening capacity and expanding uptake among underserved populations?

MLA Asagwara: We announced a \$5.2-million investment today in a Manitoba menopause clinic. This clinic is going to be providing comprehensive health care for mature women in this province, the very same women, and those who need this care, who fall into the disproportionate age demographics who are eligible for breast cancer screening.

So this clinic, which is going to provide comprehensive care, will be working to provide care to women who are eligible for breast cancer screening. It's another access point and pathway to that life-saving care we know women need.

This in addition to the over 13–13.2, 13.4 FTE positions for mammographers that we need in this province. And I can't emphasize enough—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: You know, I know the minister wants to talk about their announcement today, but I fail to understand how the announcement today is going to help a woman with dense breast tissue who needs to access additional screening tools living in northern Manitoba access the screening that they need to potentially detect breast cancer.

Again, the question is, what additional resources is this government putting forward to fulfill the objectives laid out in this legislation?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'm genuinely shocked. *[interjection]*

And the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth)—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—heckling me about women's health care is honestly a joke. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: He is completely unserious, Honourable Speaker. Heckling me while I'm answering

a question, just because you don't understand—
[interjection]

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

I was going to caution the honourable member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) to come to order, but I must caution the honourable minister to come to order as well.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'm genuinely stunned. I have to say, like, the lack of basic understanding, to heckle me in this House talking about \$5.2 million to establish care.

I'm going to walk everybody through it now, for the last remaining answers that I have here: a place where mature women can access primary care, which is where they would be able to ask the questions, connect with clinicians who then direct them down the pathway for screening. It's unbelievable that I actually have to handhold members opposite for what—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I can assure the minister I don't need my hand held when it comes to talking about women's health, but I thank them for the offer.

How is this government going to measure improvements in equitable access to screening services? What are the metrics they are looking at?

MLA Asagwara: And, Honourable Speaker, I'm going to keep going because it's that important.

This menopause clinic is going to be able to be a hub-and-spoke, as Dr. Vanessa Poliquin spoke to today. The provincial clinical lead for women's health care in this province, who's been at the forefront of bringing back this clinic and other services, explained it's going to be a hub so that women in every corner of this province can be connected to a pathway of clinical care, primary care, endocrinologists, physiotherapists, dieticians: all of the specialty areas that speak to breast cancer screening and breast health care.

This clinic is going to be a hub for the rest of the province to get connected to care, including mobile breast cancer screening, services that were cut by the previous government. So I am more than happy—you know what, I'll offer a briefing—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I threw the minister a softball there. That was a lob question. How is the minister going to measure improvements to equitable access to breast cancer screening under this bill? That's a question they should

be able to answer. I hope that they can endeavour to do so in their next response.

* (18:50)

MLA Asagwara: I want to thank the member for Roblin for throwing me a lob. I'm going to keep dunking on the PCs every single time I talk about women's health care in this Chamber. They cut it, we're restoring it. They attacked it, we're building up the strength of women's health care in this province.

We're training more and more people every single day to deliver women's health care. We're investing in mobile breast cancer screening services. We're training the people in every corner of this province to make sure people have the information, education and awareness to get access to breast cancer screening. We're recruiting experts in this field to Manitoba because there's finally a government that cares about women's health care, not driving them out of the province like the member for Roblin did under the previous government.

Members on that side of the House, I say it again: I offer you a briefing so you can get educated on women's health, something you clearly don't care about.

Mrs. Cook: I would challenge the minister in their assertion that I don't care about women's health, when I was the one who first introduced legislation to lower breast cancer screening in this province—something that this NDP government only did under intense pressure from members on our side of the House and members of the public.

And if we want to put some facts on the record, the NDP have not done anything; they made an announcement. We've seen this before. There's a brand new hospital sitting empty in Portage la Prairie today because they can't—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —staff it. So their announcement today is only as good as their staffing plan. And as we all know, the NDP has no plan to recruit, retain and train staff in Manitoba.

I don't have a question. That's the end of my question.

MLA Asagwara: The member for Roblin advised Heather Stefanson to fire hundreds of health-care workers. They cut the mature women's clinic in 2017.

We're retaining, training and recruiting more health-care workers than we ever have in this province.

We are restoring the care for women in this province that they cut. They fired lactation consultants, we've made their jobs permanent and we're hiring even more. We're doing the things that they should have done for seven and a half years.

And we unapologetically talk about menopause, periods, menstruation. We're making reproductive health-care free, hormone replacement therapy free because we care about women, something that they didn't do for seven and a half years—in fact, they did the opposite.

I'll take no lessons from the member for Roblin. She should take lessons from us.

Oh—and we're lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 by the end of this year. You're welcome.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm always pleased to rise in the House and talk about women's health and in particular breast health and the importance of screening and early screening—which is something, you know, I and my colleagues on this side of the House have done many times over the last few years in an effort to get the NDP to lower the breast cancer screening age, to keep up with other provinces, to keep up with clinical recommendations and to ensure that Manitoba women have the same access to early screening that other Canadian women have. And we were pleased to see them act on our recommendations.

The first time I introduced the bill, it prompted the minister to go out into the Rotunda and call a news conference to say, oh, you know, the member's bill, we're going to do what they're asking for. So, in opposition, we call that a win and I'll take it and I know that Manitoba women will hold them to account for their promise to lower the screening age to 40 by the end of this year and I certainly hope they're able to fulfill that.

And, certainly, we, on this side of the House, support improved access to breast screening, and I think that's what this bill is trying to achieve. I'm not sure that a bill is necessary in order to do that, but if the government feel that they need to put it in legislation, I guess that's the game we're playing.

But I do think there are some omissions from this bill that should be included. You know, if we're going

to talk about screening, we should talk about the full spectrum of screening services and the fact that mammography is certainly a very important tool, but it's not the only tool—and for some women it's not an effective tool. Women with dense breast tissue may not be adequately screened by the mammogram alone. So, I just found it a somewhat troubling oversight that an entire bill talking about improving access to breast cancer screening would leave that out, and the fact that other provinces do more to ensure access to breast screening for all different women including women with dense breast tissues.

There are a number of other provinces that provide an annual mammogram—a screening mammogram, not a diagnostic mammogram—a screening mammogram for women with category D density: Nova Scotia does, PEI does, the Yukon does, Saskatchewan does, Ontario does, Newfoundland does, Northwest Territories does. Manitoba does not.

And a number of other provinces also offer additional screening to women with dense breasts: British Columbia does, Alberta does, Saskatchewan does, Ontario does, Northwest Territories does. And, in Quebec, under certain circumstances, they do. But Manitoba does not.

And other provinces have a high-risk breast screening program—again, something that Manitoba does not have.

So I just—while I certainly don't dispute that some of the provisions in this bill—you know, this is accurate. There are underserved populations in Manitoba, populations that are not accessing breast screening services in the numbers that we would like to see. That needs to change. But there is also an entire other category of women that can't get—even if they wanted to—they can't get the screening that they need in order to reliably detect breast cancer.

So, you know, I would encourage the government to consider amending the act to include that, to require the cancer authority to look at what's needed to improve access to breast cancer screening for all women, including those with dense breast tissue.

And I think—I just take exception to some of the minister's comments that—you know, I care about women's health deeply, not just because I am a woman but because I'm a legislator and I represent thousands of Manitoba women who have approached me and told me how important these issues are to them.

So, I just take exception to the minister's disparaging comments. They're not rooted in reality. I think if you

look at, certainly, my record since becoming a legislator and the issues that I have chosen to highlight or to try to champion from my position in opposition, I think, certainly, women's health has been one of those issues, and I will continue to do so.

And, you know, part of my job as an opposition critic is to point out the flaws in what the government chooses to do. And I take that responsibility very seriously. It makes our system of government and our democracy stronger, and I will continue to do so and I will continue to engage with stakeholders who—including those who told me that they were not aware that this bill was coming because they were not consulted until after it was already drafted.

So, I think it's important for the minister to acknowledge that and to ensure that all of the relevant stakeholders are brought around the table when something like this is introduced.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: So then the question before the House is second reading of Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 50—The Pharmaceutical Amendment,
Regulated Health Professions Amendment and
Public Health Amendment Act**

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 50, The Pharmaceutical Amendment, Regulated Health Professions Amendment and Public Health Amendment Act.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), that Bill 50, The Pharmaceutical Amendment, Regulated Health Professions Amendment and Public Health Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Thank you.

Motion presented.

* (19:00)

MLA Asagwara: It's my pleasure to rise and bring forward some brief remarks and comments in respect to Bill 50, The Pharmaceutical Amendment, Regulated Health Professions Amendment and Public Health Amendment Act.

This bill will make amendments to multiple acts. The amendments to The Pharmaceutical Act will allow pharmacists to perform therapeutic substitutions without the authorization of the original prescriber. This will allow pharmacists to substitute drugs that have similar therapeutic effect when the original prescribed drug is not available.

This change will improve patient care, enhance access and ensure continuity of medications. These amendments will also ensure that the scope of practice for pharmacists in Manitoba is more consistent with scopes of practice in other jurisdictions, enhancing Manitoba's ability to recruit and retain pharmacists.

The amendments to The Regulated Health Professions Act will allow regulated health colleges or associations to amalgamate when it's in the public interest. These amendments will modernize our regulatory structures for various health professions. Allowing colleges or associations to amalgamate enables them to consolidate administrative functions, reduce operational costs and streamline processes such as registration.

Amalgamated colleges can jointly strengthen recruitment pathways, improve governance stability and enhance regulatory consistency while reducing duplication.

Finally, the proposed amendments to The Public Health Act build on the changes made to The Public Health Act in 2025 that ensured individuals detained under the act were not held in correctional facilities. The amendments will establish clear mechanisms for reviewing and modifying orders, allowing for flexibility in supporting due process and fairness. It will improve procedural fairness while continuing to balance public safety and individual rights.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Could the minister just indicate, what was the impetus for this bill?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): So there's a few different acts being amended in this legislation, so I'm not sure if the member wants me to comment on all three or one

specifically, but, fundamentally, this is about us continuing to strengthen health care to ensure that we have more efficiencies that work for professionals and organizations in the health-care system.

But I would probably highlight the therapeutic substitutions changes. This is what pharmacists have been asking for for many years and this is going to allow them to work to their full scope and make sure that Manitobans have better access to primary care.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that.

Does the minister anticipate the amalgamation of any of the health regulatory bodies following the passage of this legislation?

MLA Asagwara: What I would say is that we know there's some actually pretty small regulatory bodies that have reached out and expressed an interest in being able to amalgamate.

They recognize, as I stated in my opening remarks, that there's some redundancies and duplication and probably some economies of scale that can be gained by joining other regulatory bodies that are also small.

I fully support that. These regulatory bodies are experts in what they do and so, you know, support their ability to take additional steps to make sure they have more capacity, not less.

Across the country, other jurisdictions are well ahead of us, in terms of supporting amalgamation where it's in the public interest, so in some ways in Manitoba we're playing catch-up here.

Mrs. Cook: So, as regards the therapeutic substitutions, it is outlined in the legislation that the doctor in the script must state, no substitution or no therapeutic substitution, or tell the pharmacist that verbally.

I'm just wondering how this change will be communicated to doctors to ensure that they're all aware of these changes.

MLA Asagwara: Sure. This is something that doctors actually already do, okay. This is already a common practice for physicians for many, many different reasons, particularly in the area of specialty care.

What I can tell you is that this legislation was developed in consultation with the regulatory bodies, so the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, Doctors Manitoba, the pharmacists association of Manitoba.

We've worked with our partners to make sure and the regulatory college for the pharmacists; we've worked with our partners to make sure that proactive steps have been taken to support this.

And, of course, there's going to be work that needs to happen as this rolls out to make sure that everybody is fully trained up and all communications have gone out to the respective bodies.

Mrs. Cook: The minister will know that this is not the only expansion of scope that pharmacists are interested in or capable of, and that pharmacists in other provinces have had significant scope expansions and can assess and treat a number of minor ailments that pharmacists in Manitoba cannot.

I'm just wondering if the minister considered including any of that in this legislation. And if not, why not?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, again, you know, this is work that our government really hit the ground running. We started having these meetings with pharmacists, with their representatives, with pharmacists themselves and different aspects of the Province. And doing this work—you know, this is something that the member knows pharmacists have been asking for for many years, actually.

And so we've already taken some steps to expand the scope of pharmacists in this province, whether it's administering vaccines, whether it's abilities to prescribe proactive treatments for HIV, just as two examples.

So this is yet another step that we are taking. It's a pretty comprehensive step that we're taking, and there's going to be additional announcements attached to this in terms of how we're further expanding the scope to support this work—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Cook: I just want to give the minister another opportunity to continue answering that question and perhaps further elaborate on any additional expansions of scope that they're considering for pharmacists.

MLA Asagwara: So we know that pharmacists are a really important point of contact for many folks across this province. They are primary-care providers, and so beyond therapeutic substitutions, we are going to be further expanding pharmacists' scope in a few other ways that they've been asking for for years.

Actually, I want to shout out and thank the pharmacists for reaching out to us so that they could administer measles vaccines. You know, this is a really

important step that we've taken to make sure they can administer vaccines for those between the ages of two and 19 years old. That—I signed that order, that directive, just a few weeks ago.

So we're always taking steps to expand the scope of pharmacists. They're wonderful primary-care partners, and Manitobans really appreciate the care they provide.

So we're really excited. There's more to come on this—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin?

No more questions.

Debate

The Speaker: And the floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I don't have a lot of comments to make about Bill 50. I note that the bulk of the bill is primarily administrative amendments that would allow regulatory colleges to amalgamate, and certainly, if that's in the best interests of those regulated professions to do so, I don't want to stand in the way of that.

I'm going to focus my comments primarily on the expansion of pharmacists' scope of practice, because we know that pharmacists in Manitoba are trained to provide significantly more services than they are currently allowed to provide in Manitoba.

And, you know, the minister noted that there has been some expansion of that, and certainly some of that began under the previous PC government, enabling pharmacists to assess and treat for urinary tract infections. There was also a social impact bond through which Manitobans can now access smoking cessation products through their local pharmacy.

So, there's—you know, if you look to some neighbouring provinces—Alberta comes to mind; I believe Nova Scotia is another where patients in those provinces—for minor ailments, if they're—you know, if they get a tick bite and they need antibiotics to ensure they don't develop Lyme, they can go to their pharmacy to do that.

It's things like that that I think pharmacists would like the ability to do in Manitoba, and I certainly think that it's in the best interests of Manitobans and our health-care system to explore those opportunities and enable pharmacists to practise to their full scope in Manitoba. I'm thinking particularly of some rural

areas that would really benefit from being able to access the care of a pharmacist.

* (19:10)

And so that's really my only commentary on Bill 50, and we're ready to move this bill to committee.

The Speaker: The House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 50, the pharmaceutical amendment, regulated health professionals amendment and public health amendment act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 18—The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement)

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 18, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement).

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation and New Technology (MLA Moroz), that Bill 18, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change, seconded by the honourable Minister of Innovation and New Technology, that Bill 18, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

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

MLA Moyes: It's my pleasure to rise today for the second reading of Bill 18, which strengthens and modernizes the enforcement framework under The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act to ensure Manitoba's system remains effective, accountable and aligned with modern regulatory practices.

Bill 18 is about ensuring Manitoba has a clear and contemporary compliance tools that regulated parties, including stewards, stewardship-program operators

and landfill owners and operators, can meet their responsibilities, that oversight is transparent and that waste reduction and prevention can continue to operate in the best interests of Manitobans.

For more than three decades, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act has guided waste diversion, recycling and environmental protection in our province. While these programs have evolved, the enforcement tools within the act have not kept pace. These amendments respond directly to that gap by strengthening proportionate and effective compliance and progressive enforcement tools.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 18 introduces a suite of updates that will (1) apply interest on overdue waste-reduction and recycling support levy payments, ensure environment officers have clear authority to issue the orders they need when violations occur, introduce administrative monetary penalties as a modern and flexible option when orders are not followed, clarify offence provisions under the act and regulations, including failure to comply with orders, providing false or misleading information and obstructing officers.

It will modernize inspection powers to allow environment officers to access electronic records, take photographs and bring technical experts to verify compliance. It will also improve transparency by enabling the publication of compliance orders and administrative monetary penalties and stewardship-program plans, suspensions and cancellations. And, finally, they will—it will enhance the oversight of stewardship programs by providing authority to require independent third-party audits when necessary.

Honourable Speaker, Manitoba's waste reduction and prevention system depends on fairness, accountability and clear expectations. The current framework lacks several tools that are now common practice across Canada and these amendments will help close that gap. The introduction of compliance orders will ensure regulated parties receive clear, written direction when a contravention occurs, outlining what must be done, by when and how a review may be requested. This promotes timely compliance and reduces the need for more serious enforcement actions.

When a compliance order is ignored, administrative monetary penalties will provide a proportional and efficient alternative to prosecution. This approach is widely used in other jurisdictions and ensures that consequences are timely, predictable and easier for both regulated parties and government to administer.

Honourable Speaker, the bill also clarifies and updates offence provisions under the act, specifying the types of contraventions, including non-compliance with the act, its regulations or orders, knowingly providing false or misleading information, obstructing an officer. This helps improve certainty for regulated parties and supports fair, consistent application of the law.

The amendments update Manitoba's inspection powers by giving environment officers authority to access electronic records, take photographs, consult experts, collect documents needed for compliance, while maintaining privacy safeguards by requiring consent or a warrant to enter a dwelling.

Transparency is another key improvement. Manitobans expect clear information about how stewardship programs and other regulated parties are meeting their obligations. These amendments enable the publication of compliance information such as orders and penalties, which will help build public trust and encourage consistent compliance.

Stewardship programs play a central role in Manitoba's waste diversion efforts. Bill 18 provides authority for the director to require an independent third-party audit when needed to verify performance, financial transparency or compliance. Auditor qualifications and audit requirements will be set in regulation to ensure fairness and consistency.

Honourable Speaker, these enforcement amendments do not create new financial pressures for government and do not impose direct impacts on consumers. They focus on strengthening accountability for regulated parties while supporting the long-term sustainability and performance of Manitoba's recycling and waste diversion system. These changes support Manitoba's environmental goals by improving compliance, reducing waste sent to landfills and helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste. A modern and accountable system is essential to achieving better waste prevention outcomes.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 18 represents a practical and overdue modernization of legislation that has not been substantially updated since it was first assented more than 30 years ago. It strengthens enforcement tools, clarifies responsibilities, improves transparency and supports better environmental results for Manitobans.

I look forward to the support of all members in passing this legislation.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I'd like to ask the minister, what challenges in enforcing The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act led to the introduction of these amendments?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Thank you for that question.

It's—we heard from legal, actually. There was some discussions that were had with legal in terms of the oversight of our stewardship boards, and we always want to ensure that the stewardship boards are doing right by Manitobans. And so this bill will help update legislation to make sure that we can do, in fact, that.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the minister tell this House how often the department has relied on your—on prosecutions under the act to enforce compliance?

MLA Moyes: Well, that's actually, Honourable Speaker, that's actually one of the reasons why we're bringing forward this piece of legislation. We need to update the legislation so that we can actually hold folks to account when necessary. We obviously are hoping that all stewardship boards and landfill operators are doing right by the Province before Manitobans, but in the cases where that isn't happening, we want to make sure that we can prosecute.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the minister tell us how the government expects compliance orders to improve enforcement outcomes?

MLA Moyes: Well, what we're trying to do here is we're actually trying to bring the legislation into the modern age. It's been 30 years since this legislation has been updated, and most jurisdictions across Canada have this in place already, and so we're actually playing a little bit of catch-up. We need to ensure that we can enforce all of our legislation and our laws, and this update is going to go a long way to ensuring that takes place.

Mr. Nesbitt: Yes, will the minister tell this House what criteria will be used to determine the value of administrative penalties?

MLA Moyes: What I can tell you for the administrative monetary penalties, the maximum is \$10,000, but the total amount will be determined by regulation,

and so that will be considering a variety of factors, including the severity and the frequency of the contravention.

Mr. Nesbitt: I'd like to ask the minister, what safeguards exist to ensure administrative penalties are applied consistently?

* (19:20)

MLA Moyes: Well, one of the things that we really want to do in all cases of updating legislation is we want to really ensure that transparency is brought to the forefront, and so we're going to be publishing stewardship program plans, as well as the enforcement outcomes such as the orders, such as the administrative monetary penalties or any suspension, cancellation of any approved plan.

Mr. Nesbitt: The bill in—expands inspection powers to include audits, testing and electronic records.

What enforcement gaps are these provisions intended to address?

MLA Moyes: What we're trying to do is we're trying to empower our environment officers, who often had a challenging time investigating these different occurrences. And so when there is an instance of something looking awry, we want to ensure that the environment officers have the tools at their disposal so that they can get to the bottom of it for all Manitobans.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the minister tell us how frequently inspections are currently conducted under the act?

MLA Moyes: Well, it really depends on the level of risk, which is how we enforce all of our environmental laws. The higher the risk, the more enforce—or, the more inspections take place. And so, for a lot of these things, when we're talking about a stewardship board, we want to see oversight of their financial piece because that is for Manitobans.

But, in terms of the landfill operators, we do want to make sure that they are operating according to our laws and our regulations, which is what this is looking to update.

Mr. Nesbitt: Under what circumstances would the director require an independent audit of a stewardship program?

MLA Moyes: If there was—if it was determined that there was financial improprieties, then we would want to, obviously, investigate. And that's when the audit provisions would come into place.

Mr. Nesbitt: How many stewardship programs currently operate under the act?

MLA Moyes: Well, the stewardship are—there are a variety of different stewardship organizations. These are things that most Manitobans—they might recognize some of them. I'll list—I have a list here.

Like, it's like the Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba; it's the Call2Recycle Canada, which does household batteries; it is Product Care Association, which does different products like paint and lights for agriculture, related to packages; there's Cleanfarms, Electronic Products Recycling Association.

So there is a whole variety of associations that is regulated under this act.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Bill 18 focuses on updating and clarifying enforcement provisions within The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act. It introduces new tools such as compliance orders, administrative penalties, expanded inspection powers and additional transparency measures.

Overall, the legislation is largely administrative in nature, does not significantly change Manitoba's broader waste reduction framework work but instead aims to strengthen how existing rules are enforced. There are several elements of this bill that may support more effective compliance. For example, the introduction of compliance orders allows environment officers to require regulated parties to address contraventions within a specified time frame. This provides a more immediate and flexible tool compared to relying solely on prosecution.

Similarly, the creation of an administrative penalty regime, with penalties of up to \$10,000 for failure to comply with an order, introduces a graduated approach to enforcement. The bill also clarifies and expands inspection powers, including the ability to enter premises at reasonable times, examine records, require electronic documentation and conduct audits and testing.

In addition, there are new transparency provisions requiring certain information about stewardship programs to be posted publicly and allowing the publication of compliance and enforcement actions. These measures reflect a broader trend towards modernizing regulatory enforcement. At the same time, there are

several areas where additional clarity and consideration may be helpful.

First, with respect to inspection and enforcement powers, the bill provides environment officers with broad authority to enter and inspect premises of regulated parties without a warrant and, in some cases, to access other locations where relevant records may be kept. While these powers are intended to support compliance, it is important to ensure they are applied consistently and with clear guidance.

From a rural perspective, this is particularly relevant. In many rural and northern communities, waste disposal sites are operated by small municipalities or local contractors, often with limited administrative capacity. These operations may not have dedicated compliance staff or legal resources readily available. Ensuring that inspection processes are clearly communicated, predictable and proportionate will be important to avoid unintended challenges for smaller operations.

Second, regarding compliance orders and administrative penalties, the ability to issue compliance orders is a practical enforcement tool. However, the timelines are relatively tight. Regulated parties have 14 days to request a review and reviews are conducted by the director without a requirement for a hearing through written—though written submissions are allowed.

Administrative penalties may follow if compliance is not achieved, and while there is an appeal process to the minister, questions remain about consistency and transparency in how penalties are determined. What criteria will guide the amount of a penalty? How will proportionality be ensured, particularly between large corporations and smaller operators? Again, for rural municipalities or small businesses, even moderate penalties can have a significant financial impact.

Third, the bill introduces provisions allowing the director to require independent audits of stewardship programs, with costs borne by the operator. This may be appropriate in certain circumstances, but it will be important to clarify when and how these requirements will be applied and whether smaller program operators may face challenges in meeting these obligations.

Fourth, on transparency and public reporting, the bill requires a posting of key information about stewardship programs, including approvals and suspensions, which is a positive step. It also allows the

director to publish information about inspections, compliance orders and enforcement actions.

As with similar provisions in other legislation, this raises questions about consistency and criteria. What information will be made public as a matter of course and what will remain discretionary?

There is also a need to balance transparency with fairness, particularly where information may affect the reputation of smaller operators or municipalities.

While Bill 18 may strengthen enforcement tools, it also highlights a broader consideration. Improving enforcement is one part of an effective waste reduction system. The other part is ensuring that the overall framework continues to evolve and meet the needs of Manitobans.

Municipalities play a central role in delivering recycling and waste diversion programs. Many communities, particularly in rural and northern Manitoba, have indicated that they face challenges in maintaining and expanding these services. Access to convenient recycling options, such as curbside collection, varies across the province.

There may also be opportunities to review the list of designated materials under stewardship programs. Some materials that are recyclable in other jurisdictions are not currently included in Manitoba's system.

While Bill 18 introduces a number of administrative and enforcement updates that may improve compliance under the act, at the same time, there is value in ensuring that these tools are implemented in a way that is clear, consistent and responsive to the realities of different regions and operators across Manitoba. Balancing effective enforcement with fairness, transparency and practical implementation will be the key.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 18, The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement).

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 37—The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act

The Speaker: We'll now move on to Bill 37, The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act.

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 37, The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (19:30)

MLA Moyes: Honourable Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today for the second reading of Bill 37, legislation that modernizes Manitoba's environmental framework to better protect our land, our air and our water for generations to come.

Bill 37 reflects Manitoba's commitment to enhancing transparency, strengthening enforcement and ensuring that environmental responsibilities are carried by those who create environmental risks, not by Manitobans.

This bill continues the work that Environment and Climate Change has been undertaking to modernize Manitoba's environmental statutes. Recent amendments established the legislative authority to improve reporting, introduced and enhanced enforcement tools and reduce administrative burden—the administrative burden for landfill owners. Bill 37 builds on that progress. It advances our effort to ensure Manitobans have access to clear, consistent environmental information and that our enforcement system remains strong, fair and aligned with best practices across Canada.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 37 introduces a number of updates that will enhance reporting and transparency so that Manitobans have consistent access to environmental information that matters to their communities; improves communication with the public by modernizing how environmental information, proposals and decisions are shared; strengthens enforcement capabilities to ensure that those who violate environmental laws face meaningful consequences and reduces the burden on Manitobans while holding polluters to account.

Manitobans want to understand what's happening in their environment not only during the licensing stage but throughout the life cycle of a project. The Environment Act public registry currently provides a

strong foundation by focusing on assessments and licensing decisions; however, it has not consistently included information about what happens after a licence is issued.

One of the most exciting improvements in this bill is the expansion of the public registry, giving Manitobans easier and clearer access to the information about environmental compliance, monitoring and enforcement of licence developments under The Environment Act and The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act. For the first time, information about appeals related to licensing decisions and appeals concerning minor alteration decisions will be shared through the public registry, giving Manitobans a more complete picture of how environmental decisions are made and how concerns are resolved.

This is transparency in action. These updates reflect long-standing recommendations from stakeholders and the Manitoba Law Reform Commission and help Manitoba stay consistent with established practices across Canada.

This bill strengthens Manitobans' enforcement framework. It modernizes obstruction provisions and introduces new offence provisions for knowingly providing false or misleading information, important updates that reinforce the integrity of our regulatory system. These changes encourage honesty and ensure the department receives accurate information when reviewing projects and developments.

It extends the statute of limitations for prosecutions from one year to two years, recognizing that environmental investigations are often complex and require sufficient time for officers to thoroughly assess concerns and prepare appropriate action. This additional time ensures that enforcement officers can complete detailed investigations and pursue meaningful consequences when violations occur, bringing Manitoba in line with the stronger enforcement timelines used across many Canadian jurisdictions.

This bill puts the polluter-pay principle into practice. It authorizes inspection fees under The Environment Act and The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act, ensuring that the costs associated with compliance oversight are carried out by proponents whose activities require monitoring rather than being placed on Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 37 also introduces important updates to The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act. These amendments modernize Manitoba's

waste reduction and recycling support levy by ensuring it is always determined through a formula or tariff set out in regulation. This replaces the outdated per ton calculation with a clear, more consistent and transparent framework that can be updated as Manitoba's waste reduction system evolves.

This change reflects our government's commitment to reducing the amount of waste entering Manitoba's landfill while supporting stronger recycling and composting programs across the province. By ensuring the levy is determined through regulation, the bill helps ensure that the levy revenue can sustainably support the waste-reduction and recycling initiatives that Manitobans rely on, while maintaining affordability.

Together, these changes modernize our environmental governance framework and help ensure that Manitoba maintains a strong position on environmental protection, public accountability and responsible regulatory oversight.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 37 will increase transparency, strengthen enforcement, uphold the polluter pay principle, reduce burdens on Manitobans and align Manitoba with modern environmental practices across Canada.

I look forward to support from all members in this Chamber to pass this important piece of legislation and it—help ensure strong environmental protection for generations to come.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Would the minister please explain how the new inspection and service fees will be set and how we can be sure that they won't become too expensive?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): As I think everyone knows, affordability is top of mind for our government, and so what we're doing right now is we're actually updating this piece of legislation so that those fees can be amended in regulation.

All of those fees go back—outside of a small admin section that it costs to administer the program—right back to municipalities, ensuring that we're flowing

those to more composting programs, more recycling programs and so that we can reduce the waste going into our landfills.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the minister explain why the details about fees are being left to regulations instead of being clearly written into the law? Would the government consider putting limits in this bill?

MLA Moyes: Well, Honourable Speaker, I think what the member opposite is getting at is, for a long time there was actually—it was written right into the law. The problem with that is, if you don't update the regulation as costs increase to deliver the recycling, the compost programs right across our province, those don't get updated.

And so what this is allowing us to do is to continue to ensure that more funds can flow to municipalities and different groups that are doing that good work and diverting waste from our landfills.

Mr. Nesbitt: Has the government considered how any new fees will affect small businesses and local operators?

MLA Moyes: Yes. This legislation isn't actually affecting the small businesses at all. And, actually, we've been in close consultation with municipalities right across our province, communities right across our province, including AMM.

And this, as I mentioned in my previous answer, the vast majority outside of a very small admin that goes towards administering the program, it goes right back into municipalities, which actually helps divert waste, thereby keeping their landfills open longer, saving more.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, Bill 37 lets the director decide what information goes into the public registry. What rules will guide those decisions?

MLA Moyes: Well, we're actually looking to expand out what is posted on the registry. We recognize that, right now, licensing decisions are posted, but oftentimes any type of amendments are not, as well as appeals.

And so we want to put more information out there. Obviously, we're going to ensure that we adhere to FIPPA to make sure that people's personal information isn't going to be posted, but outside of that, this is going to increase transparency.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, I'd ask the minister why his department wouldn't require certain information like enforcement actions to always be made public instead of leaving it optional.

MLA Moyes: Right now, we have a pretty limited amount that's posted on the public registry and we don't think that is what we want to see happen. What we—instead, what we would rather have happen is we want Manitobans to see exactly how these environmental decisions are being made and the impacts that they are going to have on the environment so that they can have a clear line of sight on them.

* (19:40)

This legislation is going to do that. It's going to allow Manitobans to have that information, thereby increasing that transparency.

Mr. Nesbitt: Bill 37 gives a lot of power to the director. What checks are in place to make sure those powers are used fairly?

MLA Moyes: Well, there's always going to be appeals that can happen to the minister, and I'm always happy to hear from Manitobans. We're going to ensure that there's more information for Manitobans on a whole host of different things. We want to make sure that Manitobans have the information necessary so that they can see what's happening in their community, how decisions are being made.

We believe that this is going to really strengthen our environmental laws and look forward to passing this legislation.

Mr. Nesbitt: Why is the time limit for prosecutions being doubled from one year to two years? What problem is this trying to fix?

MLA Moyes: Well, what it's trying to fix, as I outlined in my opening statement, is that oftentimes environmental investigations take time. And so we're actually doubling the amount of time so that our enforcement—our environment officers have more time to do that investigative work.

I would have hoped that this work would have already been done in terms of updating this act, but members opposite did none of this work over their seven and a half years. And so we're looking to catch up to the rest of Canada.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, how will the government make sure entities aren't published for honest mistakes under the false or misleading information rule?

MLA Moyes: Well, I suppose that there's always going to be a necessary safeguard against, you know, unnecessary information being posted. We never want that to happen.

We always want to make sure that we're adhering to all of the FIPPA requirements and making sure that people are not having their personal information posted or any other type of information that could potentially cause harm. And so we're going to make sure that we continue to do that good work.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, can the minister please tell us why some definitions like Clean Environment Commission—why was that removed from the act, and does this mean less independent oversight?

MLA Moyes: You know, I'm a little confused by this—by the line of questioning. The Clean Environment Commission does excellent work. They're obviously an independent body that can be tasked with a whole variety of different things based on need and licensing and that.

Perhaps if the members opposite had done some of this work over their seven and a half years while they were in office, we wouldn't have to be cleaning up their mess just like every other area in government.

Mr. Nesbitt: I just want to ask the minister again—he didn't answer the question here, in—Clean Environment Commission was removed from the act under definitions. I'm just asking why.

Mr. Moyes: Honourable Speaker, I do find it disingenuous when members opposite want to talk about the environment just because, for seven and a half years, they sat on their hands and did absolutely nothing and didn't get the job done.

And so what we're trying to do here is actually strengthen the enforcement of environment officers. We're actively trying to be more transparent, and yet they're trying to think that we're hiding something. I guess that's just the type of people they are, where they like to go into backroom deals for their friends. We're actually trying to be more transparent.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, that was a pretty simple question. Still didn't get an answer, but we'll just move on here. The way the levies are calculated are being moved out of law and into regulations.

My question is: Will the public have a chance to provide input before changes are made to these levy formulas in the future?

MLA Moyes: Well, I think, ultimately, the ultimate arbiter always are Manitobans, and they're called elections. I know that members opposite like to, you

know, like to debase our democracy, and they've shown that time and time again.

But we're not going to do that, Honourable Speaker. We're always going to do right by Manitobans. We're going to continue to fight for them to have lower costs and to make sure that their life remains more affordable.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: Then the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Bill 37 proposes a series of amendments across three key statutes: The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act, The Environment Act and The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act. It introduces new provisions around faults or misleading information, expands authority to charge fees, extends timelines for prosecution and broadens the scope of information that may be included in the public registry.

There are elements of this bill that align with approaches taken in other provinces, particularly around enforcement and information integrity. At the same time, the way these changes are structured raises important questions about clarity, consistency and practical impact. We'd like to highlight a few areas for consideration.

First, with respect to fees and regulatory authority, Bill 37 introduces new sections such as section 18.1 under The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act and section 22.1 under The Environment Act, which allow the director to charge fees for inspections, reviewing reports and preparing documents. It also expands regulation-making powers to determine how these fees are calculated, when they apply and even when they may be waived or refunded.

This approach provides flexibility, but it also places significant detail outside of the legislation itself. This raises reasonable questions: How will these fees be set in practice? What principles will guide them? And how will consistency be ensured over time?

From a rural perspective, this is particularly important. In many rural and northern communities, businesses and municipalities already face higher transportation costs, fewer service providers and limited administrative capacity.

Additional fees, especially if they vary or are introduced without clear limits, could have a disproportionate impact. Clarity and predictability in fee structures would help ensure that these changes are implemented fairly across different regions of the province.

Secondly, I would like to turn to the public registry and transparency provisions. The bill expands the ability of the director to file information in the public registry, including details about monitoring, inspections, compliance, enforcement and appeals. It also requires that certain appeal notices and outcomes be posted. These changes could improve access to information and support transparency.

However, the legislation consistently uses language indicating that the director may file, and I quote, any information that the director considers appropriate. This creates discretion without clearly defined criteria.

It would be helpful to understand what standards or guidelines will govern these decisions. Are there categories of information, such as enforcement actions, that should always be disclosed? At the same time, there are also considerations around protecting sensitive or proprietary information, particularly for smaller operators who may be more vulnerable to reputational or financial impacts from public disclosure. Again, this is an area where additional clarity could strengthen both transparency and fairness.

Third, on enforcement and compliance, the bill introduces provisions prohibiting obstruction and knowingly providing false or misleading information. These are important components of any regulatory framework. It also extends the limitation period for prosecutions from one year to two years under both acts.

Additionally, the wording around knowingly providing false or misleading information is important, but, in practice, there may still be questions about how intent is assessed. In—again, in rural and remote areas, individuals and smaller operators may have less access to legal or technical expertise when submitting reports or complying with regulatory requirements. Clear guidance and education will be important to ensure that compliance expectations are well understood and consistently applied.

Bill 37 also removes certain definitions such as Clean Environment Commission from The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act. While these

may be technical changes, it raises a broader question about how roles and oversight mechanisms are evolving and whether any changes in structure affect transparency or independent review.

Finally, the bill amends The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act to move the determination of waste reduction and recycling levies entirely into regulation, based on prescribed formulas or tariffs. As with other elements of this bill, this provides flexibility but reduces the level of detail contained in legislation.

This leads to an important question: How will stakeholders, including municipalities and rural waste management authorities, be engaged when these formulas are developed or changed? Many rural communities manage their own waste systems with limited resources, and changes to levy structures could have direct financial implications for local residents. Ensuring that there is a clear process for input and communication will be important.

* (19:50)

Bill 37 addresses important aspects of environmental management, including enforcement, transparency and administrative processes. At the same time, it relies heavily on regulation to define how key elements will function in practice.

As this bill moves forward, there's an opportunity to provide greater clarity around fee structures, decision-making criteria for the public registry, oversight mechanisms and stakeholder engagement, particularly for rural and northern communities that may experience these changes differently. These considerations are important to ensure that the legislation is not only effective, but also consistent, transparent and equitable across the province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is Bill 37, second reading, The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 29—The University of Winnipeg
Amendment Act**

The Speaker: We will now move on to Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act.

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Cable: I am pleased to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 29. This bill amends The University of Winnipeg Act to ensure the university has a modern, effective and sustainable governance framework that reflects current best practices and public expectations for publicly funded post-secondary institutions.

University of Winnipeg has been prioritized for governance modernization as a first step to move forward with items identified in the long-overdue 2020 report from the Office of the Auditor General, which identified opportunities to enhance the existing legislative framework.

A key focus of the bill is improving the effectiveness of the Board of Regents. The current board has 36 members, making it the largest university board in Manitoba and among the largest in Canada. Stakeholders indicated that this size poses challenges for effective decision making, and this bill reduces the board to 21 members, creating a more functional and manageable structure while maintaining appropriate representation from each of the stakeholder groups.

The bill updates board composition to better align with required skills, experience and governance best practices. It embeds diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility expectations to reflect the campus community that the institution serves. The amendments also include a new requirement for a minimum of two Indigenous government appointees as the starting point. It maintains the role of many existing nominating groups, including the United Church, while adjusting members—or numbers to reflect present-day needs.

The amendments clarify conflict of interest and recusal requirements, setting clearer expectations for in camera proceedings and enhancing oversight of the university president as outlined in the 2020 OAG report.

These changes will respond to five Auditor General recommendations and align with system-wide governance modernization. They are informed by extensive engagement with nearly 200 post-secondary stakeholders consulted through more than 30 written submissions and 29 engagement sessions. Proudly, Honourable Speaker, this is the largest consultation process that the Department of Advanced Education has ever undertaken.

Participants consistently emphasized the need for right-sized boards, clearer accountability mechanisms and a more coherent governance framework across the province. The amendments reaffirm the university's history, principles of academic freedom and enhance institutional autonomy while ensuring that governance structures meet the expectations of students, staff, Indigenous partners and the public. I look forward to the bill proceeding through the Legislature.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): First of all, I just want to say how much I appreciate all of our second-post-secondary educators in our province, and they're doing a great job, and I appreciate all of them and what they do for our students and our province.

In regards to this Bill 29, my question would be: Can the minister tell us why the previous president and vice-chancellor was removed before his term was complete by the current Board of Regents?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable Speaker, as the member well knows, institutions in Manitoba maintain institutional autonomy, and the Board of Regents are responsible for the governing, hence this enhanced opportunities for them to govern effectively. As the member ought to know by now, institutions operate independently; they have academic freedom and they have institutional autonomy. The governance was handled by the board of governance.

Mrs. Hiebert: Can the minister tell us why—minister is—why she is cutting the board—the number of board members from 36 to 21?

MLA Cable: When the members opposite were in government, they received a report from the Auditor General in the year 2020, and that report collected dust on a number of ministers' desks and no action was done. And so one of the first things that I did as minister was to ensure that we moved along on those recommendations.

And the recommendations were clear: that governance needed to be right-sized at this institution. It's the largest board in Manitoba and one of the largest in Canada. So we are—the recommendations here are to reduce the number from 36 to 21, which will ensure that it's a more manageable board size and that effective governance will prevail here.

Mrs. Hiebert: Can the minister explain which member positions of the existing Board of Regents will be eliminated as part of the reduction from the 36 to the 21?

MLA Cable: I would invite that member to read the bill carefully. It is very prescriptive in the changes that are being made. And, again, largest consultation to ever happen from the Department of Advanced Education. We spoke with stakeholders across the province and, more importantly, stakeholders directly connected to the University of Winnipeg. The legislation is very prescriptive. I know that she was at the bill briefing, so I invite her to reread the legislation.

Mrs. Hiebert: I'm here in good faith, just asking questions, just because I think the public needs to know more information, because they weren't at the bill briefing. And that's why we're here today: to just make sure we are letting—make sure that everybody knows what's happening in our province and in our post-secondary education institutions.

Can the minister—can you please let us know the governance model for the Manitoba—or for the University of Winnipeg—was based on that of the University of Toronto? Can the minister tell us if she and the department did cross-'jurisdictionable' scan of the schools in Canada, and how does the U of W governance model compare to other similar universities?

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just remind the member to make sure they're always addressing their questions and answers through the Chair.

MLA Cable: I can assure the member that the legislation that has been developed here in consultation with, again, 200 stakeholders across the province is a

reflection of best practices across the country and in other jurisdictions.

* (20:00)

So I wanted to take this moment to thank the Department of Advanced Education, specifically the assistant deputy minister and all of the folks who engaged in those consultations. It was a very thoughtful process, and I'm incredibly grateful for all of the work that they did.

Mrs. Hiebert: Question for the minister: Is this an attempt from the minister to take control of the Board of Regents? Will the minister be appointing members to the Board of Regents herself personally?

Thank you.

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, that may have been how the members opposite governed themselves while they were leading this government and shown the door, but our government takes a different approach. We work collaboratively with our institutions based on skills matrix, a representation.

One thing that I can assure the member of is that we will continue to properly fund post-secondary institutions, unlike they did when they were in office.

Mrs. Hiebert: The bill says that the board must adopt a conflict of interest bylaw for board members and may make bylaws governing in camera meetings.

Can the minister explain why these changes are being made, and what were the conflicts of interest that arose, and what transpired in the in camera meetings in the past that they now need to make these bylaws to cover those concepts?

MLA Cable: One of the things that we need to ensure that is happening across all of our public post-secondaries is that (1) that Manitobans know that when they need to access training, when they want to go to school, that there will be an institution there to support them. And we know that it would be inappropriate for a minister to intervene into the autonomy of an institution.

But we also know that we need to ensure that Manitobans can have faith in the fact that their institutions are being run fairly and without prejudice. And like any well-functioning institution, conflict of interest laws are very important.

Mrs. Hiebert: The bill says the board must also make bylaws providing for an annual performance review of the university president, and the president must be

excluded from board or committee meetings when they are the subject of the deliberations.

Will there be an opportunity for due process for any future president to defend themselves or—and their work as president of the university?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, I find this tone of questionings bizarre, frankly, and I thought that the party of law and order would be in favour of ensuring that we have proper oversight on leadership.

So what I will promise to Manitobans is that, when you make an investment into an institution like University of Winnipeg, like University of Manitoba, that there are strong governance pieces in effect to ensure that we get the best value for dollar and that Manitoba students get the best possible education.

This means that there needs to be a strong leadership framework and a strong governance framework to ensure that all Manitobans can benefit from this great public institution.

Mrs. Hiebert: How will this bill help protect academic freedom and academic governance at the University of Winnipeg?

MLA Cable: So to be very clear, Honourable Speaker, this bill does not—is not involved in operations. This is governance framework. Academic freedom will be strengthened by the fact that there is strong governance to ensure that it's a well-running institution, that it is well functioning, that there is proper financial oversight and sustainability. This will enhance academic freedom and will ensure that our institutions are strong now and seven generations from now.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, today I rise as the critic of Advanced Education and Training to speak on Bill 29, which poses changes to governance in the University of Winnipeg.

Let me begin by saying this: we all want to see the University of Winnipeg succeed. Our goal is to continually support our post-secondary institutions. The success of the institutions help our students to have a future and have success also. It is an important institution in our province. It has a long history, dating back to its founding in 1967. There's a lot of history there. And it continues to serve our students in arts, science, education and many other fields. It plays a

key role in shaping the next generation of leaders, workers and community members.

Because of that, any changes to how the university is governed deserves careful thought. Bill 29 makes several changes to the Board of Regents. Mostly—most notably, it reduces the size of the board from 36 members to 21. It also introduces term limits, requires conflict of interest bylaws and creates rules around in camera meetings and annual performance reviews for university president. These are all parts of the bill that we can support.

Requiring a conflict of interest bylaw is a positive step. Manitobans expect transparency and integrity from those in leadership positions, and this helps build that trust. The requirements for an annual performance review of the present president is also reasonable. Strong leadership matters, and regular, fair evaluations are part of good governance. As well, setting clear rules for in camera meetings can help ensure that decisions are made in a more structured and accountable way. These are constructive measures, and we support them.

But, Honourable Speaker, we have a serious concern with one of the key parts of this bill. The decision significantly reduces the size of the Board of Regents. Going from 36 members to 21 is not a small change. It is a major shift in how the university is governed, and we just want to ask why and what the big impact will be.

The government has not clearly explained the need for this reduction. Yes, a—yet a small—yes, a smaller board could be more streamlined. It may be able to meet more easily and make more decisions quickly, but efficiency shouldn't not—should not be—should not come at the cost of representation or accountability. For example, which positions will be excluded or eliminated off the board, and will there still be representation from those groups of people that are being taken off the board?

A larger board allows for more voices. It allows for broader perspectives in the community, from students, from stakeholders who care deeply about the future of the university. When you reduce the number of seats at a table, you reduce the number of voices being heard. That's a concern.

It is also worth noting that these changes come at a time when the university has faced internal challenges, including leadership challenges and ongoing leader—legal matters. We do not need to take a position on those issues, but we can say this: when there

is uncertainty, transparency and accountability become even more important, not less. So we should not be judgmental. We should not be catty about asking questions about what's happening; it's important for us to do that. It's important for all of us to do that.

So, again, we ask the question: Why are we doing exactly this specific reduction of board? What problem is this change—what problem is this change trying to solve? This is—if this is about improving governance, or is it about concentrating decision-making power in fewer hands—just possibly an option as well. These are fair questions, and Manitobans deserve a clear answer.

There is also a broader concern here. The government has often—speaks about—against cuts, yet here we have a bill that reduces the size of an important governing body at a major public institution. It just raises simple questions, Honourable Speaker. If they're willing to cut here, will they cut—what will they cut next? We've seen what they've cut in the last few months.

We need to be consistent. We—if we believe in strong public institutions, then we should also believe in strong representative governance. From our perspective, there is always a good and better path forward in every decision.

* (20:10)

We can support positive accountability measures in this bill, the conflict of interest rules and the performance reviews and the clear procedures. Those are really good. At the same time, we could make—ask more questions and ask exactly why the current change in the board. That approach would protect representation while still improving governance. It would be more balanced.

Because, at the end of the day, our goal should be simple: to ensure that the University of Winnipeg is well managed, transparent and focused on student success. And we need to support those that are in the education, that are teaching, as well as the students.

Students are the reason we are here. They rely on their university to provide high-quality education, strong programs and a stable environment where they can learn and grow. That is good governance, and that supports good governance. And good governance means making decisions that are thoughtful, balanced and focused on long term.

Honourable Speaker, this bill has some good ideas in it but also raises important questions, which is why

I'm here today. It's our job as opposition. We are ready to work with the government to improve this legislation, and we are ready to support measures that strengthen accountability.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: So then the question before the House is second reading of Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 35—The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act

The Speaker: We'll now move on to Bill 35, The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act.

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 35, The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les centres d'apprentissage pour adultes, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Cable: I'm pleased to rise again to speak to Bill 35, which proposes amendments to The Adult Learning Centres Act that would allow First Nations band councils to register and operate adult learning centres in Manitoba, either independently or in partnership with a recognized educational institution.

The addition of section 7(1.1) would permit band councils to apply to operate an adult learning centre without a partner. Under the current framework, band councils must partner with a recognized educational institution, such as a college or school division, for at least three years before being eligible to apply to operate independently.

This bill maintains the option to partner but removes the mandatory requirement, giving First Nations greater flexibility in determining how best to deliver adult education in their own communities. Adult learning centres play a vital role in the education system, supporting adults who want to obtain their high school diploma or gain the credits needed to pursue further education, training or employment opportunities.

These centres follow provincial curricula that is delivered by Manitoba-certified teachers and are authorized by the Province of Manitoba to grant high school credits and issue high school diplomas.

Forty-two per cent of all adult learners are Indigenous, the majority being First Nations. In northern Manitoba, nearly 90 per cent of adult learners are Indigenous. Providing First Nations with the option to partner or operate independently would offer band councils a choice of pathways for delivering much needed adult education, thereby expanding access to learning and supporting community-led programming.

The amendment advances truth and reconciliation by responding to the education gap and improving graduation outcomes for Indigenous learners across Manitoba. Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we have prioritized narrowing the gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous learners, and we're going to continue doing that work. This is one step towards equalizing opportunities for Manitobans, and I look forward to the bill proceeding through the Legislature.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I think this is a great—I think legislation that encourages adult education is such an important part of what we do as legislators here in the province. Just have a few questions in regards to the legislation specifically.

Can the minister tell us whether other jurisdictions have similar legislation related to the First Nations band councils operating independent adult 'learning' centres, or will Manitoba be the leader in this area?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable Speaker, Manitoba is a leader in so many ways in relation to advancing truth and reconciliation, and you only need to look on this side of the House to see what representation looks like in a government. And we will be a leader in Canada in this respect, and it is overdue.

And I look forward to continuing our partnerships with First Nations all across the province.

Mrs. Hiebert: Has this—has the government consulted with post-secondary partners about potential impact on current adult education programs? For example, will this shorten wait times or wait-lists in other areas of the province?

MLA Cable: You know, when I talk with leadership at our post-secondary institutions across the province, one of the things that I hear consistently is that we need more options in community and closer to home. Participation rates go up when people are able to learn in their home communities. It makes it more accessible, less travel costs and the greater sense of belonging and community support.

So this will absolutely enhance the offerings that are already there, and it will ensure that more Manitobans have the opportunity to complete their grade 12 and pursue post-secondary or find themselves into a great job. We have a lot of investment happening in this province, and I look forward to helping to build up the Port of Churchill. And I know that—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: Can the minister tell us what consultation occurred with First Nations communities when drafting this legislation? How do they feel they're equipped to take on this big new development—the legislation that the government's bringing forward? Is there any concerns at all from the Indigenous communities?

MLA Cable: First Nations communities are looking forward to having the autonomy and the ability to educate their own.

And, you know, we've made a number of changes, including the next bill that we have coming up is the Yellowquill University College act, which reinforces the idea that Indigenous people can and do teach Indigenous children and learners.

So First Nations are looking forward to this. We already have four who have their own registered adult learning centres. So Brokenhead, Peguis; we have Treaty Reserve 292 and Waywayseecappo all have their own adult learning centres, and I anticipate that we will have more First Nations—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: In regards to the communities starting their own programs, what safeguards will be in place

to ensure students receive equivalent educational quality regardless of where they study?

MLA Cable: So I know that when Minister Fontaine has brought forward her—

The Speaker: Order, please.

We're not allowed to use people's names. Either their ministerial title or their constituency.

MLA Cable: As I was saying, I know that when the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) had brought forward legislation around child welfare, the members opposite had similar questions. And what I would say to that member is that, as I stated clearly in my opening remarks, the requirements for adult education centres are the same. It's qualified teachers. They follow the same framework.

And I would implore the member to do away with old tropes about needing additional supervision for Indigenous people.

* (20:20)

Mrs. Hiebert: There was nothing said about additional, like—anyway, just—the comment there was unheard of, but anyway.

What process is in place to review curriculum and ensure it aligns with the Manitoba adult education requirements? It's important for us to make sure that we set up students for success no matter where they're studying, and that's just a question that I have.

Thank you, honourable Minister.

MLA Cable: Once again, Honourable Speaker, the requirements are just the same as any other adult education provider—just the same.

Mrs. Hiebert: What supports will be provided to ensure communities have the administrative capacity and resources to operate these centres successfully? And if they choose operate—if they choose to operate an independent learning centre, will there be extra funds available to them? What will they—the government be doing in those situations where they need the extra funds to continually offer these courses?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, Indigenous Services Canada provides the funding for education within First Nations; it is a requirement. It is long-standing since the constitutional beginnings and they provide the funding there. But as always, we always work with our partners regardless of whether they live on reserve or off, because a Manitoban is a Manitoban is a Manitoban.

Mrs. Hiebert: Will the government be publishing performance data or annual reports in regards to the adult learning centres?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, each and every year, the Department of Advanced Education and Training provides those statistics in our annual report.

The Speaker: No further questions?

Then is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Debate.

Debate

The Speaker: Let's—the floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to discuss and to speak about Bill 35. At its heart, this bill touches on something very important, as we would all agree in this room—in this Chamber.

Access to education for adults who may not have had the chance to finish school or gain the skills that they needed to succeed. That matters; that is so important, Honourable Speaker, because adult education can change lives. It opens doors to jobs, to stability and to opportunity. We all support that. It helps people, including in—those in Indigenous communities in the North and rural Manitoba and the cities, to support their families and contribute more fully to their communities.

And for many Manitobans, especially in rural and northern areas, these programs are just not available—as they are essential, but they're not available. So just to be clear, we support the goal of expanding access to adult education. We believe that people deserve a second chance at learning. We believe that barriers to education should be removed whenever possible. But access is—alone is not enough.

If we are going to expand adult education, we must also make sure it's strong, consistent and respected across the province. We need to set our students up for success. Adult learners deserve the same quality of education as any other student in any other area of the province. They deserve programs that meet political—provincial standards. They deserve clear pathways to further education and employment. Because of the lower bar—because if we lower the bar or even—or create uneven standards, we are not setting people up for success. Our students will not succeed. We will be setting them up for a disappointment, and that's not what we want.

There's nothing wrong with being extra careful and being extra tentative to what is happening in this legislation and that's some serious concerns if we don't take it seriously in that area. This legislation does not show clearly how these programs will be delivered, how quality will be maintained, or how outcomes will be measured. It raises an important question: Does this bill do enough to truly support adult learners?

We also need to talk about costs and sustainability. Expanding programs is one thing; making sure they can last and deliver real results is another. We need to make sure that we are prepared for all of the questions and not rush legislation. What will this cost? How will it be funded? We heard some answers, but is that enough? And how do we ensure that these programs are still strong and available years from now and that those students that took those classes and those courses are still successful because of what they took?

Manitobans are ready—already dealing with rising costs; families are stretched; communities are under pressure. They expect government to be careful, transparent and responsible with public money, but this bill does not provide enough clarity on the financial aid part—I don't think. And when costs are not clear, the burden does not disappear. It gets passed on in one way or another.

We have to also consider fairness. We need to make sure that adult education programs are equally strong in all regions of Manitoba, including Indigenous communities and the North. Will rural and northern communities have the same level of access to quality as urban centres? This is always a barrier, and this has been a barrier for many years. Will some students reserve—receive better support than others? These are all questions—we need to make sure that we answer—to make sure every single student, no matter where they are, have the same things that are, like, available to them as everyone else in the province. These are not small questions.

We truly believe in adult education. It must work for everyone not just in theory but in practice. Consultation is also very important. The people who understand education best—educators, community organizations and students themselves—should be part of these solutions, and I just want to encourage that those things are happening. We know that consultation works, and we know that challenges do exist on the ground. So what is the support available to the communities in the northern Manitoba that will be adding these adult-education centres to their commu-

nities? Their voices—if their voices are not included, we risk creating programs that look good on paper but fall short in reality.

Accountability is also very important; we need to measure success. How will we know if students are completing programs, finding jobs or moving on to further education if we don't know how they're performing and how they're doing and where we need to improve, because everybody needs to be able to look and see where improvement can be made. Right now I don't think there's enough answers in those areas.

And hope is not a plan, Honourable Speaker. I believe in adult education. I believe in people getting real opportunities to succeed, but we need to make sure that we put the legislation and the details behind our goals and our hopes for everyone.

I thank you, Honourable Speaker, for listening to me today. And, again, I want to thank all of our post-secondary education teams and all our organizations and institutions and also all of those teachers who are working every day with our adult education students.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: Question before the House is second reading of Bill 35, The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 45—The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act

The Speaker: We'll now move on to Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act.

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie), that Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act; Loi sur le Yellowquill University College et modification de la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

* (20:30)

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

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Training, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, that Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to the Advanced Education Administration Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, I am thrilled to rise again to provide some comments on Bill 45. This bill is a new, first-of-its-kind approach in Manitoba that will establish Yellowquill as a university college with the authority to offer post-secondary programs that lead to the granting of a degree.

Indigenous-governed and -operated post-secondary institutions are not currently recognized in Manitoba's legislative framework, which consists of public universities and colleges, private vocational institutions and private religious institutions.

Yellowquill University College currently operates without regulation or official academic standing, despite expertise in offering post-secondary programs grounded in Indigenous pedagogies, cultures and worldviews. Yellowquill University College is governed by the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council and is recognized by the National Indigenous Accreditation Board and the First Nations from which they receive their mandate.

This bill is a priority because the Manitoba government has made a 'convitment' to advance reconciliation. This legislation would respect Indigenous rights to education and Yellowquill's capacity to defined its own post-secondary program to meet the needs of the First Nations it serves.

Other provinces, including Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, have legislation recognizing Indigenous-governance-governed post-secondary institutions, providing useful models for Manitoba.

Providing degree-granting status to Yellowquill University College recognizes Indigenous knowledge systems and affirms their equal standing within Manitoba's post-secondary system.

The intent is to establish Yellowquill University College as a degree-granting institution in a way that

respects and upholds its unique position as a First Nations-mandated institution. I look forward to this important bill proceeding through the Legislature.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I just want to say hello to all the educators at Yellowquill college university—or university college. I had the opportunity to go there and participate in an Indigenous ceremony, and it was a really great experience, and they were so welcoming and so wonderful. So thank you to the staff and educators at the college.

I—my question would be for the minister this evening: What consultations were conducted with other universities in the community or in the province of Manitoba, Indigenous communities and education experts, before bringing this forward?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Honourable Speaker, the late, great Senator Murray Sinclair said education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it.

And I am so proud to stand with a government that understands that, in order to truly advance reconciliation in this country, we have to do things that put Indigenous people first, that recognize the inherent rights and all of the knowledge and greatness that Indigenous peoples hold.

Yellowquill has waited 40 years for this recognition, and I am so pleased that under the late Nello Altomare, that our government was able to say yes, we're going to move forward with this—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Hiebert: Question would be: What financial commitments will the Province make to Yellowquill University College after passing this bill to help ensure the university is able to deliver the education needs and ensure student success?

MLA Cable: I appreciate very much that the member opposite is concerned with financing post-secondary because the record from the folks on her side of the House is pretty abysmal in that respect.

We are having conversations with Yellowquill. We've recently given them a large sum to be able to work through this initial onboarding. But we'll continue to work with them as a partner, respecting their autonomy and everything that they bring to the table as their own institution.

Mrs. Hiebert: How will this government ensure that academic standards at Yellowquill University College are equal to those at other recognized universities in Manitoba?

MLA Cable: I'm starting to feel a bit like a broken record here when I stand up and say that Indigenous people can teach Indigenous people. Indigenous parents can care for Indigenous children. And this implied, not-so-quiet statement about who is able to provide guidance and teach Indigenous people is really unbecoming of the member.

Mrs. Hiebert: I think every parent has a—make—wants to make sure that the people that are teaching their children and their students are qualified to teach them, that they have the most opportunity for success in any education or stream that they decide to go into. So, that's a very good question, I think.

What oversight—sorry, what oversight mechanisms will the Province have to ensure quality control once Yellowquill receives formal recognition under Bill 45?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the leadership at Yellowquill University College for their patience in waiting for 40 years for recognition from a provincial government. And I want to thank the instructors and teachers and Elders who have for the last 40 years provided outstanding education to Indigenous people in this province.

I look forward to them engaging in new kinds of training, partnering with other institutions to be able to offer things like bachelor of relational studies, education, trades even. Yellowquill University College does a phenomenal job of providing education. I look forward to them doing that even more.

Mrs. Hiebert: Just a question about the cultural classes and the different programs that they offer at the university. How will the government measure the success of those and the success of Bill 45 over the next five to 10 years? And what outcomes should Manitobans expect?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, much like we see great representation of Indigenous peoples here in this Chamber, we will continue to see even more representation of Indigenous peoples in every aspect of public and civil society. That will be the marker.

The Speaker: No further questions.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I rise today as the critic of Advanced Education and Training to speak to Bill 45, the Yellowquill University College act.

I want to begin by recognizing the importance of this moment. The Yellowquill University College has been serving First Nations students since 1984. It was created by the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council to meet a real need: an educational system that respects culture, supports community and opens doors for learners who are often—too often left out of traditional teachings and traditional institutions. That work matters. It has always mattered. And I want to thank those that are educating our Indigenous youth and young people in the school.

* (20:40)

Bill 45 takes an important step forward for formally recognizing Yellowquill University College in Manitoba law and granting it the authority that offer—it offers—to—offers to—for degrees. I want to be clear: I support this goal. Expanding access to post-secondary education for First Nations students in a way that reflects their identity, their language and their culture is something we should all stand behind and we do. It's so important and I will always support that.

Education is more than a classroom and textbooks; it is about belonging; It's about identity; it's about giving students the confidence to succeed while staying connected to who they are.

Yellowquill University College offers that kind of learning environment when grounded in values of wisdom, love, respect, honesty, humility, truth and courage. These are not just teachings; they are guiding principles that shape strong students and strong communities in a strong province.

We also, as legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure that every student in Manitoba receives a high-quality education that prepares them for the future and we should want that for every single student in this province as well. That is why, while supporting this bill, I believe that we could do better. I believe we can ensure that education offers—offered at Yellowquill university meets the same strong academic standards other universities in Manitoba and across Canada.

It's not about limiting the institution; it's about strengthening it. We want to strengthen all of our post-secondary institutions in Manitoba. Students who choose Yellowquill deserve to know that their degrees will be recognized, respected and valued wherever their path takes them, whether that is further education, a career or leadership in their communities.

We want every graduate to feel confident in their hard work and have their hard work open doors for them. We also want employers, educators and institutions across the country to have confidence in the credentials being granted. That's how we set students up for success.

So as we move forward with Bill 45, I encourage the government to focus on a few key areas: First, clear and transparent academic standards. These should align with what we expect from all degree-granting institutions in Manitoba. Strong standards support strong outcomes.

Second is accountability: This means ensuring there are appropriate measures in place for students, families and communities that trust in the quality of education being delivered and that quality is what gives 'acredation' to that—to Yellowquill and makes them revered in the province.

Third, clarity around funding and long-term sustainability. This is something that's important as we want our students to continually have the—or the—Yellowquill to be able to go to school.

For Yellowquill University College to thrive, it must have resources it needs to grow, innovate and continue serving students for generations to come. These are all very important points to take away with—and it's important to have Indigenous-led education. In fact, they reinforce that a true means combining cultural strengths with academic excellence. It's win-win for everyone. It's win for the college and it's win for the students.

We can and we should make sure that both are successful. We must recognize the broader context, the legacy of things that have happened in Manitoba and across Canada. We must educate systems where we must encourage language, culture and identity in all of our institutions and in the northern of—northern part of Manitoba.

Today we have the opportunity to support institutions that restore and encourage culture. This is meaningful and it's necessary and we stand behind that. By supporting Yellowquill University College we are supporting a model of education that empowers students to learn in a way that reflects who they are while also preparing them for opportunities of today and tomorrow. That is balance and it is so important.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today on how important it is for us to respect and encourage Indigenous culture in our province and in our communities, and I support this new bill. And thank you for letting me put a few words on the record.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House, then, is bill—second reading of Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

And that concludes the business before the House tonight.

The hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 20, 2026

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