



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXX No. 51B – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, May 7, 2026

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

Thursday, May 7, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 53—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2026 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: This bill introduces tax amendments and changes to implement the key measures from Budget 2026; measures focused on good jobs, lower costs and better health care.

Bill 53 removes the PST from all food sold at grocery stores, delivering real relief where families are feeling it most. It increases the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,700 and the Renters Affordability Tax Credit to \$675, making life more affordable for Manitobans whether they rent or whether they own.

These measures deliver real, tangible relief to Manitoba families, lowering costs and keeping more money in people's pockets, while we continue to rebuild health care and grow our economy.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

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

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Pleased to table the 2023 annual reports for the human—Manitoba Human Rights Commission and Manitoba Human Rights Adjudication Panel.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I'm tabling two revised Estimates sequences: one for May 7, 2026 and another for May 8, 2026.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mental Health Week

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister responsible for Mental Health): I rise today to recognize Mental Health Week, May 4 to 10, 2026. This year's theme is Come Together, Canada: Stronger connections.

This year marks the 75th year that the Canadian Mental Health Association celebrates Mental Health Week, that was introduced across Canada in 1951 to raise awareness of mental illness.

This theme speaks to something simple but powerful: We are stronger when we show up for one another. Mental health is not something we carry alone. It lives within our families, in our communities and in relationships that help us feel seen, heard and valued. Mental health is about opening doors to honest conversations, breaking down stigma and remaining—and reminding people that they don't have to struggle in silence.

Honourable Speaker, recognizing this week matters. It shines a light on the realities people are facing, it encourages folks to reach out for help sooner and it reinforces that mental health is just as important as physical health. It's also about ensuring people know where to access help.

Honourable Speaker, we know that there is not one person in Manitoba that has not, at one point in their life, struggled with their mental health and needed help. This week is also about ensuring people know where to get help when they need it, because support should be there when people look for it.

Here in Manitoba, our government is working with communities, social agencies and people with lived experience to strengthen mental health and addictions supports. That is why we have invested in a range of initiatives to expand mental health workforce, crisis

response, trauma services, suicide prevention and youth-focused service models across Manitoba.

These initiatives are being implemented with multiple partners, including Manitoba Justice, Families, Education, Early Childhood Learning, service delivery organizations, Indigenous and community-based organizations, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

Through—and through a shared mandate between Housing, Addictions and Homelessness and Justice, we're committed to adding 100 mental health workers across our great province. This work is helping to build a more co-ordinated, compassionate response and bringing together front-line workers, community organizations and law enforcement to better support people in crisis while growing our mental health workforce.

Honourable Speaker, our government provides \$4.3 million annually to support the Assertive Community Treatment, Flexible Assertive Community Treatment, FACT and ACT, teams here in Winnipeg.

ACT and FACT teams help individuals obtain and maintain tenancies by liaising with housing providers—non-profit, Manitoba Housing, social housing and private market—supporting life-skills development and housing to address issues that could lead to eviction if left unaddressed.

In 2025, we also invested \$500,000 in additional funding to the Women's Health Clinic to create Manitoba's first community-based eating disorder program for children and youth. Early intervention and accessible supports can make a life-changing difference for young people and their families.

We also increased the annual funding to Klinik's health to expand trauma counselling services, to enhance crisis line capacity. This investment helps reduce wait times, expand access to care and ensure more people can connect with supports when they need it the most. The funding helps Klinik to support more Manitobans annually through their long-term trauma therapy program.

It also improves wait times for counselling services, introduces service navigation and referral supports for individuals requiring care outside the trauma program and expands access to brief intervention services for those who do not require long-term therapy.

Honourable Speaker, we are also investing in better supports for children and youth through integrated youth services sites, known as Huddles.

These spaces provide evidence-based mental health and addiction supports, primary health care, peer support and other social services tailored to youth ages 12 to 29.

And our government is currently supporting six Huddle sites here in Winnipeg, Selkirk and in Brandon. And we're expanding into Portage la Prairie and into the North.

Honourable Speaker, I want to recognize two guests who are up in the gallery: Alana Delmer [*phonetic*], youth service clinical manager to Huddle Broadway, who emceed our event today in the Rotunda; and Hayden Schneider, who spoke at our Mental Health week, who has accessed services. I want to thank you for sharing your story.

And in 2014, we've also invested over \$2 million in the virtual crisis and consultation services for children and youth. This is a hub-and-spoke model for crisis services that creates consistency in crisis response consultation and treatment across the province and helps connect young people and their families to care more quickly, no matter where they live.

Honourable Speaker, we continue to see far too many lives lost to suicide and ongoing mental health crisis in communities across our province. That's why we've invested almost \$2 million to implement a province-wide Suicide Prevention Strategy, with a focus on Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. This work has been guided by an advisory group of Indigenous youth, rights holders and organizations and health system partners, and we look forward to releasing the completed strategy very soon.

And we are also taking important steps towards—because we know that there's more work to be done. We're going to continue to do that work because we know that mental health affects all of society and addressing it requires all of us working together.

I recently participated in the federal-provincial-territorial meeting where we discussed the development of a national men and boys' strategy—health strategy that looks at addressing the unique mental health challenges men and boys face. These conversations are important because too many boys and men continue to suffer in silence due to stigma and harmful ideas around vulnerability and asking for help.

* (13:40)

That stigma is real. We've even seen it here in this Chamber, where the member for Dawson Trail spoke openly about his own mental health struggles. That kind of honesty matters. It helps others feel less alone and reminds us all that the—of the importance of compassion and understanding.

So I want to thank the member for Dawson Trail for showing us his vulnerability and normalizing that we all need help and support and that it's okay to talk about our struggles and to seek help.

So, in addition to recognizing Mental Health Week, I also want to recognize two important days this week—or this year: Drug-Related Death Bereavement Day, observed on the first Sunday in May, which honour those who may have lost their lives to substance overdoses and acknowledges the grief carried by families and their loved ones; and today, May 7, which is National Child and Youth Mental Health Day. This is meant to remind us that listening, checking in, showing care, can make a lasting difference in youth—young people's lives.

When we come together, we build stronger, healthier communities where more people feel connected and supported.

So, today, I want to remind all Manitobans that you are not alone, that it's okay to talk about your mental health needs, that you don't have to suffer in silence, that we all struggle in some point in our lives and that we need to show up for one another and to take care of yourself, because you matter.

Miigwech.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I rise today to recognize May 4 to 10, 2026, as Mental Health Week, led by Canadian Mental Health Association. This year's theme, Come Together, Canada, reminds us of the importance of human connection and the role all play in supporting mental health in our homes, our workplaces and in our communities.

Mental Health Week is an opportunity to raise awareness, encourages conversation and remind Manitobans that mental health is just as important as physical health.

While many people stay connected through texts, video calls and social media, we also know that online communication alone does not always replace meaningful, in-person connection. According to Stats Canada, nearly one in four Canadians who rely only on virtual communication report feeling lonely, often or always.

This year's campaign encourages all of us to spark small, everyday actions of connection: inviting friends for coffee, taking a walk with a loved one, checking in on a neighbour or attending a community event. These moments may seem simple, but they can have a powerful impact on mental health well-being and help foster a stronger sense of belonging. Together we can strengthen mental health, build healthier communities and help more people feel connected.

Our PC government understands that many Manitobans continue to face challenges, including the lasting pressures brought on by COVID-19 pandemic. That is why our government created the ministerial of health—Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery to help ensure Manitobans have access to care, supports and treatment they need or their journey towards wellness, recovery and healing. And in Budget 2021, our government also made an additional—initial investment of \$342 million in wellness and recovery programs to strengthen support for Manitobans all across this great province.

Honourable Speaker, we also recognize that more must be done to reduce the stigma that is surrounding mental health and to promote an open dialogue and awareness. This continues creating workplaces and communities where people feel safe seeking help and talking openly about their mental well-being. Mental health affects us all and supporting one another must remain a shared responsibility.

As we mark Mental Health Week, I encourage all Manitobans to take time to connect with one another, support those who may be struggling and continue building a province where everyone feels seen, valued and supported.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I ask for leave to speak to the ministerial statement.

The Speaker: Does the honourable member for Dawson Trail have leave? [*Agreed*]

MLA Lagassé: I'm pleased to respond to the ministerial statement recognizing Mental Health Week. Thank you to the people that are in the gallery who continue to work and advocate on behalf of mental health. Your work is extremely important.

Mental health affects every family and every community of Manitoba. In any given year, one in five Canadians experiences a mental health challenge or illness and many more struggling—struggle in silence without seeking support. Young people are especially

impacted. Recent national data shows increasingly rates—increasing rates of anxiety, depression and mental health related to physician visits among youth.

This week reminds us that mental health is health. It is also a reminder that support must go beyond awareness alone. Manitoba's—Manitobans need timely access to counselling, addictions treatment, crisis services and mental health support in both urban and rural communities. Mental health conversations must also be included; psychological safety in workplaces, schools and public institutions. Respect and compassion matters.

I have had mental health challenges and still continue to struggle with them, and I want to acknowledge everyone who faces a mental health challenge personally or through someone they love. Sometimes the greatest accomplishment is just getting up and showering in the morning.

Recovery is not always easy, but no Manitoban should feel they are alone. This week lets us recommit not only awareness, but to action and meaningful support to mental health across the province and Canada. There is support available out there.

If you're wondering who to call, you can reach out to the 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline; Klinik Crisis Line at 204-786-8686 or toll-free at 1-888-322-3019. And for the kids out there that are suffering, you can reach out to 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.

I'd also like to thank the many organizations out there, from the Robb Nash program to the Samantha Mason foundation, for the great work they do as well. Remember, it's okay not to be okay. What's not okay is to go through it alone.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Prior to members'—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, I just wanted to say to our colleague from Dawson Trail, on behalf of all of us: We've got your back. It really tears us up to see you affected, but maybe in sharing your story, you're getting that empathy and that compassion, so we support you and we want to see you thriving.

So all the best, my friend, and maybe we'll see you at Bass Pro Shops soon.

The Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister. Not a point of order, but well-spoken words.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to members' statements, there's some guests in the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery from Woodlawn School 47 grade 7 students under the direction of Simmy Gandhi, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

We welcome you all here today.

* (13:50)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Sisler High School's Quiz Team

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding Sisler High School quiz team, a group that exemplifies academic excellence, dedication and community spirit. For four years, its grade 12 members have competed together, building a legacy that has reached remarkable heights in Manitoba.

Their journey began with consecutive provincial titles at the intermediate level, reflecting early strength in teamwork and scholarship. Like many students, they faced setbacks during the pandemic, but showed resilience in rebuilding. Under coach Heather Johnson, who has led the team since 2019, alongside Sage Pereira, these students committed to rigorous twice-weekly practices from October to May.

Their hard work has delivered exceptional results. After finishing second at provincials for the Reach for the Top academic quiz competition last year, the team captured the senior provincial title this spring, Sisler's first senior championship since 1972. Nationally, they have twice qualified for the championships. In Calgary last year, they placed an impressive 11th in their debut against top teams from across Canada. This year, they returned with determination and confidence.

I commend Sipara Berhe, Ethan Blackburn, Adeleine Collins, Raine Dexter, Herryward Lozada, Cole Laforte and Tyron Sison. Their achievements inspire young Manitobans to pursue excellence with passion and perseverance.

I invite my colleagues to join me in celebrating their success and wishing them continued excellence at the Reach for the Top national championship.

La Broquerie Habs Junior B Hockey Champions

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the La Broquerie Habs, winners of the 2025-26 CRJHL Junior B hockey championship.

Just two years ago, the Habs came into existence, bringing junior hockey back to La Broquerie. Since then, this homegrown effort has taken the community by storm. From school kids to seniors, the whole community rallied behind this team throughout the entire season and especially during an unforgettable playoff run.

President and owner, Ken Tallaire, said that every time the team stepped onto the ice, they did so knowing they carried the support of the entire community behind them. That is what makes this championship so meaningful. Throughout the year, the coaches, volunteers, billets and fans knew there was something special about this group—a team built on character, heart, determination. And they proved it, becoming league champions in only their second season.

What makes this playoff run even more impressive is that, along the way, they defeated another proud La Vérendrye team, the St. Malo Warriors, who entered the playoffs as back-to-back defending champions. And, Honourable Speaker, that says something important about our region. Whether it's the La Broquerie or St. Malo teams, southeastern Manitoba continues to produce strong communities, strong leaders and strong teams.

I would also like to recognize the coaches and staff: Dan Taillefer, Rejean Carriere, Jean Moquin, Manon Lafreniere, General Manager Steve Hildebrand and President Ken Tallaire and his wife Tracey.

Most importantly, congratulations to the players, including Conner Tallaire, Carson Tallaire, Yanik Gagnon, Grayson Plett, Mario Gagnon and Charleaux Lafreniere, who are here with us in the gallery today.

Please join me in congratulating the La Broquerie Habs on a dream season and a championship that the entire community can be proud of.

Canadian Friends of Hockey in Ukraine

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): I rise today to recognize an important work of Canadian friends of the hockey of Ukraine. Founded in Winnipeg in 2018, a group of hockey enthusiasts, including many retired NHL players, joined—players of the Ukrainian heritage came together with their

shared commitment to support the development of youth hockey in Ukraine.

Their efforts reflected the deep connections between Manitoba and Ukraine, and one that continues to grow even in the face of war. Through hockey, young people in Ukraine are finding opportunity to hope during these difficult times.

Over the past eight years, the CFHU group has set aside more than 350 sets of hockey equipment to be shipped to 17 minor hockey clubs across in Ukraine. The organization has also delivered training camps, supported Ukrainian youth pursuing hockey in Canada and advancing opportunities through par hockey.

Most recently, Canadian-made para hockey sleds were delivered to Kyiv supporting CFHU-sponsored team. In Ukraine, one of the most popular Canadian teams in Ukraine is the Dauphin Kings of Manitoba Junior Hockey League. The first Ukrainian Night that went virtual was featured in major—in Ukrainian networks.

Manitoba has become—they welcomed many players in the last few years, and just to show the support from the city of Dauphin and the Dauphin Kings, there's no surprise that born junior H player, Dmytro Kubrytskyi and Havryil Simchuk came to Dauphin from Ukraine to play with the Dauphin Kings.

And I would also like to recognize the distinguished guests in the gallery today who have contributed to this valuable cause and support. I would ask Ross [*phonetic*] Romaniuk, Winnipeg Jets player, many Manitoba hall of fame member, would please stand; also Cole Babych, son of 50-career father who scored—with the St. Louis Blues, became and NHL player, Wayne Babych; Ken Plustwa from Dauphin, who's quite involved with the organization in Dauphin; and Vern Zanwatnicki [*phonetic*], chair of the CFHU. Please rise. And thank you. I want to thank you on behalf of everyone here. Thank you for your leadership and commitment.

Even during war, hockey continues to bring people together, inspiring hope and highlighting the strong ties between Manitoba and Ukraine.

So I ask everyone in the gallery to please stand and rise.

PR 227 Bridge Construction—Detour Disruption

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of the residents of Lakeside regarding prolonged detour caused by the PR 227 bridge construction.

We all understand the importance of investing in infrastructure. Safe and reliable roads and bridges are essential for rural communities, for trade, for agriculture and for the families who rely on these routes every single day.

During construction, municipal roads have carried the burden of redirected traffic, particularly heavy truck traffic. That has meant excessive dust for nearby residents, growing safety concerns due to speeding vehicles and accelerated wear and tear on local infrastructure that was never intended to handle this volume and type of traffic for such an extended period of time.

As rural municipalities always do, the RM of Woodlands has stepped up to support its residents and keep people moving safely. The RM has invested significant funds into gravel, grading and ongoing maintenance simply to keep these roads passable and safe. They have done their part responsibly and professionally, but they should not be expected to shoulder these costs alone and without meaningful provincial support.

Travellers, producers, local businesses and families see what appears to be a completed project, yet they continue to face detours, delays and deteriorating municipal roads. If there is a legitimate technical or engineering reason for the delay in reopening PR 227, then the government should clearly communicate that to the RM and to the public.

Municipalities across Manitoba are already being asked to do more with less. Every successive NDP budget has borne that reality out. Rural municipalities are stretching every tax dollar further while facing increasing infrastructure demands, rising maintenance costs and growing pressure on local services. Downloading the financial burden of provincial detours onto local governments is simply not sustainable.

The RM of Woodlands has supported the province throughout this project. Now the province must support the RM in supporting its residents.

I urge the government to act swiftly to reopen the route as soon as possible.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* (14:00)

Bourkevale Community Clean Up and BBQ

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): This Saturday, I'm proud to invite the residents of St. James to come together and take pride in the community we call home.

On May 9, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., we're hosting the Bourkevale Community Clean Up and BBQ at Bruce Park. Together we'll be cleaning up the Bourkevale neighbourhood, Bruce Park, Truro Creek, Douglas Park Road and Deer Lodge Place, some of the beloved green spaces, pathways and streets that make St. James one of the finest communities in this province.

Events like this one remind us of what community is all about. It's not complicated. It's neighbours showing up for neighbours. It's people who care about where they live, deciding to do something about it together. It's the quiet, unglamorous work of looking after the places we share so that they remain places worth sharing.

The parks and green spaces of St. James are more than just patches of grass and trees. They're where our children take their first steps on a soccer field. They're where families gather on summer evenings. And they're where friendships are built and where community is felt. When we take care of those spaces, we're saying something about who we are and what we value.

And when the hard work is done, we'll fire up the grill for a free barbecue because, in St. James, we believe that good work deserves a good meal and that there's no better way to end a morning of community service than with your neighbours, sharing food and conversation in the sunshine.

I want to sincerely thank everyone who's already committed to joining us and I want to extend an open invitation to any resident of St. James who wants to get involved. No experience required; just a willingness to show up.

Honourable Speaker, this Saturday, St. James is going to show up, clean up and come together. I hope to see as many of our neighbours there as possible.

Thanks, Honourable Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education Property Tax Concern for Winnipeg Families

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): For the second year in a row, Winnipeg families are opening their tax bills today and are shocked to see skyrocketing education taxes under the NDP. One bill, two very different decisions.

The City of Winnipeg is so embarrassed by the NDP's double-digit tax increases, they are inserting explanations into every single tax bill just to separate

themselves from the damage caused by the NDP government. School tax increases as high as 43 per cent in Louis Riel, 38 per cent in Seven Oaks and 37 per cent in Pembina Trails in just the two and a half years since this NDP came into office. The NDP have had a year to fix the problem.

Why have then again—they again failed to keep school taxes under control for Winnipeg families?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Folks in Manitoba ought to know that everyone in this province has received their highest property tax rebate under our government. That's something that we're very proud of. If you got a huge property that's very, very expensive and you're really rich like Brian Pallister or Heather Stefanson, congratulations, you got your biggest property tax rebate from us in 2024.

And for everyone else in Manitoba, your highest property tax rebate is happening this year—\$1,700 thanks to our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala). When I look across the way, I see a sneak preview of what it's going to be like here in late June. The choice is easy. More affordable groceries with us; more expensive groceries with them.

Mrs. Stone: The property tax bills tell a very different story, and Manitoba families are opening them up today and discovering tax shock because 54 per cent of Winnipeg property tax bills are going straight to this NDP government's tax grab. The NDP removed all the guardrails protecting homeowners and Manitoba families from uncontrolled tax hikes, and now families are directly paying the price.

In fact, the NDP has hiked taxes two and a half times faster than the City of Winnipeg—and an inadequate tax credit that doesn't even cover the increase in taxes that Manitoba and Winnipeg families are seeing today. The NDP have had two years to fix the problem that they created. When will—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Everyone in Manitoba has received their highest property tax rebate ever under our government. In the member's own constituency, more than 90 per cent of people are better off this year as opposed to last year. That's because our tax rebate is progressive, meaning it provides the most help to those who need the help the very most.

Now, here's the interesting thing: We don't set property taxes; we set the rebates. What they're talking about on that side of the House is cutting education. So the minister needs to stand up in the—or—well, the

member opposite needs to stand up in the House and explain which school do they want to close, which teaching positions do they want to erase, which EAs do they want to fire.

On this side we're investing in education, plus we're saving you money.

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

Mrs. Stone: The NDP has become so toxic on taxation that municipalities like the City of Winnipeg are having to distance themselves from the decisions that the NDP government has made. The City of Winnipeg has included an insert in every single tax bill explaining the increases that are the direct result of the NDP government: 43 per cent increase in Louis Riel, 38 per cent increase in Seven Oaks, and 37 per cent increase in Pembina Trails, all under their government. They removed the guardrails. Families are paying the price.

When will they finally realize their mistake and fix it for Manitoba families?

Mr. Kinew: Well, the member opposite should consult the Member for Parliament for Transcona-Elmwood, Colin Reynolds, who's a Conservative and he's mailing out all his constituents saying, you know how to save money? Use the Homeowner's Affordability Tax Credit. And this will be the only time that we agree with Colin Reynolds.

Now when it comes to the members opposite, you know what they mailed out with everybody's property taxes? A signed love letter for Brian Pallister. It didn't work. He still got chased out of town. People were not happy with the cuts to health care. They were not happy with the cuts to education. Instead, they wanted our government to make sure that you save money on your property taxes, make sure you have a strong health-care system, and also this year's budget delivering the lowest deficit in all of Canada.

Education Property Tax Impact on Charleswood and Tuxedo Residents

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Under this NDP government, families and homeowners in Charleswood and Tuxedo are worse off and this NDP government isn't, in fact, investing in education. And that's why homeowners in Charleswood are now facing double-digit property tax increases.

This year, Pembina Trails will be collecting 15.7 million more dollars from homeowners in order to pay for education that this NDP government refuses

to budget for and fund properly. Those tax bills will begin hitting mailboxes this week.

Why is this NDP government hiking taxes on homeowners in the middle of an affordability crisis?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Open up this year's budget; it's right there on page 144: Tax Measures. Taxes are going down by \$50 million in Manitoba this year. And, at the same time, we've got the lowest deficit in all of the land.

So, when I think about constituents in Tuxedo and in Roblin, I know that the folks in Tuxedo are very happy to have an MLA who's investing in health care and saving you money. Meanwhile, next door in Roblin, they're looking longingly towards the next fixed election date.

We're going to keep investing in health care. We're going to keep saving you money and guess what? We're not going to cut schools, which is exactly what the member opposite is advocating.

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

Mrs. Cook: Homeowners in Charleswood and Tuxedo are not better off under the NDP, and I know that because the homeowners in Tuxedo call my office. Since they took office, this NDP government has jacked property taxes in Pembina Trails by over 37 per cent. They hide behind municipalities, they hide behind school trustees, but the NDP's failure to properly fund education is the reason homeowners in Charleswood are seeing double-digit property tax increases again this year, all because the NDP's funding increase to Pembina Trails—0.9 per cent—amounts to a de facto cut.

Why has the NDP increased property taxes in Charleswood by 37 per cent?

*(14:10)

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, the best Education Minister in all of Canada, sitting to my left, has seen fit to make sure that we're investing more money in Manitoba education in our children than ever before and, as a result, there are more teachers. There are more educational assistants working in Manitoba than ever before.

When the members opposite get up and they attack school divisions and school trustees, what they're really saying is they want to go back to underfunded positions. They want to go back to cutting teachers in educational systems. They want to go to less clinical

resources in the classroom to help our kids grow and learn.

We're not going to allow it. We're going to keep working together with you to make life more affordable, but also to invest in the next generation.

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

Mrs. Cook: This Premier might want to check in with school division superintendents. Pembina Trails superintendent Shelley Amos told media that it's this government's decisions that are going to result in program cuts in Pembina Trails or/and property tax increases.

Families are feeling the pressure. Income taxes, gas, hydro rates, Pharmacare deductibles: Everyone's household bills are increasing under the NDP.

Will the NDP stop hiding behind the City of Winnipeg, stop hiding behind school divisions and take responsibility for how they are making the affordability crisis even worse for homeowners in Charleswood and Tuxedo?

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister. *[interjection]*

Order.

Mr. Kinew: I cut the gas tax when I came into office. This year I'm cutting grocery taxes, and we're saving you money on your property taxes too.

People in Charleswood, people in Tuxedo, \$1,700 off your property tax bill, plus everyone in this province is better off as a result of more funding for our kids in the K-to-12 education system.

Now, on the other side of the House, they're nominating candidates like Michael Zwaagstra, who we heard yesterday said Roe v. Wade should be overturned; he's against abortion.

But we also see that this candidate is in favour of Alberta's bill 25, which, on the subject of education, it's like a walk down memory lane to the PC bill 64. He said it's disappointing bill 25 is receiving push-back.

So I'd like the members opposite to stand up and tell us, does this represent their education policy? Do they—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Education System Funding Timeline for New Model

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Taxpayers, Manitoba school boards, Association of Manitoba Municipalities are all feeling the pressure by the cuts by this Kinew government to our education system. This Kinew government is downloading onto Manitoba taxpayers.

When will this minister let Manitobans know, when is he going to announce the new funding model?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Yes, the member opposite is on thin ice when he gets up in this Chamber these days, and that's why I think it's probably beneath the Education Minister to respond to the sort of hate-spewing rhetoric that we see coming from the member opposite.

I do want to get to the bottom of this bill 25 position, so I'm going to table this for the member opposite as well as for all the members asking questions today, again, written by Zwaagstra: Schools are sacrificing our kids' education for political activism, in which he outlines his support for Alberta's bill 25.

So is this what we're campaigning on? A return to bill 64 and school cuts versus investments in our kids, more schools in Manitoba and higher education? Because if that's the next election, bring it on.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, Honourable Speaker, more of a showman than a statesman. Won't even allow his Education Minister to stand up and answer a question.

Well, what does Louis Riel School Division have to say, Honourable Speaker? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: They say that their fixed—their financial positions have eroded. What does the Manitoba Teachers' Society say? Manitoba Teachers' Society says education funding announcement fails students yet again.

Will the Minister of Education reverse course, lower property taxes and introduce a new, fair funding model, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: It's interesting to hear the member opposite stand up and ask our wonderful nation-leading Education minister to do something he was unable to do when he was face-planting day after day in the

hold-down-the-fort era of Brian Pallister's government here in Manitoba.

And it was not too long after he was sent to the opposition benches that I think this member compared me to Adam Beach. Now, why would his thought process go there? I mean, I've never portrayed Ira Hayes in a movie. I've never been a character in a DC comic book series. I've never appeared in any science fiction. Maybe the member opposite wants to talk today, on the record, about what about me reminds him of Adam Beach. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Stop the clock. Order, please.

During the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet's last question, he was quoting from something. Was it a public or private document?

Mr. Ewasko: Public.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, maybe, Honourable Speaker, the Kinew government is so confident that the Premier can go out and hand deliver those bigger tax bills to his colleagues who own cabins—well, some of whom own cabins; some own property out in my constituency. I'm sure they're going to be thrilled.

Would this minister stand up—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —will the Premier allow his minister to stand up, commit today to reverse course, listen to educators, families and taxpayers and finally introduce a sustainable funding model for education in this province, yes or no, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: So, I don't know if we're supposed to tell Protective Services to look out for the member opposite outside of people's cabins and cottages. It was a little bizarre. I'm not sure what the point of all that was, but I do want to correct the record. Apparently, what he actually said was, that I was, and I quote, no Adam Beach. End quote.

So, again, you know, these are verbatim things on the record, which, you know, very mindful of how we talk about other people—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —in the Chamber.

But I would say this: I am no Adam Beach. Instead I am a humble servant of you, the people of Manitoba, working hard to—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: –invest in your schools, working hard on behalf of our children, and working hard to set a precedent of respect and inclusion for all.

Let's see the Tories match that.

Education Property Tax Impact on Municipalities

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, this government loves to make other people do their dirty work. They've been hiding behind municipalities for a lot of their tax increases, making municipal staff and leaders not only take the brunt of Manitobans' frustrations but also cover the administrative burden.

Why is the minister downloading the cost of his property tax increases on municipalities, and why has he refused to cover the added costs?

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Honourable Speaker, this is the ABCs of me: I show up for municipalities; I engage with municipalities and I work with municipalities to make our province better. Full stop.

Ask any of those reeves, any of those mayors if I show up and the answer will be a resounding yes. Our door is not closed. We don't work in silos in the shadows. Need I remind you, Honourable Speaker, that when there was a caretaker convention, they showed Manitobans how they're going to act: in the shadows. Cliff Cullen, Heather Stefanson, did we get it done? Secrets, secrets, secrets. We show up, the ABCs of us. We're here for you.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, the RM of Woodlands still awaits the minister's arrival. When the NDP lowered the education property tax rebate, they passed the burden on to municipalities. Instead of supporting municipal partners side by side, the minister hides in the back and denies any responsibility for his destructive tax regime.

If you own your home, the government demands more of you. If you put in a hard day's work, the government demands more of you. If you're just trying to support your family, this government demands more of you.

* (14:20)

Why does this minister demand more from everyone except himself?

Mr. Simard: Wow, we're in desperation stage over there. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Simard: I mean, maybe the leader's—is supposed to be here to keep them in line, but I'll continue to tell them this: You can go to any person in the municipal world and ask them whether or not I show up and whether or not I work for them, and they will tell you that nobody—nobody—in the last 10 years has shown up like this government for municipalities.

The member opposite is completely off base—completely off base—on who shows up for municipalities. You go into Stonewall and ask them who shows up for Stonewall. It's not the member opposite; it's this—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, municipalities are doing the work fixing the minister's failed rebate program to ensure that families get what they're owed. When people fell through the cracks during this program's implementation, the NDP were apathetic. If someone wasn't enrolled properly, it wasn't a concern to this minister; they could just get a rebate at tax time.

Because the NDP Cabinet is so far removed from everyday Manitobans, how does this minister not realize that families cannot afford to front his government thousands of dollars and hope to get it back at tax time?

Mr. Simard: You know, I work with a bunch of colleagues who care about Manitoba. On this government side, we've made women safer. We're building schools. We're protecting people. We have the best Health Minister in the country who's hired thousands—thousands—of health-care staff.

We have the lowest deficit in the country. We have the king of Crown lands. We're building supportive housing instead of selling them off. And now we have the members opposite with the gall to show up in this House and say that we don't care about Manitobans. That is completely off base. We will put our offer in front of Manitobans and we'll see—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please. Order.

I would ask all members to take it down a couple of notches so that I can hear what's being said.

Basic Personal Income Tax—Exemption Increase Request for Government to Support Resolution

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): This NDP government fails to make life more affordable for Manitobans, and yet it continues to refuse to support the PC proposal to raise the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, a change which would leave roughly \$3,000 a year more in Manitoba—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —families' pockets.

Why is this government more interested in giving people a couple of dollars back at checkout lines instead of simply letting them keep more of their own money in the first place? The NDP are waving a toonie around in the front and taking twenties out of your pocket in the back.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, the members opposite do not sound serious in this Chamber. We don't know if they're coming or going or what offer they're putting on the table, but here's what we do know. We know under years under them, we saw cuts across the board: cuts to education, cuts to health care, cuts to child care, cuts to municipalities. That's the reality that Manitobans endured for seven and half years.

We're doing the work of ensuring we fund health care properly. We make sure our kids have what they need in our divisions. And while we do all that important work, we're also ensuring we make life more affordable. We've lowered taxes for everyone in Manitoba. We lowered your school tax bill. We're putting more money in the pockets of renters. We're putting more money in the pockets of everyone who drives a car.

This team is going to keep doing the work every single day of making life more affordable, including by taking the PST off all groceries—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

If I could get the clock stopped for a minute.

Order. Stop the clock.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: There's some guests in the gallery that have to leave right away, so I'd like to introduce in the public gallery from Steinbach Christian School 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Curtis Plett. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

We welcome you here today.

* * *

The Speaker: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: Families in Interlake-Gimli are not asking for symbolic changes on snack foods; they're asking for real relief from rising costs, higher taxes and shrinking paycheques.

Why won't this NDP government support the PC plan to raise the basic personal exemption to \$30,000 and leave thousands of dollars in Manitobans' pockets instead of nickel-and-diming you to death?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, the answer to that question is because it's not serious. What it results in is a billion-dollar hole, more cuts to education and health care. That's the reality that we experienced for seven and a half years under the members opposite. The proposal isn't serious. That's why we were left with a \$2-billion hole to climb out of.

Now, what are we doing? We're not only making life more affordable, but now we have the lowest deficit in the entire country. This team knows how to walk and chew gum at the same time. We're making life more affordable while we're ensuring we work towards balance. This team is getting it done.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Johnson: Well, in all seriousness, the average household income in Interlake-Gimli earns a little bit over \$60,000 a year and is struggling with higher grocery bills, fuel costs, mortgages and utilities. This government is handing you pennies upfront while taking twenties out of your back pocket.

Why would this minister insist upon denying Manitobans truly impactful inflation relief?

MLA Sala: Manitobans are struggling with higher grocery bills, and we've got a plan for you. Why won't the member get on board?

We're proposing to take the PST off all food and grocery stores. Not only that, we froze the price of a one-litre jug of milk. We're going after predatory pricing on food. We're going to make sure there's more competition in grocery stores in community to help bring prices down.

This team is doing the work of going after lower grocery prices. We're going to keep doing that work because we're focused on the needs of Manitobans. For years, Manitobans had a government that wasn't listening to them. Finally, they've got a government that cares. We're showing that each and every day.

And I ask the member opposite, if he cares about the struggles people in his community are facing when it comes to grocery prices, will he support our move to take the PST off all groceries? Yes or no?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Strengthening Local Economies Call for Tax Relief for Manitobans

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): It's amazing the length this government will go to to avoid giving Manitobans real tax relief. Since taking office, the NDP have budgeted to collect over \$800 million more in income taxes from Manitoba families. That's over 15 per cent increase in tax revenue, all while the economy grew by less than 5 per cent in that same time period.

There's no economic growth, so why is the minister taking more than ever before from hard-working Manitoba families?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, the member that just stood up, in her community, nine out of 10 people are better off under our plan than under their plan. That's a big plurality.

And, of course, not only are we reducing education and property taxes, we're going to take the PST all-off all groceries, but we're also bringing in free child care for the lowest income families in the province, free transit for youth. This is targeted relief that counts.

We're doing the work to ensure that families that need help are getting it. Again, for years, what happened? We had a government that was not focused on helping Manitobans where they were experiencing those pressures.

Now, this government is providing relief across the board. We're going to keep doing that. We're proud to be doing that. But—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: That's simply not what I'm hearing in my communities. That's—but it is the NDP way to tax, tax, tax and more tax. It's all they seem to know how to do, and it's honestly pathetic that this Premier (Mr. Kinew) would stand in his place and say he will pull out every stop. He will do whatever he can to deny families real tax relief here in our province.

Families need support today, so why is this minister content with offering pennies when families deserve real relief?

* (14:30)

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, this team is cutting taxes for Manitobans. We cut the gas tax, one of the first things we did, for an entire year; gas tax holiday. And now that tax has been permanently cut by 10 per cent. We froze your hydro rates. We cut your education and property taxes. We lowered taxes for renters, a tax that was increased by the members opposite during their tenure.

They made life more expensive for folks in Manitoba who often need the most help. That's their record. Manitobans know what their record is because they experienced it. They saw their prices, their costs go up and up and up.

I ask that member, if they are serious about wanting to support people in their community, will they stand up today and say that they will support taking the PST off all groceries in Manitoba?

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

Ms. Byram: This is what they do, the NDP. They tax, they tax, they tax.

They're convinced that families would waste their paycheques on frivolous things, like activities for their children, visits to local restaurants or a family night out supporting local arts. Money spent in the local economy has a multiplied—or, a multiplied impact and grows the economy, which this government clearly doesn't understand.

Why are they supposed to—opposed to giving families hundreds—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Byram: —and thousands of dollars in tax relief so that they can grow their local economies?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, there's only one team in this province that wants to raise taxes on Manitobans: it's the members opposite. We know if they had their way, they would lift gas taxes back up. We know they would increase taxes on renters again. We know they'd increase education property taxes in Manitobans.

And while they do all that, we know they'd once again take a chainsaw to everything that matters to

Manitobans, whether it's education, health care, whatever. We know what they did for seven and a half years.

It doesn't matter how many times they say it, it doesn't make it true. This team is reducing taxes for Manitobans and we're proud of that. And we're going to keep doing that work each and every day.

Grocery Price Affordability Removal of PST From Food Items

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): Honourable Speaker, after seven and a half years of rising costs, Manitoba families are finally seeing relief because of our government. For example, we cut the gas tax, we froze hydro rates and now we're taking steps to curb rising food costs with the freeze to the price of milk and legislation to increase competition in the grocery sector.

Would Canada's best Finance Minister—in Canadian history—please tell the House what our government is doing to help Manitobans at the grocery store?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I want to thank my amazing colleague from Thompson.

Honourable Speaker, it's very simple. No PST on grocery means more money back in the pockets of Manitobans. We are removing the PST on essential food items like rotisserie chickens, prepared salads, fruit and vegetable trays, granola and the list goes on.

Members opposite allowed grocery prices to rise over 32 per cent, while our team is saving Manitobans money in the grocery aisle on July 1. On this side of the House, we're focused on making sure families can afford to fill their carts. The PCs would rather block real savings and have Manitobans pay more at the grocery store. Our team will continue to stand up for Manitoba families and deliver real action on affordability.

Rural Ambulance Services Paramedic Shortage Concerns

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Rural ambulance service is at a crisis point.

Altona police chief, Dan Defer, says that while responding to an accident seen recently where two people needed to get to hospital, we requested two ambulances and then we were advised that only one ambulance would be responding and the ETA was one hour.

He went on to say that this cannot continue; someone is going to die.

According to Shared Health, there's been a net loss of 34 rural paramedics in Manitoba since this NDP government took office in 2023, with about 25 per cent of positions now vacant.

Why has this government allowed this situation to 'deteriate' into a full-blown crisis, and where's the plan to fix it?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, the member for Borderland should be ashamed of himself. He sat in the PC caucus while members of his caucus who sat around the Cabinet table were cutting services to rural Manitoba. He was in that caucus when they were cutting services that saw us lose 90 paramedics from rural Manitoba. He sat in that caucus when they wouldn't allow advanced care paramedics to practice in rural communities.

We have a net-new 41 paramedics here in Manitoba, and you know what, Honourable Speaker? We know it's not enough. We know there's more work to do, so we're going to keep doing that work to fix the damage that he did on that side of the House when they were in government.

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

Mr. Guenter: That, coming from a minister who claimed last fall that they'd hired 241 net-new paramedics and then they had to revise that and apologize weeks later and say they'd only hired 18. And it turns out that number's also wrong.

The shortage of paramedics in rural Manitoba is bad and getting worse, according to the MAHCP. Vacancies of advanced, intermediate and primary-care paramedic positions hit 25 per cent last December, up 15 per cent since this NDP government took office.

Jason Linklater says paramedics are burned out and frustrated and that the paramedic staffing crisis—his words—is a profound failure by this government to keep one of their signature health-care promises.

People across rural Manitoba in communities like Altona, Schanzenfeld, Dominion City or Emerson deserve to know why—deserve to know—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we believe that rural Manitobans deserve the highest quality health care and that is why we have worked across government to make sure that, for the first time ever in Manitoba's history, we have

advanced-care paramedics working in rural communities across Manitoba, for the first time ever.

For the first time in years, all of our paramedic training seats are full. For the first time in years, we have EMRs training and being hired in rural communities. This work has been done in conjunction, hand-in-hand, with municipalities, with AMM, with rural providers who've been asking for this help for years. Their answers—their calls for help went unanswered for years under the PCs. He should stand up and—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Guenter: Altona Police Chief Dan Defer asked the question: are we transporting people in the back of our pickup truck, and says this is the kind of thing responders worry about when paramedics don't arrive quickly.

In no way are we criticizing our local paramedics. They work hard; they are dedicated. There's just not enough of them. This comes as Wayne Chacun, a rural paramedic and director with the MAHCP, says the province is not posting positions in the east zone or in the south zone unless absolutely necessary.

This NDP government told Manitobans they would hire 200 paramedics in their first year in office. And the situation, just like health-care wait-times, has gotten worse.

If this was happening in Winnipeg, the minister would be ringing alarm bells, so why should my constituents have to accept this?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, what the member for Borderland's constituents no longer have to accept is a failed PC government that cuts their services, cuts their resources and turns their backs on rural Manitobans.

We have a net-new 41 paramedics compared to a net loss of 90 under them. We have EMRs practicing in rural Manitoba that weren't even allowed to have the opportunity under them. We have folks across rural Manitoba who have opportunities to work in health care that they didn't have under them.

We're fixing their damage. We're fixing the culture in health care in rural Manitoba and we will take no lessons from a member of that caucus who supported his colleagues in cutting rural health care for seven and a half years.

Seniors Living at Power Street Apartment Update on Restoring Home-Care Services

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Yesterday, the Families Minister said home care at 145 Powers was restored as of 1:30 p.m. Hours later, her own office media told—her own office told media services were still being re-established.

Which is it? Are seniors getting care in their homes at 145 Powers, yes or no?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Honourable Speaker, I want to take this opportunity just to lift up all those members at 145 Powers who are doing amazing work at supporting all of those individuals that are tenants at 145 Powers. Whether it's N'Dinawemak, Winnipeg regional rehabilitation, home-care services, you know, they're doing amazing work in terms of supporting and meeting people where they're at.

* (14:40)

Unlike members opposite who like to point fingers, we're working collaboratively in supporting and meeting people where they're at and we're going to continue to do that.

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

MLA Bereza: So unless I'm missing something here, the people at 145 Powers are or aren't getting—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: —any service back at home. The minister claims she stopped moving high-risk individuals into senior housing.

Then why are services at 145 Powers and many, many facilities across Manitoba being cancelled again because of ongoing criminal activity? If the practice is stopped, why is this chaos getting worse?

Ms. Smith: What I will say is we take zero tolerance when it comes to any criminal activity in our buildings. Safety and security is our No. 1 priority. Unlike members opposite who changed the practice around seniors housing, we reversed that and we are making sure that seniors housing is true seniors housing.

We've instituted and brought back staffing, unlike members opposite, who fired staffing. They didn't, you know, care about the safety and security of members who were living—residents who were living in these buildings.

We take that very seriously on this side of the House. We're going to continue to ensure that our residents are safe in our housing and work alongside and ensure that members that are living in these residences—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

MLA Bereza: Across Manitoba, people are waiting for answers. We're waiting for answers at 145 Powers. Seniors are locking themselves inside their apartments, afraid to pick up medication because of crime in their buildings. The minister says everything is fixed. Seniors know better.

When will this government stop, stop defending its talking points and start to protect our seniors that deserve it so much?

Thank you.

Ms. Smith: We'll take no lessons from members opposite who left residents in, like, 'disammay' with no supports, no services, no security, no housing, left them in tents with no supports.

On this side of the House, we're getting people supports; 223 people have been supported out of tents with supports. Seniors are getting the supports that they need with supportive housing. We are—we got over 2,183 boards off of housing that they left on Manitoba Housing. Shame on those folks.

We're going to continue to support Manitobans, get safe and supportive housing online, unlike members opposite—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —who didn't give a care about any Manitoban in this—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

No petitions, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call Committee of Supply?

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider Estimates.

And, just as a reminder, there's also Committee of Supply Friday.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ROOM 254

HOUSING, ADDICTIONS AND HOMELESSNESS

* (15:50)

The Chairperson (Rachelle Schott): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness. Questioning for this department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I just want to point out, first of all, that we're 10 to 4 here today. We've been waiting over 45 minutes for the minister to get here. We're hoping to close out today, but we do have a number of questions that we'd like to continue asking.

So I'll start right away here: The minister has tried to tell Manitoba that—

The Chairperson: Order.

Just a general reminder to all folks, the Estimates room is an extension of the Chamber, and we are not permitted to comment on one's absence or presence. So please remain—don't do that again.

Thank you.

MLA Bereza: I withdraw that comment.

The minister has tried to tell Manitoba that youth won't be able to access the drug consumption site, but internal documents from Aboriginal Health and Wellness show why no one believes a thing that's being said. Her department is funding this site, so if she's planning on helping youth shoot up, why did she have Aboriginal Health and Wellness generate a youth intake form?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): So that member, you know, continues to use rhetoric around discrediting

the incredible work that Aboriginal Health and Wellness has been doing for decades and in the community around health care. They have a proven track record and—you know, in the community, trusted in the health-care field by health-care experts, whether that's in the addictions field or the health-care field—primary health-care. They operate a clinic in the Neeginan Centre. They also offer a prime—or, a RAAM clinic in the Neeginan Centre, a mobile primary health-care clinic as well. They do such amazing work.

So I would, you know, say to the member that that member should maybe go for a visit instead of, you know, throwing stones at them. And that member continues to throw stones at folks and services that they've never actually gone to visit and actually, you know, have a conversation with and actually get to know what kind of services and supports that these organizations offer.

So, as far as the youth accessing the supervised consumption site, youth will not be able to access the supervised consumption site. I've been very clear about that from the very start—that if a youth presents at the supervised consumption site, that they will be redirected to appropriate services.

There is an intake form, yes, and that is to redirect to the appropriate service. If someone presents there, you want to know who they're being redirected to. RaY is a great example—and, again, I would invite that member—he's the critic for addictions, housing and mental health. I don't know how many of these service providers that he's actually gone and visited.

Has he actually gone and met with RaY? Has he gone and met with the overdose prevention site Sunshine House, you know, or is he just going and doing the lookie-loo like his predecessor did, the former minister of mental health and wellness, Sarah Guillemard did. Apparently went to Vancouver and visited a supervised consumption site but just took pictures and didn't actually go inside and actually look at and talk to the service providers at the site.

So, you know, I would invite that member to actually go and get to know what those service providers actually provide, maybe go and meet with Aboriginal Health and Wellness and talk to them about what services they provide and what the supervised consumption site is going to provide. Maybe that's a starting point for that member. He's been at every supervised—or every consultation. Is he not listening to what members are talking about?

I've outlined no youth will be accessing those services several times at the consultations, several times in the House. Aboriginal Health and Wellness has also said that no youth will be accessing services at the supervised consumption site, and if a youth does present there, that they will be referred to the appropriate service, not the supervised consumption site.

So, I would invite, again, that member to look at what appropriate services are out there for youth that are seeking addiction support services. You know, we had several service providers that were in the Rotunda today. Huddles are an amazing service provider that offer mental health, addiction support, primary health care. That member is going to have one in their very constituency, so I'd invite that member to maybe go and visit and get to know what Huddles have to offer. Such amazing resources, such amazing folks that offer a plethora of services to youth, and, you know, those are the services that will be provided to youth who present at the supervised consumption site, if a youth presents there.

So, again, that member can, you know, try to mislead members of the public, but—

The Chairperson: Before introducing the next member, we just want to remind all members that here during Estimates it's an extension of the Chamber and we can't imply whether someone was being truthful or not. So I'll just ask that minister to withdraw those comments.

Ms. Smith: Withdrawn.

MLA Bereza: First of all, I'd like to say that the last time I tried to go into a government building in Portage la Prairie, the new Portage hospital, I was actually thrown out and told that I wasn't allowed in that building.

So, my next question, honourable—it's not just a form; there's a whole youth service policy in the internal documents. The plans for helping youth take drugs come right after the section on pregnant women, and I will quote: Youth appearing to look between the age of 16 and 18 will access the supervised consumption site, end quote, and goes on to qualify this access. Not youth with—not to be—not with—will not be permitted to access the site, not ID will be checked, just if the person at the front desk thinks you might look 16.

Is this minister going to force this policy to change, and why was it found alongside a personal letter of support for this project? Did the minister not read the operating procedures before signing off?

* (16:00)

Ms. Smith: Again, I want to reiterate that no one under the age of 18 will be allowed into the supervised consumption site. We are working very closely on policies and procedures with Aboriginal Health and Wellness, and they are in line with the policies and have reiterated that they will not be allowing youth under the age of 18. They will be referring youth under the age of 18 to the appropriate services.

And I'm not sure what the member, you know, is not hearing about this. Again, they can have a conversation with Aboriginal Health and Wellness. The policy is youth under 18 will not be accessing services at the supervised consumption site. They will be meeting the federal requirements and, again, the exemption will be coming through the Province. And our expectation, which is the same expectation of Aboriginal Health and Wellness, that youth that are 18 and—or that are under 18 will be referred to the appropriate services.

Mr. Logan Oxenham, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

And, again, I would invite that member to set up a meeting if they would like with Aboriginal Health and Wellness. Go for a visit, visit the RAAM clinic, visit their primary health clinic, maybe go on a ride with their primary health-care mobile unit. Like, they are doing amazing work. They are doing the work. They have the trusted work reputation of the community and, again, decades of work from the community—in the community.

And what I would say to that member is, you know, we—there is a public health emergency issued today around the increase of HIV in our province. This is why it's so important that we get a supervised consumption site opened up in our province. We have a rise in HIV and people need a safe place to use and get connected to primary health care. They need to, you know, ensure that they are aware of PrEP, that they can have access to a primary health-care provider that can get them connected to PrEP. And, again, that they're not spreading HIV, that they can get tested for STBBIs, and this is a place that will do that. And, again, primary health care is, you know, a place where this will be provided at the supervised consumption site.

Another service that will be provided there is housing, and we know that housing is a social determinant of how well people do. And under the former failed PC government, you know, they were selling off housing. We're making sure that folks are able to access as much housing as we can. We put 2,183 units

online of our Manitoba Housing that were boarded up under the former failed PC government.

We're making sure that folks are getting wrap-around supports; 223 people from encampments are getting wrap-around supports. That means that they're getting access to mental health supports, to addiction supports, getting reunified with their families, breaking cycles, going back to school, getting into the jobs field. These are folks that were, you know, left to their own accord, just abandoned by the former PC government, that were left to—just in tents without anything.

And our government is saying, you know, you have value, you're sacred, your lives matter and we're going to help you, we're going to support you, we're going to help you get back on your feet and we're going to give you the supports you need because we know that this isn't the life you choose; that you need a stable place, you need someone who's going to believe in you, and we're going to provide that, and that's a basic necessity that—human right that we can offer. And, you know, the failed PC government failed to do any of that.

MLA Bereza: I just—you know, just to mention to the minister: I had the opportunity to spend a number of hours at a RAAM clinic last week during constituency week. And something that really broke my heart when I went in there was a wall. And it was a wall full of people—or full of names of people that had died. They had died because there was no opportunity for any recovery or treatment for those people.

The Chairperson in the Chair

We're seeing recovery—movement to recovery in treatment in BC. We're seeing it in Alberta. We're seeing it in Ontario.

And, again, when I read things like this Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, appendix S, participant visitor form, and see the things on there—and one of the things that I want to point out on this form is, are you currently interested in addiction treatment options: there's one place for yes, but there's four other boxes there that have the word no in it. So are we trying to provide help for these people in the form of recovery and treatment?

It is showing in the budget that there is a—that the amount of money being spent on the drug consumption site—the mobile drug consumption site and the proposed consumption site at 366 Henry far outweigh what is going into the—is far outweighing what could be going into recovery and treatment.

As I've said before—and I missed this week's graduation at the Bruce Oake centre, but I can remember Scott Oake saying to me when I was there one day, when I said to him, I said, what do we need here, Scott? And he said, we need 10 to 15 more of these places.

And I agree with him on that. So, again, some of the things that are being asked from this participant form—and where I get into this is, what drugs were brought today. And the minister mentioned—and I have spent some time at 631 Main St. You know, the minister said that I was a lookie-loo; no, I spent time with a businessperson there. That businessperson actually took quite a beating. And she took a beating because all she asked was the four or five dealers that were standing on her doorstep—because they've got a crowd right there. The crowd is right there. You've got somebody, a captive audience. And all she asked was them—for them to move off of her doorstep.

* (16:10)

And what ended up happening was, like I said, she took a beating. But the other side of this, too, was when I talked to her, I mentioned to her—I said, is there not security there? Because my understanding was, at the drug consumption sites, there's supposed to be security, as well, there for instances like this. And there was not, not that she saw. I asked her if the police were called. Yes, they were, but they had not shown in the time that she said.

So, again, you know, I haven't been—and I'll say that—I haven't been to every drug consumption site. But 631 Main is operating right beside the Red Road recovery centre. In fact, it's at the same address. We did have some staff that were there because there was an announcement a couple weeks ago, and—

The Chairperson: Member's time has expired.

Is there leave for the member to have an extension on his five-minute allotment for questioning?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Leave has been denied.

Ms. Smith: So, first of all, I just wanted to go back to that application that—which isn't really an application.

So, that member is really doing a disservice by referencing that application; that was never a true application. So—and then, you know, referencing himself as if he's a medical expert and putting himself over the credible experts of Aboriginal Health and

Wellness who have years and decades of experience in this field, who, you know, have, like I've said, ran a RAAM clinic, have provided primary health-care service for decades, who are leading experts in this area, I might add, who have experts in addiction services that are helping to advise and do this work alongside them. So, you know, that member is referencing a non-application. So, I just want to put that on the record.

Second thing I want to reference is that we take a balanced approach on this side of the aisle, in our term of government, unlike the failed PC government who took one approach, which was not a harm reduction approach. We believe in meeting people where they're at because you can't treat someone who isn't alive.

And we—and, you know, meet people where they're at and—to ensure that if today's the day that they decide to get into recovery that that recovery is there for them, which is why we're spending up to \$90 million annually in addictions treatment, which is way more than the previous failed PC government ever spent in their time of government.

So when they're talking about, you know, treatment, treatment, treatment, they spent way less money than our government is spending today. So for them to even talk about our government and our spending on treatment, we're taking a balanced approach. We're spending more money on treatment than they've ever spent, but we're also taking a balanced approach in terms of education, ensuring that we're making sure kids are getting to school, reaching their 18th birthday, putting things in place so that kids are enjoying recreation, families are enjoying time together, families are having food on their table in terms of affordability measures we're putting in place.

We're also ensuring that we're working alongside policing, so enforcement, the meth task force ensuring that we are getting drugs off the street, that we are tough on crime and tough on the proceeds of crime. And then again, a harm reduction approach because you can't treat people who aren't alive and lead them to recovery.

So when that member's talking about addictions treatment, we are investing more money than the previous failed government ever did.

I wanted to go back to that form that that member is talking about. Of course we would want to know if someone would want to get into treatment and we would want to make sure that they would get into treatment and they had access to treatment, which is

why Aboriginal Health and Wellness would want to ask that question. Why wouldn't we want to ask anyone that question?

And it—that member would know with Bruce Oake that that is a question—or Scott Oake—that they, you know, ask often: Is today the day and that you want to get into treatment? And if that's the day their door is open and they aren't a place where they ask, do you have the money to be able to access our services, because that isn't what it's about for them. For them it's about life-saving supportive treatment and that's exactly what our government is about: ensuring that the supports are there when folks need them.

I want to go back to that wall. I visited that Portage RAAM Clinic as well, and, you know, it's very concerning whenever we see names added to that wall, which is why we need to get that supervised consumption site open so we can get people to the supports and services that they need, which is why we've added more supports and services into the system, which is why we've invested up to \$90 million into more support so people can get into treatment and recovery.

MLA Bereza: I just—I want to go back to the form again, the appendix asks the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre. So I just want to get on the record that—because this form was filed with the federal government, but the minister is saying no; this was not. I just want to check on that.

Number 2: Did I just hear also that there will be a drug consumption site in Portage la Prairie? That was my second question. But I also want to go over this form somewhat as well, too, because we talked about, you know, the minister talked about treatment. It says here, and this is one of the questions on this form that the minister said has not been filed with the feds. So, are you currently interested in addiction treatment options: there's one place for yes; but there's not at this time, no, no and not applicable.

So, again, that's on this form that was given to the federal government unless, as the minister said, it wasn't. So if she could say that on the record that this wasn't there.

And the second thing is to ask, are—is there a plan for a drug consumption site in Portage la Prairie?

Thank you.

* (16:20)

Ms. Smith: Again, I will ask that member where they got their medical degree in addictions medicine, why they think that they could be referencing, you know, this application. And, again, we have taken over the class exemption and we are working very closely with Aboriginal Health and Wellness on the exemption.

And, again, we are taking a balanced approach. It's a four-pillared approach which is enforcement, so ensuring that we are tough on crime, proceeds of crime, getting drugs off the street; ensuring that we are taking a harm reduction approach so we can meet people where they're at—we can't treat people who are not alive. We're leading them to the supervised consumption site, which will be in Winnipeg at 366 Henry, with our partner, Aboriginal Health and Wellness, who will be leading that work, who is a leading health expert, who is working with Dr. Camisha, who is an addiction specialist health expert, along with many other health experts in the field. And then we are also working from an education perspective. That is a balanced approach.

Again, we are investing up to \$90 million annually in addictions treatments, way more than the previous failed PC government ever did. We are ensuring that we are getting housing online so that we can support people in—you know, whether they're—substance use disorders, whether they have mental health issues and they need supports there, whether they need housing and need to be stabilized. Whatever it is that they need to stabilize in their housing, we are doing that work.

We are building housing, something that the previous government never did. And, again, a generational investment. Former government never built one single social housing unit in their seven and a half failed years in government.

We are ensuring that we are meeting people where they're at. Today we, you know, proclaimed Mental Health Week. We had several amazing health—mental health providers who were in the Rotunda that are doing amazing work supporting people and meeting them where they're at. Whether that's from a harm reduction lens, a mental health lens, they are, you know, doing life-saving work. We announced the investments to Klinik; that is life-saving work, and bringing down the wait times.

And I want to go back to the RAAM clinic. You know, under the former PC government—we've brought down the RAAM wait clinics by almost 50 per cent. And that's a testament to the investments that this government is making because we believe in, again,

meeting people where they're at, providing the supports that they need.

We've brought over 1,200 new support services online. Anywhere in Manitoba, people can access RAAM digital–virtual services online, and we brought in mobile withdraw services in the North so people can access those services as well. We're working with Indigenous providers right across our great province.

We're working on our suicide prevention strategy. Again, we've done extensive consultations right across our province, listening to Manitobans to address, you know, the high suicide rates and look at what needs to be supported from folks in the communities.

And, again, we're making huge investments based on what communities are telling us. It's not our work; it's their work. We're not going to take credit for it because it's what they're telling us; they're the experts. We're just, you know, basically doing the work of what they're telling us to do.

So, again, the supervised consumption site is going to be filled with primary health care, mental health supports, housing supports, and it's a medical-led model.

MLA Bereza: So, again, this form from the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre is not my form. This was a form that was filed in the package to the federal government. It is not my form here.

I do want to again ask the question, because it's very important to my community: Will the minister admit today, yes or no, whether there is a drug consumption site going in Portage la Prairie?

The other question I have, or the other comment I have is, we have one detox bed in Portage la Prairie. Is there plans for more detox beds in Portage la Prairie? And when and where will they be?

Ms. Smith: So, again, I will go back to that form that that member keeps referencing and will bring that member back to focus on Manitoba taking over the class exemption. We are taking on the class exemption, so that form is irrelevant. I just want to point that out. And that member is not a medical expert and, you know, you're—so we are, again, taking that over. That is irrelevant, that form that you are referencing.

So I want to bring you back to the conversation of the consultation at Pampanga when you referenced MDC and maybe opening up a supervised consumption site at MDC. We—our government is focused on Winnipeg and opening up a supervised consumption

site here in Winnipeg at 366 Henry. We will not be opening up a supervised consumption site in Portage la Prairie. So a supervised consumption site will be opening up in Winnipeg at 366 Henry, not in Portage la Prairie.

I do want to bring your attention, though, to some investments that we have made in Portage la Prairie around homelessness and some of the stats that we've made. So we've funded the Portage Community Revitalization Corporation to the tune of \$310,000 annually for intensive case management and rapid rehousing services, as well as the Canadian Mental Health Association for \$55,000 for a homeless outreach mentor.

So, between these two agencies, they've actually housed 55 people in Portage la Prairie who were experiencing homelessness. So I think that, you know, speaks to the great work that those folks are able to do in terms of housing people and supporting folks.

Portage also has a mobile withdraw management service that, you know, is able to support people and provide services to the community in and around. And, yes, up to 75 people. And, again, meeting people where they're at, providing those services to people in and around Portage. And, again, we're going to continue to support and meet people where they're at because we believe in, you know, not just one approach but a balanced approach.

* (16:30)

That's why we put my services online, why we're continually, you know, ensuring that people that are housed are getting wrap-around supports, and we're continuing to put more housing online, something that the previous failed government never did. They deinvested in maintenance by 87 per cent, and only in the last year, in the election year, did they increase maintenance, trying to buy votes, increase the budget for maintenance.

But Manitobans, you know, saw through—saw past that and voted to elect a government that would support Manitobans and bring housing truly online, build housing and support Manitobans in a way that would see them successful, not just short term, but long term. And, you know, when we look at the generational investments that our government has made, it's breaking cycles for families, it's creating possible generational wealth in future for families.

I think about—I was talking to Minister Chartrand, the federal minister, and they were talking about they are the first in their family to leave generational wealth.

And we were talking about this as a kind of, you know, future we want to see for future generations and the kind of work that we want to do to ensure that Manitobans are better tomorrow than they are today.

And that's the kind of government that we're—what we're doing, the work that we're doing today.

The Chairperson: Member's time has expired.

MLA Bereza: Thank you, honourable Speaker—sorry, honourable Chair.

You know, I'd really like to hear—I've heard—I've said this about the drug consumption site at MDC. The one thing I will say about MDC is we're waiting and waiting and waiting in Portage la Prairie. This government keeps saying that they're going to do something with MDC. There was a meeting again last week; absolutely nothing was decided on MDC once again. There's a lot of beds there; it could be a great treatment centre. There is a ton of places there that people could learn trades, like carpentry or plumbing or painting. It would be a fantastic site. But, again, none of that is coming up at this time.

So, again, in our time here—so if we do get a chance to finish today, I do have some questions regarding housing. The minister has insisted she has stopped the practice of tenanting high-risk individuals in senior housing, but, clearly, from the chaos seniors are living through, that isn't true. Criminals, drug dealers and users and vandals are getting ready to access—getting ready access to homes of seniors, and this government seems indifferent.

Where in this budget are the supports for the seniors this government has placed at risk? We've only seen that in the media over the last little while. I think it was the building on Kennedy where the Free Press said in the site where a person lost their life, that in that apartment it was also reported that there was butane, propane, gasoline in a jerry can. And thank goodness that wasn't any worse than what had happened there.

We've seen it in Oak Tree Towers. The Stephens Apartments in Portage la Prairie, again, are another place that—and, again, from what I'm hearing from the tenants when I was there again last week, and the tenants now are down less to 15 people in the Stephens Apartments. And the minister said that the work was going to begin on there in—next year, I believe it is.

But that place has been—for over two years, they've been begging for work to be done in there. I know it's run by the Friendship Centre in Portage la Prairie,

but they also have told me that—the same thing, that there's not many people that are working—or, sorry, that are living in that place.

* (16:40)

So, again, I ask: Where in this budget are the support for the seniors that are scared—scared to open the doors in their apartments, scared to go out anywhere in their apartments—where's the money for that?

Thank you.

Ms. Smith: So, first of all, I just wanted to—this is probably interesting for the member for Gimli and Interlake, just wanted to let them know that there's around 400 people that are being served through the Mobile Withdrawal Management Service out in their community for addictions withdrawal management services as well. So lots of work being done right across the province to support folks around addiction services. So when that member is talking about, you know, supports for folks, it's happening right across our province.

So I will go to Stephens, and, as I told the member last time we were in committee, that Stephens Apartments is slated for a \$13.4-million upgrade. Under the former failed PC government, that member is right, that apartment was—those members were begging that failed government to upgrade their apartment. They needed renovations, extensive renovations, but the former failed PC government wouldn't do anything around renovations for any of government apartments at all.

So our government is—has stepped in and stepped up and we are investing \$13.4 million into interior and exterior upgrades, mechanical and electrical systems. And, as I told that member, that that is slated to start this year in the fall. And, as I said to that member, why would we start tenanting people and then move them out? That's very disruptive to folks to tenant them for a couple of months or a few months and then upheave them and move them, you know, within a few months. It's—you build an ecosystem with people in a building, so we have not tenanted people because we know that work is going to be happening in this building.

As far as our policy around seniors, the failed former PC government changed the policy in 2022 around seniors buildings and allowed anyone who wasn't a senior to start tenanting these buildings. That put, you know, seniors into unsafe conditions.

And, when we formed government and started to realize that this was putting seniors in these unsafe

conditions, we reversed this practice and this policy and started to ensure that these seniors buildings went, indeed, back to seniors buildings. Because seniors should live with seniors and should enjoy a life with safe and secure living conditions with people of their age. That's what they signed up to live in, in these buildings. And, you know, for the former PC–failed PC government to change that policy without even having conversations with these seniors that were in these buildings was very callous of them.

These seniors, you know, were very scared, were very frightened, were put in very unsafe living conditions. Not only that, but the failed PC former government also fired security guards, the very security guards that were employed in these seniors blocks to support and provide security in these buildings.

So seniors were left, you know, with people that were living in these buildings that weren't seniors, now left without security, and then also they were left without supports, because now tenant service co-ordinators were also fired from Manitoba Housing. Maintenance workers were fired as well. So common areas were closed because they weren't maintained. And this was under the failed former PC government.

So when that former PC government wants to talk about, you know, seniors, I'll stand up every day and talk about our record.

MLA Bereza: I will say, if we are going to close this tonight, I do have a couple more questions but—couple things.

First of all, unless the people that have just moved into Oak Tree Towers are looking very, very good for their age, I would say there is a number of younger people that are living in Oak Tree Towers.

In the past, the minister told me, and I quote: We've invested \$5.2 million in Oak Tree Towers. I filled out the FIPPA; turns out it took the minister over 150 days beyond the legal time frame to find the records, and it was only \$22,075.68, or 0.4 per cent of what the minister said. What's—you know, what is 99.6 per cent between friends? It's almost spot on.

If this is a disagreement on facts, who does the minister want my constituents to believe: her, or her department?

* (16:50)

Ms. Smith: So when that member did their FIPPA request, they did their 'frippa' requests for the time period of March 1 to May 26 of 2025, so that was a spending period for three months. So that amount that

that member would have received would've reflected that amount.

In fact, the amount that has been spent to date on Oak Tree Towers is \$4.7 million in upgrades to security. I will go to Oak Tree Towers. I know that the member had organized a meeting in February with members at Oak Tree Towers but failed to show up. So, you know, that's not very professional to organize a meeting with your constituents at Oak Tree Towers and then fail to show up with members; organize a coffee house, your members show up—your constituents, and then you don't show up to a meeting.

We've done, you know, several upgrades to this building. We're going to continue to support these members. These were upgrades that these residents were asking for from the failed PC government, that the failed PC government never acted on. When we got into government, we, of course, looked at what security upgrades and what needed to happen at this building, as we did—and assessed all of our properties within our envelope of Manitoba Housing. And we prioritized what needed to be done, and we made the investments because, you know, this is a Crown jewel.

And we know that Manitobans deserve to have safe and affordable housing, and they deserve to have a government that is going to support Manitobans with affordable, safe housing, including seniors and including, you know, folks who are struggling with their mental health, including folks who are struggling with substance use, including folks who are—have affordability issues.

This is a government who is going to show up each and every day and meet people where they're at and provide supports and services. And we're not going to, you know, not provide services like the former failed PC government did and leave housing into disrepair to the point where it has to be demolished. This is a government who's going to show up each and every day and listen to residents, listen to their needs, respond to what's going on in their residence and meet the needs of the residents.

We have, you know, made security upgrades, we've hired back security guards, we've hired back tenant service co-ordinators, we've hired back maintenance workers. And we're going to continue to support our folks on the front lines because they are on the front lines supporting these folks to ensure that they are successfully tenanted. And we know that folks have needs that, sometimes, folks—you know, there's a breakdown in tenancy.

You know, it's Mental Health Week this week, and everybody—there's not one person in all of Canada who has not struggled with their mental health. And, you know, tomorrow someone might have a mental health break, and a tenant service co-ordinator is going to be there to support them through that. And they're going to be there to—you know, they might be that person that's going to help them through that to navigate to the supports that they need.

Our security are there each and every day. There's a number for someone to call if they need their supports and services. Under the former failed PC government, they were firing those security guards that are on the front lines that are helping in—to support. There were SWAT teams rappelling off of our Manitoba Housing buildings almost monthly because the failed former PC government not supporting and ensuring that residents were supported well.

And, you know, we're working closely with our policing. But we're also working in supporting our residents to making sure that they are supported well in their tenancy, and we're going to continue to do that.

MLA Bereza: Just before we close—as we are going to close—I just want to say, it's entirely inappropriate to put false personal attacks on the record. I would ask the minister to retract her baseless comments and accusations that I missed a meeting in February at Oak Tree Towers.

The only time I'd missed a meeting ever at Oak Tree Towers was if the—when I was tossed out by Manitoba Housing and the—and when I was asked by Manitoba Housing to leave because they said they wouldn't conduct a fire drill meeting with the folks in the building and I—you know, because it was a safety issue, I left. The only other time that we've ever moved a meeting was if we moved a meeting. I have never missed a meeting with that.

In saying that, I will close this meeting at this time. We had a ton of questions left, but let's close.

The Chairperson: The honourable minister, in response?

Seeing no further questions, we'll now put the question to the resolution.

Resolution 24.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$53,337,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$267,782,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$104,242,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Physician Services—Psychiatry, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$322,458,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Funding to Health Authorities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$820,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Costs Related to Capital Assets of Other Reporting Entities, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,700,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 24.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$78,000,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Other Reporting Entities Capital Investment, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 24.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 24.1.

At this point, we request that the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this last item.

The floor is open for questions—oh, we'll wait 'til they depart.

The floor is open for questions.

Seeing none, resolution 24.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,390,000 for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, Finance and Corporate Services, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

The next section of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Department of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation.

The hour being 4:59, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Recess.

The Chairperson: The committee recess.

ROOM 255

**BUSINESS, MINING, TRADE
AND JOB CREATION**

* (15:00)

The Chairperson (Diljeet Brar): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation.

Questioning for the department will proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I'm glad to be back for another day of opportunity to ask the minister important questions about the future of our economy in the province, job creation and job market, along with economic growth that we've heard from the minister. We have questions around the budget, so I'm hoping that through today we'll be able to get some more clear answers for questions that we have.

And, you know, picking up from where we left off last time, we've heard a couple comments come from both this minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew); specifically last week, the Premier doubled down again and claimed by 2030 Manitoba could be shipping LNG from Churchill.

Now, we know to do that, we'd need to build a natural gas pipeline over hundreds of kilometres of—across hundreds of kilometres of muskeg, erect an LNG terminal in Hudson's Bay, build a new

breakwater to protect the pipeline, expand the port and figure out a way to move that LNG through the ice.

There would also need to be a—there would also need to be significant upgrades to the railroad and the harbour itself—and somehow obtain all the engineering, environmental and regulatory approvals to do so—all in less than four years.

You know, I think many Manitobans are wanting to see the clear picture on that because it's sounding less like an aspiration and more like a delusion. Yet here's what the Premier had to say the other day: if we get private-sector investment—and I quote: If we get private-sector investment and we can deliver on the Prime Minister's timeline of LNG out of Churchill by 2030.

So I'm going to start by giving the minister another shot at answering something I asked him when we left during our last session here. A simple question, and just looking for a dollar figure: How much commitment—how much committed private-sector investment has the minister raised to date to make the Premier's Churchill dream come true?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Thank you very much, Chair, for the opportunity. And I appreciate the opportunity from member opposite for, again, having this time during Estimates to talk a little about the projects that we're doing, talk about how we're continuing to grow our economy here in Manitoba, make sure that those initiatives and steps we're taking are pretty clear for Manitobans and make sure that we're as—doing best we can to answer questions for the members of the opposition.

As we begin today, I also just wanted to introduce a staff person who I didn't get a chance to introduce previously because they weren't here for the—joining us for the first time. Amy Thiessen, executive director of Finance, thank you for being with us today.

So, in terms of Churchill, yes, this is a significant project. Get a chance to talk about it at different events and occasions and certainly be working alongside private industry, different levels of government, including First Nations, municipal, federal governments, Métis governments as well, on putting forward this project. The good thing about this is that there's interest from all those levels. It's also even better to hear that there's interest from international governments and players as well, who see the potential of

having LNG through the Port of Churchill really be a huge opportunity for them.

You know, places in Europe who are having—perhaps view an unreliable or unstable supply of LNG or energy sources are looking for opportunities to diversify and to strengthen their own energy sovereignty and energy position. And for them, that one opportunity could be in the form of more energy and more LNG coming from Canada.

So those are some of the aspects that we're looking at in terms of international opportunities to ensure that we have the right market for products that will come out of Port of Churchill, including LNG. So we're working with, you know, stakeholders right across the globe.

In terms of dollars that have gone into Churchill, well, certainly I can point to the amount that we funded as government, both provincially and jointly with the federal government that have combined over the—to the tune of \$262.5 million over five years. And plus, on top of it, that \$10 million that we committed to in this year's budget for \$10-million Churchill Catalyst Fund to really help us seize on those private-sector opportunities to advance the Port of Churchill.

So I think those are some of the funding that I would point the member to, and having said that, we're working in a really strong concrete way with private-sector partners to move forward with the project of both enhancing the rail line, improving the ports, making sure that there are reliable infrastructure assets there that meet the needs of the customer base both domestically and for global partners and, at the same time, looking at that energy project and what would it take to actually get LNG up there.

And member's highlighted a number of initiatives and steps that would take to actually have that become a reality there. I'm not sure if the member mentioned liquefaction, but that would certainly be part of the process as well, at some point along the route, and certainly understanding what it takes to have that all out is the work that we're doing right now.

And so, as we work through the projects on our side as a provincial organization working in partnership with AGG, who is operating the port right now and—that's Arctic Gateway Group. We're currently shipping goods out of there and we're doing the resupply missions, for example, to our neighbours to the north in Nunavut as we continue to work side along private partners and even other western

provinces who are interested, for their own economic benefit, the advancement of the Port of Churchill.

* (15:10)

We all align and see that there is a lot of benefit for doing this project and moving it forward. We're making our investment, working with other public-sector partners to do this, and we're working very closely with private-sector partners to advance the project, get the right types of investment in there, to make sure it can happen in a good way.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: This is exactly a prime example of exactly why I'm getting discouraged in this process, the Estimates process, in this committee, because it's an important process, part of our legislative engagement. Together, the opposition, representing the voices of Manitobans outside of the government, to get answers from the government in specific departments, and here again, today, we're kicking off without any answers.

So my question specifically was around private investment. I think, you know, first of all, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this minister have portrayed Churchill as the silver bullet, the answer, the single largest answer, to transform Manitoba from a have-not province to a have province, a province that's receiving nearly \$30 billion in federal transfer. And when asked, this is the answer that has been given, is that Churchill is the future of our economy.

Again, on our side of the House, the opposition or your business community across Manitoba and Manitobans in general—I'd say Canadians in general—are not opposed and see value in the in the plan of building Churchill and the economic benefit that that is going to have to our entire country.

But we need to see what that plan is. And everybody is far more concerned about what that's going to look like and how it's going to come together more so than they're really interested in—they're interested; they're concerned about how much of their tax dollars will go into it.

But every single Manitoban, I would say, realizes that this will not be built just on the backs of taxpayers. This isn't a build-it-and-they-will-come project. This is something that involves serious private investment. This needs suppliers, whether it be natural gas being liquefied and shipped across the world, whether that be potash from Saskatchewan, oil from Alberta, wheat

from the Red River Valley. This needs a partnership with private sector.

And we, as all Manitobans, would like to know what that partnership looks like today. Who has signed up to say that: we're an oil and gas company and we're looking at building a pipeline; we are a grain terminal and we're looking to partner with the Port of Churchill to get wheat shipped to Europe; or whether it be a neighboring province saying that our resources need to be exported through that port.

Without that, like I said, this is no more than a pipe dream. So, I'll—with that clarification, I'm not really concerned about, in this question anyway, what the taxpayer dollars are that have been committed or already spent. I'm looking at what is the private investment in actual product that will be shipped out of that port, not hypotheticals, but actual examples of negotiations that are taking place.

Like, if we're talking 2030 that something's going to be shipped out of Port of Churchill, time's ticking. You know, it's taking this government years to build a campaign promise addition to an emergency room, like, years. We're talking three years of a campaign promise and it's still not open; and you're talking a nation-building project that's going to wean Canada off \$30 billion, \$30 billion with a B, of transfer payments from the federal government, and we have no examples of what those partnerships are.

So, once again, I'd like to know what the private commitment is to this project.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth).

Mr. Moses: I really appreciate the question from the member opposite. You know, his concern for the Port of Churchill and the progress there is—I think is important, right? To show how interested Manitobans are in the Port of Churchill.

We know from recent surveys that, you know, 80—roughly 80 per cent of Manitobans are supportive of the Port of Churchill and investment in Port of Churchill. We know that more than half of Canadians are supportive of the Port of Churchill and investments in the Port of Churchill. And so we're going to take our leave from Manitobans, listen to them, and we're going to continue to invest and work up the great plans that we think will help to advance the project, meeting the quick timelines that we are trying to look at.

I also think that, when we are doing the work, we should also recognize that even though the member

opposite might have—I don't know—maybe an approach that is kind of a bit of a naysayer, I would say—you know, calling into question the credibility of the work that's taking place. And I don't want to necessarily critique that approach or line of thinking or questioning; rather, to say the positive side of it: that in Manitoba, we can do big things. We know exactly how to get big things done.

In fact, we've a track record of getting big things done. We know how to tackle challenges, whether that's through flood, or last year, where we dealt with the worst wildfire season in the province's history. We know how to handle it and protect as many Manitobans as possible.

You know, it wasn't too long ago, maybe 20 years ago, when Manitobans said CentrePort was a wild idea. When I remember a certain opposition Conservative government that said: CentrePort's a wild idea, you know; Premier Doer, don't do it, it's a terrible idea.

But now, we've got over 1,000 businesses thriving in CentrePort, bringing in over \$1 billion of economic activity. This is a great opportunity to show that, yes, sometimes there are big ideas—when you work together, when you work hard, work with a lot of people who can roll up their sleeves, like I know Manitobans can do, you can get big things done. So, that's the same spirit that we're going in with, working together to get the Port of Churchill built and developed.

The other aspect I want to bring to this is, certainly as we have the conversation, that we are absolutely seeking more private-sector dollars in investment into the Port of Churchill. I don't want that narrative to be out there.

* (15:20)

We know this project is going to move forward with some public-sector support, but also definitely, a hundred per cent, with private-sector support. And so we are absolutely working with private sector along those lines to develop the port in real and meaningful ways.

I'll just give the member opposite one example, is that, you know, part of the work that our government did to shepherd the 'ordorridor'—shepherd through conversations, to open the door for more engagement—we know that the work that—our work as government led Arctic Gateway Group to build a MOU of understanding with the port of Antwerp. This is one of Europe's largest ports. It's one of the most diversified

ports. And it also aims to establish a diversified trade corridor.

At Antwerp-Bruges, the port there, they manage 300 million tons of cargo just—per year. And so not only does it make it one of Europe's largest ports, it makes it one of the largest ports globally. And so the MOU signed between Arctic Gateway Group at the Port of Churchill and the port at Antwerp now allows us to build a framework of an economic corridor in linking their significant economic partners with our port. I think that's one of the avenues that will lead to more investments, more private-sector investment, into the Port of Churchill.

And so as we continue to work alongside First Nations, Métis through our Crown-Indigenous corporation, as we continue to work with the federal government, municipal governments, private-sector partners, we're going to make sure that we also have an eye to global partners in the private sector who can help to shepherd along and speed up the advancement of the Port of Churchill, developing the port rail line and the possibility and the work that we're advancing to see an LNG go through the Port of Churchill as well.

So those are some of the aspects that we're working with, and I hope it addresses some of the member's concerns around private-sector involvement with the project.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: The minister has a true talent to evaporate time. It's quite amazing. It's—it is quite amazing. So I'd just like to recognize that and compliment the minister that he's able to take something very serious and make time disappear in front of our eyes. As I was watching the clock, I felt, wow, it's like time is just evaporating before us. So that's a talent.

But, again, unfortunately, we weren't able to get any numbers or any projections on when we can foresee this project happening. And I don't want to dwell on it, but I think it's really important that when we're being as—or, not we—the government is being as lofty as they are in the future outlook on the reality and timelines around when this port is going to be operational and contributing, you know, there's a lot that can be done to grow our economy.

And each and every time, whether it be media, opposition or a business community—and just your average Manitoban stating concern to this government on what exactly is the answer that's going to set us apart in Manitoba or set us on a path to prosperity in

the future—and each and every time now, we're being told that the Port of Churchill is that answer.

And, like I said earlier, we can accept that and we can support that, but we need to start seeing the plan. When we talk 2030, we're less than four years away from a timeline that both the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) have set out, that we'd actually start to see some action out of the Port of Churchill.

So since I won't get an answer as to what private investment has been engaged, what industries are in discussion or anything around what products will be supplied to the Port of Churchill, maybe my question is better positioned to be when Manitobans will see the Port of Churchill providing a net contribution to our economy.

So this is the answer to wean us off of \$30 billion of transfer payments and, supposedly, growing our economy to that extent. Since we're not really seeing any clear answers from the minister today as far as dollar figures go, or a plan of any sort including any type of industries, I think my question may be more easily answered as to, what year will we start to see the Port of Churchill being a net contribution to the province of Manitoba?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: I thank the member for his question.

I love talking about the Port of Churchill, so I love to get these questions. In fact, earlier today, I was at the Winnipeg arctic summit the Fort Garry Hotel. I spoke extensively about Churchill during my remarks. And in that room, we had a variety of people. We had, you know, Chris Avery from Arctic Gateway Group; we had people from Thompson, Thompson Airport Authority; people from a wide 'vrange' and variety of sectors—manufacturing and supply chain advocates; people from the North; people from Indigenous backgrounds.

And during my comments in that—during my remarks, one of the things I reflected on and shared with the crowd was when I had a chance to go up to Churchill and the Minister of northern relations and Indigenous—Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie) was with me and the Premier there. And what I remarked about was thinking—how we think about the Port of Churchill and its impact.

While advancing an LNG project at the Port of Churchill will have significant impact for the Manitoba economy, for the western Canadian economy—including Saskatchewan and Alberta—it will also have,

undoubtedly, positive impact for our reliable partners that we would want to sell this LNG to, like folks in Germany, for example, who might feel a strained relationship from some of the current suppliers that they might be currently sourcing LNG from, like, for example, Russia.

Additionally, with the Strait of Hormuz, I'm sure it's no surprise to the member opposite that the Strait of Hormuz closed and having, obviously, impacts on global supply chains, that the need for more energy reliability is something that is very highly valued in this moment.

And so, as we do our part as Manitobans to help play a role in solving some of these large global energy challenges, these large global supply chain challenges—as we do that in a way that also benefits our GDP here in Manitobans—in benefiting the real lives of Manitobans in the South who are—want to export, but in the North, who want to see real employment.

My mind turns to my trip with the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie) to the Port of Churchill where not only did we get to see the port, but what we got to see was people, young people, working there and learning and building up their skills. We saw them learning to build sheds and houses, build up their carpentry and woodworking skills, the next generation of people who are looking and seeking for employment.

* (15:30)

Now, the benefit of Port of Churchill that you're asking about in your question—when will we see a net benefit—can be measured in these global—in solving—in playing a role in solving these global challenges. It can be measured in ways that help to grow our Canadian economy. It could be measured in ways that help to grow our Manitoba economy. It could also be measured in how do we give more opportunities for that young person who's developing their skills in the North, who wants to have a new opportunity to work, have a career, build a life with economic success in northern Manitoba.

It can be measured in a way that says, yes, you know what? As a government, our responsibility extends to helping make sure there's economic—enough economic activity and opportunities for people in Churchill, for people along the Bayline communities, for people in Gillam, for people in Thompson, for people throughout the North who want to have more opportunities, more access to the economy.

And so we think about this in a—in many small and big ways. And so, certainly for us, we—working very hard to understand how and when we can get every opportunity for those people to have more opportunities to work in Manitoba supporting that port opportunity. And so, you know, as big as we think this—our role, it could be, to help solve these global challenges, as big as that is, it's as big for that one individual who will have more opportunity. It's life changing, it's career changing, it's a—you know, generational changing in many respects, for that one person to have a significant opportunity.

And at the same time, I want to make sure the member knows that we're already seeing success out of the Port of Churchill. In fact, HudBay shipped over 18,000 tons of critical minerals through the Port of Churchill over the last two years. And so we have this massive eye to the future for the Port of Churchill success, but we know it's already seeing success right here and now.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

A gentle reminder to all members to put your questions and answers through the Chair, please.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Chair, my question was around when we would see a positive net contribution as a result of the workings of the Port of Churchill. And I didn't limit that to products that we're, as a province, able to sell through there or anything else; this could be as broad as indirect jobs that are being provided to the province. But, unfortunately, other than talking about, you know, the future that this project could hold for people in the North, we didn't hear any specifics around that.

The question was, what year would we see a positive net contribution. And, we're seeing benefits from products that are being shipped out of Churchill today, is what the minister had said. But I'd be fairly certain that the minister would not be able to answer—or support his answer by saying that it's providing a positive net contribution to our economy.

So maybe I'll simplify it even further because we don't seem to be getting an answer, but the minister had mentioned that he was there with the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures and they looked around the port and the community.

So I'll simplify my question even more because I'm trying to really see the full picture on the feasibility of a 2030 plan for the Port of Churchill.

So my question to the minister would be: Did he see a port that looks like it would be transformational to the economy of our province within the next four years?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: I want to commend the folks in Churchill and thank them for their hospitality and for the good work that they're doing. I also want to say, you know, the member opposite should maybe familiarize himself with Churchill as a whole, right? Quite frankly, it already is a net benefit for Manitoba.

The amount of tourism dollars that come out of Churchill is remarkable. Quite frankly, if you look at what the international players might know about Manitoba, they might know of Winnipeg as a capital and they might know that Churchill is the polar bear capital of the world. And so, it's remarkable to see the international presence there. Tourists from around the world come into Winnipeg, fly up to Churchill—some take the train up to Churchill, as well—and get a chance to see the sights in the natural habitat. Get a chance to go there during polar bear season and try to catch a glimpse of a polar bear.

Go there and visit the whales and see—they're remarkable—who are going through the Hudson Bay and the Churchill River. Even go during the winter-time and get a chance to check out the Northern Lights. And so, I encourage all Manitobans if you get a chance to do that, all Canadians, anyone around the world who might be tuning in today, including the member opposite who's right here. Go to chance—go to Churchill; it's a great place to be. I think members on his team have been there, as well, who can attest to how beautiful Churchill is.

And I think there's no question, no doubt in my mind that already Churchill is a net benefit and positive contributor into our provincial economy. And we know there's some great tourism operators throughout the North and throughout Churchill and I want to commend all of them for the work they do, including those who do it from that lens of sharing their knowledge and experience as some of the first people, as the First Peoples in the region, both from a First Nations and from an Inuit background.

I think—we know that it's a massive, massive undertaking to be in that space, so we already know that there's a huge massive impact to our provincial GDP through Churchill. Now, we can build on that and that's exactly what we're seeking to do through our Port of Churchill Plus, as we continue to invest

our dollars and with working alongside the federal government to invest in that rail line, getting that improved.

And when I was up there, I got a chance to see the port. And I understand that even since I've been there, there's already been private-sector investment to improve the port infrastructure, whether that's the dredging, whether that's the port itself, whether that's the storage capacity at the port. All has been improved since I've been there.

* (15:40)

I've already said that shipments of critical minerals are going out of the Port of Churchill. It was about 18,000 tons of HudBay's minerals have gone out of the Port of Churchill in the last two years, and that's—we're going to continue, and we're—no doubt that's going to grow.

And so I think the narrative the member opposite is trying to put forward today is just completely off base. It's one that discounts a ton of work that's happened over years to build up the economy in Churchill, not only through tourism but through resupply missions to Nunavut. There are actually even cruise ships that dock in the Port of Churchill, as well, and tourists come and stop by Churchill. So there's a lot of activity going on right now.

In fact that—tourism generates \$99.8 million annually to Manitoba's GDP. And so we know that there's a massive benefit for Churchill, its current existence. We're aiming to work collaboratively with partners across the sector, from municipal governments to First Nations and Métis governments, working with the federal government, as well, through their Major Projects Office.

And we're hearing it directly from the Prime Minister himself, who said it's a priority. We heard it directly from the Minister of Finance, who was here in the province earlier this week, who said Churchill is a great idea, and he supports the Port of Churchill.

And as we continue to advance this project in a collaborative and real way, we will certainly be having an eye to ensuring that it has a benefit for all Manitobans.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Chair, there you have it. I asked about what the positive net contribution to the province would be from Churchill. Whether or not the minister, when he was there with a colleague minister, saw a transformational port, transformational to the

economy of our province. And similar to the last time, when the minister went off at extent on a space mission to the moon, and talking about rockets and astronauts, today we're hearing about polar bears.

So, you know, everyone can agree that we have a great tourism industry in Manitoba and how much exactly that contributes to the provincial economy. And the minister stated it: \$99.8 million, and much of that is thanks to our previous PC government's partnership model with the 96-4 model that was brought forward by Travel Manitoba to reinvest into tourism. And that's what really had kick-started the Churchill tourism.

But, you know, we don't see the net positive, net contribution that bringing up that comparison has for our economy and has for transforming our economy from a have-not to a have. In an earlier question, the minister said that they've committed \$262 million to the Port of Churchill project, another \$10 million Churchill catalyst fund.

So we're talking, you know, roughly \$270 million, a sizable amount of money but we know that that's a drop in the bucket in comparison to the billions of dollars that this project's going to take; and then spoke to how we're already seeing a positive net contribution to the province because of the \$99.8 million of tourism, which has nothing to do with the Port of Churchill, contributes to our province.

Well, if you have a \$99.8-million revenue as a result of a \$270-million contribution, that is not a net positive benefit to the province. But I think we will move on. We're not getting an answer as to what the Port of Churchill looks like, when we're going to see it contributing to our province, and these are all things that we're not skeptical on or critical of. We just—we want to see a plan, and we're simply not—we're not seeing that.

So something that the minister brought up today, and we left off the last day that we were together in this committee, was the Manitoba Crown-Indigenous corporation. And I had—I'd asked, you know, where it was, what it was, and why we haven't actually seen any numbers around it or how it's made or what involvement it'll have with the Port of Churchill.

So could the minister please tell Manitobans why this entity has been obviously announced on numerous occasion? They've established a board so there are clearly costs involved and money being spent, but it does not have the proper costing or details in this year's budget, so I'd ask the minister, why?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Can the member please clarify if he is referring to another bill, which is put forward by the Minister for Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures? Bill 12.

Mr. Narth: Thank you, honourable Chair, for that clarification. So what I'm looking at is what involve the Crown-Indigenous corporation will have on the Port of Churchill project.

The Chairperson: So we are discussing the Estimates for the Department of Business, Mining, Trade, and Job Creation. At this platform, we are not entertaining questions about a bill which is on the floor of the Legislature.

Mr. Narth: I'm not—yes, I'm not wanting to debate any details as far as what's in the bill itself, but if we're not able to discuss anything around the Crown-Indigenous corporation, it's unfortunate because that's a large part of basically every aspect of what the minister has brought forward for the plan of their budget this year and future projects for the province. It's been outlined on a number of occasions that the Crown-Indigenous corporation is going to be part of all major projects for the province, so not to be able to speak anything about it, like I said, is unfortunate.

But we can move on from that. And I'll move on to the trade work that has been done—trade work done outside of our country and the trade rep that this government has hired to represent our province in the United States specifically, and that being Richard Madan. So I'd like to ask the minister, since obviously being the minister responsible for trade, I would say that it should have been under his direction that the trade rep was hired.

* (15:50)

And I'd like to ask on behalf of Manitobans, why Richard Madan was chosen as the trade rep for our province.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: I want to—in the previous question, the member tried to ask, he—you know, I want to address some of the comments that he made before getting to the comments about our—the US Washington rep, who is representing us here in Manitoba.

You know, the member opposite, I guess, maybe had some issue with my commentary in our previous encounter that complaining that it was off script talking about the incredible mission where we had a Canadian representative going to the moon on the

Artemis II mission and complaining that we talk about something that inspires Manitobans.

In fact, I've heard, literally, from a young person who is—always knew they were going to pursue engineering and is now thinking about going into aerospace engineering because of what they've seen as part of the Artemis mission. So this could be another great leader in our aerospace sector in Manitoba as a result of this.

And at the same time, in the same question block, we had a comment from the member opposite criticizing polar bears. Shocking. Polar bears are incredible, not only for their—you know, the majestic animals that they are, but for the importance that they represent for First Nations and Indigenous communities in the North, but also for the economic drivers that they play, the economic role they play in attracting tourists from around the globe.

So it seems really curious to me that the member opposite would spend time in Estimates here—out of the blue, even though I hadn't brought it up—criticizing an inspirational global space mission, which held—host—had a Canadian on it, who's wearing a patch designed by a Manitoban, and then, out of the blue, criticizing polar bears? Very curious line of questioning from member opposite, but I digress.

So I'll move on and focus on the questions the member is seeking to get more clarity on so that we can ensure that Manitobans of all walks of life, from every region, get a clear understanding of how we are approaching growing our economy in the multi-faceted ways in which we do.

And, of course, as we know, the member opposite should know, Manitobans would know, that over 70 per cent of our exports go to the United States of America. On a given year, that's roughly 72, 73, 74—could be around that ballpark—have exports that go to the United States of America.

And so for us, having someone who can represent our interests, as a province, in the United States of America is really important, someone who can actually go there and be there and understand what it's like to be in Washington. Someone who has experience on Capitol Hill and has a network of contacts—really important.

And not only did we find someone who has that network of contacts, decades-long experience working in Washington, has a Rolodex—I don't know if it's a physical one or a virtual Rolodex of contacts to reach

out and advocate for Manitobans—we finally have a person.

Now it's a stark contrast—and I want to be clear with Manitobans, it's a stark contrast from what we saw previously, where their former government made a decision, I think, you know, a short-sighted decision, to pull out our representatives out of the United States with—making sure that we didn't have that voice at the table to represent Manitoba's interests.

We don't see other jurisdictions do that. We don't see Saskatchewan or Alberta take that course of action that the former government here decided to withdraw themselves and insulate themselves from, you know, a global economy. No, we didn't want to make that same mistake that members opposite did in their former and their previous time in government.

So, yes, it's really important for us to shepherd and foster a positive relationship, and it's even more important now, given that we're having such trade tension with tariffs being brought on by the Trump administration. Advocating for why it's important to have a healthy trading relationship with Canada and with Manitoba specifically is important.

So that's what our Washington representative does for Manitoba. It helps connect businesses with their—with important stakeholders, both on the government side and business-to-business relationships. And so our representative was chosen because he's got that long experience working in Washington, that network of contacts and is the right person who has knowledge about Washington and Manitoba who can advance our interests.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: My question is: Did Richard Madan have any experience in trade or commerce? Any experience whatsoever in his professional career in the past? Any experience in trade and commerce? And would the minister be able to list his experiences?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

* (16:00)

Mr. Moses: I certainly think it's important to be asking about trading relationships, as it is a key part of our economy. Whether you're talking about agriculture, manufacturing—they all export. Aerospace sector, life sciences are key exporters in our province. Critical minerals and other natural resource products get exported. And so it's important for us to talk about and understand how we can maintain and improve our relationship with our largest trading partner.

On top of that, I think it's also important that we acknowledge the impacts that this moment is having, both into the landscape of the tariff policy under the White House that is straining that trade relationship, that is making it more challenging to do business for many Manitoba businesses.

It's also important for us to acknowledge the CUSMA, the USMCA review that's happening and how we can be putting our best foot forward in terms of advocating both with our Canadian federal government in terms—as they go into those conversations with the United States, and also, at the same time, have a voice for Manitoba and the politicians in Washington: senators, congresspeople, but also at the state level with governors and state officials. And so part of our Washington rep, Richard Madan's role, is to do that political legwork that is very beneficial to enhancing our position as Manitobans.

As many products get exported, there are also many products that get exported after they cross the border many times, such as the hog industry. Members opposite might be well aware that, you know, a hog might cross the border half a dozen times before it actually makes it to market. And so it's important for us to understand that that's a very integrated file and integrated products that we export out of Manitoba. And so having that relationship on the political level is very important.

And I think, even now more than ever, where we see the Trump administration have the type of tone and control over a lot of what happens in Washington, in the US, it's important to be speaking that political language. And our rep, Mr. Madan, has that ability to speak that language. Being in Washington for so long and having that experience—not only the contacts, not only the people who he can call up and say, let me just chat and tell you about Manitoba really quick and get you a better understanding of what we do, who are—but to understand how to communicate to those people in an effective way, is what he brings to the table.

It's that knowledge, that skill set, those connections and that ability to parse through the system and speak the language in Washington [*phonetic*]—in Washington, and specifically of the Trump administration, is what is valuable and what is the most challenging part.

And so, over the course of his work to understand the political system in Washington and advocate for Manitoba, Richard's been actively meeting with leaders on both sides of the border. He's been working with not only Democrats but—and Republicans, and

he's advancing our interests. At the same time, he's providing some strategic advice to our business community here in Manitoba on the USMCA—the CUSMA—review.

He has ensured that the business community in Manitoba has been staying connected. He's had many visits, tours, meetings with business community here to support and advance our interests. And none of which—none of least is in the pork industry, and so he's done a significant amount of work there. He's helped steward at meetings with Senator Murkowski and Governor Dunleavy, of some of our neighbours, our neighbours here. He's ensured that we've had presence in events and conferences in various parts of the United States, offering opportunities for Manitoba to showcase our story and what we have to offer. This is the type of representation that is actually making a meaningful difference in the lives of Manitobans and our business community, and certainly is working to advance our interests.

And so I want to make it clear that that's exactly what he brings to the table, some of that experience, ability to speak the language, and we're already seeing benefits of it.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: So, basically that didn't give us any clarification on what his trade and commerce experiences have been. Didn't really hear any specific trade or commerce experience whatsoever, anything that relates to trade and commerce. As a reporter that's able to talk to government officials is what I heard from that response.

So maybe I'd like to see if the minister could explain to the committee here today and Manitobans what Mr. Madan's specific job description is.

What is it that the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew)—the government—what has been outlined to Mr. Madan as his specific job description? What are we paying him specifically to do and what are the expected results? So, a specific job description is what I'm looking for here today, honourable Chair.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: The US DC—Washington, DC office—the role there will work to develop relationships with US lawmakers, industry leaders, trade officials to promote strong ties with Manitoba and ensure that Manitoba interests are protected in high-level trade negotiations like the renewed Canada-United States-Mexico agreement.

We also know that the role there is to ensure that we have those strong relationships with key lawmakers—key US lawmakers and industry leaders and trade officials. Again, that—those relationships are to promote more durable ties and strong and prosperous links between Manitoba and the United States. The role in Richard is also working to ensure Manitoba's interests are protected in bilateral economic relations, including high-level trade negotiations, like I mentioned—those renewal discussions between the Canada, United States and Mexico agreement.

* (16:10)

So I think that kind of gives a summary of the description of the role, and I think it also describes why someone who has the ability to have a strong Rolodex, have that ability to speak the language of Washington and speak the language of the Trump administration is critically important to the role. I think it's a very strong person to be in that role, and it's finding success already.

And so, as he continues to work on advancing our interests as a province, certainly by networking more with political figures in Washington and throughout—in the US, he also plays a role in giving us advice to our business community and strengthening his knowledge. Obviously, he's someone who spent a lot of time in Manitoba, he's familiar, and over the course of his time in that role, he's certainly become even more familiar and gained a depth of knowledge of what Manitoba has to offer, and strengthened his ability to network within 'ourn' own business community, our own exporters, and has been a strong advocate.

There's many folks around our province who would attest to their connections with Richard and their ability to leverage his role and his presence to advance their interests as Manitoba businesses, and that's exactly why he's a person who's well-suited to be in that role and to find success in that role.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: So, from that, I understand that basically, Richard Madan's job description—what are—what is expected of him by this minister and Manitoba's government—is to hang out in Washington, take some meetings, make himself seen and make himself known. Nowhere did I see any expectation of actual results, but that leads me to my next question: for committee to understand what Mr. Madan's current salary is and allowed expenses.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: I thank the member opposite for his questions that go to advance our initiatives to strengthen our position in the global trade landscape. We know between 70, 75 per cent of our exports in a given year go to the United States, and so it's a continued importance for us to have that strong trading relationship.

Given by the question I'm—questions I'm getting from the member opposite, I'm wondering, does he not support us having a strong relationship with the United States? We certainly see members from his party, you know, make—have rhetoric like they wish they were the 51st state or that we would sell ourselves to the Americans. We see it online occasionally from members of his caucus. We even have times when the member—the Leader of the Opposition—your leader—makes comments like, hey, these tariffs—thank you, Trump, for those tariffs.

I can't believe—you know, it's kind of shocking to the Manitoba business community that's been such—so greatly impacted by the negative impacts of the tariffs that—in that moment when it's such a threat, a year ago, that the Leader of the Opposition would think it's such a good idea to say, hey, I'm going to thank Donald Trump for his tariffs that are having such a negative impact on our national, but also provincial, economy and businesses.

Now I wonder what the Leader of the Opposition's response is to the many Manitobans and Canadiases [*phonetic*]-Canadians whose jobs might have been impacted as a result of the tariffs. I wonder what his response is to why he was thanking him for those—the tariffs. I think it's really irresponsible. Think it was also irresponsible for the former government to remove our Washington representative and remove the fact that we would had a person who would have already been up to speed with the ongoing in Washington and the United States if it wasn't for the short-sighted decision of the former government.

And so, you know, I think those are the sort of things that make us really shake our head when it comes to their approach. And so, you know, I look at those decisions, I look at the questioning here today and I can't help but wonder, is it their intention to set our economy behind? Would they rather have us not have a rep in Washington and pull that out again, as they did once before, it's their track record. They've done it once. They've removed the—closed down the office there in Washington once before. Are they going to do it again? Is that what their plan is and

suggests? I'm budging by the questions here today, maybe it is.

Maybe it's something else. I mean, we've heard the members opposite wish they were a 51st state, and we know they've said things like they thank him for the tariffs, and so certainly we've heard, like, all this rhetoric and it makes us really question what their motivation is when it comes to this issue.

We've heard them, you know, even in question period—lots of opportunities for them to denounce the tariff approach of Donald Trump and to denounce the approach that his global policy on tariffs is having—wreaking havoc on the global economy, including the Canadian economy and including the Manitoban economy. Yet, members opposite haven't taken that opportunity to denounce Trump in that way.

And so it's curious if rather, instead of supporting Manitoba businesses, the members opposite would rather, you know, support Donald Trump's efforts. It's really strange. And so I think those facts and those aspects have a lot of Manitoba industries worried and concerned about the rhetoric that they hear and the sincerity of the members opposite.

* (16:20)

So I'll let member opposite reflect on those comments as he has an opportunity to speak in his next chance, and whether he wants to clearly say what his position is on Donald Trump, perhaps—maybe he will, maybe he won't. We'll let Manitobans decide on that.

But certainly when it comes to our Washington rep, who's doing a great job of connecting with policy leaders, business leaders, both on the US and Canadian side of the border, helping to strengthen our position as Manitobans with our largest trading partner, we know that he's been doing good work. And, certainly, we also know that his position is very valuable because of the role that he plays in the networks and connections that he has.

So to answer that member's question—the member's question, his salary is \$387,000.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: Wow, has this been—it was disappointing the previous two days, but this is even more disappointing. We had five minutes of preamble to give an unclear answer: \$387,000 for a trade representative in Washington. So we don't know if that's in US funds or Canadian, which is 34 per cent difference.

And I clearly asked what the allowable expenses along with that would be, and what those expenses would add up to.

But I'll remind the minister that the purpose of this committee, as well as my role—it's my right—and not only my right, it's my responsibility to Manitobans to be critical of what the government is spending all of our tax dollars on. So that's how our democratic system in this Manitoba Legislature is structured, so that official opposition has that obligation to Manitobans, and definitely to the Manitobans that didn't elect this government—but all Manitobans in general. So that is technically the purpose of my role, and it's the obligation of government to give clear answers as to where money is being spent.

And the purpose of this committee, of the Estimates committee, is—for me, who—my obligation to Manitobans is to be critical of government expenditure. So the purpose is that the minister's staff, who's with him here today—a group of them have the budget in detail in front of them. And it's the responsibility of the minister to provide the details that I ask on behalf of all Manitobans.

So the minister, I understand through his preamble to the last answer, is defensive to why I would be critical around the role of our trade representative—or this government's trade representative. I'm not saying that Mr. Madan was the wrong choice; I'm not saying that he isn't providing value to the province. I'm just questioning, for Manitobans, what exactly he was hired to do—the outline of that. Because this isn't the minister's money, this—these are Manitobans' money. This isn't the money of the department staff that the minister has. These are funds that are held, you know, with the responsibility to show the value and also the transparency to all Manitobans.

So it is my obligation to be critical of the management of his department. And, although he may feel that it's me being directly critical—or our party's criticism to them doing a poor job, we just—we want to know what the job is that they're doing.

And in this specific question, I had asked what the salary was in Canadian dollars, as well as the allowable expenses for Mr. Madan fulfilling his role in Washington. And, since I know there's going to be five minutes of preamble before I get an answer, I'm going to load that up a little bit more and I'd like to know how that's changed—if it's changed—and if those are the same amounts that are budgeted for this year in the budget.

So he's now going into the second budget year; what exactly is it—\$387,000 even-stein and that's it? Canadian funds? You just stroke him a cheque and move on? Or, what is the obligation of Manitoba taxpayers?

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: So I appreciate the question from member opposite. I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I served in the role as critic for four years, so, thank you for explaining the role. I certainly want to clearly explain to Manitobans the cost of ensuring that we have a strong representative there. The number figure that I provided for the member in my previous answer was in US dollars, and there's no change to the budget, and that includes his allowables for hospitality.

Additionally, I think it's important to note that our role is—Manitoba—is to make sure we have not only strong trading relationships, but we have strong trading partners and strong trading opportunities for Manitoba companies.

And so, not only do we 'strongit'—strengthen our relationship with the United States, our largest trading partner, but we're not, you know, as the saying is, putting all of our eggs in one basket.

No, we want to diversify. We want to have a diversified economy. We're fortunate in Manitoba to have one of the more diversified economies in the country: strong agricultural base, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, life sciences, natural resources, energy, among many others.

* (16:30)

And as we continue to advance and to grow those diverse economies, we want to see diverse partners around the world. So things like our Export Support Program, which we have in our province—we've doubled it, making sure that more businesses have opportunities to grow and thrive and meet the glowing competitiveness that we're seeing around the world.

So this fund helps more businesses reach more trade shows, investors, business partners in different parts of the world, and so we're not putting all of our eggs in the United States of America basket. That's an important relationship and we're hoping to foster a strong positive relationship, which is why we have a US representative in Washington, Mr. Madan. But it's also why we are investing in growing in other areas.

So we've certainly had an eye to—how do we grow in Europe? How do we grow in Asia? How do we

grow in India and among many other places around the world? How do we grow in Mexico and, as well, throughout South America and Africa as well?

So we are not just stopping with the United States in terms of how we approach diversification and the expansion to our Export Support Program. The doubling of our Export Support Program shows that we are taking the steps to ensure that more Manitoba businesses can reach those global markets, so we'll continue to diversify.

Going back to our earlier conversation from today, Port of Churchill is another aspect that helps more businesses diversify. And instead of finding that our best—excuse me—bet is to ship our products just to the United States or just out to Port of Vancouver, we want to invest in a new port that can allow more opportunities for businesses to get to Europe faster, get to our partners around the world more cost-effectively.

And so we'll advance both our work in the Washington trade rep with our officer there, Mr. Madan. We will work to diversify our economy through programming like our export support programming.

As well, we will continue to advance the Port of Churchill as an effort to both grow our economy in real and meaningful ways with First Nations, Métis and northern partners and federal government, but also with an eye to growing our exports from southern Manitoba and the west of Canada and ensuring that we can diversify through port infrastructure and meet the needs that we're seeing in this growing global competitiveness so that Manitoba doesn't get left behind and that we can continue to advance and move ahead.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: I'd like to thank the minister for actually answering the question clearly and then moving on to the long, drawn-out preamble—or, I guess, postamble—*[interjection]*—yes, postamble. So I appreciate that. And as long as I get answers, I'm—I'll sit through listening to the minister.

So we—we'd heard in one of the other sessions of this committee a couple weeks ago, from the minister, the impact that tariffs have had on the Manitoba economy, you know, directly through manufacturers seeing disruption.

You know, I tried to get some clarification. We didn't actually see any big changes directly to CUSMA,

but the minister had explained to the committee that it was more so the uncertainty that has created disruptions and that's affected manufacturers in Manitoba and trade for products that we have.

And today, again, the minister highlighted that 70 to 75 per cent of trade for Manitoba is done through the United States, and that's where Mr. Madan is representing us and representing—I would hope—representing those companies who do business here in Manitoba.

So I'd like to know if there are any examples—and even one would probably satisfy myself and the Manitobans that I represent—to know that—you know, to highlight, to showcase the value that Mr. Madan has to trade in our province, just outside of the conversations that he's able to have with government officials in the United States.

So, again, to clarify: Would the minister be able to highlight any new trade deals that Mr. Madan has been able to provide to Manitoba businesses, whether they be manufacturers, producers of goods—we ship a lot of agriculture products to the United States. We've seen some disruption there that the volume of sales has scaled back and individual companies have made contact with producers in Manitoba, whether it be value-added agriculture processing, hog production, some of the weanling demand that we've seen out of the United States that's—there's renewed demand in industries outside of what we had normally traded.

And I'd just like to know if Mr. Madan has provided any new trade deals or any new markets.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: It's an important question from member opposite, so I really appreciate it. Yes, we definitely want to be seeing the impact of the, you know, resources we spend in any area of government, particularly in this department.

* (16:40)

We really value the ability to show that our government is serious about growing our economy and we're doing so in a way that grows jobs, does it to strengthen our exports, become more competitive, grow in terms of more equity and more people getting the skills to involve and be part of our workforce, but also understanding that we've got to also increase our competitiveness within the world.

And so, we're going to continue to do that work; we have been doing that, and Richard Madan, our rep in Washington is doing that. Mr. Madan has certainly

had a role to play in growing our economy, working with businesses and specific sectors.

Now, I'll want to make two clarifications and two points for the member opposite. One, it's not our role necessarily to be making trade deals, as in, like, a new trade deal the way a federal minister would, or a federal prime minister would be doing that. We certainly play roles in shepherding companies who can then grow and make arrangement to a new sale or a new opportunity, increasing our market share.

I hope the member opposite gets the kind of picture that our role is not the federal government's role, which to actually sign deals like creating a new free trade agreement with another country or state, something like that. So I just want to make sure member opposite has that awareness of what he would expect from any role that's not our role as a province.

A second point I want to make is that, yes, very clearly, there has been an increase in our exports in some key areas, I think, as a result of the work that's been happening from Richard Madan. I know he's been doing an extensive amount of work in our transportation and industry, so specifically with companies like New Flyer that have been advancing their sales and exports to the United States, specifically in areas like hogs. A number of work has been happening on that area as well, as well as in our aerospace sector. And those are some of the key areas that are very big in Manitoba, that he's been doing some very specific work.

And so, while I wouldn't want to get in the way of any private company's sales or forecasts or anything like that, I can say—tell you broad numbers from our economy that we've seen the proof that there has been actual increases. And I don't want to get in the way of any private-sector announcements or private-sector forecasts or deals that may be, you know, not for public consumption, but I would say, certainly, there has been positive impact as a result of the direct sectors that Mr. Madan has been working in over his time in his role.

And so, to that end, I'll just give you some of the stats that we have on Manitoba's exports to the United States, and in—these are key areas where he—know he's been working in. And so in the buses and other public transportation passenger vehicles, those exports from Manitoba to the United States have increased by 32.6 per cent since he's been in his role.

We've also seen in another area—the two other areas I want to point out to is in aerospace, aircraft;

and then live swine so hog industry. Aircraft, spacecraft and other parts thereof, that sector has grown by 49.4 per cent. This is '24 to '25, so in—during his time in role. And in live swine, we've also seen an increase there of 24.3 per cent.

So we're seeing some significant increases of our exports during his time as being our representative. Goes to show that the work he's making to lobby officials, to introduce business connections on both sides of the borders are actually having a real impact on our economy, helping us to increase our exports with our largest trading partner in the United States of America.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: Thank you to the minister for highlighting some of that and stating his impression with the results that Mr. Madan has been gaining for Manitoba.

I just—I'd like to clarify. I was hoping to move on, but I think we need to clarify because, you know, I was want—you know, in one of my previous questions, wanting to have the minister highlight exactly his role, right? And that was a question—we didn't really see that, other than he—his role was to work at representing Manitoba to different government officials in the United States, specifically in Washington, at a federal level in the United States.

And as much as, you know, I took that answer at face value, it then was clarified in the last answer, which I think everyone realizes that trade representative for Manitoba, a specific province in our country, wouldn't be negotiating actual country-to-country trade deals or specific industry carve-outs or trade negotiations. So, you know, I would hope that the results are more specific to industry or company, but in a previous answer, the minister had said that his role was to build relationships with the government in the United States.

So two very different examples were provided in the last response to my question. Highlighted an increase to transportation, used New Flyer as an example and aerospace, which I can understand that those two may be linked to negotiations with government, in Mr. Madan's role, because both those industries, usually the buses, city transport buses, as well as aerospace products, would be something that government would buy whether that be, you know, municipal counties, cities or the federal government, and then in aerospace, the federal government.

Then he also highlighted live pork increases, and that's a direct result of Richard Madan's work in the US,

which would be a private-sector change to industry demand. Pork isn't bought by a government or a town or a city; that's bought by a packer in the private sector.

So I'd like the minister to clarify whether or not—again, going back to what Mr. Madan's role is—is that he, in fact, is negotiating on behalf of Manitoba agriculture corporations because there's private corporations that own pork production in Manitoba, and then there's public demand for our transportation products—New Flyer buses as an example—or the aerospace industry.

So Richard Madan, the expectation of his role is both to negotiate with public industry as well as a government entity.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Moses: I appreciate the member opposite. I think his last question I think was a little bit confusing. I'm just trying to—struggling to understand the role—I think I said his role, which explains it fairly clearly.

I'll repeat it again. Couple of the points I said in my answer a couple of responses ago is that the Washington, DC office will develop relationships with US lawmakers, industry leaders, trade officials to promote strong ties with Manitoba, ensure that Manitoba's interests are protected in high-level conversations particularly around negotiations of Canada-US-Mexico Agreement. His role as the senior representative United States is to build stronger relationships with key US lawmakers, industry leaders, trade officials to promote durable ties and prosperous linkages between Manitoba and US.

So, in both of those answers, which I previously stated my answers, describe both the role that talks and builds strong relationships with lawmakers because we know they're influential in the policy decisions that impact Manitoba businesses. And the same time, he's building key relationships with industry leaders in the private sector to help link the Canadian and Manitoba private-sector businesses with US private-sector businesses.

* (16:50)

I said that in the job description of Mr. Madan. And, quite frankly, it explains why he's—makes sense to have him in a role who is someone who can open the doors and can have the good relationships with folks on Capitol Hill in Washington and in the people who are in the House and people who are in the Senate there and with people in the White House.

And at the same time, he has the ability to work with key industries in Manitoba and make those links with their US counterparts—whether that's, you know, pork going to Iowa or whether that is manufacturers that are in—have connections to Atlanta—to folks in Georgia, or whether that's anyone who's doing business throughout the United States, whether that's in Illinois or Minnesota.

You know, so these are examples of the roles that he plays, both on the policy advocacy piece and the business connection. And that's why he's the right person for the job, who has experience connecting with Manitoba, understands our province, has worked to gain a fulsome understanding of our business community here, working and knowing our business leaders right here in Manitoba and take that expertise, matching it up with his Rolodex—physical or virtual Rolodex in—that he has in Washington and advocating for Manitoba's best interests, both on the policy side with US lawmakers and with the business interest side.

And so both the results that he's had to open doors on the policy level are significant, and on the business side is significant, proven out by the results I said in my last response.

So I think it's proven that what I'm demonstrating—to you, and to Manitobans—is that we—the steps we're taking is to grow our economy in a fulsome way in Manitoba, kind of a—certainly a no-stone-left-untuned approach, and making sure that we put our best foot story. Now, we know—Manitobans know—we've got a great story to tell, a story that is very powerful for international business and landscapes to understand. And so we will continue to tell the story.

Mr. Madan in Washington plays a role in telling that story and shaping how people understand Manitoba, so they don't make policy without understanding the impacts it has on a province that has many industry sectors that are very much intertwined with US states. And so, as we continue to advance our conversations with our largest trading partner, Mr. Madan, in his role, will continue to play a large part of that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Narth: Looking at time—being only approximately seven minutes left in the day and not nearly getting the answers that I was hoping to out of this committee's process—you know, we've highlighted a number of different areas of concern in the budget.

We all know on—you know, across the province, but definitely on the opposition side of the House—the great potential that Manitoba has to be a nation leader, not the largest per capita recipient of transfer payments. You know, it's something that I highlighted in past sessions of this committee—that we truly believe that, whether it be goods from across Canada being exported through our Port of Churchill; whether it be expanding trade to our largest trade partner in the United States; unlocking the resources that we have throughout the entire northern region of our province or truly capitalizing on the entrepreneurial strength, manufacturing capacity and, you know, in general just strong economic position of southern Manitoba in general.

We've got a lot to offer in Manitoba and a lot of potential to not only, you know, turn our province into a more prosperous place for all Manitobans, to increase the affordability and economic position of each of the families in our province but truly lead our country, and for once contribute to the prosperity of people across our country. You know, I think it's our duty to the rest of the country, as we sit on so much possibility for economic strength here in Manitoba, that we should be providing that strength to all Manitobans and all Canadians.

But, unfortunately, we're seeing some concerning statistics highlighted through not only this year's budget, but in alarms that are being set off by industry leaders and Manitobans that are struggling each and every day when they go to the grocery store. You know, last August alone, Manitoba lost 4,000 manufacturing jobs, and the manufacturing sector of the province has dropped by 30 per cent under this minister.

So, you know, since we're not able to get any clear answers, I think that concludes the questions that I'll ask in committee, and I'd ask to wrap up this session.

Mr. Moses: We are growing our economy. Our GDP is in line with other—national average. We're No. 1 in job growth in the country. We're advancing the Port of Churchill and, if the members opposite let us pass our budget without delay this year, we'll deliver on the affordability with PST off all grocery prices for Manitobans

The Chairperson: Thank you, Minister.

Seeing no further questions, we shall now proceed to put the question on the resolutions.

Resolution 10.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum of not exceeding \$34,090,000 for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Investment and Trade, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$145,161,000 for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Workforce Development and Training, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$13,939,000 for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Minerals, Petroleum and Geoscience, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$570,000 for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 10.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$60,000,000 for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Loans and Guarantees Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates for this department is item 10.1(a), the minister's salary, contained in resolution 10.1.

The floor is open for questions.

An Honourable Member: No questions.

The Chairperson: No questions?

Resolution 10.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$6,272,000 for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the matter for this committee.

The time being 5 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will recess until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

CHAMBER

PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

* (14:50)

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Public Service Delivery. This time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber.

Could the minister introduce his staff in attendance?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Yes, we have with me today Deputy Minister Brenda DeSerranno; director of ministerial affairs, Julia Antonyshyn; assistant deputy minister and executive financial officer, Jason Perez; assistant deputy minister of Asset Management division, Brent Timmerman; assistant deputy minister of Procurement and Supply Chain division, Paris Fragkoulis; assistant deputy minister of Consumer Protection division, Kathryn Durkin-Chudd; acting assistant deputy minister of capital plan—Capital Project Planning and Delivery division, Cheryl Lashek.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

And could the critic please introduce their staff?

An Honourable Member: I am here with—

The Chairperson: The honourable member for Borderland.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Sure, I am here with Shannon today.

The Chairperson: As previously stated, in accordance with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Guenter: So, when it comes to the 85-cent charge that is levied by Manitoba Building Trades on projects that have the Manitoba jobs agreement applied to them, that 85 cents per hour, per worker charge—the other day, we talked about where the money was going, couldn't get an answer.

But I'm wondering if the minister could tell us today: How much—how many millions, or whatever the number is, does he anticipate the government will collect through that fee alone, annually?

* (15:00)

MLA Sandhu: I just let the member know the BTBC remittance follows the same process, a similar labour strategy and it includes to support the administrator and labour relation function required under the MJA. This is mentioned throughout the first MJA in the market and also included in all 'chandering' documents.

And also, maybe I'll still let the member know what MJA is; I think member's still confused. We are listening to Manitobans and we are listening to Manitoba workers. This is—every single person, every single worker who works on MJA is better off. They will have a safer work site, better benefits and fair wages. This is all about it.

And this is also about putting Manitoba workers to work here in Manitoba. Under, like, previously—under Conservatives, we have out-of-province licence plates on the work site. Our focus is on Manitoba workers, the Manitoba workers who build Manitoba, the same workers who put hard hats and steel toe boots on on the job site is—plus, they are working out, be it plus 40° or -40°, and they're working hard. And we want to make sure they will have safer work sites, better benefits and fair wages. And we want to make sure they go to their family safely.

So we are working the workforce—we are training the workforce for the future.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Guenter: You know, it's—again, no response from the minister. For decades, Manitoba's construction industry has built our roads, hospitals, schools and bridges. They've never had to pay a fee like this new slush-fund fee that the minister and his NDP colleagues are bringing in now, that they're foisting on the construction industry.

This 85-cent per hour, per worker charge is a brand new fee; it's unprecedented. This is on top of union fees and dues and all the rest of that. So the minister can't tell us where this money is going. He can't tell us how much the government expects to collect. We know that on one school—the construction of one school, the amount is—that the government will collect is \$250,000 ballpark in in this one fee, in this 85-cent fee.

So across the four schools that are scheduled to be built, you do the math. A quarter of a million dollars across four schools is \$1 million that the Manitoba Building Trades Council is collecting in this fee, this 85-cent fee, this unprecedented charge that's never been levied before in Manitoba's construction history.

And the minister doesn't want to answer some basic questions about where is this money going. You know, suddenly there's a need for it. Oh, administration—safety. Well, when it comes to safety, you know, Manitoba's construction associations have got that figured out.

In fact, they were the ones—it was open shop construction associations that created the first worker safety programs. And I passed one of their vehicles, actually, CSAM, Construction Safety Association of Manitoba, on my way to work this morning.

So just another reminder: Hey, you know, I want to thank all the open shop contractors in Manitoba's construction industry for their advancements to the innovation in Manitoba's construction industry. But, you know, back to this fee. Again, no answers about where this money's going.

And the minister can't answer basic, simple questions about how much his government expects to collect. So it's clear that the purpose of this money is to reward their political allies in the Manitoba Building Trades Council and to—and actually, you see their political allies right now running ads, slick new ads, on behalf of the NDP to help the NDP get elected. This is a shady insider business. And, you know, you can't take the minister at his word.

So it's a huge, huge concern for Manitoba taxpayers, just an absolute lack of oversight and one of the things—and I brought this out last time, but one of the things about this Manitoba jobs agreement that troubles me the most is that this minister has never brought the Manitoba jobs agreement to this Legislature for debate. Has never brought it here for scrutiny, for the ability of legislators in this place to ask questions.

And so we're left to do this, to use this forum to ask questions. And here I am, along with my PC colleagues, as we have been for weeks and months now, asking questions on behalf of Manitoba taxpayers, trying to get some transparency and accountability for them.

And this shady, secretive, you know, backroom-dealing government, NDP government, up to their typical behaviour, and we can't get answers from them. So I'm hugely concerned about that and, you know, I would just like to note, the minister repeats ad nauseam the same old tired talking points and he says, we're listening to Manitobans.

Well I'd like to ask him, you know, when's the last time he's met with the Winnipeg Construction

Association? When's the last time he's met with Merit? When's the last time he's met with Manitoba Heavy Construction Association? When's the last time he's met with the rural construction association of Manitoba?

And after he's finished answering me—I want to know exactly when—I'd like to know the dates of the minister's meetings with all of those organizations. But I also want to know, more importantly, what changes has this minister made as a result—to has this minister made to the Manitoba jobs agreement as a result of those consultations.

* (15:10)

MLA Sandhu: I want to thank the member for the question. Like previously, I asked the member if he have gone to the job site and had he talked to the workers and offering them to see if you want to make less money. And he hasn't given me any name yet where he has talked to the person—to a worker on a job site and who said, you know what, I want to make less money; I want to have a less safer work site.

Where he is—hasn't mentioned a single place where he doesn't want—where workers want to have less benefit.

So, again, what MJA is all about: fair wages, safer work sites and better benefits.

Again, member might just only listening to the lobbyists. He may not want to go and listen to Manitoba workers. On this side of the House, we care about Manitoba workers. I will continue to listen to them each and every day.

They are the ones building Manitoba. They are the ones out at the work sites if it be -40° or plus 40°, working hard, and we want to make sure they go safely to their families. And we want to make sure we see more Manitoba licence plates, unless—previously, under Conservatives, they created the jobs not here in Manitoba. They created those jobs, and you see those licence plates at those work sites from Saskatchewan and Alberta.

And the member asked the last time I met these organizations: WCA, Manitoba Heavy and CARM. There was—last time I met them is March 27, and department met them April 28. At March 27, they was discussion from the industry setting up a industry table, so we sent those invitations to the industry, both WCA and Manitoba Heavy, both separately, having two tables.

And we addressed—and member also talked about what concern has been addressed. We have addressed concerns about data privacy, and we continue to work to make sure MJA works for everyone.

And recently—actually, I just forgot to mention this; MCAM, ECAM, we just met them April 28.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

Mr. Guenter: We're not getting any answers today, so I think I'm ready to close out and bring in the next minister.

The Chairperson: The critic has indicated that questions have concluded, so we'll move on to resolutions.

Resolution 8.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$12,254,000 for Public Service Delivery, Capital Programs, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 8.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$128,835,000—sorry, I'm going to repeat that—\$128,830,000 for Public Service Delivery, Asset Management, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 8.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$26,013,000 for Public Service Delivery, Procurement and Supply Chain, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

* (15:20)

Resolution 8.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,999,000 for Public Service Delivery, Consumer Protection, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 8.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$80,000,000 for Public Service Delivery, Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of this department is item 8.1(a), the minister's salary contained in resolution 8.1.

At this point, we request that all ministerial and opposition staff leave the Chamber for the consideration of the last item.

The floor is open for questions.

No questions?

Resolution 8.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to His Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,260,000 for Public Service Delivery, Financial and Strategic Management, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Public Service Delivery.

The next set of Estimates to be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next department? *[Agreed]*

Committee is in recess.

The committee recessed at 3:23 p.m.

The committee resumed at 3:28 p.m.

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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

This section of the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: She does, yes.

The Chairperson: The honourable Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Good afternoon, everyone. As the Minister of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, I'm honoured to be here today to speak to the important work of the department.

Our government remains committed to delivering safe, reliable and sustainable infrastructure that supports Manitobans, strengthens communities and grows our economy. Transportation and infrastructure play a critical role in connecting Manitobans to services, supporting trade and economic development, strengthening safety and connecting communities across every region of the province.

Our government continues to prioritize strategic investments that support economic growth, improve safety and strengthen climate resiliency across Manitoba. I am very pleased to tell the members of this committee that MTI's part B capital budget has been increased from \$595 million in '25-26 to \$605 million in '26-27. An increase of \$10 million will be used to amend the neglect the previous government left us.

* (15:30)

My department continues to implement the multi-year infrastructure investment strategy, investing approximately \$605 million in infrastructure and capital projects in 2026-27. This strategy provides a long-term transparent framework focused on infrastructure renewal, economic development, climate resiliency, connectivity and innovation. Significant transportation and infrastructure projects are currently under way across Manitoba.

This year marks the beginning of design work for the Carberry overpass at the intersection of PTH 1 and PTH 5, and—thank you—an important step toward improving safety at a busy intersection. Preliminary design work and engagement are under way and include collaboration with local governments, impacted landowners and rights holders.

We continue to advance the Trans-Canada Highway twinning initiative from five kilometres west of PR 301 to Manitoba-Ontario boundary. This important project will significantly improve safety, increase highway capacity, reduce congestion during peak travel periods and strengthen a key national trade corridor.

As a multi-year project, it will also be a steady source of important jobs in the heavy construction industry. Together, this initiative reflects Manitoba's commitment to strategic infrastructure investments that support economic growth while reinforcing Manitoba's role as a national and international transportation and trade hub.

Strengthening Manitoba's role as a transportation and supply chain gateway is a priority for our government and our partnership with the federal government is key to advancing this work. Our government continues to support rehabilitation of the Hudson Bay Railway and improvements at the Port of Churchill.

These investments support economic development, job creation, remote community access and connectivity to global markets for local producers and products. Through collaboration with the federal Major Projects Office, early planning and research are under

way to expand exports through the Port of Churchill and strengthen northern supply chains.

The Perimeter freeway initiative was established to ensure the Perimeter Highway continues to function as Manitoba's most critical trade, commuter and safety corridor, supporting both the city of Winnipeg and the broader provincial economy. With steady population growth, increasing freight volumes and continued land development around Winnipeg, the Perimeter must safely and efficiently accommodate higher traffic volumes and more complex travel patterns.

My department also continues to advance the Trade and Commerce Grid Initiative. This work has now brought total completion to 87.5 per cent and continues increasing the proportion of Manitoba's highway network capable of supporting the heaviest and most efficient truck loadings.

Road safety remains one of our government's highest priorities, and I'm proud of my department's work to develop and implement our road safety strategy, which has the goal of reducing fatalities and serious injuries on provincial highways. This work includes strengthening the road safety unit, improving governance of traffic data, reviewing fatal collisions, conducting network screening and advancing safety planning for the entire highway system.

Safety is also prioritized across Manitoba's provincial highway network through comprehensive summer maintenance and winter operations. Winter roads remain critically important for northern Manitoba communities.

MTI constructs and maintains approximately 2,375 kilometres of winter roads serving 19 First Nations and three northern affairs communities. These roads provide essential seasonal access for resupply, health care access and inter-community travel.

The department remains committed to maintaining winter road access as long as possible without compromising safety and continues investing in long-term improvements to support access and resiliency. We also recognize the importance of safe, reliable and all-season airport access for Wasagamack First Nation and St. Teresa Point First Nation.

Construction of all-season road and bridge structures will continue through winter 2026 while design work progresses for the future airport terminal. Emergency management and climate resiliency continues to be major priorities for Manitoba.

The 2025 wildfire season had significant impacts across the province, including widespread evacuation and extensive wildfire activity. In response, Manitoba is undertaking a comprehensive provincial after-action review focused on identifying lessons learned, recognizing strengths and gaps and improving wildfire response efforts. This work includes broad engagement with First Nations, Indigenous organizations, municipalities, provincial departments and external partners and stakeholders.

Manitoba also announced a disaster financial assistance program for local authorities affected by the 2025 wildfires. Manitoba's EMO aligned the provincial disaster financial assistance program with Canada's updated Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements framework to maximize federal cost sharing.

Flood mitigation and climate resiliency infrastructure also remain important departmental opportunities. The department continues maintaining and rehabilitating Manitoba's flood mitigation network, including dams, dikes, diversions, pumping stations and drainage infrastructures. That commitment was reflected during recent flood conditions when Manitoba's emergency response efforts played a critical role in protecting communities, infrastructure and public safety across the province.

On the ground, departmental staff respond quickly, providing critical engineering expertise, assisting with sandbagging and coordinating the movement of equipment and resources to areas of highest need. To ensure a co-ordinated whole-of-government response, the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization activated the Manitoba Emergency Coordination Centre to support affected regions.

Teams across the department and government worked closely with local authorities and First Nation communities to support flood planning and response efforts and to co-ordinate flood-related assets and service requests. Together, these actions ensured that communities had the support they needed during a time of crisis.

As emergency conditions stabilized, Manitoba began shifting its focus from immediate response to permanent flood protection for flood-impacted First Nation communities, including Peguis First Nation and Fisher River Cree Nation. Manitoba continues to work 'collaboraty'—collaboratively with Peguis First Nation and Fisher River Cree Nation on the management, design and construction of these protection works,

supported by a funding commitment negotiated with the federal government.

Ultimately, investing in permanent flood resiliency infrastructure strengthens the long-term health and safety of communities, significantly reducing future risk to homes and critical infrastructure and minimizing the need for emergency responses, including evacuations.

Our government and my department continue to make significant investments that strengthen Manitoba's transportation network, support economic growth, improve public safety, advance reconciliation and build climate resiliency across the province. We are committed to working with communities, experts and stakeholders to ensure all this is possible, and I am confident that these strategic investments will ensure Manitobans can live and work safely while helping our economy grow and thrive. Together, these efforts pave the way for a stronger, more sustainable and more prosperous future for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments.

Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments?

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I just want to say thanks to the minister for being here today to answer questions, and obviously we're going to welcome staff in shortly, but my thanks to them as well and everyone in the department of Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure for the work that they do. Whether it's emergency preparedness or building our roads, it is a very significant file and I thank them all and I look forward to asking some questions today.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: We thank the critic from the opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate on the minister's salary is the last item considered for a department in the Committee of Supply. Accordingly, we shall now defer consideration of line item 15.1(a) contained in resolution 15.1.

This time, we invite ministerial and opposition staff to enter the Chamber, and I would ask this minister—the minister and critic to please introduce their staff in attendance.

* (15:40)

MLA Naylor: I'm very pleased to thank the incredible staff in my department, deputy minister Ryan Klos, as well as ADM and executive financial officer Amber Zhang. And I also have Ciara Shattuck, who is my director of ministerial affairs. Of all the things I couldn't remember.

The Chairperson: Thank you, and if we could have the member for Borderland introduce his staff.

Mr. Guenter: We have Shannon with us today.

The Chairperson: In accordance to—with subrule 78(16), during the consideration of departmental Estimates, questioning for each department shall proceed in a global manner, with questions put on the resolutions once the official opposition critic indicates the questioning has concluded.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Guenter: Yes, I'd just like to start off—right off the top, and just ask about the Lake St. Martin outlet channel. What is the government—just really broad—what's the government's intention with regard to that?

MLA Naylor: I appreciate that question from the member opposite. It—so, this obviously has been a long, ongoing challenge to governments of the day and of the past day.

And so, the status of that project right now is it's still absolutely a project that I'm committed to, that our government's committed to, but I think the member might recall that we had—the federal government had raised some concerns about the licencing—the environmental licencing pertaining to the needs of rights holders, pertaining to all kinds of issues that would impact, like, generally First Nations communities and so, we wanted to get it right.

We think that this remains a critical project for protecting many, many Manitobans and communities from flooding. And so, at that time, we asked the federal government to hold off on a decision in case it didn't—they didn't allow us to continue with this project. And we have invested a lot of time and person power and energy into getting it right, working with the communities—each community impacted—to make sure that their concerns are being addressed and that when we go back to the federal government to ask them to rule on it, we will have been able to bring a solution and a resolution to the concerns that was holding back that environment licence.

So that work is ongoing. I'm pretty proud of the work the department's done on that.

Mr. Guenter: And I appreciate the minister's, you know, commitment to the project. Is there any funding committed to the project in terms of, you know, consultation or just any of the work that's ongoing?

MLA Naylor: Yes, thank you for that question.

So, up until now, about \$120 million have been allocated to this project. That has been money spent on design. We've actually just completed the design for this project, the land acquisition and consultations. So those investments have already been made. And in this year's budget, there's not—like, there's not a specific line for this project. There would be allocations out of water and our other infrastructure budget lines.

And this is also a project that would—will require federal financial support. And so I can't, you know, until we have the environmental approvals, we're not in a position to negotiate what that support looks like.

Mr. Guenter: So I'll switch gears here and move over to the Emergency Management file. The Estimates show the Emergency Management staffing increasing from 47 to 62 FTEs, including a significant increase in recovery and mitigation. I wonder if the minister could talk about what new positions are being added and how will these additional resources improve Manitoba's emergency preparedness and response capacity.

MLA Naylor: So thank you for that question about staffing. You know, when I came into this role, it was—I was astounded to understand that there was a 39 per cent vacancy rate across my entire department. And I know now from a lot of the research that's come out about the level of vacancies across all of government, but it was very high in Transportation and Infrastructure, and that's something we have been trying—to fill those positions, to strengthen those positions.

In this particular section of Emergency Management Organization, there was a great deal of reliance on term positions. And we want—I wanted the stability for that department. This—these 15 positions are not in preparedness work, as the member asked about, but rather part of the response and mitigation efforts of Emergency Management. Because there's lots of different roles that happen there. So we've been able to make these permanent positions to make sure that we have the folks in place to help Manitobans recover from a disaster.

* (15:50)

Mr. Guenter: The department states that it is enhancing Manitoba's emergency management capacity following recent emergencies.

What were the biggest gaps identified over the last year, and how are those gaps reflected in this budget?

MLA Naylor: I thank the member for that question. I—you know, I want to just say, here it is May what 5 or something—7. Look how the time flies. You know, a year ago, we were already 11 or 12 days into our wildfire season. The first wildfire started in April. The last fire—wildfire ended in November.

And, of course, fighting wildfires is part of a different department, the purview of Minister Bushie. But emergency management organization was deeply involved from the beginning to the end—and then, of course, the recovery and mitigation—and are still deeply involved in the work of last year's season.

So I'm incredibly proud of the public servants in this department. It was just such an honour last summer to see the skill and the scope of their knowledge, their passion, their—our—you know, I remember, like, begging staff to get some sleep when I knew that they'd gone 24 hours, 36 hours without rest.

So I can't speak to gaps. What I can speak to is that there's always an opportunity to learn, and so that is why we have done the after-action review. It—we're—we've released a preliminary report so that we can begin to address it and address anything that might help us in the future—

The Chairperson: Order.

I'll just remind the minister that in Committee of Supply, we have to use our portfolios and not—*[interjection]*

You used another minister's name. Yes. Gentle reminder. Yes.

MLA Naylor: The Minister of northern—Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures, who is responsible for the wildfire services, is what I meant to say.

Anyway, okay, I lost my train of thought there. What I want to say is that the after-action review is providing us with a roadmap for improvements because every system can always have improvements and because we've never seen a wildfire season like last summer and we hope to never see one like that again, but we want to be even more prepared, if that's the case.

And then, going into—you know, the only other—the only place of gap I would really identify is that never in the history of Manitoba has the province worked with and served First Nations in the way that happened last summer.

We made a decision as a government to take a one Manitoba approach, to not simply say to First Nations that they needed to work it out with ISC, and we weren't a part of it. There was a one-door approach, regardless of whether you came from a town or a Northern Affairs community or a First Nations community, that you got the same kind of support, the same levels of access to support through the crisis.

And so I think what we were doing was addressing a gap, a huge gap in real time, and we learned a lot from that and it didn't go perfectly. But we're—you're learning from what took place last summer in order to have a better approach going forward in the future. And I think we did just get to, again, witness that in real time with the work that our province provided to mitigate for the potential flood that was expected from the Fisher River.

So that's—I hope that answers the question effectively.

Mr. Guenter: I thank the minister for that fulsome answer.

The Manitoba Emergency Coordination Centre is responsible for co-ordinating a whole-of-government response during disasters. Again, during the emerge—major emergencies in the last year, you know, including the 2025 wildfire season—and I know, as the minister said in her last answer that it's the minister's—Minister for Natural Resources? And Indigenous Futures—it's his department's responsibility.

But I'm wondering if the minister can still speak about, from the perspective of her department, whether there were any situations where there were issues with co-ordination capacity and, you know, where there were staffing—where staffing perhaps proved insufficient, and, again, what lessons may have been taken from that.

MLA Naylor: Just going to ask for some clarity. We had staff from the Wildfire Services, we had staff from the Families Department, from health care, Mental Health, Justice—where? *[interjection]* Parks. And, of course, MTI and Emergency Management, and probably some I'm forgetting.

So in terms of staffing gaps, which department was the member referring to?

Mr. Guenter: Yes, I guess I'm just speaking generally about—so my understanding is that it would be Manitoba—the Manitoba Emergency Coordination Centre, which rests within MTI, or within your department, I believe. Or the minister's department. And so they're the ones co-ordinating the response.

I'm just wondering, you know, if the minister—if there were any lessons learned through the disaster response last year, because of any—and there may not have been—but any potential staffing shortfalls or whether co-ordination capacity was significant—was sufficient to be able to co-ordinate between all of the different departments and everyone involved in the response.

* (16:00)

MLA Naylor: So Emergency Management Organization does have one of the lowest vacancy rates in all of government, which is good—a good thing.

And, as we mentioned before, we've added those 15 FTEs to help with mitigation and the—you know, the after—like, there's so much work that happens after a disaster in terms of the—a lot of the administrative processes and support for communities. And so, that doesn't really speak to your question—or to the member's question about what was happening during the emergency.

So, you know, as I mentioned, there were multiple government departments involved. And so, EMO's role was really to co-ordinate all of that. There are multiple co-ordination calls every single day. So, there would be calls with families. There would be calls with health care.

There was a daily briefing with myself and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie) and our staff every single day at noon, either an in-person meeting or a call every single day, literally, for two months, maybe, with seven days a week.

And that was—you know, that was more on the political level, what was happening, and then lots—so that we were able to speak to—the leadership could speak to leadership with municipalities and chiefs that were in contact with us. But then there was all the co-ordination calls that happened throughout the day between the different departments and also the federal government working with ISC, working with the emergency minister at the federal level.

And so it was—I mean, given everything that was taking place and the sheer volume of wildfires, the

sheer volume of evacuees, I want to say it was a well-oiled machine, but I know the reality is that it wasn't perfect for everyone and it's never going to feel good to people to leave their home and sleep in a gym somewhere. It's terrible for people who have to come from the North and come to the city and may be vulnerable to some of the things that go on here. So, there was a lot of involvement with Justice, and it took a bit of time to get the right mix, you know—who is the right type of Justice person to be in that space that doesn't make things worse, that helps people be both safe and comfortable.

So, a lot of problems were solved in real time, but I don't believe that there was any gaps in staffing in my department or in the work that was provided by EMO in those co-ordination efforts.

Mr. Guenter: And, again, I thank the minister. The Estimates reference efforts to modernize the disaster financial assistance program.

What specific reforms are being considered, and how will they reduce wait times for Manitobans affected by disasters?

MLA Naylor: I've never done this in this space and it's very different. I want to—I'm—I'll get it right eventually. Okay, well, thank you for that question. So, yes.

So, the federal program, which is the DFAA program, had substantial changes to it that were introduced—I mean, we had some information ahead of time, but they took effect April 1. And so the Province worked really hard to match and co-ordinate with that, because that's important that there's an alignment with the federal program if we want to see reimbursement as a province for expenses for us.

But some of the modernization that I'm really happy about is, like, the—what we call the build back better program. So, historically, the federal program and the provincial program would have, you know—for example, if we needed to rebuild a road that was washed out from flooding, would have built it back to exactly where it was before. The new—with the new build back better program, there's the opportunity to now build that road higher to make sure that it wouldn't be impacted by a similar flood in the future. And so there's a lot more built in that's this build back better.

There is also some other allowances. Previous DFA programs wouldn't have addressed things for, let's say, homeless people. Like, at the time of last year's fire, there would have been people evacuated

from Flin Flon that may have been not actually living in a house, right? Or if Thompson had been evacuated.

And so there's new ways in there to support people who may be homeless, but lose their belongings because of fire or flood. And so we're aligned with the federal program. It is more expensive to the province, but we also chose not to download those additional expenses to municipalities.

Mr. Guenter: The government says it wants to maximize federal reimbursements under the disaster financial assistance arrangements. How much federal funding related to recent disasters in—is Manitoba still waiting to recover, including costs associated with the 2025 wildfire season?

MLA Naylor: So, we have, as a province, already submitted our claims for 2025 wildfire season. The team worked really hard to get those submissions done relatively early. It is a long process. We don't know yet how much we'll get back. My staff just showed me a list of claims that we're still—that are still being audited. They date back—well, they date back before either of us was elect—or either the member or I were elected.

So it's a long process with the federal government working through those audits, and the department—that's exactly the type of administrative work that a lot of those new FPTs deal with.

* (16:10)

Mr. Guenter: Yes, that is a frustration, perhaps, if that's the word, but I understand that that is a process that takes a lot of time, and, I guess, unfortunately, you know, the consequence of that is that the provincial government ends up paying interest for a period of time on money that is supposed to be, you know, reimbursed by the federal government. So there's a bit of a cost there as time goes on.

The department highlights programs like the Manitoba investing in resiliency and adaptation program and the residential flood protection subsidy. How is the government measuring whether these mitigation programs are actually reducing long-term disaster costs and improving community resilience?

MLA Naylor: So, the member's raised a question about something that's really new and kind of, I think, in my staff's words, the first kick of the can—about this program.

So we have—we've done our first—approved the first two projects under the MIRA program. One is a fire break, four fire breaks, ahead of the 2026 wildfire

season at town lakes—town—sorry, at Snow Lake, and these fire breaks are intended to reduce the community's exposure to future wildfires' spend—spread.

And then there's also the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet. There was the development of a community wildfire protection plan to help identify local wildfire risks and guide the prioritization of future mitigation actions.

So that is the type of program that we are able to roll out within this funding.

Mr. Guenter: Yes, the department's key initiatives include expanding training workshops and emergency-preparedness exercises following the challenges experienced during the 2025 wildfire season.

How many provincial-level emergency exercises are planned this year, and will any specifically test large-scale evacuation capacity in co-ordination with municipalities and First Nations?

MLA Naylor: Yes, I think the question was about the training. I mean, there is ongoing training and education available to municipalities throughout the year. There is a lot of checks and balances between municipal emergency managers and our department.

And so, I think, you know, certainly lessons learned from last summer is how important that training is. And we are committed to continuing those ongoing programs.

Mr. Guenter: My colleague from Roblin has a question.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): As the minister will know, I represent the RM of Headingley. And I just had a couple of questions about the department's intentions in this budget year with respect to Portage Avenue, as Highway 1 through Headingley specifically.

I think the minister will be aware that the top infrastructure priority of the RM of Headingley is the twinning of Portage Avenue through that stretch, particularly with the construction of the Costco there and the growth within Headingley itself. Traffic is a very serious concern. The minister has responded to a couple of letters I've sent regarding the intersection of Blumberg Trail and Highway 1, where there's significant safety concerns there, just near the Costco.

So I'm just wondering if there's any consideration in this year's budget Estimates for advancing—whether it's study or design work or any progress towards separating Highway 1 through Headingley and constructing service roads.

* (16:20)

MLA Naylor: So regarding that stretch of Highway 1 through Headingley, I'm sure the member will know that there was some recent road construction that was recently completed. Also, we've recently opened the new weigh scale to make things safer with trucks coming through there.

And we are monitoring the intersection for additional potential improvements. The light—the timing of the lights was adjusted. They're based on traffic volume, but we're continuing to monitor traffic volume with the new developments in the area and considering future intersection improvements if that's warranted.

Mrs. Cook: Yes, I thank the minister for the response, but I would be remiss in my responsibilities as the MLA for Roblin if I didn't just reiterate the importance of eventually separating that section of Highway 1 and installing service roads, and working with the RM to achieve that.

I understand that's not a small undertaking, particularly when it comes to dealing with the properties along Portage Avenue that would be affected by that, but in all of my conversations with elected officials in the RM of Headingley, they've made it very clear to me that that is a significant priority of theirs.

Moving on to a different question. I had sent a letter about this to the minister earlier in the year, and I just wondered if there was an update. It's my understanding that Caron Road, which is just north of Roblin Boulevard through Headingley, there's a jurisdictional—dispute is too strong of a word, but it's not clear whether it belongs to the RM or the Province and there's some discrepancy. That's the word I'm looking for.

There's a discrepancy, not a dispute. And I think the—I believe the RM has indicated its willingness to take it over, but it's still under the Province's jurisdiction and this has resulted in some issues with maintenance. And it's a gravel road, so it gets quite rutted, particularly in wet weather.

I just wondered if there's any further progress on—whether that's discussions or negotiations or however the department would characterize it—between the RM and the Province regarding Caron Road.

MLA Naylor: So they're—you know, the type of issue that the member has raised, we're getting into the nitty-gritty of case work and not really budget territory, because this is very tiny in an overall budget for MTI, but I have done my best to find out an answer.

So the department is working closely with the RM on this issue. It's my understanding that there is some improvements being made to Rockall Road, and once that's done I believe the RM will be assuming responsibility for Caron Road; but that is just an ongoing project right now with—you know, not at my level, sorry to say, but I hope that's helpful.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that, and I appreciate the minister's willingness to entertain my borderline question when it comes to budget Estimates.

With that, I'm going to return the floor to my colleague from Borderland.

Mr. Guenter: I'll allow my colleague for Lac du Bonnet to ask a few questions.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Quick question for the minister, and I appreciate that this atmosphere here in the Chambers is different than in the committee rooms for sure.

Quick question on 433, which is the road from 313 all the way up towards Granite Hills golf course in the RM of Lac du Bonnet; what the status of that that is. And where are we at? Are we still on time and relatively on budget to get that work well under way and hopefully completed by summer of—well I think it was supposed to be 2026, but we'll go for 2027?

* (16:30)

MLA Naylor: I thank the member for the question. I love the community of Lac du Bonnet and spending time there and the incredible working relationship we have with the municipal leadership. So I'm more than happy to address this question.

That particular road, it absolutely—this project needs to be done, from a safety perspective. It has been in the five-year plan. But there's also been some challenges around lack—land acquisition, so the department has been working closely with the RM. I think the most recent meeting was just yesterday, and so we've been able to adjust the design to deal with some of those concerns so that we can move forward with this project in a timely fashion.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you to the minister for the answer. So I'll do it in my next question as a two-part.

So, I guess, what is the projected timeline for a completion? And, secondly, since we're talking about the area around 313, has there been any discussion around speed zones and also turning lanes coming off of 313, sort of proceeding from—just to paint a picture for the minister, not saying that she doesn't know, but

I'm just saying—sort of, east of the old bridge that was known at one time as the skinny bridge, which is the new 313 bridge, towards the Bird River turnoff and that, for turning lanes and that, say, the 520 and that area.

So, thank you.

MLA Naylor: So the—so Lac du Bonnet, the municipal leaders have a number of—have brought forward several questions about speed limits and intersection issues. And so we're working closely with the municipal leadership to negotiate what makes sense for that community. And that is built into this year's budget, so you can think about this like a budget question. And that work will continue and proceed with the municipal leaders.

Mr. Ewasko: Great, so it's—thanks for that answer to the minister. And it's good to hear that—that the project, speed zones and turning lanes are all going to get done this coming summer. That'll encourage all those seasonal residents that live outside of my constituency but then call the Lac du Bonnet constituency home from April 1 'til October 31. So that'll excite everybody there. That's good to hear.

So since we're talking about speed zones and the minister had brought that up—speed zones around Highway 317 and No. 11—I know that the Eastman committee, with mayors and Reeves, have been in contact with the minister, and it's good to hear that a dialogue is going well.

So I guess we'll switch gears up to the community, the town of Powerview-Pine Falls and the RM of Alexander. So what is the status and the completion date for the main provincial road going right through the town of Powerview-Pine Falls, 304 and No. 11?

* (16:40)

MLA Naylor: Before I speak about Highway 11, which was, I believe, the last question, I do—first of all, I want to correct the record.

I very clearly stated in my last answer that my department was working closely with Lac du Bonnet on their many—they have several speed limit change—speed change requests and intersection improvements that are of interest to their community. We are working with them and addressing each of these requests in time. When it comes to speed limits, there's a lot of safety engineering standards to be considered, and that work is ongoing.

And I find it disrespectful of the process that the member would put false information on the record by

claiming that I had stated that all of that work is being done. I'm not sure why he's playing games with this very important process.

And I'm also not sure why, when there's this opportunity to dig deep into our budget, that it's becoming a case-work afternoon. But I will take a moment to just brag a little bit about our increase in capital spending, that—an additional \$10 million for highways this year. And maybe that is why, because there's no criticism of our actual budget, so this process is taking an interesting turn.

But every one of our projects is listed online. Members and their constituents can see what we're working on. They can also see the five-year capital plan and the annual updates. But I think the budget itself is actually a way more interesting conversation.

As for Highway 11, there was a project. There were improvements this past year. I'm not sure if the member is speaking about something different.

Mr. Ewasko: So I apologize 'unequivocally' to the minister if she took what I was saying as any kind of slight to the process or anything else. But I was just basically asking about the timelines, which I would think that—because we're talking about the budget timelines and monies to be expended on these projects—I think are very pertinent in this budget.

So the question I had asked was Highway 11, in the community—the town of Powerview-Pine Falls, from the tracks just east of the community of Sagkeeng right through the town to the junction of No. 11 and No. 304. And just wondering if that is also on time and on budget.

And then, since the minister brought it up, I'm asking if also—if the service road just south of that junction is also getting redone.

So I again apologize if the minister didn't say that that work was going to get done earlier about the speed zones and that, so for that I do apologize.

And so I would like to know, though, when those speed zones and those conversations with the local elected leaders, when those projects are potentially going to get done on those speed zones, because we've had a few accidents at the corner of 317 and 11.

I don't want to get her off topic; I want to have her talk about Highway 11 to 304 and then speed zones at Highway 317 and 11, and if she could talk about that.

It does come down to money. That's why it's very pertinent to this budget. I look forward to the minister's answer.

Thank you.

MLA Naylor: To answer the question about Highway 11, I had said in my previous answer that some of that construction work had already taken place, and that was an intersection improvement and a 1.7-kilometre bituminous reconstruction that started last year.

So that work started, and now as we're entering construction season again, it will be completed this year.

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks to the minister for that answer on the project of 304 to Number 11.

So in regards to the speed zones—you know what, I'll leave the speed zones alone for now up around 317 and 11, because the minister said that they're working on it. No completed—no time frame, but that—you know what, I'll wait for the minister to share with the elected leaders, which, again, from the community, which includes myself, as far as what that timeline will be.

So, I'll just jump again. Basically, based on this year's budget, knowing that a lot of infrastructure has already been completed in the town of Beausejour for Park Avenue, for redoing water lines and that, now I think the stage is set to get Park Avenue done, as well as the roundabout at the corner of Highway 12, 302 and Park Avenue. I'm just wondering what would be the guesstimated budget for that finished project, and is the timeline—is everything on time and potentially going to be completed when?

Thanks to the minister.

* (16:50)

MLA Naylor: So, first of all, just to go back to—I know the member did want to hear a little bit more about 11 and 317, and we have done a safety review at that intersection. Actually, the results, the timeline and the plan of that project were shared with both the town and the RM last month, so the member may want to speak to the constituents he represents to hear their feedback on that, but our work continues on that project with the community.

And, you know, I know there—I can hear there's a lot of interest in speed limits in different communities today and, you know, this is a really good example of where budget cuts really have significant consequences.

When I came into this role, there was several, several years' backlog on the department's ability to review speed limit requests. And, you know, it took some time for us to get ahead of that, but now there's a dedicated team so the backlog that came to be under the previous government, we're starting—we're clearing that and we're—and we're, you know—new requests coming in are able to get much faster attention.

So I'm pretty excited about our work to be more responsive to municipalities on these questions about speed limits, so that—so I'm happy for the chance to talk about that today.

And in terms of the specific project that the member is asking about, we are at the detail design stage for the roundabout, which will be completed this summer. We'll go to tender for construction later this year. And there's drainage work that—on Park Avenue that needs to be worked out with the town before the final design can be—well, before the design can be finalized.

The Chairperson: If another member wants to ask questions, it needs to be handed over from the current member, so I'll ask the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko).

Mr. Ewasko: I'm going to pass it over to my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Lakeside.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thanks for the opportunity to bring forward some questions in Estimates here this afternoon for the minister.

Just an issue—or a project that I've been bringing to the attention of the minister the last couple of days in the Chamber here: project on PR 227, where the bridge structures are being upgraded as we speak.

Now, this—these bridges have been closed in the RM of Woodlands in—since October. Been getting lots of questions from residents and, of course, the RM about the completion date, because it appears that the structures are complete now. In fact, I drove out there and had a look at them myself. I probably could have

drove over them if I wanted to go around the barricades, but I didn't.

So they appear to be complete, the concrete structures; just some gravel there. I understand there needs to be some paving yet, but residents are wondering, with the—them appearing to be complete, why the timeline for the project being finished—if it could be expedited somewhat because it seems to be directed.

Now, that's a busy highway. It's a paved highway from all the way from Meadow Lea to Warren, and very busy. And a lot of that traffic has been rerouted onto the municipal roads ever since last October.

So I would like the minister, if she could tell me what the expected timeline—the RM has been told July, which is another three months from now—why it couldn't be finished. So the municipal infrastructure in which they're spending a lot of time maintaining and graveling at this point with no support from—or response—from the Province, for that matter, if that timeline would be bumped up or not.

MLA Naylor: To the member opposite, we're in constant communication with the RM. We've had at least two meetings in the minister's office on this. We have another one coming up on various issues in the community.

But, as he stated, that we have done a lot of work on the two structure replacement projects. I would have expected him to be saying thank you for that—

The Chairperson: Order.

The time—*[interjection]*

Order.

The time being 5 p.m., I am interrupting the proceedings. The Committee of Supply will resume sitting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

IN SESSION

The Deputy Speaker (Tyler Blashko): The hour being 5 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 7, 2026

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Basic Personal Income Tax–Exemption Increase	
Bill 53–The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026		Johnson	1809
Sala	1799	Sala	1809
Tabling of Reports		Strengthening Local Economies	
Wiebe	1799	Byram	1810
Fontaine	1799	Sala	1810
Ministerial Statements		Grocery Price Affordability	
Mental Health Week		Redhead	1811
Smith	1799	Sala	1811
Bereza	1801	Rural Ambulance Services	
Lagassé	1801	Guenter	1811
Members' Statements		Asagwara	1811
Sisler High School's Quiz Team		Seniors Living at Power Street Apartment	
Brar	1802	Bereza	1812
La Broquerie Habs Junior B Hockey Champions		Smith	1812
Narth	1803		
Canadian Friends of Hockey in Ukraine		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Kostyshyn	1803	<i>(Continued)</i>	
PR 227 Bridge Construction–Detour Disruption		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
King	1803	Committee of Supply	
Bourkevale Community Clean Up and BBQ		(Concurrent Sections)	
Sala	1804	Room 254	
Oral Questions		Housing, Addictions and Homelessness	
Education Property Tax		Bereza	1813
Stone	1804	Smith	1813
Kinew	1805	Room 255	
Education Property Tax		Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation	
Cook	1805	Narth	1822
Kinew	1806	Moses	1822
Education System Funding		Chamber	
Ewasko	1807	Public Service Delivery	
Kinew	1807	Sandhu	1837
Education Property Tax		Guenter	1837
King	1808	Transportation and Infrastructure	
Simard	1808	Naylor	1840
		Guenter	1842
		Cook	1846
		Ewasko	1847
		King	1849

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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