

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 14, 2024

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Routine proceedings—before routine proceedings, I have a statement for the House.

### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** I would like to ask for the attention of all members for a brief moment.

I've noticed that members are not always using the correct salutation or pronoun when asking questions or participating in debates in this House. When members are in this Chamber, they are representing their constituents and should be free to do so in a respectful and inclusive environment. I've asked all members to refer to me as Honourable Speaker, and I'm asking again now for members to respect this decision. As well, when referring to your fellow members, I would ask that you please respect their personal pronouns and salutations.

And I thank all members for your co-operation on this.

Now, routine proceedings, introduction of bills.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 23—The Change of Name Amendment Act (2)

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

**The Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Consumer Protection and Government Services, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act (2), be now read a first time.

**MLA Naylor:** I am pleased to introduce Bill 23, The Change of Name Amendment Act. The bill makes changes to the current legislation to prohibit a person from being able to legally change their name if that person is convicted of a sex-related criminal offence or other serious criminal offence that is specified in the regulations.

This bill requires all change-of-name applications to include a certified criminal record check in addition to the existing requirement of fingerprinting.

These amendments align with government's commitment to building safer communities. The amendments also align Manitoba with other jurisdictions who have passed similar legislation.

**The Speaker:** Further introduction of bills—oh.

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

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

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister for Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, that Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act (Distribution of Fake Intimate Images), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Wiebe:** Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce for first reading Bill 24, The Intimate Image Protection Amendment Act.

This bill will expand the definition of intimate image to capture images created or altered by electronic means, and update the title of the act.

By expanding the definition, victims who have had computer-generated or altered intimate images distributed without their consent will have access to the civil remedies provided for under the act. These amendments will also act as a deterrent for would-be distributors of electronically altered or created intimate images.

While other jurisdictions such as British Columbia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan have brought forward similar legislation, these amendments to The Intimate Image Protection Act will make Manitoba a leader in protecting and supporting victims.

I'm pleased to present this bill to the House for consideration.

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

Further introduction of bills?

**Bill 22—The Celebration of  
Nigerian Independence Day Act  
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks  
and Months Act Amended)**

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I move, seconded by the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Kinew), that Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act, be now read a first time.

**The Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, seconded by the honourable First Minister, that Bill 22, The Celebration of Nigerian Independence Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a first time.

**MLA Asagwara:** This bill would amend The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act to designate October 1 as Nigerian independence day.

October 1 is a meaningful day to Nigerians, as on that day in 1960, Nigeria freed itself from decades of British colonial rule that had disrupted the culturally diverse and distinct social structures of the peoples living in the territory.

Manitoba is home to a thriving, dynamic community of Nigerian communities—Canadians, rather—with a strong and significant involvement in the economic and cultural fabric of our province.

This bill uplifts all those in the Nigerian community in Manitoba, who advocated so we can be here today, and to inspire future generations to be proud of who they are.

Thank you.

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

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**The Speaker:** Ministerial statements—and I would advise that the 90 minutes required has been provided.

**Ducks Unlimited Canada Day**

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** This Sunday will mark the inaugural Ducks Unlimited Canada Day here in Manitoba, a day to lift up the decades-long work of Ducks Unlimited and their tireless efforts to conserve, restore and manage wetlands and associated habitats to benefit waterfowl, wildlife and people.

In the early 1930s, waterfowl populations were declining across the prairies, a trend driven by rampant habitat destruction and unsustainable hunting practices. It was in 1938 that waterfowl hunters from across the country came together in Manitoba to see what could be done.

By pooling data collected by volunteers and citizen scientists, many of whom were hunters, Ducks Unlimited Canada began studying ways to preserve waterfowl habitats. They developed a system to band waterfowl populations to better understand shifts in migration patterns, home range, habitat use and nest-site selection. With its first successful project at Big Grass Marsh, just west of Sandy Bay First Nation, and a head office in the Bank of Hamilton building here on Main Street, Ducks Unlimited Canada was ready to spread its wings.

\* (13:40)

Over the next few decades, Ducks Unlimited would expand its operations to include major watershed engineering projects alongside the agricultural sector, and initiate international co-operation programs, including the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan between Canada, the United States and later, Mexico. In 1993, Ducks Unlimited Canada found a new home at Oak Hammock Marsh, where it remains today.

Over its 85 years of operation, Ducks Unlimited Canada has completed nearly 12,000 projects on more than 200 million acres of habitat. Its decades-long conservation work has helped find solutions to flooding, drought, water pollution and the impacts of climate change. Through it all, Ducks Unlimited Canada advances reconciliation through conservation, and currently supports three Indigenous protected and conserved areas alongside the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership and Indigenous Leadership Initiative.

Our Manitoba government commits to the ongoing protection, conservation and revitalization of Manitoba's lands and waters, working alongside partners like Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Seal River Watershed Alliance. Together, we will protect 30 per cent of Manitoba's diverse ecosystems by 2030 and usher a new day for environmental stewardship in Manitoba.

I want to wish everyone a happy inaugural Ducks Unlimited Canada Day and invite all of my colleagues to recognize the Ducks Unlimited Canada staff and board who here today with us in the gallery and request to have their names added to Hansard.

We have: Michael Nadler, Mark Francis, Roger d'Eschambault, Colin Robinson and Trent Hreno.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I am so pleased to rise in the House today to celebrate the Ducks Unlimited Canada Day that is taking place this Sunday, March 17.

It was my honour to introduce this bill in the House last year and to celebrate the partnership between this province and Ducks, as well as all groups that make this important work possible by recognizing March 17, which was the day that Ducks became an organization in Canada.

Ducks Unlimited Canada is a passionate community of people who believe that the—that nature is the foundation of strong communities, a prosperous economy and a sustainable future that supports the hopes and dreams of the next generation.

Since 1938, volunteers and hunters have been working to grow this important conservation work. Hunters started and continue to support the movement that make the use of our wetlands in Manitoba possible.

Not only do they work with land stewards across Canada, they're actively recognizing the importance of working with and building meaningful and mutual, respectful relations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in protecting these natural systems we call home.

Manitoba's wetlands are also an important factor when it comes to agriculture. They play a crucial role in supporting one another and allowing for sustainable farming.

They have completed over 11,826 projects, and conserved, restored and positively influenced more than 201.8 million acres of habitat across Canada. Unfortunately, wetlands continue to be lost at an alarming rate and that's why we must uplift and support Ducks Unlimited so that they can continue to provide the amazing work that they do.

Thank you.

#### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before I move on to further ministerial statements, I'd like to introduce some members we have in the gallery.

We have with us, in the public gallery, Nigerian community elders, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara), and we welcome you all to the gallery.

We also have with us, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today students from Elm Creek School, Claire Malenko, Makkedah Veldman and Scarlett Friesen, who are the guests of the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

On behalf of all honourable members, welcome.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Further ministerial statements?

The honourable minister of housing, addictions, homelessness and mental health—and I would advise the House that the required 90 minutes' prior notice has been received.

#### Human Trafficking Awareness Day

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** I want to start by acknowledging folks in Manitoba, across the country and the world who have been victims of human trafficking. I also want to uplift families and organizations who support the most vulnerable in our province each and every day.

I want to acknowledge Victoria Morrison, a survivor of sex trafficking who was brought here to Winnipeg. Victoria now shares candidly about her story of survival with the world to promote awareness and educate on the issue of human trafficking.

According to Statistics Canada, nearly one in four victims of human trafficking is a child or youth, with 24 per cent of victims being under the age of 18.

Human trafficking transcends the crisis of MMIWG2S. It is important to note the 'disproportionate' number of Indigenous women and girls who are affected by sex trafficking. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has identified that Indigenous women and girls represent more than 50 per cent of all human trafficking victims in Canada.

My sister, Claudette Osborne-Tyo, went missing on July 25, 2008 in Winnipeg without a trace. Throughout the years, our family has often wondered whether she was a victim of human trafficking. My sister was 21 years old. Like many other families who have lost someone to—that has been missing, we've

often wondered and have been left wondering whether they are victims of human trafficking.

This issue of human trafficking and disappearance spans our nation from coast to coast to coast, impacting children, families and communities.

This is not right. We, as Manitobans, as Canadians we must all do better. No one should be faced with this targeted violence.

Honourable Speaker, human trafficking is a lucrative crime where perpetrators prey on the vulnerable—on the vulnerabilities of their victims. Sophisticated manipulative techniques are used to lure victims online or in person with barriers like poverty, trauma, precariously housed—housing, substance use, mental health and other challenges that lead to our relatives being exploited.

Victims are often lured and stripped of their decision making, then controlled by threats, coercion and manipulation. There are way too many victims here in our province, and there is much work to be done to protect our relatives from this heinous crime.

I want to recognize the work of our colleagues through the Tracia's Trust, which is Manitoba's Sexual Exploitation Strategy. This strategy works across provincial departments and provides \$15 million in funding to community organizations to prevent human trafficking.

Trafficked persons can call the Klinik Human Trafficking Line for services and supports. I encourage all Manitobans to call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline and visit [Cybertip.ca](http://Cybertip.ca) to learn more about the dangers presented by perpetrators and to report suspicious activity happening in their community.

Each and every day—and especially on Human Trafficking Awareness Day—it is important that we continue to educate ourselves on the early signs of trafficking.

I encourage all members in this House today to take the opportunity to remind other Manitobans: if you see something, say something.

Our NDP government will continue to invest in healthy communities so that we can minimize some of the systemic vulnerabilities experienced throughout the province.

It is up to all of us to keep our loved ones safe and extend this protection to everyone in our communities. Our government is committed to doing this work in

collaboration with survivors, families, law enforcement, front-line organizations, all levels of government and the broader community.

To the many survivors of human trafficking, we are now supporting each other—who are now supporting each other in their healing, we know that this is not easy and that you are doing incredibly hard lifting and important work.

\* (13:50)

I want to uplift and honour you in all of the work that you do each and every day in creating awareness. You are warriors. Our community values you. We see you and we love you.

Miigwech.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Today, March 14, is an important day in Manitoba, one that we have proclaimed as Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

For years now, our province has dedicated this day to raising awareness and attention to the heinous practice of human trafficking and committing ourselves to ending it.

Recently, the issue of human trafficking has become increasingly prominent and, in turn, more widely discussed as we recognize the reality that occurs both within our province and sadly within our country.

This is a significant change because of the fact that for many years, many people were under—unaware of the severity of this issue and perhaps believed it occurred in some parts of the world, but not here.

But the sad and unfortunate reality is that human trafficking occurs right here in Manitoba, and often affects our society's most vulnerable populations disproportionately. Indeed, we know women account for 95 per cent of sex trafficking victims, 43 per cent which are young women ages 18 to 24. We also know that our Indigenous community is the most impacted population.

We must take today to raise awareness of this issue, and thank all the organizations who dedicate themselves to supporting victims, preventing trafficking and advocating for policies that will utilize the full extent of the law to punish these predators.

An example I'd like to recognize of such an organization is the Joy Smith Foundation, located right here in Winnipeg. The leading authority of human trafficking, this important foundation provides direct support for survivors, uses education to empower all

Canadians to stay safe and works diligently to find justice and prevent trafficking from continuing in this country. Since its inception, the Joy Smith Foundation has helped over 7,000 human trafficking survivors and their families.

Joy Smith is a former MLA for Fort Garry and former member of Parliament for Kildonan-St Paul. Her passion and actions have made a difference for so many people in our country. She was the first sitting MP to amend the Criminal Code twice and strengthen sentencing for traffickers and expanding Canadian laws to reach internationally.

Honourable Speaker, it is in witnessing the efforts of organizations like the Joy Smith Foundation that make today so important. By working together, we can ensure that awareness of human trafficking is continuously promoted, legislation is created that make it more difficult for predators to operate and support is provided to organizations to help victims, survivors and families.

In closing, as we take today to discuss Human Trafficking Awareness Day, let us all remember that every day there are individuals in our cities, communities, province and across the country who are manipulated and trafficked. It will take a collective effort, but we must not act now to protect people's right to freedom and liberty, and work to bring an end to those crimes that devastate the lives of so many people each and every day.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** I ask for leave to respond to the minister's statement.

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

**MLA Lamoureux:** Today I rise to speak to Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

The Government of Canada defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation or harbouring of a person, including controlling or influencing their movements with the goal of exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of a person. This can take many forms, including sex trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude.

This dry definition is a statement of facts, but does not fully describe the horror and very human and traumatic costs that human trafficking incurs on victims.

It is important to understand that trafficking is often very local and occurs here within our city limits.

Honourable Speaker, the Province says around 400 children and youth are trafficked annually in plain sight in Manitoba. But it estimates that this is only a small portion of the illegal trade which operates in private and online.

Human trafficking is difficult to detect and fight because all too often victims are coerced or shamed, preventing them from coming forward. Traffickers target vulnerable people and shamefully exploit them because of reasons including race, ability, immigration status, age and sexuality. Traffickers use manipulation as a means of maintaining control over their victims. This can include beginning a relationship through gifting expensive items or compliments, but quickly turns to emotional abuse, addictions dependency, threats or violence.

Honourable Speaker, in closing and to build awareness for more information on human trafficking and resources, you can visit the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking website or report suspected human trafficking to the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Austin Lathlin-Bercier

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour the life of my young cousin, Austin Lathlin-Bercier. Remembered as a brave hero, a caring friend and a cherished son, Austin Lathlin-Bercier was killed last November in combat with Russian forces.

A proud member of Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Austin's dream was to serve in the Armed Forces. As a teenager, he participated in the Canadian Armed Forces' Bold Eagle program, and later the native—the navy's Raven program.

In the winter of 2022, a little over a week after Russia launched its invasion, Austin joined the International Legion for the Defense of Ukraine. Though his friends and family never fully understood his reasons, they all came to know that this was something Austin had to do. Driven by a fierce sense of justice and a calling to help anyone in need, Austin fought for what he knew was right.

A few months later, Austin returned home to Manitoba to reconnect with his family and our nation's rich traditions. It was a time of great joy, but the war never left him. Upon hearing that two of his unit comrades had been killed in action, Austin's warrior spirit led him back to the front lines in the spring of 2023.

He was only 25 when the Ukraine embassy called his parents to inform them that he been lost to the war.

His life stood for justice, integrity, bravery, honour and the uncompromising need to see good done in our world.

Austin is survived by his mother, Lucy Lathlin, and his father, Adam Bercier, and his siblings. Both his parents join us today in the gallery, today.

Honourable Speaker, I ask that you canvass the House for leave to observe a moment of silence in honour of Austin Lathlin-Bercier.

Ekosi.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*]

All rise, please.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

**The Speaker:** Further members' statements?

#### **Team Hayward Curling Champions**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** It is an absolute pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize and congratulate Team Hayward from Carman, who are the 2024 Canadian Under-18 Curling champions. And I am pleased that they are here in the House with us today. I'd like to recognize skip, Shaela Hayward; third, Keira Krahn; second, India Young; lead, Rylie Cox; and Coach Diane Hayward.

Team Hayward is a U18 junior team that curls out of the Carman Curling Club. Many of us proudly watched February 4 to 10 as the team headed to Ottawa for the U18 Canadian nationals, making it to quarter-finals, semi-finals and lastly defeating Team Fortin from Quebec in the gold medal game.

Eight wins and only two losses during the tournament; Team Hayward has made Carman and the entire Manitoba curling community proud.

The team has played together for five years, and all four girls are in their grade 12 year at Carman Collegiate.

In addition to their recent success at Canadian nationals, Team Hayward are also two-time MHSAA provincial champs. The team went on to compete at the U21 Manitoba junior provincial curling championships at their home rink in Carman. The girls won five wins and zero losses—wow.

\* (14:00)

Team Hayward is now heading to Fort McMurray next week to compete in the U21 Canadian Junior Curling Championships.

I know I can speak for all members that we wish you all the best of luck. You continue to represent the Carman Curling Club and all of Manitoba with pride. So I congratulate you on your recent successes, and we'll all be cheering you on next week from here in Manitoba. Congratulations.

#### **École St. Germain's Enviroclub**

**MLA Mike Moyes (Riel):** Today I rise to honour École St. Germain's Enviroclub, located in my constituency of Riel.

The seed for the club was planted when music teacher Mme. Engbrecht and her students collaborated on an environmentally themed concert. Their first performance was a resounding success and created momentum for further environmental initiatives at St. Germain and across our Riel community. Fueled by passion and creativity, the students joining us today have proven themselves to be environmental caretakers and valued partners in the fight against climate change.

The students involved have created events like the climate change symposium and an environment week to promote the everyday steps we can all take to create a sustainable world. These activities have given rise to initiatives such as litterless lunches, plastic bag drives and a composting program at St. Germain.

Through these programs, the club stays true to its roots by centring art and musical connection to the environment. The Enviroclub members often spend their free time at recess and lunch creating books, presentations, videos and other performances to inspire the rest of the school to take environmental action, protect our ecosystems and fight climate change.

Having found a willingness to work at environmental sustainability among students, teachers and parents at St. Germain, the Enviroclub has now been working to share their goals and solutions with their school division and other learning communities across the province.

Enviroclub is an example of young people taking initiative and being role models to their peers and community at large. Change makers like them will help Manitoba find its strength and direction for the future. We can all learn something from the initiative of these bright young minds.



Honourable Speaker, I ask everyone to join me in thanking the École St. Germain Enviroclub, who are seated in the gallery, for their determination and leadership on such an important cause.

#### **Federated Women's Institutes of Canada**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** In 1919, the inaugural conference of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada was held right here in Manitoba and was presided over by Mrs. Emily Murphy, who realized the importance of organizing the rural women of Canada so they might speak as one voice for needed reforms. Murphy was not only the first president of the Women's Institute but was also one of the—one of Canada's group of women known as the Famous Five.

A monument honouring the Famous Five stands proudly on our Manitoba Legislative grounds in recognition of their work resulting in Manitoba women becoming the first in Canada to win both the right to vote and to hold provincial office. It is notable that, since its inception 100 years ago, the Women's Institute has remained true to its original mandate, which is to welcome all women regardless of their ethnic, religious, political or educational background.

While the Women's Institutes maintain themselves as a community-based organization for women, they are also part of an international organization that has members in over 70 country—countries.

The Women's Institute is one of our Canadian organizations that enjoy royal patronage, and in 1953, the Dugald Women's Institute created a fashion show as entertainment for their provincial conference. This fashion show became famous and eventually became the Costume Museum of Canada, with a royal visit from the late Queen Elizabeth II. The Dugald Women's Institute also won the Lady Tweedsmuir competition for Canadian history with a hard copy history of the Springfield municipality published in—on the 100th anniversary of the municipality in 1980.

Springfield Women's Institute has also accomplished numerous community projects, and their biggest was their undertaking to erect a local monument on the 60th anniversary of the 1947 Dugald train disaster. It speaks not only to the disaster itself but also to the compassion and heroism of the local people during this tragedy.

Thank you to the Springfield Women's Institute for all you have done to make Manitoba a better place to live.

#### **Raj Maan**

**MLA Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** In 1972, Raj Maan made the life-changing decision to settle in Winnipeg from Punjab, India, and face the challenges of starting a new life. He worked tirelessly when he arrived, earning enough to support his family back home. In 1976, he married and, along with his wife Kamaljit, they raised their young family, working factory jobs, night shifts, to make ends meet.

Mr. Maan followed his passion of music and arts by funding—founding the first local Punjabi radio and television programs in Manitoba in late '70s. He also travelled North America, gathering donations to help establish the Sikh Society of Manitoba gurdwara on Mollard Road. There he served as a president and executive member.

His commitment to our community and the arts is evident in his radio and television programs, fostering a sense of belonging and unity within the Punjabi community while carving out their identity as a Canadian.

I remember those Saturday evenings, tuning in to watch his TV program on Videon channel 11; amazed that our community has this opportunity to showcase our heritage in Canada.

Today, Mr. Maan is a proud father of two highly educated children and even prouder grandfather of three beautiful grandchildren.

For over 50 years, recognizing the importance of preserving culture, heritage, providing a platform for the Punjabi community, Raj Maan's story as a proud Manitoban embodies the immigrant's experience of hard work, resiliency and the pursuit of a better life.

I would like to welcome Mr. Raj Maan with his wife Kamaljit and family to the gallery today.

Thank you, Mr. Honourable Speaker.

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

##### **Upcoming Increase to Carbon Tax Call for Government to Oppose**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Before we get going into question period, Honourable Speaker, I'd like to welcome the Nigerian elders, Team Hayward; unfortunately, Ms. Bercier [*phonetic*], I wish you were in the gallery for other reasons today, but welcome here to the Manitoba Legislature; of course, Ducks and École St. Germain.

Honourable Speaker, seven of Canada's premiers are calling for a stop to the carbon tax April 1. Manitobans saw them on the national news, but whose smiling face was missing?

This NDP Premier has changed his position on the carbon tax more times than the weather changed in Manitoba's winter. Manitobans are calling on the Premier to join other premiers and oppose April 1 federal carbon-tax hike.

Will the Premier rise and explain his failure to act?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I want to welcome the Nigerian elders, the members of the Nigerian community to your building, the people's building of Manitoba.

I want to extend the same congratulations to Team Hayward, to the folks from Ducks Unlimited, to all of our guests who are here today.

And I want to speak directly to Lucy. I wanted to put on the permanent record of this House the message that I've shared privately, which is that all of us, as Manitobans, are proud of your son's service, in the name of freedom, liberty and democracy. We join you in mourning your loss. And as one parent to another, you raised a good boy. May peace be with you.

We're making life more affordable in Manitoba. We cut the fuel tax on January 1 and inflation came down. We're going to continue working on behalf of you, the people of this province.

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

\*(14:10)

**Mr. Ewasko:** The Premier failed to stand with other premiers against the carbon tax and failed to stand up for all of us, all Manitobans. If this sounds familiar, it's because he failed the same way in November. Premier Houston in Nova Scotia led the charge calling for carbon tax fairness right across this country. Many premiers joined him as signatories of a letter to Justin Trudeau, but our Premier did not.

Honourable Speaker, I now table a record from the government of Nova Scotia that proves that Manitoba NDP Premier was invited to sign that letter. Not only did he fail to stand up for Manitobans, he failed to even respond.

So I ask the Premier: Why didn't he or any of his many, many, many staff respond to that letter?

**Mr. Kinew:** I'll ask the Leader of the Opposition a question I've asked many, many, many times: Why does he object to one 14-cents-a-litre tax on gasoline when he charged another 14-cents-a-litre tax on gasoline the entire time that he served in government?

We took immediate action. We cut the PC gas tax 14 cents a litre on January 1, saving you and everyone across the province money.

I really don't understand the policy direction of the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, he seems to be backing away from many PC election promises. During the election they said they were going to stand firm against searching the landfill. But then, in *The Globe and Mail* this week, he said he wasn't sure.

After running and losing an election campaign on this topic, how does he not know his position? Does he want to stand firm against the families of murder victims or does he want to join us and the rest of the people of Manitoba to do—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Once again, Honourable Speaker, deflection, deflection.

We still hear the cries of the protesters standing outside the Legislature, calling on this Premier to show up now that he's been re-elected. Lots of promises during the election, says anything to get re-elected.

If the Premier had raised this issue on the carbon tax with the federal government successfully, there would be evidence of the federal government working towards a carbon tax exemption for Manitobans.

We requested those records but received nothing, and I table that response now.

What does this mean, Honourable Speaker? No records, no briefing notes, no plan. Failing to stand up for Manitobans is nothing new for you know who, but this is just another flip-flop.

Will he—I'll give him another opportunity to do the right thing, stand up for Manitobans today, call for a stop to the carbon tax today, prior to April 1, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Kinew:** If standing up for Manitobans means saving them money at the pump, we did that on January 1 of this year.

But what I don't understand about the member opposite is how after the PCs ran a very divisive campaign, he's chosen to double down on one piece of anti-trans rhetoric, but then on the topic that was also very divisive and hateful, which was standing firm against the family of murder victims or whatever it was that their election ad said, he's now trying to backpedal away from that one.

He told The Globe and Mail this week, the national newspaper of record, that he's not sure about whether we should search the landfill. *[interjection]*

I'm sure the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) believes that when someone goes missing that we should go looking for them. That's what we believe on this side of the House. Everyone else in Manitoba seems to understand that.

Will the minister opposite—or member opposite please clarify his position? And, of course, if anyone wants to join the side of reason, you're more than welcome to—

**The Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

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

#### **Premier's Office Staff Conflict Concerns**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The NDP Premier knows it's important to keep official separation between political staff and party staff.

So why, then, did the Premier hire the president of the Manitoba NDP as his new Premier's office co-ordinator with a starting salary of \$117,000, Honourable Speaker?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I invite the member for Lac du Bonnet to share with Manitobans all the heads and officials from the PC Party that their government hired during their time in office. In fact, while we're talking about the failures of the PC Party, let's talk again about the stand firm ad against the families of murder victims.

It defies logic; it defies compassion, that anyone would choose to attack grieving families like that, and yet, apparently, all the money that was fundraised by the members opposite was used to bankroll these ads.

Now, even though they really doubled down on that strategy and lost government in part because of it, this week the member opposite says that he's not sure where he stands on the issue.

I think any reasonable person would have established an opinion on this topic. I'm simply asking the member for Lac du Bonnet to tell us where he stands.

Does he stand firm with the member for Tuxedo (Ms. Stefanson), or is he with us and the people of Manitoba?

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** And it seems that the interim Premier of the province is looking to look—to get back to question period, Honourable Speaker.

There are rules that govern what we do here in Manitoba Legislature as legislators. Then there are rules that govern what we do outside of the Legislature, as political parties. And then there are rules that preclude us from mixing those activities here in this great place.

Is the Premier and the NDP leader following those rules?

**Mr. Kinew:** We always follow the rules, unlike the member for Tuxedo (Ms. Stefanson)—*[interjection]*—unlike the member for Tuxedo, who had to go to court and was told by a judge that she broke the rules.

But, again, you know what breaks the rules of polite society is running ads attacking the families of murder victims. Arguing that standing firm against the landfill search was somehow a positive message is not something that I think reasonable people in this province support.

We've been very clear: if someone in Manitoba goes missing, we should go looking for them. They've made it clear under the member of Tuxedo's time where they stand.

I'm simply asking the member for Lac du Bonnet to tell the people of Manitoba: Does he oppose the landfill search, or has he now moderated his view?

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, the Premier is standing firm on doing nothing.

Honourable Speaker, I want to be clear: this is not an issue of staff. We all recognize that committed Manitobans who work alongside elected officials to serve Manitobans. This is an issue of the Premier expecting Manitoba taxpayers to foot the bill to pay his party president two and a half times the average

salary in Manitoba, paying his party officials more than most elected officials in this room.

So I ask the Premier: Does he think it's inappropriate to pay his political party officials with taxpayer funds?

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, the member for Lac du Bonnet really ought to tell the people of Manitoba about the lobbying activities of Marni Larkin, who ran that hate-filled election campaign and talked the members opposite, under the direction of the member of Tuxedo, to support those terrible landfill ads.

I would invite the member now, after telling The Globe and Mail that he's not sure, even though his political party said that they wanted to stand firm against the landfill search, whether he believes in standing firm against the families of murder victims, or has he now moderated his opinion? Every person in Manitoba, whether they supported the search or not, found that that ad campaign was mean-spirited.

Will the member stand in his place today and apologize for those ads?

#### **Carbon and Fuel Tax Increases Affordability Concerns**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Honourable Speaker, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) obviously has no idea where he is. Maybe he's getting ready to get back from the opposition benches from 2027. He's supposed to answer the questions; he is the Premier.

At the end of this month, the price of gas is going up 17 cents of carbon tax. Two months later, 14 cents on the gas tax. Between Justin Trudeau, Jagmeet Singh and this NDP government and this Premier, 31 cents on your gas.

Yesterday, this Premier said he won't join the other seven premiers across Canada, across party lines, to stand against Justin Trudeau and the carbon tax.

\* (14:20)

Why won't he stand up for Manitobans today and axe the tax?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Our team is very proud to be bringing greater affordability for all Manitobans with our fuel tax holiday. *[interjection]*

That's right. Cheapest gas in the country, lowest inflation in Canada for two months in a row—that's what our new NDP government is bringing to Manitobans.

The previous government charged fuel taxes on Manitobans every single day they were in government for seven years. We're doing different. We're making life more affordable.

More work to do. Can't wait to announce more on April 2.

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

**Mr. Khan:** Honourable Speaker, it's quite ironic and actually funny that the minister stands up and talks about affordability. Manitobans for affordability, yes.

I table this document, Honourable Speaker. As a Manitoban, you'd want your minister to talk to the federal Minister of Finance about affordability, and I'll table this document: all correspondence and records that—discussing—regarding the carbon tax—between Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Manitoba minister Adrien Sala. There are none.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

It's a well-known rule in this House that we don't use a member's name. Either refer to him by his ministerial title or his constituency name.

**Mr. Khan:** I apologize to the Minister of Finance for mentioning his name in there.

But in this document I'm going to table today it's going to say a thorough search of records under the control show that there was no records relevant to the 'recrest' at all.

The question is simple: Why has the Finance Minister not had one correspondence with the—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

**MLA Sala:** You know, as I've mentioned before in this House, we've had a great series of engagements with Manitobans over the last couple of months doing our prebudget consultations.

And one of the main things we heard in those consultations was the great affordability challenges that Manitoba has suffered for seven years under this previous government, because they failed to take action to make life more affordable.

What did we do right out of the gate? We made a fuel tax holiday. We're making life more affordable.

We're action; they're about inaction, Honourable Speaker. We're going to keep making life more affordable. More good news to come.

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

**Mr. Khan:** Not one correspondence with this Finance Minister and the federal Finance Minister on making life more affordable for Manitobans. That's what Manitobans need to know.

The gas tax is going to go up on July 1. The carbon tax is going to go up on April 1.

This Premier (Mr. Kinew) had the opportunity to join seven other premiers across Canada and axe the tax. Honourable Speaker, 70 per cent of Canadians oppose the carbon tax; 70 per cent of premiers oppose the carbon tax.

Why won't this Premier or Finance Minister do anything to make life more affordable for Manitobans?

**MLA Sala:** The previous government did everything in their power to make life more expensive for Manitobans. They raised Hydro rates in every creative way imaginable. They brought in legislation during the holidays in a pandemic, which raised Hydro rates through legislation for the first time in our province's history. That's their record.

They raised taxes on renters—that's seniors, folks with disabilities. That's their record.

What's our record? Making life more affordable. We're going to do more of it. More to come April 2. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The member for Fort Whyte, the Speaker is standing. So, you're cutting into your own time for questions.

### **Grocery Prices NDP Election Platform**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** When this Premier (Mr. Kinew) proposed his temporary gas tack holiday, he said he would, quote, put grocers on notice, quote, and that shoppers would see immediate savings.

Unfortunately for Manitobans, this did not happen. Anyone who saw savings at the grocery checkout found them by being frugal, shopping deals and coupons, not because of this Premier.

He promised if we don't see those savings materialize, then that's when we're going to follow up on those further steps.

So I ask him, what further steps has he taken, and what grocers has he met with to address these pricing concerns?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** It's always a good question to deal with the price of food.

Obviously the members opposite really didn't have any conscientious feeling, when they didn't concern about—during their seven and a half years of government, to take 14 cents off a litre to make life affordable for people.

'Obvaly' the price of groceries, and we've been in consultation with the federal Agriculture Minister about the price of food.

And I think that members opposite maybe should've taken the initiative when they were in government. They waited until we got elected to do their work for the betterment of the province of Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question. *[interjection]*

Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, we know this NDP government is trying to hide the promises it has made. When you go to the NDP's own website to look at their promise for a better deal at the checkout for Manitobans, all you see is, the page you're looking for was not found.

That is because, due to the fiscal mismanagement of this NDP government, the savings Manitobans have been looking for are not found.

I table this page from the NDP's own website, and simply ask: Why is he hiding the plan he promised to Manitobans?

**The Speaker:** I would remind the members that—*[interjection]*

Order. Order. Order. Thank you.

I would remind the member that using props while they're speaking is not allowed, so please refrain from doing that, all of you.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Maybe I should suggest, maybe ink cartridge has run out, maybe that's why she couldn't get it—write down on a piece of paper.

But honestly, Minister, we talk about the price of food. We talk about the price of food, the grocery code of conduct. But you know what? Why is the government who sat across, had no conscientious feeling about the price of food, when they brought in a 300 per cent increase in Crown land leases for agriculture producers. They also double-billed producers the same year.

I ask the members opposite: Were you conscientious what the price for those producers were in that year, to be double-billed and 300 per cent increase in their lease rates in the long run?

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

**Mrs. Stone:** All talk and no action. This is this theme of this NDP government and the Premier (Mr. Kinew). Maybe the next time the Premier hires someone to ghostwrite a book, I suggest he tie-try the title, the reason I talk, since that—all he does.

When this Premier makes his pledge, retailers and experts told him the economy doesn't work this way, but the Premier ignored them and sold Manitobans the bill of goods.

Why does this Premier deceive Manitobans and pretend and promised action he has no intention to take?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** This is not old news, this is the new news. We've got the No. 1 Premier in Canada. So I beg to differ with the conscientious feeling from the member opposite asking the question that the Premier's not accountable.

I think all of Canada realizes what we have today in the province of Manitoba. It's too bad the members opposite don't realize that.

### **Animal Overpopulation One Health Program Funding**

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I want to let everybody know I didn't get this information off the interweb.

I spoke earlier this week about the crisis of animal welfare and overpopulation in our province. In the campaign and again more recently, the NDP stated that they would establish mobile spay-and-neuter clinics to address dog overpopulation.

The One Health program, started in 2022, is funded in part by a \$750,000 commitment from this—from the PC government. Why reinvent the wheel? All he needs to do is increase and extend the already existing funding to Winnipeg Humane Society.

\* (14:30)

Will the minister commit today to increase and extend the term of funding for One Health—

**The Speaker:** The member's time is expired.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Thank you from the question—member opposite.

Definitely, we've noticed a large increase of animal cases in the province of Manitoba and across Canada. Manitoba's not unique in the movement forward on this situation.

Last week, we had a chance to sit with the Winnipeg Humane Society board of directors and we're starting to work towards what is the alternative of choices. Dollars are the importance. Spay and neutering programs continue to happen in northern Manitoba and we will continue to work with those organizations to make life more adaptable for our poor animals that are suffering right now in today's society.

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

**MLA Bereza:** When asked previously about One Health funding, the honourable minister mentioned funding of \$150,000.

He showed very little knowledge of the program at the time. He couldn't even name the group that he had met with. We already knew there was a problem and we got—start work fixing it.

On this side of the House, we recognize the crisis in animal overpopulation. We committed to doubling provincial funding for One Health and extending the term.

Will the Minister of Agriculture be copying another PC plan by increasing the funding to One Health?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** As—I want to repeat what I had mentioned a few days ago about the program.

In 2003, we had—1,737 animals were seen and 23 communities in which 1,198 were spayed and neutered and then planted with various programs.

We continue to work with people throughout the province of Manitoba. And I want to assure you, as an agriculture producer that works with numerous animals and had an opportunity, my heart goes out to all the animals that have been left neglected and being treated the way they are.

We, as this government, will continue to work with the Winnipeg Humane Society and anybody else that chooses to be—

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

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

### Veterinarian Training Seats Request to Fund Additional Seats

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** The NDP are bringing back a recycled Ag Minister. Maybe they're bringing back failed ag policies as well, like the disastrous hog barn moratorium.

Maybe the health of hogs are not an issue with them. Animals of all kinds: cats, dogs, cattle, iguanas all deserve care.

Our government provided 33 per cent increased to vet training seats available to Manitobans. I know this was near and dear to the MLA for Burrows.

Will the minister commit to continuing efforts in funding additional vet training seats, yes or no?

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

Order. Order. Order.

I shouldn't have to ask three times. And again, you're cutting into your own time. Even when I'm standing up speaking, the clock is running. So keep it up; you're just losing time.

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I really appreciate the tone of compassion that our Agriculture Minister showed because that's where the people of Manitoba are at.

Manitobans are compassionate people. They want to see animals treated with dignity and with respect and we are working to meet the good work in the community.

But I am compelled to stand up when the members opposite go beyond answering questions in good faith and start to make personal attacks, start to make invective included into the questions that they pose.

So, any time a member of our team is attacked on a personal level, I will get up and stand up and call the members opposite to order. You're free to ask questions in good faith about substantive issues; our team is happy to respond.

But we've got each others' backs one hundred per cent. We'll answer the shots every time and we'll keep doing the good work on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

### Upcoming Increase to Carbon Tax Call for Government to Oppose

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** The absolute hypocrisy in that statement is mind-boggling. But nonetheless, seven out of 10. Seven out of 10—that's

how many provincial premiers are publicly calling on Justin Trudeau to stop his offensive and misguided 23 per cent increase in the carbon tax on April 1.

Can this Premier explain why he isn't one of them?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Again, appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House and talk about the important work our team is doing to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

We brought in a fuel tax holiday already, right out of the gate. There's more work to do. What we're not going to do is raise the cost of living like the members opposite did for seven years when they were in government.

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

**Mr. Jackson:** I'll table an image of all seven premiers, just to remind the Premier what they look like. These are his colleagues that he sat down with in Halifax, looked in the eye and said, yes, I'll support you in asking for fairness on carbon tax exemptions, only to walk it back as soon as he got back to Manitoba.

Will he flip-flop again today, do the right thing, join the vast majority of provincial premiers in calling Justin Trudeau for a pause in his tax hike, or do the NDP believe Manitobans need a 23 per cent increase in their carbon tax right now?

**MLA Sala:** I want to remind the critic, every single day they were in government, every single day for seven years, that party applied the fuel taxes to Manitobans. They had an opportunity every day that they were in government for seven years to make life more affordable.

And now they're coming forward with all types of big ideas, but they failed to take action. They failed.

We're taking action. We're making life more affordable, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Mr. Jackson:** It's clear this NDP crew thinks the carbon tax is great. When the Premier's away from his caucus, he commits to fighting it. But when he comes back home to his NDP colleagues, his opposition to the carbon tax melts away.

Can the Premier make it clear today, if the federal government should change and remove a national carbon tax, will this government follow on British Columbia's footsteps and impose one of its own?

**MLA Sala:** We're making life more affordable, Honourable Speaker, which is the opposite of what that party did in seven years when they were in government.

They raised costs on farmers by raising the cost of their Crown leases. They raised taxes on renters, Honourable Speaker, by \$150. And they raised hydro rates over and over and over again.

We're making life more affordable. More work to do. More good news on April 2 when we release our budget.

### **International Students in Manitoba Provincial Nominee Certificate Request**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Just over an hour ago, hundreds of young people stood outside the Manitoba Legislature asking for our help. Many have joined us today in the gallery.

I am asking the Premier to understand the urgency of this matter. These young people need our help, and this government has the ability to help them.

Honourable Speaker, will the Premier commit today to making sure that these young people receive their provincial nominee certificates before they lose status and are forced to leave our country?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Manitoba is a great place to grow up, it's a great place to grow old and we want more people to join this province, set down roots here and build their lives here.

There are a lot of tears being shed. There is a lot of stress being visited on people in our province because the federal government is cancelling post-graduate work permits.

I want to make a personal commitment that our Immigration Minister is going to work with people who are here in the province to find solutions. Our goal is to keep people in Manitoba working for generations to come. We have an open door. Let's work together to ensure that we can have a prosperous future together on these lands.

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

**MLA Lamoureux:** These individuals who have joined us today are well aware that it is ultimately up to this provincial government that will determine whether they are able to stay here in Manitoba or not.

\* (14:40)

So what is this government prepared to do to make sure that these young people receive a certificate before they are forced to leave our country?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Thank you, member opposite, for raising this very, very important issue.

Actually, over lunchtime, I was able to meet with a few of the protest leaders, including MD, Jasan, Rahal, Xi Luo, Ten Yu and even Varinder. I really appreciate the fact that they were able to express themselves politically like this and to participate in this discussion, and it's part of our democracy that's really, really important.

Another thing is that our government is very sympathetic to people who want to make Manitoba their home, and we're going to be working together with all these folks to make sure that we're going to—

**The Speaker:** Minister's time has expired.

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

**MLA Lamoureux:** I am asking that the government of Manitoba stand in support of our international students who chose to come to Manitoba in good faith.

They invested thousands of dollars in their education. They have taken upon jobs that support our economy, and we're talking this is two, three, four years, Honourable Speaker, they have been here, contributing to our province, paying taxes. These are some of our most highly skilled Manitobans.

Will this government ensure that Nominee certificates are issued in a timely fashion and allow for them to stay in Manitoba?

**MLA Marcelino:** Honourable Speaker, the federal government, in December and in January, made the decision to stop extending the federal work permits for these folks.

We are going to be working on a solution, along with the federal government, to help ensure that these folks can continue to work here in Manitoba and contribute to our province, because we really need them.

Due to the PC cuts, on my second day on the job, Manitoba lost 2,000 newcomer spots. Due to the PC cuts, our provincial department—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, order.



A member shouldn't have to scream at the top of their lungs to be heard in this Chamber, so please tone it down a little.

**MLA Marcelino:** Due to the PC cuts, our provincial department wouldn't even be able to process the applications of those 2,000 folks that we just missed out on.

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

#### **AI-Generated Intimate Images New Legislation to Address**

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Justice has been hard at work bringing forward many pieces of legislation. He has continued meeting with stakeholders on public safety. I know he will continue being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

There is a growing risk to everyone, especially kids, around artificial intelligence and specifically AI-generated intimate images.

Would the Minister of Justice tell us about the legislation he is bringing forward to protect Manitobans, especially kids, from the dangers of artificially generated intimate images?

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, I know the member for Kildonan-River East has worked with high school students in her past. She's a proud mom. And so, she, like all members in this Chamber, know how important it is to keep our kids safe online.

It's essential for parents, for governments, to act swiftly, and as technology evolves, it becomes important that this Legislature bring forward important bills like the one we brought forward today to bring us back to the forefront of protecting kids and anyone who has intimate images that are distributed against their will.

AI and altered images are becoming more and more of an issue. As parents, as legislators, I hope we can come together, and we can move forward and—

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

#### **Internationally Educated Health Workers Recruitment, Funding and Accreditation**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Yesterday, while scrumming with the media, the Minister of Health falsely claimed that no funding had been cut by the NDP government for the Filipino health-care worker recruitment program.

So, I'll table a media article from December where the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and Finance Minister clearly lay out \$5.8 million in cut funding.

Why did the minister try to conceal this yesterday, or were they just not aware of the funding their government cut three months ago?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Honourable Speaker, staffing the health-care system is a top priority for our government, including welcoming those from the Philippines who want to become of our—become a part of our health-care team here across the province in Manitoba.

The member opposite has two former failed PC Health ministers in her own caucus. She could've asked them about that program and where they went wrong.

The dollars she's referring to are lapsed funds that were underutilized because their program has failed to achieve their own targets set to achieve July of last year.

So, perhaps she has two former ministers she could pose that question to in her own caucus and get some answers.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Yesterday, I tabled documents concerning a group of Filipino nurses who are willing to come to Manitoba today under this NDP Health Minister, and they're being blocked.

And yesterday, while scrumming with the media, the minister made it clear that they think I should've brought this issue to their office and not to question period.

But this is concerning, because not only did these nurses go through the proper channels only to be held up for months due to Shared Health having talks with the government, but the minister's statement implies that newcomers wanting to work in Manitoba should only reach out directly to the minister instead of being supported through the immigration process.

So, can the minister confirm: Does every newcomer wanting to come and work in our health-care system have to email them directly, or will the NDP government finally actually put forward a plan to train, recruit and retain—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, just so that we are all clear, the member opposite is stating for the House that the program her previous government developed is not only wildly underperforming, but she's standing up in the House and demanding that I fix the mess her government made previously.

Now, Honourable Speaker, I am going to continue to do the work of cleaning up the mess in health care the previous government made. And I want to make it explicitly clear: that member opposite knows fully well that on this side of the House we support all health-care workers to be a part of our health-care system, including those who want to reside here in Manitoba from the Philippines.

We're going to do the work every single day of cleaning up the mess in health care the previous government made and making health care stronger for all Manitobans.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** The NDP also said in the Winnipeg Free Press today, and I quote: No immediate changes are being considered to make it easier for Filipino health-care workers offered jobs in Manitoba.

Yet, in February, the Minister of Immigration said in an article that I'll table, that they were developing a new path of accreditation for internationally educated nurses, and that includes the CCA exam that impacted this group of Filipino nurses.

It sounds like changes are being considered but it's very confusing. And health-care workers wanting to work in Manitoba are confused, and we can all tell the NDP Cabinet is confused.

So, will the minister please clarify for the House: Are they working on the new accreditation or not?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, it is very clear, it is becoming abundantly clear, that the confused person in this House is actually the member opposite.

And I'm really concerned about that because we're talking about a program that was developed by the previous government, and if she has questions she needs answers to, guess what: two failed former Health ministers are sitting on that side of the House with her.

Honourable Speaker, every single day, we are creating stronger pathways for internationally educated health-care workers. We are making sure that we're

cleaning up the mess in health care the previous government made. And we are taking steps the previous government never did; that's treating health-care workers with respect, building a health-care workforce in Manitoba and making sure Manitobans have the health care they can count on.

**The Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

\* (14:50)

### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** I have a statement for the House.

Please—can all members be aware of electronic devices, ear pieces and speaking notes close to the microphones on their desks and ensure that they are moved away when they are recognized to speak. The feedback can damage the hearing of those wearing headsets and providing simultaneous interpretation and also those in Hansard transcribing what has been said.

Again, I ask for your co-operation on this, and it would be very much appreciated for all the staff who support us here in all we do.

Thank you.

### PETITIONS

#### Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is accosting and the—costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more of those—for those with older furnaces.

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make, it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below zero degrees Celsius annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating in the Atlantic provinces of Canada but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba Hydro indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace their heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including the Atlantic provinces that benefit from the decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance that all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them much-needed relief.

This petition is signed by Ryan Poirier, Roan Wychnenko, Sebastian Klapprat and many other fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any further petitions?

Seeing none, grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

*(Continued)*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Acting Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, can you please call to resume debate on all stages of Interim Supply.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will resume debate on all parts of Interim Supply.

### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 25—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024

**The Speaker:** Resuming debate on second reading of Bill 35—Bill 25, sorry—the interim appropriation act of 2024, standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson). *[interjection]*

Ah, my mistake—standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland, who has 24 minutes remaining.

**An Honourable Member:** House business.

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

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to call the time as 5 p.m. as soon as royal assent is completed, the ceremony for Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024, has finished.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to not see the clock until royal assent has been granted to Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I hear a no. *[interjection]* My mistake. Wrong leave request.

Is there leave to have the House call the time as 5 p.m. as soon as the royal assent ceremony for bill twenty—*[interjection]* Order. Order. I'll start again.

Is there leave to have the House call the time as 5 p.m. as soon as royal assent ceremony for Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024, has finished?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I heard a no. Leave has been denied.

The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

**Mr. Johnson:** Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if there's leave to not see the clock until royal assent has been granted to Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to not see the clock until royal assent has been granted to Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024? Is it agreed? *[Agreed]*

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I look forward again today to some—putting some words onto the historical record as it relates to the Interim Supply appropriation act.

The NDP Cabinet, since being elected in 2023, have authorized the Finance Department and Treasury division for the government of Manitoba to significantly borrow additional funds over and above what has been the normal pattern of borrowing over the past eight years.

We've asked why and the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) did not have an answer for that.

The amount authorized totals almost \$10 billion in borrowing since they have been elected in just a few short months. This is not normal, Honourable Speaker.

What does this suggest? Well, this suggests something that we all know. Us on this side of the House are prepared for it, but it'll certainly come as a surprise to Manitobans. They plan to run large deficits for many years to come, 'displite'—despite inflation and federal transfers going up significantly recently and since 2021.

In addition, the NDP have added another \$710 million in new spending above the 2023 budget that already had record increases from 2022.

We need to focus on growing the economy and bringing in that revenue. Constant borrowing is not the answer.

Yesterday, I spoke about growth-oriented policies, that that's the answer. We need to encourage private-sector investment in this province. That is what will create jobs. That's what will create a tax base. That is what will create revenue to the Province of Manitoba.

I spoke yesterday about how under the previous PC government, over 30 economic development projects were in process. Yet when the NDP came into power, what did they do? They fired the very person that was putting those projects through and encouraging that investment to come into Manitoba. That is shameful.

Clearly, this shows where this NDP government stands and that's against private investment, whereas us on the PC side of the House know that that is what improves our economy and drives our tax base and is better for Manitobans.

The NDP must commit to fighting inflation, to repaying rather than growing debts. This is something our PC government understood.

After the NDP depleted the rainy-day fund in 2016 under strong economic conditions and as I mentioned yesterday, Honourable Speaker, we know we don't have strong economic conditions right now. We are in an affordability crisis. We expect these challenges to continue.

Manitobans are concerned about affordability. Canadians are concerned about affordability. Yet this NDP government does not seem to be concerned about affordability.

The only affordability bill that they have introduced to date, Honourable Speaker, is a temporary 14-cent fuel tax pause that realistically only lasted two and a half weeks and is set to expire in June. And yet, they refuse to commit to any other affordability measures for Manitobans.

Asking Manitobans to provide even more money while they dig deeper and deeper into their pockets, well, I tell you, Honourable Speaker, those pockets are getting less and less. They are not providing the citizens of this province with any sense of security on how this government manages its money.

\* (15:00)

And we all saw what happened in 2016, Honourable Speaker, when the NDP Selinger government left over \$800 million in a deficit, depleted the rainy day fund, and that was in good economic conditions, because that's what the NDP government does. They tax and they spend, or in this case, they're going to be spending and then they're going to be taxing.

We do recognize that there are basic operations of government that do need to continue, Honourable Speaker, and, of course, this is what the Interim Supply bill is intended for.

However, they have authorized to over \$10 billion of new borrowing and debt since being elected in October. This is significantly higher than the previous borrowing that has happened over the past number of years. And, again, the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) could not say why they needed such an increase in borrowing.

The government is coming forward, and the Minister of Finance is coming forward and requiring once again to spend more money on the backs of Manitobans, money that Manitobans do not have. On the backs of higher interest rates, debt-servicing costs are projected to increase, and I will say this clearly, \$263 million, totalling \$1.28 billion this year alone.

That does not even include Manitoba Hydro's debt-service costs, and we all know how the NDP likes to run Hydro, Honourable Speaker. We saw it the last time they were in power: billions and billions of dollars in debt on the backs of hard-working Manitobans.

As I mentioned earlier, we saw the previous NDP government. They had an opportunity at that time to set money aside in the very good times that were realized in Manitoba during that period of time. But

they showed their true colours, like the NDP always does: tax and spend or spend and tax.

And now we are headed into a very similar situation, and today and yesterday is no different. Expect the situation is instead not in good economic times, because we are in an affordability crisis, Honourable Speaker. Economists are predicting we're heading even into more challenging times in Canada as a result of NDP-Liberal coalition overspending, over-borrowing and placing debt on the backs of Canadians.

With the rising cost of living and weakening economic conditions, life is increasingly unaffordable, and it's unfortunate the member opposite is heckling me when they very well know that their government fired the individual running economic development here in Manitoba with 31 projects in process and investment coming here into this province.

Yet we haven't seen an economic development plan. Do they care about the economy? Do they care about growing jobs? Do they care about growing the tax base here in this province? It certainly doesn't seem so, Honourable Speaker.

Constituents, my constituents, are telling me that affordability is the No. 1 issue. I hear from my constituents; I'm hearing from Manitobans; I'm hearing from friends in other provinces, all across Manitoba and people that I connect with.

In December, a report was released by the Salvation Army, showing one in four Canadians are struggling to afford rising costs of covering basic needs: food, shelter and transportation. Twenty-one per cent of those respondents in that survey reported they have been forced to reduce food intake in order to afford groceries, often leading to only eating less than one meal a day. Parents are clearly struggling to put food on the table, and it's the most vulnerable members of our society that end up suffering the most.

Data from an Angus Reid poll back in December indicated this is the No. 1 issue Manitobans are faced with. But the NDP has shown their true ignorance when it comes to recognizing the struggles of average Manitobans. As mentioned, the 14 cent-fuel tax temporary holiday that lasted two and a half weeks realistically is their only affordability measure to date. Food, shelter and transportation are basic necessities, yet the NDP continue to flip-flop on the NDP-Liberal coalition carbon tax set to increase on April 1.

We know that the carbon tax is baked into basic necessities. It is felt the most with the purchase of

these basic necessities. Manitobans are going to have to find this money from somewhere. Where are they going to get it when the cost of living is so high and carbon taxes on our basic necessities are set to increase?

The NDP government refused to remove home heating from Manitoban's hydro bills—the carbon tax on home heating for Manitobans' hydro bills, despite our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan doing just that. On January 1st, Premier Scott Moe removed the carbon tax from heating bills, providing significant and necessary cost relief to families in Saskatchewan.

But here in Manitoba, and while many families are struggling to make ends meet, the NDP government has chosen instead to do nothing.

A recent Leger poll indicates 69 per cent of respondents are not in favour of increasing the carbon tax. We on this side of the House recognize that the carbon tax is an unnecessary tax burden on Manitoban families.

We know Manitobans are struggling to find the extra dollars for those basic necessities that I have already previously mentioned. Numerous reports, as I have mentioned in my remarks today, have indicated rising costs of our basic necessities are impacting the most vulnerable people.

Recognizing that cost burdens on families are difficult. I'm a mom. I have two kids. I know how expensive things are. Honourable Speaker, \$35 for a carton of baby formula; \$20 for a sweater that my son will grow out of in three short months. This is expensive for the average Manitoban.

This would significantly help Manitoban families if the NDP came up with a solid, tangible and long-term affordability plan, not continuing to increase their borrowing costs and debt on the backs of Manitoban families.

And the only answer that I have for them doing this is that they want to raise taxes on Manitobans. What's it going to be this time? An increase of the PST? Maybe an increase of tax on hair cuts, manicures, pedicures, home insurance. They did it last time, they're going to do it again. School tax. Birth and death taxes, wow. That was shameful that that previous NDP government had done where this Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) was sitting around the very Cabinet table when that happened.

We on this side of the House recognize we must do more to support struggling Manitobans, and we know that borrowing and debt service costs are not the way to do it.

From my constituents it's common to hear, we're just living paycheque to paycheque. We're sacrificing. We don't have extras. Yet the NDP continue to borrow Manitobans and Manitoba Hydro further into debt while front-loading as much spending as they can into this fiscal year.

Honourable Speaker, they have launched a mad march spending campaign to try to reach their \$1.6-billion deficit target. They are using advertisements to promote the PC government's tax cuts that were saving Manitobans' families instead of coming up with their own affordability plan. We've seen them today take credit for our hard work and our bills. That's what they do. They are too busy doing TikToks during the day in order to come up with their own plan.

This is what NDP governments do. They have reckless spending and reckless borrowing. They're clearly doing it again. Will they commit to not raising taxes on Manitobans? Because we haven't heard anything yet. We don't know their plan. Manitobans don't know their plan. But we certainly have an idea. Today certainly gives us an idea of what is to come into the future.

An authorized \$710 million in new spending for fiscal '23-24, this is the NDP's special warrant for mad march spending spree. This is a clear attempt to inflate the deficit to the NDP Minister of Finance's (MLA Sala) target of \$1.6 billion.

This means the NDP are spending billions more this year and will spill-spend billions more next year, putting Manitoba further into debt. It means more of Manitoba's taxpayers will go to pay interest to Bay Street banks instead of government programs.

The NDP with their \$3 billion in election promises are once again growing Manitoba's debt exponentially and completely out of control.

The PCs left the NDP with a surplus last year, and a plan to balance the budget by 2025. The NDP Finance Minister has personally revised the government's forecasts of deficit in the second quarter instead of the budgeted deficit of \$363 million. Following last year's \$270-million surplus, the NDP now plan to spend an additional \$1.3 billion this fiscal year to reach their billion-dollar deficit.

After years of steady improvement by our PC government that led to two surpluses, in '19 and 2022-23, the NDP are borrowing more to spend more in their first six months of government. Manitoba does not have a revenue problem, Honourable Speaker, the NDP have a spending problem.

The NDP are trying to change their channel from their failures and broken promises that they made during this campaign. The NDP have neglected to mention they are in charge for half of this budget's fiscal year when all the final tough decisions have to be made by this government.

\* (15:10)

The MNP report itself acknowledges economic growth has been better than expected for 2023, at 1.7 per cent. So I ask this NDP government again, why the significantly high borrowing costs, over \$10 billion, that have been higher than the past number of years?

The PCs knew they wanted to make life more affordable for Manitoban families. We invested in schools, highways, addressed health staff shortages. We managed these expenditures while also returning to balance. The NDP are failing to act on these priorities. We've seen them have no plans and no forward vision about how to fiscally manage this province properly.

Instead, they are playing partisan games in an attempt to distract from their broken promises while desperately looking for someone else to blame. Today is the NDP's preparation for their big show. The NDP is setting the stage to eventually hike taxes and cut services. We've seen it before, and we will see it again, Honourable Speaker.

It has been almost six months, Honourable Speaker—six months—and this NDP government has barely moved any bills forward in the Legislature. We have seen barely any affordability bills, and yet this is the No. 1 issue facing Manitobans, No. 1 issue facing Canadians. Multiple reports, polls, surveys have indicated this. So why is the NDP government not taking this seriously?

Well, we certainly know why they're not taking it seriously, because they want to go and tax those Manitobans. That's what they're going to do. They are going to run three big canoe-sized deficits. Now let's talk about a canoe. It's what, 16 to 18 feet long? That's about three of me. Well that's a lot of money from Manitobans and Manitoban pockets that they're going to fill.

And you know what? The Premier (Mr. Kinew) is going to try to paddle that canoe and sink it along with all of Manitobans' money along the way. They are going to spend; they're going to borrow, and then they're going to tax. This is the ways of this NDP government.

As I mentioned, we have seen it before with the previous NDP government, Honourable Speaker, and we will see it again. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other speakers wishing to participate in debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is shall the second reading of Bill 24–Bill 25 pass—the interim appropriation bill, 2024. Shall it pass? *[Agreed]*

The House will now resolve into a Committee of the Whole—*[interjection]* Oh.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Johnson).

**Mr. Johnson:** On division.

**The Speaker:** The motion is accordingly passed, on division.

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider a report on Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024, for concurrence and third reading.

Would the Deputy Speaker please take the Chair.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

##### Bill 25—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024

**The Chairperson (Tyler Blashko):** Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order. We will now consider Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024.

Does the honourable Minister of Finance have an opening statement? No?

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement?

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Everyone knows I like to speak, but for this moment here, I have no opening statement.

**The Chairperson:** We shall now proceed to consider the bill clause by clause. The title and enacting clause

are postponed until all the other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass.

Shall clause 6 pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Pass.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mr. Khan:** It gives me honour to just ask some questions on the interim appropriation act here, brought forward by the Minister of Finance. I appreciate the conversation the Minister of Finance and had—I had earlier.

I believe this one is in regards to clause 5 or 6. Well the—in section—the bill talks about \$259 million to eliminate long-term liability.

Can the minister just tell us what that long-term liability is, and if he can tell us if this will help reduce our debt as a province?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Yes, the authority here is used to make payments related to previously accrued liabilities such as environmental liabilities and legal claims against the government. The amounts are reported in Public Accounts each year.

**The Chairperson:** Any other questions?

**Mr. Khan:** I want to thank the minister for that answer on that one, and there's a \$25 million—up to \$25 million may be paid out of the consolidated funds in '24-25 fiscal year for the purpose of developing or acquiring inventory to be disposed of in the subsequent year.

Can the minister just maybe elaborate that on a little bit more?

**MLA Sala:** Yes, so the—I think this is under section 4, not section 5, but I am happy to speak to it.

COVID-19 required the government to acquire supplies of PPE—of course, the previous government—PPE, vaccines and other inventories. Those amounts have been normalizing in the last couple years, so in this year, the amount is decreased from \$50 million to \$25 million.

**Mr. Khan:** Thank the minister for that; I appreciate going back to that one. I have missed the section 4 part there.

Are there any other long-term liabilities that—inventory expenditures that will be reduced, or was it mainly just the COVID expenditures for that?

**MLA Sala:** The long-term liabilities relate to, as I said, legal claims and environmental liabilities.

**Mr. Khan:** Apologize, I read the wrong header. For inventory expenditures.

**MLA Sala:** Sorry, and I will ask for clarity. What was the question pertaining to inventory expenditures?

**Mr. Khan:** We can move on to the next question, Deputy Speaker.

When I look at all the sections that we've gone through and passed, I'm just curious is—if the minister can just mention the—or speak a little bit about the large increase in percentages of appropriations that are being asked for: 75 per cent to 90 per cent and onwards for the appropriation in section A; section B, 75 per cent to 90; 75 per cent to 90 in section C.

\* (15:20)

So, maybe the minister could just talk a little bit about why there's a large increase being asked for in this interim appropriation.

**The Chairperson:** Just before I pass it to the minister, I'll just remind folks that we are to speak to the clause that we're speaking to, which, in this case, is clause 6.

But if the minister would like to respond.

**MLA Sala:** We've got important work to do, fixing health care, improving affordability.

**Mr. Khan:** I appreciate that question, there.

Without the budget being tabled here—on April 2, I understand, it's coming forward for the '24-25 year—and again, I understand that 90 per cent of appropriations being asked from '23-24—does the minister foresee, with the budget being tabled, that they're going to max out that 10 per cent that's left from that appropriation bill above and beyond to cover the '24-25 budget?

**MLA Sala:** What we're asking for in part A is for 75 per cent, so it's not 90 per cent as has been suggested.

Also I would say that it doesn't seem that we're asking questions as it relates to the specific sections at this point.

**Mr. Khan:** So, in regards to the increase in appropriation for the ask in this one here, then, the minister wants to simply state that it's for the amount of work

you have to do, is for the increase in percentage asked right now? Just for clarification.

**MLA Sala:** What I can share is that the amount is not dissimilar from what we saw in 2019, 2020, 2021. Of course we know, in some of those years, there were elevated costs associated with COVID, but this also reflects what happened in 2018-19.

It's very similar to numbers that have been put forward by the previous government.

**The Chairperson:** Are there any other questions?

Then I'll ask the committee: clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass; enacting clause—pass.

Shall the title pass?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Chairperson:** I hear a no.

**Mr. Khan:** This allows me an opportunity now to go back and talk about the appropriation bill that we're seeing in front of us here.

So, this will go back to the question that I'd asked the minister previously about the increase in appropriations. So, I believe there is a right to have that conversation here with this money being asked—the amount of money also being asked—to \$12.6 billion, or 75 per cent of the total appropriations. When we look back to 2023, only 35 per cent, or \$6 billion, was asked from the total appropriations.

So, the question to the minister—I had asked this earlier, he had alluded to the answer, and then the second time around, just a little more clarity on the amount of money being asked in this appropriation versus historical—and he wants to reference historical debt asks prior to, you know, 2020—the worldwide pandemic; in '21, pandemic.

I don't believe there's a pandemic right now, so I believe Manitobans just—I'm curious. I'm just curious as to why that increase in money.

**MLA Sala:** I would suggest the reason for the much smaller number in '23-24 was that it was an election year.

**Mr. Khan:** So, just to be clear, the minister is saying that because there was an election in '23 that less money was asked for from the total appropriation? That's what the minister's answer is as to why they're asking for a \$12.6 million—billion, sorry—and 75 per cent of the total appropriation?



Just curious if that's the answer.

**MLA Sala:** I don't know what decisions were made by the last government. I proposed a possible answer for '23-24.

What I can say is that the appropriation being asked for reflects the important work that we have to do. We were left a huge mess by the previous government. They absolutely did a massive amount of damage to our health-care system. They underfunded education. They underfunded municipalities. They failed to take care of affordability challenges that Manitobans were facing.

We've got a lot of important work to do. We're going to do that in a good way that ensures we balance our fiscal priorities and our need to be fiscally responsible with delivering on the priorities of Manitobans.

**Mr. Khan:** I appreciate the minister's answer on that, and I hadn't asked the minister as to why he thinks the 2023 interim appropriation was only \$6 billion or 35 per cent. He had said that this is why he assumes. I said I was reiterating what he said, and he said it was because of an election that's why.

Second answer he said, well, they have work to do. He can't guess. I wouldn't ask him to guess why or what his answer was for 2023. The question was for 2024.

It's a \$6.6-billion increase in the appropriation that this government is asking for. The minister wants to mention, you know, affordability and prices. Well, the previous government left this government with a \$250-million surplus. It's well-documented that there was a surplus when that happened.

He wants to talk about affordability. The previous government had mailed out affordability cheques, historic support for Manitobans, the largest tax cut savings in the history of this province—\$5,500, \$4,500 for a family. Given all of the other affordability, \$4,500, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the minister will agree, \$4,500 is a lot of money. It's a lot more than, on average, the \$26 the gas tax is saving that this government has put forward.

Albeit, the question is specific to the \$6.6-billion increase over the last. It's 75 per cent of the total appropriation. Minister says it's because of the amount of work they have to do. Okay. If that's the minister's prerogative the follow-up question then would be: does the minister have a percentage or a budget of how much more this '24-25 budget is going to be

when the full amount of the appropriated amount from the '23-24 Estimates has been used?

**MLA Sala:** I know the member opposite is just as excited as we are about the release of our budget on April 2nd where he'll get clarity on these questions.

Today isn't about that. Today is about ensuring that government has the ability to pay civil servants, keep programs running, keep delivering important services. I hope that they'll support that so we can continue to do that important work.

**Mr. Khan:** And I agree with the minister. See, we do agree in this House at times and we do want to see the budget, so—on April 2nd—so is there any chance the minister will let me see the budget ahead of April 2nd?

**MLA Sala:** No.

**Mr. Khan:** We have to have a little bit of fun in here and this appropriation is important. It's important that, as the minister says, that the government doesn't come to hope that we can pay our—the bills that are needed and the debts and the capital projects and the workers. So I agree with him; I was having a little bit of fun with that.

On a—back to a serious question now, 75 per cent of the total appropriations being asked for in this bill, can the minister say yes or no that he will go over what was appropriated in the previous budget—'23-24 budget?

**MLA Sala:** What Manitobans can expect from us is a much higher degree of fiscal responsibility than what we saw from the previous government.

We know, over this past fiscal year, and again we brought forward a report that was done by an independent accounting firm that I know the critic yesterday identified that he has a high degree of respect for—I'm sure he understands that they don't just write things willy-nilly without them being based in fact. And what they wrote was that the previous government made a series of irresponsible budgetary decisions.

That's the record that the previous government has. That's not the way we're going to approach things. We're going to budget in a good way; we're going to plan, and we're going to make sure that we deliver fiscal responsibility and accountability because we understand how important that is to allowing us to delivering on the important things that Manitobans sent us here to do, like fixing health care and making life more affordable.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Khan:** I agree. MNP is a very reputable company in the province and throughout the world on the work they do. The concern with companies—the way MNP operates is they're only as good as the data they get. They can only operate on the information that they receive.

And it clearly was written in the report that MNP did not audit or independently verify the accuracy or completeness of the supporting information. I mean, I don't know how much clearer we can make that. MNP did not audit or independently verify the accuracy or completeness of the supporting information.

That's an important clause that the minister chooses to leave out, that his government chooses to leave out in their press releases and when there's an opportunity for them to speak, that they do not mention that this was not independently verified.

So, with all due respect, we can move on from that point. The minister will say, this government say, well, these are the numbers and we'll say, with a clause like that in there, no, they're not. They're not real numbers. We need to see what the actual numbers are.

Albeit, though, when it comes to this appropriation, does the minister, when he looks at historically, as he wants to bring up, see that the—historically, when it comes to interim appropriations, it has been 35, 35, 35 and now it's 75.

Can the minister talk about the 40 per cent increase that the government is now asking for in this interim appropriation bill?

**MLA Sala:** I'm not sure where the critic is getting his information from: 2019, they asked for 75 per cent; 2020, they asked for 75 per cent; 2021, they asked for 75 per cent; 2022, they asked for 75 per cent.

We're asking for 75 per cent.

**Mr. Khan:** I believe, Deputy Speaker, the minister will be—we might be looking at different data here, points. It was—35 per cent was the total appropriations that was from 2023, \$6 billion or 35 per cent in part A. You are asking for 75 per cent in part A. That's a 40 per cent increase; 2023 was \$6 billion or 35 per cent of total appropriation as set out in the 2022 Estimates, \$12.6 billion or 75 per cent of total appropriations.

So the question is simple. And again, we're not arguing, here—I want to be very clear—we're not arguing about, you know, the importance of this bill and going forward with this bill, and that this bill's

needed to cover the finances and costs in the province. We're good with that.

The simple question is that this is a large increase from previous years. So, for clarity on that, the minister has said that they have a lot of work to do; and that's okay, you have a lot of work to do. So, that's the 40 per cent increase.

The question, then, is when you use up the remaining 25 per cent that is within this appropriation—or above this appropriation—does the minister have a percentage or number on what that's going to look like, so Manitobans can be prepared for that?

**MLA Sala:** Well, again, I'll just clarify for the critic, the number that his government requested in—we'll start again here—in 2019, was 75 per cent; 75 per cent in 2020; 75 per cent in '21; 75 per cent in '22. The number that they brought forward as an interim appropriation in '23-24 was for 35 per cent, it was for \$6 billion.

So, if we simply do the math and round that 35 per cent up to around what it would be if they had used 75 per cent, it would be roughly the exact equivalent of what we're bringing forward here in terms of an ask for appropriation.

So again, I don't know where the confusion is coming, here, for the member, but the numbers are quite clear. If he wants me to show him historic data, I'm happy to do so.

**Mr. Khan:** Okay, we agree now. So we're heading in the right direction.

So, the question, percentage-wise, is what I've been saying, is—the minister's correct. So, percentage-wise the overall numbers will roughly equal 16.8, 17 billion—we're in the billions-dollar range.

The question is, the appropriation previously was only for 35 per cent. This act is asking for 75 per cent. I'm asking why is there such a large increase in this act, of 40 per cent, when the previous government—to the own minister's saying—proportionally was the same overall, but releasing 35 and releasing 75 per cent is quite a big difference. It's actually the difference of \$6.6 billion.

So, that's what I'm asking the minister for, not based on percentages, just clarity on that increase of 40 per cent in this ask.

**MLA Sala:** I don't know why the previous government only asked for 35 per cent in '23-24, but, again, I hope the critic is listening here. The question you're

asking me is a question you could pose your own previous government when you asked for 75 per cent the four previous fiscal years prior to last year.

So it's—I guess the answer is, a common pattern.

**Mr. Khan:** So, the minister is basing his ask just on historical patterns, then, or needs?

**MLA Sala:** Well, I mean, I'm simply responding to the fact that the member seems to be indicating that this is unusual in some regard, when his party did that four fiscal years in a row.

I'll repeat the same answer I've offered already, which is, just broadly, we are in need of doing a lot of important work in this province. I think the member opposite knows that, and every member opposite knows that we were left in a really tough spot here with huge needs across the entire province.

Again, the way that our government will work will be to ensure we balance meeting those needs—those very important needs—that Manitobans have. We're a listening government. We've heard them. We have a lot of work to do, and we're going to balance delivering on those needs with fiscal responsibility.

**Mr. Khan:** In part B of the interim appropriation, again, the same thing happens here. This government is asking for a 15 per cent, and this Interim Appropriation Act again, percentages numbers overall works out to be the same once the whole budget is looked at.

But upfront, in the act, this government is asking for 90 per cent of the total appropriation set out. So 90 per cent is a large percentage of anything. That only leaves you 10 per cent left over until you have now theoretically exhausted the budget of '23. I think everyone can see that.

Same thing, the last part, A, there's only 25 per cent available. So when the previous government had done 35, you're doing 75, gives you 25 per cent room. Part B now gives you 10 per cent room.

So can the minister maybe talk about why they are going 90 per cent of the total appropriation set out in part B?

**MLA Sala:** Again, just to enlighten the member about the historic record, his government asked for 90 per cent in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022. This is not uncommon. Again, he can inquire with previous leadership within his own party as to why they did that.

There's a lot of important work to do. Part B encompasses capital investments for government. We know that it's important that those dollars are there to

continue that important capital investment work that's already in process, not new—net new items, which, of course, can only be funded once a budget is passed.

Nothing uncommon here. This is exactly the same that we saw from the previous PC government over the four years that I listed.

**Mr. Khan:** In the interest of saving time and moving on to the lovely 30-minute speeches that everyone has ready to go, myself included, we look at the part A, previous government, 35 per cent; this government, 75 per cent. Part B, previous government, 75 per cent; this one, 90 per cent. Part C, again, same thing. Previous government had 75 per cent; 90 per cent. It goes on and on. Part D, same thing, and onwards.

So the question of concern for Manitobans should be that this government, this NDP government, is asking for the math lion's share of the total appropriation upfront, which signifies that they are going to burn through the total appropriated amount for the previous budget, that was allotted in the budget, the '23-24 budget.

Manitobans should be concerned, and everyone in this room is concerned now, that once that runs out, that appropriated amount, and then this government tables their budget on April 2, they are then going to essentially double this amount or maybe even triple this amount.

If the minister's only leaving 10 per cent of wiggle room in the appropriation for a B, C and D and 25 per cent in A, which is the \$16.8 billion, versus the previous governments of \$6 billion, there is massive concern that this appropriate amount is going to—the budget is then going to dwarf whatever this—appropriated amounts is.

\* (15:40)

There's not much comment, I guess, beyond that, other than, you know, I'll ask the minister and I'll be shocked if he's going to share that with me, but does the minister want to tell everyone in the House here today how much more is Budget '24-25, that is going to be tabled on April 2, going to be—more than these appropriated amounts.

**MLA Sala:** Well, again, Honourable Chair, we're not here to release the budget. We're here to, hopefully, with the support of the opposition, be able to gain access to the funding we need to continue the operations of government.

You know, I do want to, just again, raise for the critic this business of dishonesty and not being clear

and transparent about the data you're sharing. You continue to cherry-pick the '23-24 fiscal year, which was an election year. I don't know what decisions led to the percentage differences, but again, the four previous years all have the same percentages in A, B, C and D as those we're bringing forward here.

So, you know, this—I understand the, you know, the desire to make a point at some level, but there's really too much glossing over the truth here, to a really egregious extent. Four years in a row the percentages requested from their government were the same as what we're bringing forward. So the argument that he's trying to build here, that this reflects something different, or some fiscal risk that we're creating, I mean, it's ridiculous.

We can say that, again, I'm happy to repeat it, the notion that we are somehow presenting some kind of fiscal irresponsibility in doing this is obviously patently false, but more importantly, we have the reality of the previous government's record to contend with, that was independently verified by a respected accounting firm. That's not politics; that's just the reality of the situation. We had MNP—is a respected group of accountants that did an independent verification of what we brought forward and verified that to be true.

If Manitobans have anything to be concerned about, it's about the pattern of fiscal irresponsibility from the previous government. They can be confident, Manitobans can feel very confident that we are bringing forward a strong plan that will ensure we invest in those areas that Manitobans want to see us invest in, while we balance the books. That is exactly what Manitobans can expect from us.

So, you know, again, these questions, while I appreciate them, I would ask the member to look at his own party's record and he'll see there's nothing diverging here from what has been the norm historically.

**Mr. Khan:** I appreciate the minister's comments, and you know, I apologize if I was misleading or glossing over some facts. I was just going back to last year's. I didn't want to go back two, three, four, five years. It was just the last year's numbers I thought would be most relevant in discussing the appropriation of this.

I think it is important. I think it is important that we identify that it was 35 per cent and now 75, 75 now 90 for this government. And I can appreciate that historically it was 75 per cent, as the minister says. And if we want to go back to 2019, I think it's very important

that Manitobans know that after years of steady improvement under this PC government, that led to two surpluses in this province. 2019 and 2022-23.

So, the minister can reference that the appropriations were high and that there was fiscal mismanagement. The numbers don't lie. The minister wants to reference MNP numbers that are unaudited, not independently verified. These are verified, audited numbers. That—2019, surplus; 2022-23, surplus. Last time that was done, Honourable Deputy Chair, was 2008–2008; 2008, 2009–'09, '10, '11, '12, '13, '14, '15, '16, '17—maybe half of '17.

Nine years under NDP, and they didn't have a surplus in their operations. So I believe that is something that, you know, the minister wants to talk about appropriation and fiscal—I think those are important facts. And facts matter.

This minister's asking for a blank cheque for 90 per cent—75 per cent for part A and 90 per cent for the remaining and hasn't even tabled the budget yet. The concern is that the appropriation ask is very high. Compared to historical, last year, or previous years, where there was a surplus run by the PC government, that is going to run this province into fiscal mismanagement and over-borrowing.

That is the concern. That's why we're here today. In regards to that, I will pass the questions over to honourable deputy—honourable leader—to—am I—tries—to ask a question. Apologize. I have to ask a question, right? Right? Apologies.

**The Chairperson:** Preferably, yes, a question.

**Mr. Khan:** I pass the questions now to the leader of our—interim leader of our party.

**MLA Sala:** I didn't get a question there. I believe the member was looking to pass it to one of his colleagues—the—pass the floor to one of his colleagues. If that's their decision, then I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's interesting to sit here and listen to the question-and-answer time between Finance critic and the Finance Minister, so I appreciate both of your times here this afternoon.

So, a couple of just quick questions in regards to the Interim Supply here that we're debating this afternoon and getting forward to keep the wonderful province rolling along, Mr. Finance Minister.

Just asking a question in regard to the—prior to—since we're talking about that '23-24 fiscal year and since we were talking about carrying on and moving forward with capital plans, and that's basically just taking words from the minister's mouth from a couple minutes ago.

Previous—prior to the 2023 election, the former Progressive Conservative government made a promise to the community of Lac du Bonnet and surrounding areas for a personal-care home. And the money was in place and it passed through Treasury Board and it passed through Cabinet.

And I know that his leader, the now-Premier (Mr. Kinew) also promised that if the NDP had formed government in the 2023 election, that they would be moving forward with the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home.

So I'm just wondering, since we have the Finance Minister here, does he see the pause lifting off of the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home and the other five personal-care homes promised prior to them getting elected, being lifted and proceeding on those personal-care homes?

**MLA Sala:** I'm delighted to see that the Interim Leader of the Opposition is just as excited as others to see our budget on April 2.

We know that there's a huge need to improve access to personal-care homes in Manitoba. Of course, the member opposite and the interim leader was, as the representative for Lac du Bonnet, in government for seven years and spent many of those years in Cabinet, and yet was not able to deliver on that project for his community.

I'm sure it's something that members of his constituency pushed him to deliver on and, unfortunately, he was not able, in seven years, to deliver on that for residents of that constituency.

We're excited about our budget on April 2. We know there's a ton of good news in there for Manitobans. We're excited to bring it to the House and looking forward to revealing that soon.

**Mr. Ewasko:** And just to correct the record, it's unfortunate that the Finance Minister puts a couple of those—little bit of misinformation on the record.

\* (15:50)

But, technically, the personal-care home was not only promised, it was delivered. And the problem is, is that when the NDP—and, again, if the minister is

saying that I have to wait 'til the budget—which is good; I appreciate that he puts that on the record because I'll be making sure that I'll be letting my constituents know that April 2, we should be looking at the pause being lifted on the personal-care home.

We know that the amount of money that was dedicated to the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home and the other personal-care homes that were announced, we know that because of the pause, and because the pause had carried over into the year of 2024.

And with new building codes and those things, I'm also hoping that the upcoming budget, that we're talking about the Interim Supply right now, that the upcoming budget, April 2, that he is aware as Finance Minister, and I know that, you know, he has some background in some of the various different trades around the province and that, so he would know that the increase in prices will go up eight to 10 million dollars just on that one project alone.

So, hopefully, you know, in the upcoming budget they're accounting for that, so when they lift the pause—because again, his leader, the now-Premier, had stated in written articles that he would deliver, or continue on with, the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home. So it's good to hear today that I'll be able to share with my constituents in the Lac du Bonnet constituency that we are waiting for the budget and it looks like, and I think, you know, possibly he's hinting at the pause being lifted on the—on April 2.

I'm also interested, since I have some time left on the clock, to hear his opinion on the fact that his government, and because he's Finance Minister, had written orders-in-council—I know he received copies of them yesterday when I tabled them—to the fact that the NDP are borrowing almost \$10 billion. And so I am assuming, because they're borrowing almost \$10 billion, half a billion dollars of that, each and every year moving forward, is going to be on top of the debt-servicing costs to Manitobans.

So I just would like to know why, in a year—unless he's got some form of crystal ball, that I don't know what's going to happen this coming spring and summer—but in a year when we have had no flooding, like the previous Selinger government had to tackle and, of course a worldwide pandemic which the Progressive Conservative government had to tackle, why in the world is he borrowing and signed orders-in-council for almost \$10 billion, or is it maybe setting Manitobans up for a—for the floodgates of some incredible spending year that the NDP government are going to be doing in the upcoming fiscal year?

**MLA Sala:** The irony of these questions, of course, is that this debt is refinancing debt that was issued under the previous government. And I'll help the interim leader understand it so he can hopefully put this question to rest.

During the pandemic, you had significant cash needs as a government to help manage the various cost increases that their government was dealing with. In order to meet those needs, they needed to have money be borrowed, and they needed to issue debt. Because it was the pandemic, buyers of debt only wanted to buy debt for shorter periods. So there was a significant amount of debt issued by that government for two-year periods, which is unusually short. The reason was, because it was a pandemic, buyers were uncertain. They ended up issuing a significant amount of debt to meet their elevated cash needs during COVID for two-year periods.

That two-year period has now—much of that financing is elapsing and needs to be refinanced. There's nothing to see here. It has to do with refinancing debt issued under the interim leader's previous government, in a pandemic when they had elevated cash needs and issued a lot of debt on two-year periods.

It's debt that they issued. I don't know how much more clearly I can say that.

**The Chairperson:** Any more—oh, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Ewasko:** It is interesting when the Finance Minister starts to get up on the—on his podium and start to educate others, especially when it comes time for any type of conversation on debt and driving the Province further into debt like the previous NDP government did.

They more than—the previous NDP government, under one of their advisers, Premier Doer and then Premier Selinger, which ended up raising and tripling the debt of the Province to the tune of \$25 billion. And then with their mishandling—and since this minister is in charge of Manitoba Hydro as well—the mishandling of Manitoba Hydro raised the—Manitoba Hydro's debt to \$25 billion.

So now the \$10 billion that the minister is educating, obviously, not only myself but everyone else in the House, because I know that his caucus colleagues are sitting there listening intently to him and learning, because I know that many of them on that side of the House—not all of them, some of them—don't do their homework regularly, but the Finance

Minister is taking this time to try to turn the page, distract and deflect on the—on his record and on his Premier's (Mr. Kinew) record, on some of his other ministerial records.

So, it is going to be interesting when the budget gets announced on April 2. We do look forward to seeing what there is in there, and I guess it's a bit of a carry-over on, you know, some of the money that was allocated to the personal-care homes, and I guess he's going to basically try to take some credit, much like what his Premier's been doing for the last few weeks or since the beginning of January.

So, I guess, this reckless spending that we are going to be seeing eventually from the NDP is going to increase those inflation rates, and I know that he will crow that inflation is low, and most of that has to do with the lack of their ability to bring in and increase the economy here in Manitoba.

So, it will be interesting, and it'll also—and part of my reasoning for coming on and asking some questions is to also put on the record some facts that they have—the NDP, since forming government, they've cut many things which would've either made life more affordable to Manitobans or at least make their life easier.

And so, I look forward to their new plan, and I say new with quotations because they had cut nine new schools and almost 660 daycare spaces, which some of those schools are actually in NDP-held constituencies. So I don't quite understand why the NDP caucus members, MLAs, are not questioning a little bit more of their caucus colleagues. I think probably, due to the culture within their caucus, probably is a little toxic, and I think they're a little worried of the ramification that they'd be getting from the Premier.

So, I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance, is there—is he going to raise the pause on the nine—new schools and the six personal-care homes, and why are they continuing to delay surgeries and cut those programs if he's saying that they are, you know, going to be moving forward and making better changes for Manitobans?

We're not seeing any plan, so I'm hoping come budget time there will be the odd plan unveiled because, so far, I don't think Manitobans are seeing much.

**MLA Sala:** Yes, I mean, I don't know what that five minutes was meant to accomplish.

\* (16:00)

But I can say, again, and I've answered it already, we're not here to announce our budget no matter how many ways they want to try to ask. We're here to ensure that government has the funds it needs to operate, to continue delivering on ongoing services, programs for Manitobans, to keep the lights on. We're not here to make announcements to the opposition.

In terms of this question about a plan, we're excited about the work we're doing and we do have a plan, and we are going to deliver, again, that important balance that we know Manitobans are waiting for because they haven't seen it in some time in terms of balancing our fiscal responsibilities with the priorities of Manitobans.

I can say clearly, again, the members opposite like to continue to pat themselves on the back about fictional information about having left Manitobans with a surplus. They left Manitobans with a \$1.6-billion deficit.

They don't seem to believe what every other Manitoban knows, which is that that is accurate. That's a statement of fact. And, again, their own critic for Finance has said himself he believes in MNP. He knows they're—this isn't a side wing of the NDP in Manitoba. This is a respected accounted firm. These folks don't just write whatever you want them to write. They're professionals.

And so, you know, again, if the interim leader is questioning a professional accounting firm and wants Manitobans to believe his version of the facts, I got news for him: I don't think it's going to go over very well. Manitobans know that the reality is they left us a mess. We can see it really clearly. We provided independent evidence of that.

I also can just take another minute just to—and I know the interim leader probably is really not wanting to hear this information I'm about to share, which is why he's splitting out the door, that they made a number of very irresponsible budgetary decisions—

**The Chairperson:** Sorry, you can't comment on the absence of—or presence of members in the Chamber.

**MLA Sala:** I apologize for referencing the absence of a member from the House at a key time during debate.

Look, he can't seem to find the door.

**The Chairperson:** I'd like to give the minister one more chance at an apology. Just—in your apology, you were again referencing the absence or presence of a member, so. *[interjection]*

So, I—sorry; the honourable Minister of Finance.

**MLA Sala:** I apologize for referencing his potential absence. He's still here.

### Point of Order

**The Chairperson:** The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

**Mr. Ewasko:** On the point of order: It's unfortunate. It's unfortunate that the member who has been given the privilege and the honour appointed to be the Finance Minister of the Province of Manitoba, is making such rude comments from his chair. It is unbelievable, Mr. Chair, that he would sit in his chair—I strongly recommend to the Minister of Finance and to his colleagues on that side of the House to do some homework.

There's a rule book. There is a process book for our Chamber. I understand that the MLA for Concordia is upset. I know that the MLA for Concordia doesn't do his homework on a regular basis. We see that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stands up on a day-to-day basis reprimanding the Justice Minister for not doing his homework—

**The Chairperson:** So, a point—sorry—*[interjection]* Order. Order.

A point of order is a serious matter, and I'd ask that you speak directly to what your point of order concern is, or what the breach of the rules is, and it shouldn't be used for debate.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much for your sage advice.

So, the point of order is the fact that the Finance Minister doesn't know the rules. He should do his homework. But I do accept his apology for fictitiously saying that I've left the Chamber. It is inappropriate, and especially the way he—that he did it.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity on the point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chairperson:** So, I recognize the member for Kirkfield—Kildonan-River East, speaking to the point of order.

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** It's a new point or order that arose during that one.

**The Chairperson:** Okay, I have to—

**An Honourable Member:** Sure. No problem.

**The Chairperson:** Yes, we'll get there.

So, there was no point of order in that there was no specific rule that was outlined to have been

breached. And I would point out that the word fictitious walks a line and is slightly inflammatory, so we would like to avoid using that language moving forward.

### Point of Order

**The Chairperson:** And now I will move on to the honourable member for Kildonan-River East.

**Mrs. Schott:** I don't know if it's a point of order. I don't know of all the fancy lingo here, but I would just like us to all respect the Speaker's comments earlier to remind everyone in the House to be respectful of the language that the Speaker has asked us to use; to refrain from using Mr. or Mrs. and to refrain—or, to refer to the Chair as Honourable Chair and to refrain from using pronouns.

And it was referred by the previous speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko), multiple times when they were referring to you, Deputy Speaker.

**The Chairperson:** The member for Interlake-Gimli, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** We all strive—I want to apologize to start off with. And the member is right, although it is not a point of order, but I do want to apologize on behalf of everybody in this Chamber that unintentionally uses a pronoun when they shouldn't be used.

And, Honourable Chair, please accept apology from this side of the Chamber.

\* (16:10)

**The Chairperson:** So, there's no point of order because no rule was breached.

\* \* \*

**The Chairperson:** And I appreciate the reminder to honour folks' pronouns and honorifics that everyone has chosen. Just a reminder that both me and the Speaker would appreciate the term Honourable Speaker and Honourable Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Khan:** I want to thank the member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott). And it is important, it's very important to bring it up. You're right, the Speaker had mentioned that.

At times, people will say things by accident. They'll—it's a different day and age we live in. People are, I believe, trying. I think there's a little bit of compassion needed, as we saw the other day when I was speaking and a member on the opposite side had

made an accidental comment on fasting. And we let it slide, you move on, you apologize sincerely.

I believe our House leader has apologized sincerely, but it's something to learn from and these mistakes will happen again, so it's mindful to be aware of that and just generously move forward, Honourable Deputy Chair.

Getting back to the Minister of Finance here, so we can circle back, and there won't be any five-minute questions here, so don't worry. Just that I want to ask the—I believe the minister did comment in question period earlier that this budget of '24-25 will be a balanced budget. Can the minister confirm that—it?

**MLA Sala:** We committed to delivering a balanced budget at the end of our first term. If I used that term and it was, like, thought to be—to indicate that we were going to balance it in '24-25, that was my fault to use language that indicated that.

We're committed to a balanced budget at the end of our first term, and that's what our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our party has said throughout the election.

**Mr. Khan:** And I may be mistaken, so we'll look back into it, but on the record, end of the first term is what the minister is saying, so we'll go with that.

The equalization payment that this government is receiving from the federal government of 24 per cent increase of \$843 million, has that equalization payment come into the hands of the government now, and will that be booked to the '24—starting in '24-25 fiscal year for this government?

**MLA Sala:** Those equalization payments are relative to the '24-25 fiscal year.

**Mr. Khan:** And will that equalization payment be coming in every year, X amount every year, or all be accounted for in '24-25? Or is there a, I guess, accrual of that over time, if the minister can maybe clarify that for Manitobans?

**MLA Sala:** Those dollars will be applied against the '24-25 fiscal year.

**Mr. Khan:** The member had referenced the \$10 billion for refinancing charges, and I appreciate the minister's time to have a conversation about that off channel, about that. And that was to refinance maturing debt that was taken out during the COVID crisis, I believe, and the two-year term was up. And so the—that borrowing money of \$10 billion, or 9.25, what we have recorded, was for that payment of maturing debt. Is that correct?



**MLA Sala:** The number that I referenced was \$7 billion. And, again, the majority of that was refinancing debt that was issued under the previous government.

**Mr. Khan:** So that—the majority of that debt, if my memory serves me right, I believe that this government had taken out—previous government had taken out about \$1.5 billion in COVID expenses. This minister is saying it's closer to \$7 billion was the amount required for refinancing of this.

Can the minister provide us with a breakdown of what's included within that maturing debt? Is it a consolidated debt, is it simply just the COVID debt, has that—other debts been put into this 9.25—or, \$7 billion, sorry, the minister says. What is within that maturing debt? Or is it a consolidated debt with a bunch of other expenses within there—debts within there?

**MLA Sala:** Again, the number 9 billion—or, \$9 billion continues to be raised. I'm happy to get clarity on that. I don't know where the critic is getting that number. There were \$7 billion of parameter borrowing authority that was issued.

Again, while it doesn't encompass the entire \$7 billion, the vast majority pertains to funding that the previous government had sought during COVID. That was for short-term period of two years. Much of that debt that was issued as a result, that's coming due now for refinancing. That is why we have an unusually high number here and it's explained by the previous government's financing decisions.

**Mr. Khan:** The \$9.25 billion is a number that was obtained through order-in-council that this NDP government had done on January 17, 2024.

I won't go through reading the extent of it, but on January 17, 2024, this government had taken a \$9.25 billion—through orders-in-council of \$7 billion of which go to what the minister was alluding to.

So that—within that, in the budget that's being tabled on April 2, will there be a breakdown of what's contained within this \$7-billion order-in-council for the consolidated debt?

**MLA Sala:** The \$7 billion, as has been explained repeatedly, the vast majority of that pertains to debt that was issued by the previous government during COVID. It is an unusually high number to be refinancing because the previous government had financed an unusually high amount of borrowing during COVID.

So we are simply refinancing those dollars. We have to refinance that. Those dollars don't just disappear. We

continue to need those dollars to be in place so we're refinancing them.

Again, the reason being, there was elevated cash needs that the previous government had during COVID. They issued a lot of debt to meet those needs. They issued a lot of two-year terms for that debt and now we are in a position where we need to refinance that.

Again, just—the member continues to reference \$9 billion. I have the order-in-council, which it sounds like he has, as well, and it's very clear in that it says \$7 billion. So I don't know where this \$9-billion figure continues to come from, but the OIC that he's referencing clearly states a \$7-billion figure.

**Mr. Khan:** I mean, we can move on, but the order-in-council has a total borrow amount of \$9.25 billion. I do—seen the first one, it's \$7 billion, but there's a \$1.5 billion, a \$500 million and a \$250 million, but I digress. We'll move on from that.

I'm not—the \$7 billion, \$9 billion isn't the question. The question was in reference to, will there be a detailed breakdown of what is within this consolidated debt in the budget in '24-25?

**MLA Sala:** I'll admit, being new to this role, I'm not exactly sure the level of detail that will be provided on that question in the upcoming budget.

**The Chairperson:** Any other—oh.

**Mr. Khan:** Yes, and I thank the minister for the question.

Does the minister know what the terms on this borrowing was for this \$7-billion order-in-council, what the borrowing terms on that were?

**MLA Sala:** There would have been a variety of terms as a result of having to refinance that debt. I can—as the member would know, we're in unfortunately a much higher interest rate environment, so the two-year terms of maturity that were issued under his government are now coming due.

Unfortunately, we're in a higher interest rate environment and that debt needs to be refinanced under those higher interest rates. One thing I can say is that we have incredible folks working in the Department of Finance in the Treasury division, who do an incredible job, a really great job of ensuring that we pay as little as possible for borrowing. Just an amazing team.

So I know that while we are in a higher interest rate environment, they're doing their very best to make sure that those dollars are accessed at the lowest cost possible.

\* (16:20)

**Mr. Khan:** I agree with the minister. We have a—there are amazing folks that work in this building who do an absolutely wonderful job, and I'm sure in all the departments across the board, they do a great job here.

Does—the terms the minister might not know, but does the minister know what the costs are on servicing this debt on a monthly or annual basis?

**MLA Sala:** I don't have the specific figures for that \$7 billion in debt that is being refinanced. That's a number I think we could probably seek to obtain, but I do not have that figure with me.

**Mr. Khan:** I only have about two more questions, so we'll keep it two or three questions max, and then we'll move on to our lovely 30-minute speeches by about ten of our members I know are really excited to speak, so, about five hours.

The equalization payment that the minister referenced to is going to be booked in 2024. That was announced by the federal government in the fiscal year of 2023, so why wasn't that booked in the 2023 budget, or, balance sheet?

**MLA Sala:** Well, again, those equalization payments and that announcement pertain to funding that would be provided for the following fiscal year, and so that would be why it would be accrued in that year.

I do want to say, though, the member is alluding to this, that they seem to be, at this point, playing games with this interim appropriation process that we're in. This is incredibly important, Honourable Chair. We're here to make sure we have the funding we need, and this is about keeping the lights on. So I don't know why we're talking about five hours of speeches. There's not really a lot more here to discuss.

We've been very clear and—about what it is we're asking for, and I hope the members opposite will support getting this done for Manitobans.

**Mr. Khan:** I appreciate that, and I guess I'll have to go back and look at that—at the actual announcement for the equalization payment and then when that should be accrued or accounted for.

You know, we had commented back and forth, and we've had some moments of levity in here, and that was simply a moment of levity with the minister, I guess. I won't make any more comments like that on the five hours. This is very serious, and that's why we're spending a lot of time discussing this.

On a serious note, when we look at the act, the total appropriation on this act, in 2023 it was for \$7.9 billion by the previous government, and this one here is for \$14.8 billion—double what the previous government had asked for.

So, again, I'll give the minister an opportunity to discuss on why is this appropriation act double what the previous government had asked for?

**MLA Sala:** Well, again, we've been through this multiple times. They only asked for 35 per cent of the year to be funded. We're asking for 75 per cent, which is what they did for the four years prior to last year. This is par for the course. Nothing to see.

We're doing the important work here of ensuring that we have the money necessary to keep the lights on, keep services and programs moving, to serve Manitobans.

We're looking to do that important work of fixing health care and making our province more affordable, and we're excited to bring our budget forward on April 2.

**Mr. Khan:** On a closing comment here, I will simply state that, you know, the minister had mentioned that he doesn't know why we keep referencing—or I had referenced MNP as a reputable firm, and MNP is a reputable firm. Everyone knows that. But again, they're a firm that is reputable based on the data they get.

When the data they get is one-sided, from one input, that's not audited, that's not verified, that's not independently verified, MNP will take the numbers, and they'll pump out whatever you give them.

That is what was clear was done in this report. I'm not questioning the credibility of MNP. The question was around the credibility of the information that was being given to MNP to create the support—report.

On that, I want to thank the minister and all the colleagues for putting up with these questions. I look forward to continuing the debate on this act.

**The Chairperson:** Would the minister like to comment? No? Okay.

Seeing no further questions, title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes the business before the committee.

Committee rise.

And call in the Speaker.

## IN SESSION

### Committee Report

**Mr. Tyler Blashko (Chairperson):** Honourable Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen), that the report of the committee be received.

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko), seconded by the honourable member for Fort Richmond, that the report of the committee be received.

Is it the will of the House to—Agreed?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** Agreed and so ordered. [*interjection*]

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

## CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

### Bill 25—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara), that Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024; Loi de 2024 portant affectation anticipée de crédits, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

#### *Motion presented.*

**The Speaker:** The floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I'm—want to put a few words on the record for this bill, the appropriation bill. And I want to say, you know, I just listened to what was happening in the Chamber between our critic of Finance and the Minister of Finance, and it was quite interesting when the Minister of Finance had indicated that their concern right now is fiscal responsibility. And I don't remember what—fiscal responsibility and the NDP actually go hand in hand here.

Because, the fact is, I love history, and I know the history lesson that we can share here. For a lot of the new members who've just been elected to the NDP, here, and I'm sure the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) remembers the times of the days of the NDP, the spendy NDP, that we used to nickname them

because they had a record of really bad fiscal management.

And I remember one time, actually, there was a person who was actually part of Filmon government and the Lyon government, and what would happen was when before we got elected—the Filmon's—the Filmon government got elected, there was a, you know, crossover. I remember there was a, you know, in 1988, there was election, and the Filmon government got in. And I remember one of the things it said that the Pawley government, you know, more than doubled the debt of the province.

Every indication that happened in the—during the Selinger-Doer days, it's the same thing that happened back in the day. So there's a saying, goes, history doesn't repeat itself—in the financial world—history doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme. So I'm thinking now that, you know, my mother-in-law used to always say that when—there's a good expression, you know: The road to hell's paved with good intentions. The NDP said that they're going to be actually balancing the budget at the end of the term, and I would say, you know, with their records, I can't—none of us can believe that, Honourable Speaker.

And the thing is, right now they are—they actually have over \$3 billion of promises that they did during the last election.

\* (16:30)

And I know when the last time, the member from—the Minister of Justice can remember too, that I remember when we came into government, we inherited an \$800-million deficit. And meanwhile when we—when they took over from us, we actually gave them a 275 surplus for the fiscal year of last year.

And you know they say, well, I balanced this budget, you know. But during the whole time Selinger took government, when the member for Justice first became an MLA, they never balanced any budget. They didn't know what a budget was. They just kept on spending, spending and spending, Honourable Speaker.

And you know, when it comes to—you know one thing that I have to say when it comes to the bet—budget, I am so glad that when I was a transportation minister, that I put five-year budget into the program so that there is going to be—because back in the days of the Selinger government, the saying that we used to make for them was they raid, raid, raid and then parade just before election.

That was what we used to do about transportation and infrastructure, which is probably the most important investment in this province right now. And right now I'm hearing from the construction industry right now that there is no tendering happening right now. Everything is being put on hold, and now the construction season is coming and none of them are getting ready. They're actually now telling me that they're laying off employees. And so the thing is this is a big concern, Honourable Speaker, when it comes to the budget.

So the thing is, I know in the past, especially during the Selinger days, you know, they made sure that their friends were looked after—their union friends were looked after. We saw teachers making the highest income and giving the worst results in—during the Selinger government. We were number nine out of 10, 10 out of 10, and it got to a point where you're going to get 10 out of 10—the—we were bottom rank. And we were spending the most money in education.

And the thing is when we took over government, Honourable Speaker, I remember there were so—there were so many deferred maintenance issues that were happening with our schools, with our hospitals, we had to make sure that we had to reinvest money into those infrastructures of buildings because they never took care of them. They made sure that their union friends were all taken care of, and the thing is all the promises that they're creating right now, that's \$3 billion, Honourable Speaker.

And I want to say that, you know, right now we—when we looked at infrastructure, we invested, we were made sure that, you know, Winnipeg is going to become a population of a million people. We wanted to make sure that we invested in infrastructure.

Right now I don't see any activity happening with McGillivray. You know we were doing St. Mary's. I'm going a feeling like you know the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), he wanted to open more intersections, Honourable Speaker. That was his thing. He wanted that—more intersections. Put more lights on the Perimeter Highway. And that was unsafe for a lot of drivers who were on that Perimeter Highway. As our population is going to go higher—in more population going outside the city amongst the Perimeter Highway, it's going to—he wants more intersections put on there, more lights.

And right now they—that's what they did. They underspent on infrastructure, never invested like we see with freeway systems that we see in Saskatchewan. Regina has intersections. They're—you don't stop when

you go around the city of Regina. There's a new perimeter highway around the city of Regina, Honourable Speaker, and when it comes to Saskatoon, these are like American cities almost with the inter-infrastructure that they invested.

And this—this government, NDP government, and again, the Minister of Justice remembers those days where—like, they just put more traffic lights along the Perimeter Highway. And then he—and when he's in opposition, he wants us to put more traffic lights on the Perimeter Highway so that people have—able to come on and have it—accidents that—Honourable Speaker.

And so, you know what, I want to make sure that, you know, when we're in opposition here, that our highways—I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) for instance, you know, he talks about infrastructure, and the fact is, you know, he made sure that his constituency of Swan River was looked after. But meanwhile where the oil was coming from, when the oil was coming from, in the southwest corner, they didn't spend a dime for many, many years.

When I came in as a—in a by-election, one of the biggest concerns that the media asked me about, what is the biggest concern in our neck of the woods. And I just said, you know what, it was infrastructure. The Selinger government, the Doer government, did not put any money into infrastructure. Not a penny. And I—like I said, you know, Highway 23, it was never done until we came into government. And then we're investing in Highway 75.

You now, this thing—again, I just want to make sure that when we get back into government again, they don't leave us with a huge deficit and a financial mess. I remember when I first—when we—was first assigned to a committee it was the fiscal responsibility committee, and I know when it came to my—the member from Gimli-Interlake, he was also on that committee, member for river north.

So, anyways, I would say that, you know what, we were basically looking at all the efficiencies, because, right now, there was no efficiencies when it came to the actual spending by the NDP. They were carelessly spending, and the thing is, we inherited a big mess.

And I just hope that the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), what he's saying is actually going to be the—what is going to come true here. But I—but the thing is, they have a history of not providing fiscal

responsibility. They cannot continue spending the money that they have.

And, you know, right now we have, you know, hospitals, you know, they closed in rural Manitoba. I know they came out, they did an announcement in Virden when the Premier (Mr. Kinew) came out back in the spring, talking about announcement, and one of the—CBC reporter Ian Froese said to me, why would they do an announcement in Virden when it—actually, they closed many ERs throughout rural Manitoba in their days?

You know, the member from Justice—Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) remembers that they closed 22 hospitals, and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Kostyshyn) would also remember that, too. They closed down Grandview, they closed down Reston, they closed down Manitou, they closed down Baldur. They reduced coverage, you know, when they—when it came to Boissevain, they reduced services there. All there is is a doctor, basically a clinic left there, Honourable Speaker.

So, what I'm saying right now, Honourable Speaker, I want to make sure that in their budget—and, you know, when it comes to Building Sustainable Communities, too, projects, I know the minister of municipal relations has actually stopped that grant opportunities for a lot of municipalities here. And they're not—ignoring a lot of the communities in—throughout the province of Manitoba. And a lot of—actually, some of the projects within their own constituencies—of Union Station, there's a project there.

And so it's important that they can continue doing the good work that we have done and continue the fiscal responsibility. But, you know, they say the opposite.

But, you know what? I have to say, you know, Honourable Speaker, when it comes to their story, their narrative, that they're going to balance this budget at the end of their first term. I don't think it's going to happen. I don't think it's going to happen, because the fact is, they'll go—continue going on to their ways of mismanaging finances.

The thing is, lot of, like, lot of them over there, like, they don't have a lot of business background. And so I would say, you know, it concerns me. It concerns Manitobans when it comes to their tax dollars. Because, at the end of the day, it's just not government money, it's people who pay their taxes. This is who we—they need to take responsibility for, is making sure that when we pay our taxes, when Manitobans pay taxes, they are going to—we have fiscal responsibility.

In this case, when it came to the history of the NDP, that wasn't the case. That wasn't the case when we inherited an \$800-million deficit. And they say that we gave them a fiscal mess when it came to \$275-million surplus. That's the difference between an \$800-million deficit, so I don't know if they understand the difference between the numbers there, Honourable Speaker, what is a deficit and what is a surplus. And so that concerns me.

You know, I pride with my constituents that when it comes to now making sure that they're accountable, I'm going to make sure that every single step of the way, these next three and half years, that I'm going to make sure, especially when it comes to road construction, that they actually—especially in the next five years that we listed every single project, these projects are going to get done, and that they're not going to take the money away like they did, like, raid, raid and parade just before election.

We're going to make sure that that money gets invested into our Manitoba highways, because at the end of the day, some of the best opportunities for growth is actually job creation, making sure that when we invest in our highways, we get a lot of investment that comes back to this province.

\* (16:40)

And, you know, one thing that we did that we had pride of is we had the economic committee of Cabinet. And the thing was, Honourable Speaker, we brought a lot of interest and we brought a lot of business and a lot of money into this province for investment.

And one of the examples is in Portage la Prairie. We brought Roquette—was what—which—\$1.3-billion project. And then when it came to Simplot right next door, they put another \$450 million of investment for expansion for potatoes. And the thing is, this is so important to Manitoba, is the infrastructure in rural Manitoba to make sure that our produce and goods and services gets to the processing markets, gets to the cities, to make sure that it gets intraprovincial transportation into other places where our goods and services go, Honourable Speaker. And it's so important.

Right now, when it comes to Manitoba, we do have the trucking—we're a heart of transportation—and making sure that—lot of that—those items in the budget is basically invested in our highways. The Perimeter Highway, which is so much important for safety of Manitobans who are going to work and moving around the city of Winnipeg—if we don't invest into the city of Winnipeg, we're going to have a nightmare,

much like a lot of cities had to spend extra money to making sure that—like Calgary, for instance. They didn't—they had to make a major project in years later, and it cost them a lot more money to making sure that they can move traffic. Because the fact is they went beyond a million; now they're up to 1.5 million people within that region of Calgary.

And this is why we want to make sure that we make—we want to make sure that this investment gets put into the—into infrastructure. We want to make sure that health care is also addressed too, because the fact is, they went out there and told how bad health care was. Meanwhile, every other province was actually having the same issues of trying to find workers. Yes, they can open up ERs in Winnipeg, reopen them like they said, but the thing is, where are they going to get the staff from?

And the fact is, the thing is, what we were doing, we were getting Filipino nurses to come from the Philippines, and they have actually cancelled the contract. We actually had 30, 40 Filipino nurses come into the Prairie Mountain Health region, which was really needed for health care. And I feel, like, in the past, this NDP government forgets rural Manitoba in a lot of cases too. And I'll make sure that I'm here for the next three and a half years, is to make sure that we're never forgotten, much like we were back in the Selinger days. And like I said, we have a couple of colleagues here that remember that, and remember how there was a mass exodus of our young people going out of the province.

And we were creating investments; we were creating projects that were going to be coming here. And right now, the reason why we balanced our budget last year was because we focused on revenue. We focused on economic development. And we brought that revenue in. And we had surplus for last year. And my concern is that they're already reversing a lot of that stuff that we've done when it came to attracting, to have the advantage of having a better tax system here, to compare us with Saskatchewan.

I remember when I first became MLA, they raised the PST by 1 per cent. It didn't help communities like mine in—when I was in—representing Virden, Arthur-Virden, or Melita. You know, we're so close to the border—or Boissevain—we're close to the US. A lot of that spending can be done in those other provinces because they have an advantage. And right now Moosomin is growing quite largely because of the policies they have, and Virden was starting to grow. But when the NDP days, the population's stagnant.

We had an oil boom, and our population barely grew by 1 per cent. Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, during the NDP days, the population grew from the—from one census to the other, over 12 per cent in Moosomin.

So this is why I feel that we are competing with Saskatchewan and other Prairie provinces, and I just hope that, you know, when it comes to moving forward on these budgets that the NDP are going to perform, that they don't raise taxes because, again, that \$3 billion that they promised during the election is going to make—that it's—the only way that they're going to pay for it, especially if they're not focusing on economic development, is raising of taxes.

We saw them in the past; we saw them during the Pawley days, we saw them during the Selinger-Doer days. And I'm really concerned right now that, you know, as much as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) goes out and says, we're all rah-rah, you know, over time, that honeymoon is going to be over. And the other—no other choice to do the budget, is going to have to raise taxes, Honourable Speaker.

So, on that note, I'm going to leave my words on record here, to say, you know, we are watching. We are watching to making sure that the NDP are—we're going to—but they promised a balanced budget by the end of next term. I want to see that happen for the betterment of Manitobans, to the ratepayers of Manitobans.

So, on that note, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** It's an honour to rise again and speak to this very important Interim Appropriation Act we have brought forward by this NDP government, and I understand I have 30 minutes to talk about this today, so I will not use all of that time, as the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and I have spoken. But there are a couple important things I do want to get on the record here before we call this to vote here.

Because this interim 'appropriasht'—act is important. It's about continuity so the government can continue to operate. We understand that on this side of the House. But there are some questions that the Minister of Finance has yet to answer and from his answers today, we will get those during the budget. And I look forward to seeing that because there are a lot of questions that Manitobans should have after listening to this.

The one that jumps right out, off the bat, is in this act, this NDP government is asking for \$14.8 billion,

historic amount, 14.8. Previous government, 2023, was \$7.9 billion. That's almost double what they're asking for in this act. When asked to speak to where that money's going to be spent, how it's going to happen, it's, wait 'til the budget comes, wait 'til the budget comes, wait 'til the budget comes. So we will wait 'til the budget comes. I asked the minister if he would show it early, he said he will not, so we'll wait.

The equalization payment by the federal government, \$843 million, the largest ever, 24 per cent increase equalization payment. Manitobans have a right to know where that money's going. That money should be going to make life more affordable, not to pay for irresponsible promises that were made under this PC—under this NDP government. PCs left them in a surplus.

Now they say we're looking at a deficit from unaudited reports, MNP, an accounting firm. Anybody—whatever information you give them, the report's only going to be as good as that information you give them. This was unaudited. It was unverified. It was completely based on the information the minister had given MNP and, of course, they're going to come out with the data that you give them; that's how they operate. They're not making up numbers; they're going off numbers only a one-sided party gave them now with this NDP party.

When you look at other expenses this Province has and these irresponsible promises made by this NDP government, you see a \$9.25-billion order-in-council, largest order-in-council in recent history: \$9.25 billion.

And we're not even talking about the budget here. The minister wants to reference that this is for refinancing of debt maturity. How much of that is it? Couldn't get an answer. What are the payment terms on that? Couldn't get an answer. What are the payments going to be in a month or a year? Couldn't get an answer; \$9.25 billion is no joke in this province. It's no joke for anyone. It's a serious number and Manitobans have a right to know.

When you look at the previous historic spending by this NDP party, it's no—it shouldn't catch anyone by surprise. This NDP is known for increasing your taxes and doubling or tripling or quadrupling your debt.

With their historic borrowing from this appropriation act of \$14.8 billion versus previous \$7 billion, Manitobans should be worried about where this money is going. How is it going to be paid back? Who's going to pay it back? Minister couldn't answer those questions today.

Hydro tripled their debt under this—under some of the people who are here, from our NDP, but under the NDP, tripled their debt; 33 cents on every dollar goes to pay for your interest payments alone on your hydro—on Hydro's debt.

How are they going to go forward in the future? We haven't had a plan yet. Fired the CEO a week before committee so she couldn't answer, maybe. Minister comes out, a week, says we disagree; she's fired the next week. The CEO and the board chair were muzzled when it came to answering questions on this. Actually, they said that the performance of the former CEO was great and they were happy with it.

So it leaves you to question what is this NDP going to do with all this money. Why are they borrowing so much money right now? And let's not forget, this is the party that raised the PST after they said they won't raise the PST. And for his current—oh, that was a long time ago.

\* (16:50)

This is the party that says they won't raise your taxes, and they already have raised school taxes. They have four schools to raise taxes.

They talk about tax cuts. The only tax cut they know is a fake tax crack-cut. A fake tax cut. That's what this government is known for. They won't oppose their best friend Justin Trudeau when it comes to the carbon tax. They're in favour of raising the carbon tax on April 1st. Seven out of 10 ten premiers in Canada are saying that they should stop; the carbon tax needs to be axed.

This Premier (Mr. Kinew) won't stand up. He won't even answer a question about it. They won't even answer a question on the carbon tax. They keep deflecting. That's how afraid they are of their best friend Justin Trudeau.

Manitobans have a right to know—Manitobans will know when this budget comes out that they are going to be in deep trouble with this NDP, and we're going to hold them accountable to that.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members wishing to speak in debate?

Hearing none, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 25, The Interim Appropriation Act of 2024.

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

The House will now prepare for royal assent.

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

**The Speaker:** The motion is passed on division.

The House will now prepare for royal assent.

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Dave Shuttleworth):** Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

*Her Honour Anita R. Neville, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, the Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:*

**The Speaker:** Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks Your Honour to accept the following bill:

**Clerk Assistant (Ms. Vanessa Gregg):**

Bill 25—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2024; Loi de 2024 portant affectation anticipée de crédits

**Deputy Clerk (Mr. Tim Abbott):** In His Majesty's name, the Lieutenant Governor doth thank the Legislative Assembly, and assents to this bill.

*Her Honour was then pleased to retire.*

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The hour now being 5 o'clock, this House stands adjourned, and is adjourned until Monday at 1:30.



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 14, 2024

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