

**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>
AL TOMARE, 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
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
<i>Vacant</i>	Tuxedo	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 27, 2024

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

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

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**The Speaker:** Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Jewish Heritage Month

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** Honourable Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize May as Jewish–Canadian Jewish Heritage Month. First passed in 2018 by the federal Parliament, Jewish Heritage Month recognizes the role that Jewish Canadians have played in their communities across this country. And in 2022, this Assembly passed The Jewish Heritage Month Act, which recognized the vibrant history and diverse culture of the Jewish people in Manitoba.

Jewish Canadians have made incredible contributions across Canada, and their work has also been recognized in our own province. The first Jews made

their way to Manitoba in the 1870s, and the community grew from there, with many generations of Jews making their home in Manitoba in an effort to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Jewish Manitobans have played a pivotal role in building our province, including serving as members of this Assembly, including David Orlikow, Saul Cherniack, Maitland Steinkopf, Sidney Spivak, Izzy Asper, Jim Carr. And we would be remiss to not mention the Honourable Anita Neville, the first Jewish Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba.

Jewish Manitobans have made their mark on our province in another way. From the fields of law, business, labour, culture and community, Jewish Manitobans have provided important leadership in all aspects of our social, cultural and economic life of our province.

We, as a government, were pleased to recognize their contributions earlier today at an event in the Rotunda, which featured guests from the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, among other community institutions and members, some of whom have joined us in the gallery today. Manitoba is home to the fifth largest Jewish population in Canada, and the Jewish community continues to play a prominent role in this province.

Unfortunately, the community continues to face challenges with the rise in anti-Semitism across Canada. Just over this past weekend, we heard disturbing news of shots being fired at a Jewish day school in Toronto. This follows a previous firebomb thrown at a synagogue in Montreal and bomb threats at other Jewish schools in Toronto.

Honourable Speaker, we recognize that so many in our Jewish communities came to Canada seeking a better life. They came to Canada to escape generational persecution and, in many cases, came as survivors of the Holocaust. Our government is committed to preserving that history. Working with the Jewish community, we were proud to include Holocaust education in our K-to-12 curriculum. It was my pleasure to join so many community leaders on Yom HaShoah to make this formal announcement and hear first-hand the difference that this change would make.

We know that the fight against all forms of racism and intolerance begins in the education system.

By teaching today's young people about the wrongs of the past, we can ensure that our future generations are well-equipped to push back against all forms of anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination.

As members of this Assembly, we have an obligation to speak out against all forms of anti-Semitism, discrimination and racism. We recognize the hardships of the Jewish community, but equally recognize their contributions to Winnipeg, to Manitoba and to Canada.

I want to congratulate the Jewish community on their accomplishments to date, and on behalf of our government, I want to recognize the bright future that the community has in our province.

Mazel tov.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before recognizing the next speaker, I'm going to take a moment to acknowledge some students in the gallery. We have with us in the public gallery New—students from New Life Fellowship, 15 grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Eduardo Bergen, and they are the guests of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert).

\* \* \*

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** May is annually celebrated as Jewish Heritage Month. It provides Jewish Manitobans with the opportunity to be recognized and celebrated, and an opportunity for all Manitobans to learn more about Jewish heritage and the many contributions of the Jewish community to our province.

May was selected because it holds significant meaning to Jewish communities around the world. Notably, it often lines up with Shavuot, or the feast of weeks, which celebrates the spring harvest and commemorates the revelation of the Torah.

In 2022, our PC team was proud to join hundreds of members of the Manitoba Jewish community to officially adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism in Manitoba.

The rise of anti-Semitism in Manitoba and across the country is extremely troubling and should be universally condemned by every member of the Legislature. Our team stands with the Jewish community against hate, discrimination and extremism in all its forms.

The Jewish community has made countless contributions to Manitoba as a whole. I'd particularly like

to note the contributions of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the Jewish Heritage Centre of Canada, who are with us in the gallery today.

And I'd also like to acknowledge the incredible Jewish community groups, who do so much good for our communities. I'm thinking in particular of the Jewish community fund, which supports great work in communities across Manitoba, including in my own constituency of Roblin, where they recently supported the Friends of the Harte Trail's tree-planting initiative, and other groups like Camp Massad and the Simkin Centre, who are doing great work for Manitobans.

I encourage all Manitobans to learn more about Jewish heritage and to participate in the special events that are happening throughout the province to celebrate Jewish Heritage Month.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

\*(13:40)

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

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

**MLA Lamoureux:** I rise this afternoon to speak to Jewish Heritage Month and how the Jewish community has contributed to who we are as a nation, and more specifically, here today in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, think about the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. I know I catch myself thinking about individuals like Izzy Asper, who we can reflect upon, and Gail Asper, two individuals who contributed immensely to the first national museum to be located outside of Ottawa and happens to be right here in Winnipeg where the Red River and Assiniboine River come together.

It has been shared with me how Izzy had a dream of making this museum a reality and if it would not be for him, it would not be here today.

Honourable Speaker, it is a beautiful, and can often be an over overwhelming museum. I'm sure a number, if not all, of my colleagues have experienced this national treasure that is becoming only more and more important as we see what is happening in the world around us.

Unfortunately, every day, Jewish Canadians are faced with anti-Semitism. The Jewish community is frequently targeted and considered to be the most targeted group for hate crimes in Canada.

Any form of discrimination, including the uprise of anti-Semitism, has no place in our society and it is up to each and every one of us to stand alongside and advocate for the Jewish community.

Here in Manitoba, we have the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg and the Asper Jewish Community Campus. We have events such as Folklorama, and the Israeli pavilion, which is a great show to see.

And as the Jewish community continues to grow, we need to do all that we can to protect individuals' rights and keep everyone safe.

Honourable Speaker, in closing, I'd like to recognize the strength and resiliency of Holocaust survivors, share that we need to do more to better protect Manitobans, and I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward today's statement.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Further ministerial statements?

#### **Manitoba Access Awareness Week**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** As Manitoba's Minister responsible for Accessibility, I am pleased to announce May 26 to June 1 is Manitoba Access Awareness Week.

This week promotes accessibility and inclusivity, and recognizes dedicated individuals who are working towards a future with fewer barriers and better access for all.

This week is also an opportunity to talk about our government's commitment to a more accessible Manitoba. We are committed to creating a more equitable and inclusive province by ensuring Manitobans with disabilities have a voice in the legislation supporting them, while also working in partnership with individuals, businesses, community groups and other organizations.

While some provinces are just now beginning the work on accessibility legislation, Manitoba was one of the first provinces to adopt The Accessibility for Manitobans Act under a former NDP government in 2013. We were a leader then and our government is ready to be a leader in accessibility once again.

In January 2024, we enacted the fourth of five standards under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act: the Accessible Transportation Standard Regulation. This standard helps transit providers, schools, vehicles-for-hire and municipalities create a system of transportation that is more inclusive for all Manitobans of all abilities.

The dedicated staff of the Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat continue to help Manitoba organizations and businesses comply with these standards by offering free resources and training. During this year's Manitoba Access Awareness Week, they will be hosting a series of virtual events focusing on Accessible Information and the Communication Standard. Participants will learn how to make websites, documents and other communication materials that are more accessible for everyone.

While much progress has been made, it is also important to acknowledge that much more work lies ahead. This includes developing and enacting the fifth accessibility standard to address barriers in outdoor public spaces.

I want to say miigwech to all of the amazing staff at the Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat for all the work they do to remove barriers in our province.

I would also like to thank the Accessibility Advisory Council for their incredible work on standard development. The council's time and efforts are deeply appreciated.

Our government believes in accessibility and inclusivity and understands that they are essential values for all Manitobans. And this week reminds us, when people come together, we can create a better future for everyone.

I look forward to our continued work in building a more accessible Manitoba.

Miigwech.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** This week is Access Awareness Week in Manitoba, a time where Manitobans have the opportunity to recognize and raise awareness of accessibility barriers that people with disabilities face, and to promote the removal of these barriers.

Access Awareness Week was originally recognized in the 1980s with the goal of promoting accessibility and inclusion. Manitobans recognized that an awareness week was needed to bring attention to the barriers that persons with disabilities faced, and continue to face, so that these barriers can be broken down.

In 2022, our PC government took steps to ensure that Manitobans living with disabilities would be better supported by passing bill 72, otherwise known as The Disability Support Act. It was through this act that we created a new dignified income support stream

that would be separate from EIA for Manitobans living with severe and prolonged disabilities.

Our PC government was proud to bring in this new Manitoba Supports for Persons with Disabilities program, after years of advocacy illustrated how the EIA program was ill-suited to Manitobans who face severe and prolonged barriers that stopped them from working. We were also happy to increase other benefits given to persons with disabilities, such as indexing the basic needs allowance for those individuals to rate-to the rate of inflation, after the NDP froze benefits for 17 years.

Further to this, our PC government invested more than \$13 million in June 2023 to index the Rent Assist benefit for low-income Manitobans and to better support Manitobans living with disabilities, because we recognize that housing is a basic human right for all people, no matter their background.

However, despite these and other supports that were provided under our PC government, we recognize that there are still barriers that need to be taken down. That is why we'll do everything in our power to hold the NDP government into account and will continue advocating for Manitobans with disabilities and promoting their interests.

To access—to celebrate this week, the Manitoba Accessibility Office will be showcasing free webinars that I encourage all Manitobans to participate in. These webinars will have knowledgeable speakers who will cover various topics such as digital accessibility and how accessible content can be created and shared.

I wish all Manitobans a very happy Access Awareness Week.

Thank you.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### Larry McKay

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Today, we honour an incredible leader in sport in our province, Larry McKay.

Larry, who joins us in the gallery here today, is retiring from his 35-year career as the head coach of the University of Winnipeg men's volleyball program. He took over the head coaching role in 1989 and led the Wesmen to two national championships over his career. He's been named national coach of the year three times and was inducted into Volleyball Manitoba's Hall of Fame in 2011.

Larry's unique journey makes him stand out. He started out as a player—a practice player at the University of Manitoba, which led to opportunities to be a manager and assistant coach. He often thanks the start of his career to his own mentors who allowed him to watch and learn at their games and practices.

Larry, as a result, builds his players up for success. His coaching style was calm from the sidelines but fierce in pushing players to lean into their discomfort and grow from it.

\* (13:50)

Larry made sure to spread his expertise and knowledge beyond Wesmen sports to high schools across the province, giving younger players the opportunity to learn from him and his athletes.

He also made a mark at the international level coaching—as coaching staff of several of Canada's national teams, including as an assistant at the 2016 Rio Olympics and as the head coach of the 2021 national team that finished second at the North, Central America and Caribbean Volleyball Confederation and qualified for the world championship.

He is now retiring as the longest serving coach in the history of Wesmen Athletics. Larry's irreplaceable legacy has changed the standard of the sport forever.

As someone who was positively impacted by Larry's brilliance, humility, kindness and leadership, I know he will be missed by Wesmen Athletics and Manitoba's entire volleyball community.

Please join me in wishing Larry all the best in his retirement, and I'm sure that Larry will continue to serve the community no matter what he does next.

Thank you.

##### David Bebbington

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Honourable Speaker, I stand in the Manitoba Legislature today to pay tribute to an individual who has devoted five decades to educating young minds in the French language at Vincent Massey High school in Brandon.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to welcome my guests David Bebbington, his wife Fran Bebbington, daughter Sheila Marlow and nephew Brad Salyn, who are with us in the gallery today.

In January 1974, Mr. David Bebbington embarked on his journey at Vincent Massey High school, marking the beginning of an era that spans over a half a century and 100 semesters.

Over the decades, Mr. Bebbington has no doubt witnessed the many changes within the educational landscape, yet his unwavering commitment to fostering a love for learning in his students remains constant. He has guided thousands of students towards prosperous futures, many of whom have become his colleagues in education.

Mr. B, as he is affectionately referred to by his students, goes far beyond the confines of the classroom. His involvement in extracurricular activities is a testament to his ingrained approach to education. He has coached soccer teams, bowling teams, orchestrated a weekly lunchtime karaoke club and the list goes on. He has pioneered the school's travel club, broadening horizons for countless students and educators, giving them the opportunity to explore the world beyond the walls of the classroom.

The influence Mr. B has on Vincent Massey High school is profound. His vibrant enthusiasm, wit and compassion all contribute to the school's positive culture. He teaches his students to dream big and to believe in their potential.

As Mr. Bebbington shows no signs of concluding his educational odyssey, I invite everyone to join me in extending a heartfelt congratulations to him for surpassing the milestone of 50 years in education, and convey our best wishes for his continued success in enriching the lives of his students.

### **The Women of Note**

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** I rise today to honour an incredible group of women who have been a beacon in Manitoba's musical community.

The Women of Note choir is a community choir with over 70 members; 24 of them are present here in the gallery today. This year marks an incredible milestone: they are celebrating their 30th anniversary.

It is my privilege to celebrate them, and to pay tribute to their extraordinary founder and artistic director, Patricia Rabson, who is retiring this year.

For three decades, Patricia has been the leader and the very heart of the Women of Note choir. As their leader, she has directed the choir through an incredible 30 years of performances that have spanned across the globe. Through her artistic vision and strong leadership, she has made the Women of Note choir into a

remarkable testament to the power of music and the importance of community.

The Women of Note are more than just a choir, they are a sisterhood. Patricia saw the potential in each and every member and helped to nurture their voices and cultivate their self-confidence. Under her leadership, they have broken down barriers and repeatedly shown us the value of women's contributions to the arts.

Patricia, your vision and leadership has been the very heart of this choir for so many years. And after hearing the speeches read at your anniversary gala, it is clear to me how much your dedication has inspired, nurtured and empowered everyone you have encountered.

I ask for the names of the members present to be added to Hansard, and I would like to ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Patricia and the Women of Note Choir and to thank them for their 30 years of making joyful noise.

Thank you so much.

*Mélanie Boudreault-Dykes, Amanda Burke, Anne Burns, Meghan Capner, Denise Chammartin, Marilyn Cozzuol, Diane Cullen, Lori Flood, Janine Guinn, Jody Hecht, Lindsay Hoffman, Kimberly Lapatha, Katelin Martin, Jean McCleod, Kim Misko, Christine Polimeni, Patricia Rabson, Jodi Robillard, Tracey Silagy, Dorothy Stephens, Laura Stephens, Karen Stuart, Suzanne Ullyot, Diane Wreford.*

### **Kadriana and Colton Lott**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Curling fans in this province may one day look back at these times with the realization that it is a golden age for curling in Interlake-Gimli. Today I am proud to recognize Kadriana and Colton Lott of Gimli for their incredible success in mixed doubles.

Starting out strong by winning the first provincial championship that they competed in, Kadriana and Colton have been on a roll for these past six years. As a team, they have won the Manitoba championship three times, and by virtue of their performance have earned an automatic qualification to the Canadian championship a further three times. Having played five Canadian championships, they have medaled four times, taking home one bronze, two silver and a gold.

Colton and Kadriana were—went undefeated in the Canadian championships on their way to gold and the honour of representing Canada at the world mixed

doubles championship in Sweden, where they ultimately finished with an 8 and 1 record. Unfortunately, they lost a nail-biter in the medal round to the eventual silver medal winning team from Estonia.

Currently ranked No. 6 in the world, Colton and Kadriana have qualified for the 2024 Olympic trials with a spot in the 2026 Olympics on the line.

Kadriana and Colton's great success so early in their career is truly amazing, and I can't wait to see how far they go.

I know everyone in this Chamber can get behind our homegrown curling superstars, so please join me in standing to congratulate Canadian mixed doubles champions Kadriana and Colton Lott, joined by their loving sister and mother whose names I submit to Hansard.

*Jennifer Sahaidak, mother; Kenna Sahaidak, sister*

### Riverwood House

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Honourable Speaker, many communities throughout our province are facing significant challenges with poverty, addictions and homelessness, and for too long these issues have been ignored. But community organizations have stepped up and walked alongside vulnerable Manitobans to provide them with the meaningful support that they need.

A 40-unit transitional housing project in Elmwood is one of those vital projects, making important strides towards increasing the support systems available in Manitoba for people experiencing homelessness, poverty and addictions.

Riverwood House, an initiative of Riverwood Church and Winnipeg Supportive Housing, provides temporary housing for Manitobans in recovery who need a supportive and substance-free environment. They work in partnership with other community organizations to identify potential residents and offer bachelor suites equipped with the essentials and access to shared spaces for peer support and programs.

Riverwood operates with a strong focus on the freedom and privacy of their residents, allowing them to truly feel safe and comfortable in their new homes. Residents can access important services such as counselling, skill development, recovery programs and health supports to assist on their journey to recovery. Riverwood House works hand-in-hand with residents every day to ensure that when they are ready to transition to permanent housing, they can stay on the path of recovery.

I recently had the great pleasure of touring Riverwood House and meeting the incredible staff. The overall environment was warm and welcoming, and we heard from residents in hallways and elevators who spoke highly of their experiences at Riverwood. One part of their incredible story is the many current staff members are previous Riverwood tenants who completed the program and decided to use their lived experience to give back to their community.

\* (14:00)

This is just another example of the incredible impact of this place and the spirit of Manitobans who have been helped to turn around and offer the same help to others, lifting—helping lift entire communities on their shoulders and carry us all forward.

I want to highlight that one of the important reasons people choose to do this work is a calling of faith, and for Riverwood Church, putting their faith into practice has meant serving and caring directly for their community.

Initiatives—

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**The Speaker:** The member has leave.

**Mr. Wiebe:** Initiatives like Riverwood House and many others, led by churches and other religious institutions, are a key part of addressing the addictions crisis and ending chronic homelessness. I want to thank not only Riverwood House today, but also the many other faith-based organizations throughout our province who care for vulnerable Manitobans and make our communities safer.

For so many, Riverwood House is a—truly a stepping stone towards positive change in the lives of Manitobans experiencing addictions.

Honourable Speaker, I ask that my guests names, including residents themselves of Riverwood House, be included in Hansard today and that all my colleagues join me in thanking Riverwood House for their incredible work.

*Jon Courtney, Vanessa Galbraith, Bruce Kirkpatrick, Steve Neufeld, Shane Thomas, Lyle Wheeler*

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before proceeding to oral questions, I have some guests in the House I'd like to introduce.



First, I'd like to point out that it is Elena Verrelli's last day as the senior legislative page. Elena would like to personally thank each and every one involved in the legislative process, not only doing their jobs with care, but never failing to be kind to the pages.

Elena is confused as to why this second year of paging is almost over, as it feels it has just begun.

In the following year, Elena will be moving forward in her academic journey, going into preliminary year of engineering at the University of Manitoba.

Paging to her will always be remembered as a dignified duty filled with lasting memories she will carry in whatever she does in life. She would like to shout-out to the group of pages this year for being very supportive and energetic group.

And on behalf of all of us in the Assembly, I want to wish you the very best in the future, and thank you for your amazing service to us over the past year. You really are part of an important team that can allow us to do our work here in the Chamber, so thank you and best of luck.

And also I'd like to point out that Elena is joined in the gallery by her parents, Maalwa and Maria Garash Verrelli [*phonetic*]. Sorry for the pronunciation.

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today students from Université de Saint-Boniface: Fatoumata Bamba, Heddy El-Gubtan, Eunice Augustin, Rebecca Augustin, Caleb Dorge, Zena [*phonetic*] Zaoui, who are guests of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard).

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

Further, I'd like to draw all-attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us Patti Chmelyk, originally from Alberta and now living in Nova Scotia, who is the guest of the honourable member for River Heights (MLA Moroz), and was his former colleague with the NDP in Alberta.

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

I would like to draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Larry McKay, retired head coach of the University of Winnipeg men's volleyball program, and also Chinwe Ezewayunka [*phonetic*], visiting

from Nigeria, who are the guests of the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara).

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

And lastly, but very importantly, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where the 2024-2025 legislative pages are present today for their orientation session.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Food and Shelter Costs Government Record

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Honourable Speaker, Last week Food Banks Canada released their report card, grading this NDP government on its performance so far. In 2024, 40 per cent of people are now spending more than one third of their income on housing, and 39 per cent of Manitobans feel they are worse off compared to last year. And I quote from the report: Manitoba was among the better graded provinces but has since declined.

Honourable Speaker, one in four Manitobans are struggling to get food on the table. This NDP Premier looked Manitobans in the eye and promised to lower food prices, and he has failed.

My question is: Why?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** We know that food insecurity is a major challenge for people in Manitoba, and inflation has been one heck of a huge obstacle for many families to overcome.

One of the biggest challenges, however, is that Manitobans had to put up with six months of a PC government within the past year, a government that continuously made prices higher, raising hydro rates, charging a gas tax.

We took a different approach. On January 1st of this year we cut the provincial tax on gasoline and diesel to zero. It's starting to show results. Not only do we have the lowest inflation rate in Manitoba, but StatsCan tells us that we actually have the lowest rate of inflation on food purchased from stores of anywhere in the country.

There is much more work to be done, but the policy direction that we're taking is proving results for you, the people of Manitoba.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** I am going to table the consumer price index for Manitoba since October 2023, showing that the cost of food and shelter has clearly gone up since the NDP took office.

What grade did the NDP get on poverty measures? An F; What about access to health-care services? An F. Food insecurity in Manitoba? An F. Spending over 30 per cent of income on housing? An F. And finally, what grade did this NDP Premier get on his legislative agenda? An F.

Despite campaigning on, quote, helping the most vulnerable Manitobans, Food Banks Canada is giving the NDP a failing grade on affordability. These NDP Cabinet ministers need to stop patting themselves on the back and start paying attention to the reality facing Manitobans.

Does—

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

**Mr. Kinew:** The statistics that the member opposite tabled show that Manitoba has the lowest inflation rate on food of anywhere in the country. It's 0.6 per cent. The inflation rate on food purchased from grocery stores is half the national average here in Manitoba.

Again, there's still a ton more work to be done, but the steps that we've already taken are beginning to prove results for you, the people of Manitoba.

And when we talk about the most vulnerable Manitobans we're talking about kids, and that's why I'm so proud of our Education Minister for bringing in a universal nutrition program accessible to every child in every single school in the province of Manitoba. This is going to lift children out of poverty.

What did the PCs say when we proposed this in opposition? They said, and it's a direct quote, that it's a bad idea. So perhaps in the final question, she should explain why the PCs think it's a bad idea to feed hungry children.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** One in four Manitobans can't even afford to put food on their table. They can't afford a car, never mind the gas to go in it. A temporary gas tax holiday is no help to them. They can't afford the roof over their heads or the food on their family's table.

They campaigned on cracking down on grocery stores to lower food prices, but the NDP have only made food prices worse.

Why are Manitobans paying more for groceries and more for housing under the NDP?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Kinew:** I didn't hear any commentary about the PCs' failures during their time in office. Again, we said we should feed hungry children in Manitoba. And what did the PCs say? The PCs said it was a bad idea. No wonder the member opposite doesn't want to defend that; that position is indefensible.

That's why our government was elected. We're doing the exact opposite. This team right here: feeding hungry kids right across the province of Manitoba.

But the work to ensure that we combat poverty and food insecurity doesn't end there. We also cut the provincial fuel tax. Members opposite might understand that there's a lagging impact here. We cut the fuel tax on January 1 of this year, and now in the most recent months, we have the lowest inflation rate on food of anywhere in Canada.

These policy tools were at their disposal; they refused to exercise them. We're different. We're taking action to save you money.

### **Green Team Program Funding Concerns**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Honourable Speaker, members opposite have heard my little math lesson a few times already: 5.6 million is less than 9.6 million; 1,500 is less than 2,500. But I got a new one today: 300,000 is a whole lot less than 4 million.

Will the minister step up today and return the \$3.7 million to the charities, non-for-not-for profits and community groups that were callously cut?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Members opposite know that we're putting people to work right across this great province. We're building hospitals. We're building schools. And, importantly, our team is reopening emergency rooms that were closed by the PCs during their two years of cuts and payoffs.

Importantly, we're also a listening government. And that's why I'm very proud of our minister going back and listening to stakeholders who've expressed concerns and then going through the process of Treasury Board to find the resources to go out and help folks who've been asking for additional resources to fund their Green Team positions.

But, of course, that sort of listening and that sort of going through the mechanics of Treasury Board never happened under the PCs, and that's why I've got a number to share with the member opposite: \$1.6 billion. That's the deficit that we inherited on day one because they never cared about the finances; they only cared about trying to make promises to earn re-election. They—

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

The honourable member for Lakeside, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. King:** We know that the minister was forced to meet with the Camping Association after being called out for his lack of leadership by this side of the House. But, as I mentioned the other day, there are still about 200 other groups that were left out.

Does every organization need to join us in the gallery and draw attention to the minister's oversights before they get their audience?

**Mr. Kinew:** We know that we're not only building the health-care facilities to make up for the cuts that were exercised under the PC government, not only are we putting ERs back on the board like in Carberry, where they were closed under the previous administration, but our Health Minister has brought forward a plan to hire 1,000 new health-care workers. This is a comprehensive plan to address the No. 1 issue facing Manitobans.

The members opposite ought to begin every meeting that they have with stakeholders with, listen, we're sorry that we blew up the deficit and closed emergency rooms and put hundreds of nurses out of work. Now, what did you want to talk about again?

I'm sure if they began with that level of authenticity, they'd find very few people actually willing to sit down with them whatsoever. We, on the other hand, are taking action, putting people to work in schools, putting people to work in hospitals, putting young people to work across Manitoba.

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

**Mr. King:** Honourable Speaker, \$300,000 doesn't go very far when you have to spread it out over hundreds of groups. The Manitoba Camping Association was one of the groups that raised the alarm on the arbitrariness of the Green Team funding decisions. Uniqueness of their camping experiences really made them stand out to me, and I'm very glad that they are fighting for their campers.

Can the minister please tell us if the Manitoba Camping Association will be the only group receiving a slice of the \$300,000, and if not, who else?

**Mr. Kinew:** We know that youth employment is an important priority across the province of Manitoba, and the answer to the member's question is actually no. In fact, in his riding alone, groups will be receiving more than \$56,000. So I don't know if he's going to extend a thank you to my colleague, the Minister of Municipalities.

And I know for the PCs, \$300,000 doesn't sound like a lot of money, especially when they give 500 grand to the member for Fort Whyte. Well, the difference here, on this side of the House, is we're not giving money and cash giveaways to preferred candidates. We're trying to find an equitable way to dig ourselves out of a fiscal hole dug by the PCs while still investing in young people.

The good news for Manitobans is that you have a government that's listening, you have a government that's fiscally responsible and you have a government that's putting young people to work right across this great province.

#### **Budget Implementation Act Request to Call BITSA to Committee**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** I'm going to start off with a quote: Stripping the rights of people, it is also undemocratic, and that it takes away the rights of Manitobans to have a fair and open public hearing.

Who said that, Honourable Speaker? This Premier (Mr. Kinew) said that, and I table it so he can refresh his memory. The Premier of Manitoba said that when he came to putting legislation into the BITSA budget bill.

If he thought it was wrong then, why is this Premier doing it now in his own BITSA budget bill?

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Finance—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. The opposition bench needs to come to order.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** You know, we're bringing forward a BITSA bill that's delivering on the priorities Manitobans sent us to deliver on in the Legislature.

For years—for years—Manitobans had a government that was focused on slashing health care, cutting education, cutting child care, cutting municipalities.

That's their record. Our record in this recent budget we brought forward, and the BITSA bill that helps us to deliver on that budget, is focused on making life more affordable, fixing health care, and all while we're doing that, finding a path to balance.

That's the work they're—we're doing. They cut; we're making life better in Manitoba.

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

**Mr. Khan:** That is a clear example of the sheer hypocrisy by this NDP government and this Premier (Mr. Kinew). This NDP government want to remove all say and all rights from Manitobans. They don't want your input. They don't even care what your input is, and the NDP want to remove your democracy.

I asked the Minister of Finance point-blank in the bill briefing if he would allow Manitobans to come and speak at committee. He flat out said no. Why does this Minister of Finance not want to hear from Manitobans? What is he afraid of? What is he hiding, and why is he abusing his power just like this Premier is doing?

**MLA Sala:** We've got nothing to hide. We're delivering for Manitobans and we're proud of it.

The member opposite's making a lot of claims. I just want to remind him of what his own previous government brought forward in BITSA 2020. They amended over 30 acts, Honourable Speaker. Not only that, they increased electricity rates for the first time in our province's history by legislation, by 2.9 per cent, trying to hide a hydro rate increase.

Was there a committee? No. That's their record. Their record is bringing forward a significant number of major changes in BITSA bills. We're doing the important work Manitobans sent us here to deliver on, and we're not ashamed of that, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Mr. Khan:** If this minister has nothing to hide, why won't he meet with them? It's that simple, Honourable Speaker. We've asked this minister and this Premier to simply meet with Manitobans to hear their voices, to hear their say on this budget bill, and they refuse to do so.

This minister is not freezing your hydro rates like he promised; he's increasing them to 4 per cent at the Cabinet table. He's increasing the education property

tax \$148 million. He is forcing through labour legislation without any input from Manitobans.

The question is for the Premier or the minister: Why don't they have the courage to stand up today, do the right thing and say they would take the BITSA budget bill to committee to hear from Manitobans?

\* (14:20)

**MLA Sala:** Honourable Speaker, we are very proud of what's in this BITSA bill, because it delivers on what we brought forward in our budget, right?

And what does that contain? A significant number of really important measures that are going to make life more affordable. For example, our homeowners affordability tax credit that's going to make life more affordable, more affordable to own and operate a home. Our renters credit—what did the last government do? They raised taxes on renters. What does this BITSA bill do? It makes life more affordable by lowering tax rates for renters.

The work we're doing is making life more affordable, fixing health care and while we do it, we're going to deliver on that balanced budget commitment at the end of our first mandate.

They make life more expensive. We deliver for Manitobans.

### **Grade 12 English Exams Cancellation Notification**

**Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods):** In February, with no notice, the Deputy Minister of Education cancelled provincial exams and then, a few short days later, the Minister of Education reversed that decision.

Now, with very little notice again before assessments were supposed to begin, the minister has pulled the rug out from underneath teachers, giving them no time to readjust.

The question is simple: How long has the minister known that grade 12 English exams would be cancelled this year?

**Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Again, I do want to thank the member for that question, because it does allow us to bring clarity to the very—this very, very important topic.

So this past Friday afternoon, provincial officials in my department made the decision to simply just postpone the exam. And the reason they did that is they did that out of an abundance of caution regarding

identification of certain Manitobans that was used in the reading material for the exam. So in order to protect their privacy, what we did, Honourable Speaker, is we did the right thing.

I appreciate the question because it allows us, again, to bring clarity to the issue. Exams are not being cancelled, just merely being postponed.

And we'll continue to do the very good work that we were elected to do, sent to this House to do for Manitobans. That's why they're sitting over there.

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

**Mr. Jackson:** When criticized about cancelling grade 12 exams the first time around, the minister said: We're going to look at that again and not only are we going to reinstate them, but we're going to get it right.

Well, clearly, he didn't get it right by having to cancel them several days only before they had to start.

So can the minister clarify: Does he really believe that he's done the right thing here by cancelling these assessments at the eleventh hour, or is he going to get it right when these exams are rescheduled again?

**MLA Altomare:** While that member brings false information on the record, we're here to bring clarity to the record.

What's going to happen is that all grade 12 students in Manitoba will write the ELA provincial exam by June 21 of this academic year.

Clearly that member is misinformed. We're here to bring clear information on the record, Honourable Speaker. We will continue to do that. Why? Because we were elected and they trusted us, Manitobans, to get the job done.

What they clearly weren't doing, we're going to get done, support our educators and ensure kids get exactly what they need so that they're prepared for what's going to happen in the future.

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

**Mr. Jackson:** The minister hasn't been clear about when he knew that this decision to postpone exams was going to need to be made.

If he knew in advance that this was going to be an issue with identification of students, why did he only give teachers only a few days in order to prepare for these exams to be postponed?

**MLA Altomare:** Again, I do appreciate the opportunity to bring some clarity on the record.

This member is new. He doesn't understand that for four years in a row, the former government cancelled exams. Can you imagine not preparing students for the real world? That's exactly what they did for four years in a row.

Our government brought them back—brought them back because we know how important it is for students to be prepared for the working future. This is something they were never able to do.

The other clear thing: they love to talk about assessment, Honourable Speaker, but I'll tell you, their department, what started at 24 people in 2016, they cut to six. Six people. Can you imagine?

So what did Manitobans do? They elected an NDP—

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

#### **Youth Removed From Spirit Rising House Care Plan and Placement Inquiry**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, the safety of youth placed in care is critical. The 34 youth moved from spirit rising are a priority. The Minister of Families said, and I quote and table this for the House: Our department supported agencies to develop individualized care plans to identify appropriate placements and monitor the transition of each youth.

Can the minister tell us that all 34 youth are accounted for and that there is a care plan in place for each of them to set them up for success?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** Miigwech to my colleague across the way for that important question.

As I said in committee, and as I've said many times in the House here, as soon as we found out about what Spirit Rising House was doing in respect of the distribution of unauthorized, unprescribed drugs to children in their care, we took immediate action and ceased our relationship with Spirit Rising House.

And as I've said previously, it was all hands on decked. Agencies, our staff, myself, our team worked together to ensure that all 34 youth had those individualized care plans and that we knew where they were and we knew where they were going.

And I have to say that I know that our team, everybody that came together to do what was in the best interest of some of the most complex needs, came

together to execute that in a good way, and we know that those children are in placements right now.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, we know that it is critical for these youth to receive the proper care and placement. Studies show if they don't receive the supports now, while in care, their chances of success are slim, and they could end up homeless or on the streets.

Can this minister ensure that all 34 are accounted for and placed in stable environments?

**MLA Fontaine:** Miigwech to my colleague.

I cannot stress that there is, as minister responsible, there is nothing that is more important than the safety of children that are in care. Every child is loved and should be treated with the respect and the care and the compassion and should be listened to, and that is what our team alongside agencies are doing.

As I've stated before, as soon as we found out about what was going on at Spirit Rising House, we took immediate action, and it was one of those examples where everybody came together to work together, all hands on deck, to ensure that, once again, the children—some of our most complex needs—

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

The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Families office did not respond to reporters' requests for information about the placement of the 34 youth. Spirit rising has said the youth have not been placed into a safe or supported environment as promised.

Can the minister please share with us if she has received further information or updates that can provide peace of mind for all of us in this House and concerned Manitobans?

**MLA Fontaine:** I'm concerned that the member opposite is taking advice or taking any information from Spirit Rising House when we've clearly made the case here and explicitly noted that Spirit Rising House was not providing care that was in the best interest of the 44—the 34 children with complex needs that were in their care. So I'm concerned that the member opposite is raising in the House information that Spirit Rising House is bringing forth.

As I've said previously, each of the 34 children with the most complex needs, the team came together and ensured that they had individualized care plans that took into consideration—

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

### **Shooting of Female Black Bear Request for Update on Incident**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Yes, Honourable Speaker, we are hearing concerning talk out of Schist Lake, where it's rumoured that conservation officers removed and shot a female bear.

Understanding there is a lot of nuisance in wild-life management, will the minister commit today to publicly releasing a full accounting of what occurred at Schist Lake?

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** I'm glad I have the opportunity to talk about the really good work that our conservation officers are doing right across Manitoba.

Just recently, they were out here in Winnipeg making sure that a black bear that was stuck in a tree not only got down safely in a safe manner, but protected the people and the public around us and the community. That's a good way to protect Manitobans, protect community and protect wildlife in the same time.

I'm very thankful that conservation officers are doing this hard work on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

### **Black Bear Rescue Manitoba Government Support Inquiry**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Three cubs in that same area were 'lited' reported to conservation officers on their own without a mother. One was delivered to Black Bear Rescue Manitoba. Another is presumed deceased and the status of the third is unknown. We here on this side of the aisle are thankful for committed organizations like Black Bear Rescue Manitoba.

Does the minister support their work?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** Honourable Speaker, I was happy to let the members know that I visited Black Bear Rescue,

and I know colleagues on this side of the House did as well.

And I want to say also to show continued support for our conservation officer team, that not only work to protect Manitobans and our wildlife, but also go to help assist our fire service team as well. And they had a tremendous work effort that went up in Cranberry Portage over the last month, and so I want to also just send my support to the conservation officer team who aided in that effort to protect Manitobans from wildfires.

They're going to continue do that work throughout the summer as we face this wildfire season, and I thank them for their committed effort to protect all Manitobans.

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

#### **Conservation Officer Services Accountability in Public Reporting**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Honourable Speaker, incidents such as this shatter Manitoba's fate in our systems, and undermine the public confidence in the important work that our conservation officers do.

This minister has a responsibility to safeguard the public's trust in these systems through proactive and transparent reporting.

Will he commit to such reporting going forward?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources):** Honourable Speaker, one of the reasons why I want to really highlight the—and appreciate the work that our conservation officers do right now is because for seven and a half years, they didn't get any of that appreciation. And, quite frankly, they saw cuts after cuts to the Conservation Officer Service—underappreciated for the important work that they do right across Manitoba. We did not see fit to let that stand.

That's why our government is taking action to support our conservation officer service and make sure that they are recognized as an important part of our province.

We'll continue to do that. We'll continue to bring Manitobans together, protect wildlife, protect our people, protect our natural resources, and we'll do it on behalf of all Manitobans.

#### **Cancellation of ELA Exam for 2024 Costs Associated with Redeveloping Exam**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** As summer gets closer, schools are getting ready to carry out exams. Unfortunately, it has been widely reported that the ELA exams were pulled at the last minute because the department failed to get the necessary permissions to use the materials in the test. This disorganization is affecting students and educators alike.

Can the Minister of Education provide an update on whether materials in the exam will need to be redeveloped entirely and if so, how much will the redistribution cost Manitoba taxpayers?

**Hon. Nello Altomare (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Well, again, I do want to thank the member for that question because it does allow us to bring clarity again to the record.

Here's what happened. This exam was created under the previous government. It wasn't properly vetted. It wasn't properly attuned to what was necessary for students, and then when we discovered that the error was made, we immediately pulled it because we had to do it for privacy purposes.

I also want to assure the member that by June the 21st, all grade 12 students will write the ELA exam and will be prepared for whatever the future brings to them next.

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

#### **Request for Support for Educators**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Under this government's new Education Minister, students have gone from having provincial exams be cancelled, then reinstated and now postponed due to their disorganization.

Those in our school system, both working and students alike, are concerned. And while I'm glad the minister recognizes this—and himself, he says he is regretful that he did not spend more time working on this file—there is a lot of confusion as to what the next steps will be.

What does this minister have to say to our educators as far as rolling out the E-A-L exams go—this school year?

**MLA Altomare:** I do want to thank the member for that question, because, again, it does allow us to bring clarity to the record.

By June the 21st, all grade 12 students will write an ELA exam that'll be administered by their school. This is something that was expected, something that will continue.

I do want to remind members of this House, however, that we're—still remain cleaning up the mess that was left behind by the previous government, so here we are now.

Manitobans elected us to get this work done. We take this work very seriously, Honourable Speaker.

I want to assure that member that as we continue this work, we will ensure that students' needs are met and that families can be guaranteed that they'll receive the experience that they want in their public schools.

**The Speaker:** Member's time—the honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Cost to Taxpayers**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Parents, educators and students are all concerned about the disorganization that this government has demonstrated.

How much is this hiccup that even the minister has noted that he regrets, as far as not spending enough time on the file, costing Manitoba's taxpayers?

**MLA Altomare:** Again, I do want to thank the member for that question, because I will bring more clarity to the record.

The test that was created was inappropriately produced by the previous government, wasn't properly vetted, did not receive the proper permissions. Not only that, they cut the department from 24 to six people, putting extra strain.

So while they like to talk about all this—assessment pieces, we're the ones that are tasked with fixing up the mess and making sure students get the experience they deserve in their public schools.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **New EMS Station in Teulon Government Announcement**

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Devgan:** —when members opposite were in government, they closed 23 EMS stations and lost 90 rural paramedics. That's their record. They disrespected paramedics working on the front line.

But it's a new day in Manitoba. Last week, the Health Minister announced our NDP government has opened a new EMS station in Teulon.

Can the minister tell the House what this means for the people of Teulon and the surrounding region, and elaborate on the important role of paramedics to our communities?

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

I am so excited to stand here and talk about our government's investments of \$532,000 in the Teulon EMS station. This station will provide a modernized operational hub for paramedics in the Interlake and surrounding communities.

Retaining and recruiting paramedics is especially important in ensuring that rural and northern regions of our province have timely access to emergency care.

Unlike the previous government who cut rural and northern health care time and time again, our government is investing in it.

With over \$16 million going toward expanding opportunities for paramedics, we can confidently say, as my colleague put it, it's a new day in Manitoba. We are empowering front-line workers, and together, we're making sure that Manitobans get the care—

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

#### **Increase in Random Acts of Violence Request for Government to Address**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** Every week, Manitobans are paying the price for this Minister of Justice's poor performance.

Only this Premier (Mr. Kinew) can support an agenda of inaction. Manitobans are experiencing random acts of violence with increasing frequency. I know the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) thinks she knows more about law enforcement; she's been on the record as saying such.

Does this minister share this disrespectful anti-law-enforcement attitude?

\* (14:40)

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, again, Honourable Speaker, it's—I guess it's not surprising, but it is disappointing that the members opposite continue to use divisive rhetoric when talking about important issues like public safety.



We've taken a different approach. What our government is doing is bringing people together: bringing together retailers, businesses, community groups, law enforcement and bringing everybody around the same table. That's why we had a public safety summit here in Winnipeg and we're starting the process of moving out across the province, bringing in that feedback, working with others and building a safer province for everyone.

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** Violent assaults in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) own riding and police assaulted in the Minister of Health's, and this is just this weekend. Scroll back through the Winnipeg Police Service's press releases and you can see an avalanche of anti-social behaviour. And somehow this Premier and this minister declare it mission accomplished.

What does this minister have to say to the Manitobans who are suffering for his inaction?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Quite the contrary, Honourable Speaker. In fact we're getting to work every single day to work with partners across this province to come up with real solutions that'll make our communities safer: solutions like a \$300 rebate for security systems that'll be accessible for residents and for businesses across our province. This is an important initiative that's been welcomed by community because they understand that when many people within a community or a neighbourhood have a security system, it benefits everybody.

Again, working together; that's how our government is going to accomplish big things. And the members opposite continue to be divisive. They want to talk about divisions in this province. We're not going to go down that road. We're going to work with all Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** A listening government would actually—listening. We're constantly hearing about scenarios where small-business owners are forced to take matters into their own hands to defend their livelihoods. Vigilantism should not be the solution. Yet when the minister does nothing, Manitobans feel like they can only rely on themselves. A security camera observes, but it doesn't provide any protection or safety.

Why is the Minister of Justice content with a society where small-business owners need to take matters into their own hands?

**Mr. Wiebe:** Again, extreme rhetoric from a desperate party who has no record to stand on when it comes to enhancing public safety. Because we know their record, we know the results of inaction, of seven and a half years; in 2022 alone, a 40 per cent increase in homicides; a 44 per cent increase in attempted murders; a 39 per cent increase in firearms offences; a 26 increase—per cent increase in vehicle thefts; a 21 per cent increase in robberies; a 19 per cent increase in breaking and entering. The list goes on and on, Honourable Speaker. They have no record to stand on.

Our government is working with partners and we're going to make our community safer.

#### **Faith-Based Post-Secondary Institutions Number of Attestation Letters Issued**

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, whether it's the Green Teams or our colleges and universities, this NDP government is targeting Manitoba's faith-based institutions with cuts. The Advanced Education Minister herself has personally cut the number of attestation letters that faith-based schools can issue to international students. She cut them to less than 1 per cent of their normal allotment of letters. These schools are teaching our future business leaders, teachers, scientists, health-care professionals, engineers and so many other professionals.

Can this minister please tell Manitobans the reason she has targeted faith-based schools?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** We have children in the audience today who we can do—we need to do better by. And this consistent divisive narrative that's coming from the other side is so disheartening.

And at a time where we have conflict in all corners of the earth because of this, I implore members not to bring divisive 'rhetovic' like this into the Chamber. It is not based on fact, it is based on fear, and I implore you to do better.

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

#### **Booth University College Funding Concerns**

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** This minister has even targeted the Salvation Army with her cuts to Booth college. Booth college is the only school in all

of Canada that trains the amazing, dedicated staff and social workers that serve Salvation Army food banks, shelters and family services across Manitoba and across Canada.

I ask again: Can the Advanced Education Minister tell us why she targeted and cut the resources and revenue for this faith-based school?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** In October of 2023, the people of Manitoba spoke very clearly, and they would not support the divisive, awful rhetoric that was put forward by the previous government.

I am proud to stand in my place on behalf of all Manitobans and remind the members that we are one Manitoba and will continue to act on behalf of all Manitobans.

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

### Speaker's Ruling

**The Speaker:** And I have a ruling for the House.

This ruling deals with two matters of privilege raised by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen). I've decided to rule on both matters in this one ruling for several reasons: (1) They were raised by the same member on consecutive sitting days; (2) they raised the same complaint about two different incidents, and; (3) in recent rulings I have addressed in some detail the circumstance behind this complaint.

Prior to routine proceedings on April 23, 2024, the member for Brandon West raised a matter of privilege alleging that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) shared details of proposed legislation to media prior to its introduction in the House, thus violating the privileges of members. The member concluded their remarks on the matter by moving: That the Minister of Justice be compelled to apologize to this House for his transgression and that this matter be referred to an all-party committee for review.

The honourable Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement.

Following the land acknowledgement on April 24, 2024, the member for Brandon West raised a matter of privilege alleging that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) had disclosed information about Bill 34, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act, to the media before it had been introduced to the House. The member further alleged that the

provincial government's continued pattern of disclosing information about bills to the media before they had been introduced to the House infringed on the privileges of all members. The member concluded their remarks on this matter by moving: That the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew) be held in contempt of this House, and that the matter be referred to an all-party committee for consideration.

The honourable Government House Leader and the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) spoke to the matter before I took it under advisement.

\* (14:50)

There are several problems with these submissions which I must address with the member. I will note first that in the matter raised on April 23, '24, the member for Brandon West spoke at great length regarding his complaint, but he failed to mention the number and name of the bill he was concerned about. This was problematic for me as your Speaker as it made it harder for me to assess the member's argument. As well, this omission did not add credibility to the member's complaint.

Second, everyone in this House should know that a matter of privilege is a serious and significant tool available to members, and it should be treated as such.

I was extremely lenient with the member for Brandon West as he was raising these matters, and I would note that he went on at some length in both his submissions. While it is important to be specific when stating the reasons for raising a matter of privilege, the member repeated himself many times, which diminished the credibility of his complaint.

Third, as I indicated earlier, these matters raised the same complaint about two different incidents. I will acknowledge that the first submission was directed to the Minister of Justice and the second was directed at the Premier, and that they each referred to a different incident of an alleged disclosure of information regarding the same bill. On this basis, I allowed the second matter to be raised and considered in the House.

For clarity, however, I will caution this member and all members that raising a matter of privilege on a topic very similar to a matter already under advisement is potentially out of order.

In this case, the member did explain the basic details of each matter, but he used a great deal of the same information in both cases, and due to this, the two matters sounded quite similar.

I would like all members to be aware that I was less lenient with this kind of submission—that I will be less lenient with this kind of submission in the future. I would encourage all members raising a matter of privilege to first be certain that the matter is worthy of such a grave measure and, second, to ensure that the matter is distinct from other matters under advisement and, third, to be concise in your arguments. Quantity matters—quality—quantity matters less than quality in such submissions.

Regarding the member's claims of a breach of privilege, as the House knows, for a matter of privilege to be ruled *prima facie*, the case—the member must demonstrate that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity, while also providing sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

On the condition of timeliness, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) indicated his submission on Tuesday, April 23, that before raising the matter, he needed to confirm details from a media article Sunday evening—two days earlier.

Accordingly, I am ruling that the member did not meet the condition of timeliness on the matter raised April 23.

In his submission on April 24, the member from Brandon West indicated that he first learned of the alleged breach reading the news the previous evening. While the member could have been more specific in his explanation of this circumstance, I would agree that he met the condition of timeliness for that submission.

Regarding the second issue of whether a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established, I would refer the member to the ruling I delivered in this House on April 24, the same day he raised his second matter of privilege.

Similar sentiments apply to these matters as they did to that matter of privilege, namely: (1) former House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken made it clear that unless there is evidence that a minister made copies of a bill available to someone outside the House, it is hard to find any breach of privilege; (2) Canada's pre-eminent expert on parliamentary privilege, Joseph Maingot, advised that complaints a minister made a statement outside the House rather than in the House may amount to a grievance against the government, but they are not a breach of privilege; (3) no fewer than seven Manitoba Speakers have ruled that such

complaints may be a matter of discourtesy, but they are not a matter of privilege.

Accordingly, I rule that a *prima facie* case of a breach of privilege has not been established in either of these cases.

Once again, however, I must agree with former Manitoba Speaker Walding's sentiments and note that while this circumstance does not constitute a breach of privilege, it should be considered discourteous to the Assembly.

I trust that my rulings on these matters and the related concerns I have shared with you will be understood by all members and influence future actions regarding the introduction of bills in the House.

Finally, as I have stated before, if members wish to truly resolve this particular issue, it should be considered by the Standing Committee on Rules of the House.

Thank you for your attention.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Now, before moving on, there are some guests in the gallery. In the public gallery, there is MP for Portage-Lisgar, Branden Leslie, and he is the guest of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza).

Further, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today the members of The Maples Debate Club: Shejaver Sindhu [*phonetic*], Aurelia Collantes, Megh Modha, Hoc Khoi Tran, Emily Maan, Emily Alibin, Clyron Hernandez, Raymound Mendoza; staff Kamila Dhillion [*phonetic*] and Sarah Anderson, who are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

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

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** Petitions? Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### House Business

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider amendment to the

Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Rules of the House will meet on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 6 p.m. to consider amendments to the Rules, Orders and Forms of Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

## SECOND READINGS

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

**The Speaker:** And now, as agreed to by the House on May 21, 2024, the House will debate second reading of Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax statutes act of 2024.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2024 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

**The Speaker:** It has 'benounce'—been announced by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education—it has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Altomare), that Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

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

**MLA Sala:** It gives me incredible pride to rise today and introduce Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

I want to start out just by expressing a note of thanks to this incredible team for all the work that they did, and that went into the development of this budget and, ultimately, the work that ended up in this BITSA bill that helps to deliver on that budget that we developed and delivered to Manitobans not so long ago.

\* (15:00)

One of the key focuses, of course, in that budget is affordability. And this BITSA bill is one of the key

drivers allowing us to deliver on those commitments we made to Manitobans to improve affordability for all in this province.

One of the key things that will help to deliver on that, Honourable Speaker, is the \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit. We know that that tax credit is going to go an incredibly long ways towards helping Manitobans to afford the cost of operating a home. And we know that it will go a long ways towards helping prospective homeowners who want to get in to home ownership, buy that first home, to help to make that home a lot more affordable thanks to that measure.

We also know that, unfortunately, under the last government, there was some increases to taxation levels for renters in Manitoba, and this BITSA bill contains measures that respond to that and start to make life a little more affordable for renters. And we're doing that through the renters affordability tax credit measure that does follow through on one of our campaign commitments, to make life more affordable for Manitoban renters.

And, of course, we know that those renters include folks on fixed incomes, folks with disabilities, people who have been really challenged for many, many years living under the previous PC government, who were not given the supports that they needed.

You know, relating to that, we're also increasing the seniors top-up, because we know that those seniors who did so much for our province deserve to get that support to help make life more affordable for them. And we know that they've faced some significant challenges in recent years, under the past government, with increasing cost of living, their revenues staying the same while all their other costs went up. And, unfortunately, they did not have a responsive or a listening government.

We changed that. This BITSA bill helps us to deliver on making life more affordable for seniors.

But our plan, of course, doesn't end there. When we're talking about renters, we're also, of course, talking about the broader housing universe and the rental universe and the costs that Manitobans have been facing, escalating costs year over year. It's been known for many years that Manitobans are facing runaway, above-guideline rent increases that are making life more expensive throughout the rental universe. And we know that we've seen huge cost-of-living increases tied to those big rent increases.

And so one thing that we're doing, in addition to, of course, bringing forward a bill that my colleague introduced recently, which is The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, in addition to that, we're also helping to ensure that we deal with these rental affordability challenges by bringing forward a new credit, a tax credit for PST that will eliminate PST on the development of both new affordable rental units—they'll get a \$13,500 benefit for every affordable unit developed—but also on market units.

Because we know that we need that rental universe to grow, not just in social, not just in affordable, but also in market, because if we can increase the number of market rental units out in the Manitoban rental universe, we can help to bring down some of those cost pressures that renters are facing.

Those are just some of the bits of work that we're doing to help make life more affordable. And a key piece of that, of course, is cost-of-living for rent, and that's something that we're helping to respond to with this very important BITSA measure.

So we have, of course, those important measures, but Budget 2024 does a lot of really important work in making life more affordable. And as folks in this House will have heard me say probably more times than they would have liked, we have 21 new ways to save in Budget 2024. That's 21 new affordability measures focused on addressing the cost-of-living crisis that went unattended to under the last government for seven and a half years.

One of the first things that we know the members opposite didn't respond to for many years but that we took action to shortly after we got in was relieving Manitobans of that high cost of liquid fuels. And we did that in the form of a gas tax holiday. That, of course, came into effect January 1. This BITSA bill, of course, does important work of helping us to be able to extend that important affordability measure to continue to help offer Manitobans that much-needed relief.

And we know the impacts of that relief have been significant. We're seeing it in the form of four months of having the lowest inflation in the country, some of the lowest fuel costs in the entire country. That's really having an impact, and in fact, extending beyond that, to seeing some of the lowest food inflation as well, no doubt thanks to that important measure that our government took. And this BITSA bill helps to support extending that.

We're also doubling the fertility treatment tax credit to \$16,000. I know that myself and a lot of members of our team have heard from so many Manitobans who shared just what this means to them and how impactful this is for those families who are working to expand their families, to have a little one, that may have struggled. This is such an important measure for those families, and we know it's something that was really needed and we're really proud to have doubled that. And this BITSA bill will help us to deliver on that promise and help to support those families.

The legislation also—and this is something I'm really proud of—follows through on our commitment to deliver a broad, middle-class tax cut. And we know that the benefits from those tax cuts are going to those who need it most. The expansion of the brackets and the growth in the basic personal exemption and the commitment to indexing those means a lot for working-class Manitobans, for regular Manitobans. It can mean as much as \$1,500 in the pockets for an average Manitoban worker.

And we know, you know, in this landscape we're in, we want to make sure, as a new government, that we're able to attract the talent we need to Manitoba to do the important work that needs to be done in health care, in construction, in a number of skilled trades. And we need to make sure that when somebody thinks about, do I want to make Manitoba the home that I move to, to work, to grow, to raise my family, we want them to know that we are a competitive jurisdiction that wants to ensure that their tax burdens are as low as possible so we can make sure that they can come here, do that work of contributing to the growth of our province while they help to develop their family. So that's something that we know is really important, and we are very proud to be delivering on.

And then, of course, across the board, a wide range of other initiatives that are helping to keep money where it belongs, which is in the pockets of Manitobans. Making prescription birth control free: you know, that's something I know our team is really proud to have brought that forward. That's an important measure that will help to make significant improvements to affordability for folks who are in need of birth control.

Creating rebates for home and business security: something I'm really proud of under the leadership of our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) that we're doing to make Manitoba into a safer place, to improve the affordability of those home security systems that can

help reduce the costs for Manitobans and Manitoba businesses that are looking to be just a little bit safer, that are looking to invest in those technologies that can help to make their lives a little bit safer and, by extension, our communities safer.

Lowering insurance rates for drivers: something, again, under the leadership of our Minister responsible for MPI, great work happening there.

And then, of course, under our—the leadership of Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), we are providing more financial aid for students so more Manitoban students can go to post-secondary, develop the skills and knowledge to help grow themselves, to help them to contribute more, and help them to become successful and ultimately contribute to the flourishing here of our province.

Honourable Speaker, you know, there's lots that I could say. I'd love to continue going on at length here about our affordability measures but—

**An Honourable Member:** More.

**MLA Sala:** —you know, in summary, I appreciate that the member is looking for more.

In summary, what I would say to Manitobans is this: unlike for the last seven and a half years, what you had in terms of an experience with a government that wasn't listening, that wasn't there when you needed it, we have your back. And we are doing the work that I know Manitobans sent us here to do, which is delivering common sense improvements to affordability, making life better, responding to things that Manitobans were clear about that they wanted.

Our government is listening; our government is doing that work and we have Manitobans' backs. By passing Bill 37, by passing this BITSA bill—and I'm looking to all the members opposite, hoping that they're listening here and knowing the importance of this bill to making life more affordable. And I'm looking forward to their support so that we can get help to Manitobans and help to those who need it most.

You know, Honourable Speaker, this bill isn't just about proving affordability. Of course, it's delivering on the commitments we made in our budget, and one of the big commitments we made, of course, was rebuilding a health-care system that was devastated under the previous government over seven and a half years.

And one of the most important things that we committed to and that I'm so proud to know that we're working with this unbelievable Minister of Health, who's helping to drive forward a lot of these changes, these improvements, these responses to seven and a half years of damage that we saw under the last government, was our commitment to hire 1,000 new health-care workers here in Manitoba.

\* (15:10)

Now that's a bold commitment, Honourable Speaker. We know it is, but it's a very important commitment, and we need to be bold right now because of this situation that we were left after seven and a half years under the previous government.

You know, that 1,000 health-care worker commitment is something that we recognize as being critical, and that's why we're helping to deliver on that with a number of important investments that we're bringing forward. Things, for example, like reinstating the rural doctor health-care recruitment fund, things that—something that the members opposite cut, which is a shameful cut that they brought forward which reflects their lack of commitment to ensuring we improve health care in rural communities.

Now, something that we know that is critical for Manitobans and especially folks living in south Winnipeg, and a commitment that we made in the election and that we're delivering on with this budget is our commitment to rebuild health-care infrastructure and specifically to rebuild a new ER at the Victoria Hospital, right?

That's something we know is desperately needed, Honourable Speaker, something that we know of and asked that fell on deaf ears for many years under the previous government. We are building that Vic ER, and that's a critical commitment that, again, this bill will help us to deliver on.

We're also expanding access to primary care for Manitobans right across this province. We know that that's so important because, after seven years of cuts, there really is no time to waste. And I know that our incredible Minister of Health is taking that mission seriously along with our entire government. We are delivering improvements to health care in this province.

The legislation also takes a very critical step of creating an independent seniors advocate to investigate and report on systemic issues faced by seniors in Manitoba. Seniors helped to build this province and they deserve to hear their voice heard.

Again, for many years they didn't have their voice heard by members opposite. They had a government that shut people out, that was divisive. They were focused on closing things down, cutting, shrinking. That's their record.

Our record is focused on listening. We're demonstrating that. One of those key things that we're doing to demonstrate is delivering on that commitment to bring in a seniors advocate which, again, is long overdue. We all saw what happened during the pandemic and what can happen when seniors aren't given the respect and care that they need.

And I hope, again, that the members opposite who are chirping right now are paying close attention and are reflecting on their own failures that created a lot of suffering and a lot of challenges for Manitobans during the time that they were in power and responsible for making decisions.

You know, I couldn't be prouder of this legislation that implements Budget 2024 and delivers on these core commitments, to make life more affordable and make improvements on rebuilding, fixing health care.

But there are a few technical items in here, Honourable Speaker, that I would like—take a little bit of time to explain for the benefit of members of this Assembly.

You know, changes to The Fuel Tax Act in this bill will support the extension of the fuel tax holiday, again, something that we know has had a significant impact in improving affordability for Manitobans. I know that my critic doesn't like the idea of accepting that and for—doesn't seem to believe Statistics Canada when they bring out reports, but again, I'm happy to show those statistics to him as often as he needs to see them.

We are doing important work that is very clearly, statistically, empirically, delivering improvements to affordability for Manitobans. This BITSA bill brings forward those further changes to The Fuel Tax Act that will allow us to continue to deliver on improving affordability for Manitobans.

We're also amending the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit provisions in the bill. Why, some may ask. That's because we wanted to reflect the current nature of video game development. Something that, as we've seen, games nowadays rarely have a clean start and end when it comes to product development. They're continuously being updated. So our incentives should reflect that reality to ensure that the good work of developing gaming in Manitoba can continue in that

sector, can continue to flourish, something I know we're proud of and we want to see further growth in that area.

Also establishing a consistent registration date for all persons applying to register for the Primary Caregiver Tax Credit that will help to reduce potential confusion for Manitobans.

And there's also a timing issue respecting Manitoba and federal mineral exploration tax credits. This change will help to ensure Manitobans are not inadvertently, unnecessarily denied claims in an unintended way.

You know, Honourable Speaker, we're making changes here with this BITSA bill, again, that deliver on our budget, changes that just make sense; for example, repealing a number of provisions that are no longer needed. We're making things clearer for industry with the goal of supporting their ability to continue growing with amendments to the oil and gas production act. Those changes, for example, will simply realign record retention periods with the CRA. Just common-sense changes that make sense that we know folks have been waiting for.

But with these small changes that I've outlined here in the BITSA, let's not forget about the really important big pieces, those big pieces that are focused on, again, reflecting that our government is listening to Manitobans. And what does this BITSA bill help us to deliver on?

It's going to focus on making life more affordable, helping to fix health care after many years of PC damage, charting a very different course than they charted, working all the while, Honourable Speaker, towards ensuring we deliver on our commitment at the end of our first mandate to deliver a balanced budget so we can continue to do the important work of making life better for Manitobans.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I'll conclude my comments.

Thank you.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions to be

asked by any opposition member. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** I'm going to start off with a very simple question just to get things going here today. Hopefully, we can dial back the temperature from question period.

A very simple one to the minister is: Does the minister simply believe that the public has the right to come into this building, this Legislature, and discuss bills and legislative changes before they happen?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** It's an interesting question and one again, I ask the member just to consider that his own party, his own government, year over year followed the same rules as we're following. We're following the rules of the House.

BITSA bills are intended to help with the enactment of a budget. And every single thing here helps us to deliver on that. And, again, I'm happy to reiterate for the member just his own government's record—2022, '21, 2020—every single year they made significant changes to legislation in those BITSA bills.

We're following the rules of the House. We're delivering on our budget and we're proud to improve life, make more affordable, and improve health care in this province in the process.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** During the bill briefing, the member wasn't sure if empowering MPI to rebate for electric vehicles would actually take from the profits of MPI.

Can the minister assure Manitobans that the profits of MPI will stay in MPI?

**MLA Sala:** This BITSA bill brings forward important—the, of course, EV rebate and it's something that we know will help to make life more affordable for Manitobans looking to make a switch from a gas-powered vehicle to an electric vehicle.

Folks who change to an electric vehicle stand to save significant amount of money, somewhere estimated in the range of \$2,000 a year in fuel costs. That's a significant improvement to their affordability of living.

We're proud to be bringing those rebates forward, and we know that bringing forward a rebate specifically for used vehicles will help to ensure as many Manitobans as possible are able to benefit from those savings.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** The Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Schmidt) is making significant changes to The Environment Act in this omnibus bill.

Will the minister confirm today that his colleague has consulted with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the City of Winnipeg and industries across this province?

**MLA Sala:** Here's what I can confirm, Honourable Speaker. We know that for many years Manitobans had a government that cut in every single way when it came to environment and climate change. I think one third of the entire staff complement within now-Minister Schmidt's department was cut under their tenure.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When referring to members, you have to either refer to their ministerial title or their constituency, and not by name.

\* (15:20)

**MLA Sala:** I apologize, Honourable Speaker. Thanks for the clarification.

Again, we know that under the previous government, that area saw significant cuts.

My colleague is doing the very important work that Manitobans sent us here—have sent us here to do. Namely, one of those areas of focus is to improve environmental protections, and that's the important work that my colleague's doing and that our government is doing for Manitobans.

**Mr. Johnson:** Are the rebates for electric vehicles coming from government coffers or MPI profits?

**MLA Sala:** Those rebates will be coming from central government.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I want to ask the minister about Labour Relations Amendment Act that's included in the budget bill.

Outside of discussions with union reps—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Byram:** —regarding the content of this act, was there any consultation with businesses or other stakeholder groups outside of the unions?

**MLA Sala:** I can't speak to that specific question. But what I can say is we know for years that the previous government did unbelievable damage when it came to labour relations in Manitoba.



Year after year, we saw them undercutting labour in Manitoba, seeking to do everything they could to undermine labour within Manitoba.

Our government is working to ensure that workers in Manitoba have that ability to join a union if they want to. We know that's important, and that's something that we're proud to support.

**Mr. Khan:** I know the minister stood up and says that they're just following the rules and what's been done in the past. I wasn't referring to the past. I'm asking the minister a simple, straight-up question.

He wants to give a history lesson. They—maybe he can save that for another time. But Manitobans are due the least—little bit of respect and the decency of an answer.

Does this minister believe that Manitobans should have the right to come to this House and this Legislature and speak to bills and legislation before it is passed?

It's a very simple question. And I don't want a history lesson, just the minister's thoughts on Manitobans' right to democracy.

**MLA Sala:** The critic doesn't want a history lesson, but, unfortunately, he has to deal with the reality of the situation here, which is that his government used the same rules of the House to move forward on a number of very concerning changes.

And I just want to remind the members. So they repealed The Healthy Child Manitoba Act, removing the legal requirement of government to report on child poverty. They dissolved the public schools financing board to bring in P3s. This is all just in 2020. I've got a very long list, as long as my arm, of very concerning changes.

The changes we're bringing forward in this BITSA bill are focused on making life better for Manitobans—every single one of them. I'm proud of the work we're doing here, improving affordability, fixing health care, all while we deliver on our commitment to a balanced budget.

**Mr. Khan:** So Manitobans heard it right there that this minister is claiming that the previous government did something wrong—did something they shouldn't have done. And yet now he's repeating in that step. The hypocrisy is so rich on this NDP, it is mind-blowing.

Now, the question that was easy to the minister: Does he believe in Manitobans' democracy right to

come and speak to debates and bills here? And the answer, obviously, from this minister, is no.

So I'll ask him a simple question: Does the minister believe that it is okay for government to increase taxes by 50 per cent on their political party rebate?

**MLA Sala:** I don't really understand the question. I invite him to ask it again if he wants.

But what I can do is—no, I'll finish the response here. And this is a great opportunity for me to talk about our \$1,500 homeowner affordability credit that's going to benefit folks who live in every single one of the constituencies of members opposite.

And I know that members opposite are likely hearing from their residents day after day about how excited they are to have those savings coming to them thanks to the actions of our government. That is, if this—members opposite decide to support this BITSA bill.

**Ms. Byram:** We saw how things went with Ten Ten Sinclair when residents were left stranded and uncertain about their care during work stoppage.

Can the minister tell us how banning replacement workers is a good thing for Manitobans?

**MLA Sala:** You know, again, I'm thinking, and I know my colleagues who were around—well, probably every one of our team members, not just those who were here between 2019 and 2023, can attest the number of labour disruptions that were caused under the previous government—I can't even keep count; there were Hydro workers, there were gas workers, there were professors. Over and over, Manitobans had to go on the picket line because of their interference, their failure to honour collective bargaining processes. That's the way they operate.

We respect labour; we respect collective bargaining, and that's what Manitobans can expect from this government.

**Mr. Khan:** Well, we can all see here that the minister gets confused very easily, and he wants to get up and just mention his talking points of whatever they be for the given day. So I'll make it really simple for the minister. I'll repeat the question.

Can the minister please clarify where in Budget 2024, his budget speech or the election trail this past year the minister or Premier (Mr. Kinew) outlined that Manitobans will now be reimbursing his

NDP political party a rebate of 50 per cent, as he's trying to sneak through in this budget bill?

**MLA Sala:** One thing we know, Honourable Speaker, is the importance of ensuring that all Manitobans have an opportunity to access our democratic processes here in Manitoba.

We know that this change will help anyone in Manitoba who wants to participate in an election, who wants to put their name forward, who wants to do that important work.

We know that in this province, this is an important thing, to bring in as many people as possible to participate in our democracy. We invite that. This measure helps to encourage to ensure all Manitobans can participate if they want to.

**Ms. Byram:** Can the minister tell us here in the House how much money has been allocated for hiring of a senior advocate?

**MLA Sala:** I can't speak to that here in the House, Honourable Speaker. I—that's something I think we're happy to follow up on.

And, again, this is an important initiative. The hiring of a senior advocate will ensure that the voices of seniors across the province will be heard. That will help us to ensure we can make investments that will help to support those recommendations that we'll hear from a senior's advocate.

Again, this is work that didn't happen for many years. We're proud to be bringing that forward as part of this BITSA bill.

**Mr. Khan:** With the new education and property tax rebate capped at \$1,500, under this NDP for residential homeowners, will the minister commit to increasing this \$1,500 cap, as the education taxes continue to rise under this NDP as high as 17 per cent in some areas of this province?

Will the minister commit today to increasing that \$1,500 cap?

**MLA Sala:** You know, one of the best things about this recent budget and, ultimately, this BITSA bill, is that not only does it bring forward a \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit, it also brings forward a broad middle-income tax cut.

When you add those two things together, Manitobans stand to save a significant amount of money, thanks to the work of our government and thanks to those—again, the combined impact of that tax

cut, the increasing of those brackets, the lifting of the basic personal exemption, and of course—

**An Honourable Member:** Was us.

**MLA Sala:** No, you were not in government any longer. That's a decision that's been made by our government, and an important one, along with the affordability tax credit.

Taken together, those measures will help to make sure more Manitobans have more money in their pockets, thanks to the work of our government improving affordability.

**Ms. Byram:** Seniors are an important part of our communities in Manitoba. Why is there not a more fulsome and comprehensive seniors act bill before the Legislature? Where is the seniors strategy, and where is the long-term-care plan? And why have you delayed and cancelled new PCHs across the province?

**MLA Sala:** There's so much in this recent budget, Honourable Speaker, and again, so much in this BITSA bill that is going to go towards supporting seniors, seniors who, for many years, were ignored under the previous government.

We know, again, who are one of the major renters in this province, the majority of renters? A significant proportion are seniors.

What's their record? They raised taxes on renters by \$175. That's a significant increase on the cost of living that they forced seniors to bear.

What are we doing? We're lowering taxes on renters, something that will give seniors a lot more money in their pocket to help them pay for these elevated costs of living.

**Mr. Khan:** Honourable Speaker, it's quite funny. You saw, two questions ago, the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) got a little upset when a colleague over here said congratulations on announcing the previous PC government's affordability measures. And this minister is happy and proud to take credit for the previous government's work, as you just saw two questions ago.

\* (15:30)

Simple one now for the minister is: Why is the minister capping the farm school tax rebate at \$2,500 and eliminating the previous PC phase-out of education property taxes? Farmers are now going to pay more under this NDP government. Can this minister explain why?

**MLA Sala:** You know, we know the importance of producers in our province, Honourable Speaker, and that's why we've ensured that we maintain the education property tax rebates at the exact same level for farmers and producers across Manitoba.

Now, that stands in stark contrast to their record. What did they do? They raised the cost of living for farmers with their Crown lands changes that created significant—*[interjection]* Right? I feel kind of funny mentioning Crown lands without my colleague here, although I might not be—not supposed to be referencing his presence.

I will say, though, their record, making life more expensive for farmers: that's your record. You have to contend with that reality.

What's our record? Making life more affordable.

**Mr. Khan:** This minister wants to talk about records. Well, we can look on that side for various other types of records, Honourable Speaker.

And when you talk about records for this budget, the record will be that they forced through the largest legislative changes in a BITSA bill, removing democracy from Manitobans. That is going to be their record, Honourable Speaker, that they removed Manitobans from coming to this House.

The minister was on the record saying, and I'll give him one more chance to clarify for Manitobans: Does this minister believe that Manitobans have the right to come into this building and discuss and debate bills and legislative changes before this NDP government forces it down their throat?

**MLA Sala:** Do as we say but not as we do, Honourable Speaker. Again, for years, we're following the rules of the House that are here and we're delivering on our commitments in our budget.

And again, for years, what did they do? They used these rules to pass a number of deeply, deeply concerning changes that had a very negative impact on Manitobans.

For example, they used the BITSA bill, for first time in our province's history, to legislate a hydro rate increase without it going through the PUB. That's your record. You got to deal with that. I know you don't want to but you do.

What's our record? Using BITSA to deliver on a budget that's making life more affordable. We stand behind that, Honourable Speaker, and we're going

continue doing that important work of making life better for Manitobans.

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

### Debate

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

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** It's my pleasure to get up here and put some words on the record of BITSA and this group of undemocratic bills.

This just goes to show that they're about reducing transparency and accountability. The NDP, all they want to do is raise, raise taxes. And this is full of broken promises as well. And due to poor organization and management of their legislative priorities, the NDP have been forced to resort to desperate measures to try and save face.

They're putting on and—they're pretending to be doing actual work, but they're not. They're just shoving everything through in BITSA, refusing public input on any of these bills that were included in BITSA. And, you know, they talk about their very, very, very short list of accomplishments, if any. But, anyway, I want to talk firstly about acts that are included in BITSA that should have been stand-alone bills.

So, first off, we have The Election Financing Amendment Act. And they are pretty much feathering their own nest with this, Honourable Speaker. They are subsidizing their own rebates out of taxpayers' pockets, going to the NDP party of Manitoba. And this is, as I said, all at the taxpayers' expense.

They are doubling the subsidy and putting it in their pockets. The public wants committee input on this bill. They are being refused.

Secondly, The Environment Amendment Act. Instead of introducing an environment bill or taking real action, the NDP are creating more bureaucratic red tape that won't actually help. Instead of real leadership on environment, they want to use a stick to punish rather than incentivizing the best practices for Manitoba. This, as well, Honourable Speaker, has a public outcry for presentation at committee.

The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act: They are removing transparency and accountability for Manitoba Hydro and watering down the Public Utilities Board. Hydro will no longer be accountable to Manitobans for its debt, deficits and borrowing plans, that is, until Hydro rates go up to cover for the poor NDP decision

making. The NDP are forcing a 4 per cent Hydro increase on Manitobans. This should also go before committee.

The Labour Relations Amendment Act: The NDP are disenfranchising workers by watering down their democratic right to vote on whether to join a union or not. They are tilting the scales in favour of union administration and bureaucracy at the expense of workers' rights. I've been approached by many union members—let me repeat that, union members—who are opposed to this and want the right to speak at committee.

The Seniors' Advocate Act: The NDP eliminated—the members opposite that are chirping right now couldn't even get up and answer questions on any of this because they're shoving it into BITSA, never mind being accountable to the public at committee. So, The Seniors' Advocate Act: The NDP eliminated the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care as one of their first acts as government. They eliminated the minister, and now it is on the side of the desk of the Finance Minister and not even on the radar of the Health Minister.

So, any of these organizations: which ones are going to investigate abuse and mistreatment of our seniors and those in long-term care? They're just passing the buck on to other agencies, taking the file off of a dedicated minister's desk.

Honourable Speaker, there are five major pieces of legislation here. We couldn't even ask questions to the ministers as it was all stuck into the BITSA bill. Here is the legislation that has been forced into the BITSA bill: (1) The Election Financing Amendment Act, (2) The Environment Amendment Act, (3) The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, and (4) The Labour Relations Amendment Act, (5) The Seniors' Advocate Act. Every single piece of this legislation needs to be presented to public for input.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and—subsidizing the following—substituting the following:—sorry

Bill 37—very small print on here—Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be not now read a second time, but that the order for second reading be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

**The Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), seconded by the honourable member for Fort Whyte,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and that—substituting the following:

Bill 37, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be now read a—be not now read a second time, but that the order for second reading be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee of Legislative Affairs.

\* (15:40)

The motion is in order.

The floor is open for debate.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** I want to thank my friend from Interlake, the Opposition House Leader, for bringing forward what I consider to be a democratic amendment. It's an amendment that is really focused on ensuring that the democratic principles by which this House have operated for more than a century are adhered to.

And to describe that a little bit, I have to give a little bit of history and some of my personal history and then, perhaps, maybe a broader history.

Members, new members and other members of this House will know that we have a relatively unique process in the Manitoba Legislature when it comes to bills after they're passed second reading in this House. After they generally pass government and other bills, public bills, when they pass second reading and they get referred to a committee of the House, different standing committees.

At those standing committees, the public has the opportunity to register. They do that through the Clerk's office, they go online now. The process has been streamlined over the last number of years. The public can go on, see which bills they want to make a presentation about, register for that presentation, and then when the bill is called to committee—sometimes it's multiple nights—the public has the opportunity to give a relatively brief 10-minute presentation on the subject matter of the bill.

And this is unique in Manitoba. Those who've been elected only to the Manitoba Legislature might think this is common practice across the country. I think there's only one other jurisdiction, one of the Maritime provinces, that has something similar to what we have

in the Province of Manitoba. And it provides that unique opportunity for the public to come to the Legislature or to go online virtually, because that option now exists as well, to provide their input into legislation.

*MLA Robert Loiselle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

And I can think of many times when that input for legislation has been valuable, that it's actually changed the bill, sometimes at committee that night, sometimes through an amendment coming back at third reading, a royal—an amendment at third reading. That input can actually change legislation.

I'll recall as one example, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it was when the fortified building—or, sorry, the fortified vehicles act first came in—this was probably 15 years ago—and it was about ensuring that vehicles wouldn't have plates put onto the side. It was an anti-gang or particular organized crime measure. Wasn't really a problem in Manitoba; it was more on the West Coast, but the minister of Justice at the time—Gord Macintosh or Dave Chomiak, I can't remember which one—wanted to bring forward this legislation. So the legislation came forward and it was about ensuring that fortified vehicles would be illegal in Manitoba.

It went to committee, and at committee, presenters came forward and they said, well hang on, now. Like, we actually have tanks that were used for ceremonial purposes. So one would think military tanks and they looked like military tanks; it may have been at one point a military tank. But they were actually used during Remembrance Day ceremonies. Once a year on November 11, these collectors would bring them out to Remembrance Day ceremonies.

And the minister at the time said, well, that's interesting, because the bill would actually ban those military ceremonial tanks from being able to participate in Remembrance Day ceremonies. So because of those presentations at committee, the bill was amended.

Now, that's a relatively small thing. It was important to the individuals at that time who were using those vehicles for Remembrance Day ceremonies, but it was an example of where the public came to a committee and provided input into legislation, which actually changed the legislation for the better. And that is what that process is intended to do.

Now, BITSA's entirely something different. BITSA is a finance bill; it's a confidence motion of government. And finance bills historically—and I don't know all the historical reasons why. Perhaps someday the

esteemed Clerk of the Assembly will explain to me why finance bills don't find their way into a committee hearing where they have public presentations; I'm sure there's a good reason why. But finance bills don't go to the standing committee and the public come forward and make presentations, generally.

They go to what we call the Committee of the Whole. They are done here. So the public can watch, they can go to the gallery, but they can't actually make a presentation. And in that way, they can't, perhaps, give that helpful advice that we saw in bills like the fortified vehicles bill many years ago.

Now, BITSA was always about ensuring that measures that were coming from the budget were getting implemented in some way. It was a catch-all bill that would implement tax changes and those sorts of things. And over the years, sometimes, you know, there would be questions about whether or not that should be in BITSA, whether that should be a stand-alone bill, but in my time, in looking at BITSA, almost entirely the bills had some sort of connection, some sort of nexus to the budget itself.

What we have here is an entirely different situation. This is almost a problem that wasn't created by the Finance Minister—and I'm not going to spend a lot of time defending the Finance Minister—but this was really a problem that was created by the House leader.

Because under our rules, and, you know, it was announced earlier today that we'll have a rules committee of this House on Wednesday evening, and for those who are interested in those sorts of things, it's worth watching because we make decisions about the rules of the House here in a collaborative way. We generally try to work those things out. There's essentially a veto power for almost any member of the House in a recognized party to prevent rules from changing in the House because those rules govern all of us. They're really democratic principles, and we want to ensure that we all agree on matters of rules. It's very, very important that we are governed under the same rules. And BITSA is governed under its own rules as well.

Now, the House movement of bills, of course, those rules changed prior to 2016. Prior to the 2016 election, there was a group of individuals from the NDP, from the Liberal caucus—wasn't a recognized caucus, but independent members from the Liberal caucus joined in those meetings—and new rules were crafted in terms of how bills would move through this Legislature.

And there was a lot of different changes at that time, but one of the guiding principles was that if we were going to have a set sitting calendar, if we were going to have a calendar by which we would know when the Legislature was going to sit, we should also know when bills are going to be introduced. Because prior to 2016, and members who were here and staff, certainly, before 2016, would know that government would sometimes bring in bills in May, sometimes late in May, with the expectation that those bills would pass sometime in June. Legislature would often sit into the middle or the late part of June.

The rule changes in 2016 were such that they provided for the early introduction of bills—earlier, based on a number of days since the Throne Speech—and, as a trade-off, then those bills were guaranteed passage by sometime in the legislative session, either in the spring or in the fall. That was an important trade-off.

Now, things have gotten a little muddy and mucky since—and then and as oppositions on all sides of the House are often to do, they try to find ways to ensure that the rules can work into their advantage.

Now, what has happened, of course, because of that, is that it requires that the government be organized in such a way that they get their legislation into—before the Legislature at an early enough time so that those bills become specified, so they become guaranteed to pass either in the later part of spring or in the fall.

But it requires organization. It requires that the bills get introduced early. That's a hard task. And I know that that's a hard task in government—I was Government House Leader for a while—and it requires that you have to go and organize with ministerial departments, with ministers themselves, to ensure that legislation's getting drafted. It also requires and puts a lot of pressure on legislative drafting resources in the Legislature as well, because they have to get bills before the Legislature in a certain time.

But that is part of the role of government. I mean, it's not—governing isn't easy, and so that particular task isn't meant to be easy, but it's important. And it's important that those bills get before the Legislature at a certain time. If they don't get to the Legislature by a certain time, well then, government's in a bit of a conundrum.

And here's where we get to BITSA, because this government, the new government, messed up. They didn't get bills in in an early enough time. I don't know

if that's because they were new. I don't know if that's because they weren't sure what they wanted to put in the bills; I have no idea, I'm not privy to that information. *[interjection]*

Well, and now we have the still-new member for Rossmere (MLA Schmidt) trying to give legislative advice here, having just discovered where the doors are for her own office. I would encourage her, while she's still trying to figure out where her office is, to actually look at how some of these rules were created. Because if she were actually to look at how some of these rules were created, she would realize that the impetus is that government has to be organized. And I don't know if she was part of the problem or not, or her department was part of the problem. Maybe it was a collective problem within government, and they all couldn't get themselves organized to get those bills before the Legislature in an earlier period of time.

\* (15:50)

It doesn't really matter how that is. But they couldn't get the bills tabled in time, so they couldn't get them specified, so somebody in the back rooms there decided, well, hey, here's an idea: why don't we take those bills that we couldn't get ourselves organized enough in time and staple them to the back of BITSA. We'll just put them and attach them onto the BITSA bill, and then they'll get tabled before the House.

Now I don't know if during that discussion whether that happened in Cabinet or whether that happened in priorities and planning. I don't know if the government has a priorities and planning committee, but however they were having the discussion, I don't know if anybody would have said at that time, okay, that's fine, but you do know that if we staple them onto the back of BITSA, those bills won't have public presenters. There won't be any sort of public presentation.

Now, at that time, there may have been ministers who stood up and said, well, that doesn't really sound good. My guess is there were probably ministers who stood up and said, that sounds really good. We don't want to have the public come and present on these bills. Let's circumvent the process by having these bills put onto BITSA.

And again, that really isn't a Finance Minister's problem; he may have been upset that his bill was somehow waylaid and hijacked by having these other legislative bills stuck onto the back of BITSA. He might have argued against it. I don't know. I would

hope that maybe he'd stand up and tell us whether he argued against it or not. He certainly should have.

Because any Finance minister should be offended that their bill, the BITSA bill—which is an important bill and the Finance Minister himself acknowledged it—any Finance minister should argue against that. I wouldn't say that there's a sanctity to the BITSA bill. That would be going too far. But it is a special bill. It's a special bill that should be treated that way, and nobody should defend that more than the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), and I'm sure his officials would have given him the same advice: that this really isn't what the Finance bill is for.

Now I heard the Minister of Finance stand up and he said, oh, but, you know, you guys did some stuff too. Well, it sure didn't take long for, you know, the new day NDP to become sort of the, oh well, you know, that's all happened before, so we don't really care if it's any different or not. They spend half their time saying that things should be different and the other half of their time saying that, oh well, you did it too, so it's good enough for us.

Of course, if they would actually look at the legislation previously—BITSA, in particular—at how it was amended before, there was always a nexus to the finances that were going on. That is not what happened here. This is a breadth that I've not seen in the Legislature before. They took bills that are not at all related to the budget, stapled them on simply because the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), or the government generally, wasn't organized enough to be able to get their bills before the Legislature.

And what's the effect of that? Oh, so now we have a seniors bill where the Minister of Finance might say that's an important bill and I won't disagree with him on that. Now, there was a report, of course, that was tabled about six or eight months before the election that the government sometimes liked to talk about as being damning on the government—the former government. The reality is it was damning on multiple governments—multiple governments. And if members opposite would actually read that report, I bet you most of those members haven't read that former report by the Auditor General, or by the Ombudsman.

If they actually read that report, they would recognize that multiple governments were cited as having concerns and problems when it came to the P-C-P-O, going back to Greg Selinger and maybe even before that. It might have even drifted into Gary Doer's time. That is a problem for all of us. That is a problem for all of the Assembly, and members opposite who are

currently in the government can stand up and point their fingers, and they're doing no service to anybody and certainly not to seniors in the province of Manitoba.

Every Legislature, and I said it when I was asked to do a news conference from a—it wasn't my ministry, but I was Government House Leader at the time. I was asked to respond to it in a press conference. I said it was absolutely disgraceful, what was revealed in that report. Not a disgrace on the current, or then the current government; not a disgrace on necessarily the former government or the former, former government; on all of us. All of us have some responsibility there.

And so the opportunity now is to have that bill come before the Legislature and have public presenters, have people to be able to come forward and say, we know that there needs to be changes. The former government committed to it, the current government is committing to it, but how should those changes happen? Valuable input that the NDP is robbing not just seniors, but those who ultimately will be affected by that particular piece of legislation, not allowing them to come and provide that advice. And just like we've had advice in the past that have improved bills, improved legislation, they're not going to be able to come.

What does this say? Now I don't want to make it a political issue, because that report that was brought forward by the independent officer of this House was a scathing report, a scathing report on every elected official in this House, governments past and present. It's not a political issue. So I don't want to make it a political issue, but the government, by taking their legislation on seniors and attaching it to BITSA, have made it a political issue.

Because they're taking away the voice of the public, of people who are concerned, of families who would have been impacted by the former operation of the P-C-P-O, to be able to come to the Legislature in a committee that actually provides protection for them to be able to speak, provides them parliamentary privilege.

And by the way, I'll say, Honourable Speaker, I didn't realize that until the former leader of the Liberal Party brought forward a bill when it came to NDAs—non-disclosure agreements—and we had a committee on NDAs and people came forward and they talked about their NDAs and the impact of it. And they were protected by parliamentary privilege. And I don't know if that would be the same thing when it comes to the seniors bill.

But if we were actually able to have that seniors bill before a committee, families who were impacted, others who were impacted, maybe some who were somehow connected to past operations of the P-C-P-O or otherwise, would be able to come to committee and say: This bill is good, but this is how it could be improved. This bill is bad and this is how it should be improved, or this bill is perfect; it's going to—shouldn't be touched in any way.

I don't know what their actual response would be. And we'll never know because the Finance Minister is being used by the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) to not allow public presentations to come forward on the bill.

And the motion that was brought forward, or the amendment that was brought forward by my friend from the Interlake, is really trying to help the government out of that situation. I don't know why the government would want to be tainted with the spectre of not allowing seniors or those who care for seniors to be able to come to the Legislature and have their opinion heard on a bill. I don't know why they would not want to allow that to happen.

I would love to hear the conversation that happened either in their caucus or the Cabinet; I'm not privy to it of course, don't want to be privy to it, but I'd love to know the rationale of why they wouldn't allow seniors to come to the Legislature and say, this bill can be improved in some form or fashion or the other.

Now maybe they think this is some sleight of hand and maybe the Government House Leader and others, you know, went to the Finance Minister and said, oh this is really cute. This is really funny. We're going to attach this to BITSA and guess what? The opposition isn't going to be able to do anything about it. It's going to sail through the House.

I don't really care what they think about us. It doesn't really matter to me what they think about us. There's never been a government that I know of—I've never been a government that's taken a bill that's so significant as this one; that speaks to an independent officer's report that was scathing, that was scathing on all governments who touched it, and there are multiple governments who touched it, who tried to put it on the back of BITSA and then stopped presentations to come from it. That is absolutely abhorrent in my opinion, Honourable Speaker.

So the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) can do what he's been told to do by the Premier (Mr. Kinew)

and try to come forward and say things like: Well, you know, in the past, you know, certain things have happened and that's been really bad and yes, we're just as bad as everybody else. I'm not sure if that's going to go on his next brochure, that we're just as bad as everybody else.

But I would say to him, I would say to him there's never been a circumstance where a government has been given a independent report that was scathing on the treatment of seniors and their remedy to that was to take legislation and put it on the back of a bill that wouldn't be—come before a public presentation, that the public wouldn't be able to speak to it. They are silencing, they are shutting down, they are shutting down the public and seniors in particular. It is absolutely disgraceful.

So the amendment allows that to be corrected.

Now there are other bills, of course. To me, that's the most egregious one, but there are other bills that the government is also trying to slide through here that they don't want people to talk about. Of course, a couple of them are the labour bills. We could get into that. I'm sure my colleagues will speak about that, as well.

But there's one regarding the subsidy for political parties. And we heard today, of course, the Premier talked about the finances of the province. And what he didn't acknowledge was what—the finances were so good that their first order of business that they tried to do as a government is to bring in a higher subsidy, to double the subsidy for their political party. That was their top priority as a government.

And, ironically, it's not the first time this has ever happened. You could go back into history and look back at the former Doer government. One of their very first things that they wanted to do was bring in what became known as the vote tax.

Now the vote tax was legislation that every time somebody voted for a political party, a certain amount of money would have been—gone to that political party.

\* (16:00)

So if somebody went into a voting booth and voted for X party, so and so much money would have gone to X party. Essentially, they would have been paying a tax. They would have been taxing themselves by voting for a particular political party.

That was one of the very first pieces of legislation that Gary Doer brought in, tried to slip it in. Now he—ironically, he didn't try to slip it into BITSA, I don't



believe, but he did try to slip it into omnibus legislation. Omnibus legislation, if you go back in history, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and look at, one was to try to silence the opposition. They were going to vet the mailers that opposition members—well, all members, I suppose, but in particular, it was targeted to opposition—opposition members would have put a—would have had to be vetted and the government would have had to approve it in some way.

That was, of course, argued and fought in long nights in committee. The public came out and said, that's the wrong thing to do. We might not agree with the opposition; we might not agree with what's going into those brochures, but they had the democratic right to be able to say what they want to say, and then the public can decide whether that was good or not.

They tried to slip that into that legislation.

Well, the vote tax, of course, ultimately passed the Legislature, because the NDP have the majority. But ironically, the NDP were too ashamed to actually ever use it. So every year, they wouldn't actually declare it. They wouldn't apply for it through Elections Manitoba, because they were so ashamed of the fact that they had passed it. So year after year, they didn't actually apply for it, so they never received it.

In fact, it was then-opposition Progressive Conservatives who came forward and said, we're not going to accept it; we're not going to accept the vote tax. Even if the NDP would have taken the money, we weren't going to accept it.

But those are things that came out of committee. Those are the sort of discussions that the public came to this House—in the evenings then, because we didn't have the virtual option—they came to the House and they said, we don't agree with this or we don't agree with that. We don't think that brochures by the opposition should be vetted. We don't think that the vote tax is a top priority of the government.

And yet here we are, 15, 16, 17 years later. They tell us it's a new day, but it's the same NDP. It's the same NDP.

Important legislation, like when it comes to seniors legislation and trying to fix problems that have happened in the past, slide it into the dark of night.

Oh, and what are we going to put on that? I mean, they actually put together, as a priority, with this egregious report that was issued by an independent officer of the House, they put together, as a priority with that report, more money for their political party.

They've almost put them on equal level in terms of importance.

We're going to stick all of this into the BITSAs bill, and we'll get more money for our political party and we're going to silence seniors. This is their new day. This is their new way.

And the best defense that the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) can come up with is, well, bad things have been done before, so we're going to do bad things again.

I mean it's absolutely—you know, there have been governments before, like, you know, the Trudeau government or the Obama administration who've kind of come in under the sunny ways or those sort of things. At least they were able to hang on to that for, like, a couple of years. I mean, I remember even Trudeau was able to hang on to the sunny ways proposition for a few years. Obama hung on to it for two terms.

Not this NDP government. They come in and they say, oh, we're going to have it—a new day; it's going to be a new day. And within six months, they're out there saying, oh yes, well, we're no worse than the last guys. Like, that's exactly what their defense is. That's what their defense is when it comes to BITSAs.

And I would argue to them, but I would say to those members opposite, if they would actually have a public hearing regarding this particular issue, I think the public would feel very differently. And I know why they don't want to have a public hearing. I know if they went to that public hearing—and they can all talk about, oh, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) this, and the Premier that, and this is how people feel about him—if they actually believe that, call the committee and have people come to the Legislature and defend doubling the political subsidy for the NDP in the very first year that they were elected—their top priority. Their top priority.

Bring those Manitobans to the Legislature. Have them either in person or virtually, and I can assure you, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I don't care what they can say about the Premier and whatever they think his popularity in—the public is going to say that is not right. That is not a priority.

At a time when the public is dealing with inflation, at a time when people are having a hard time making ends meet because interest rates have gone up in a way that they maybe didn't expect. Inflation has gone up in a way that they might not have expected a couple of years ago. The top priority of the NDP is, well, you

know who's struggling more than anybody? Apparently, the NDP party.

According to them, the organization and the people who are struggling the most in the province of Manitoba are the NDP. Because they're the first people that they decided they're going to try to help. Somebody in the NDP, I guess, came to them and said, we're having a hard time already raising money, or we can foresee us in a time where we're going to have a hard time raising money, so let's double the subsidy.

I don't know who asked for it. I don't know who was lining up. I don't remember it in the election campaign. I can go back and look at the brochures, maybe it was in there. Maybe in the NDP brochures, it said, we're going to double the subsidy because you know who's suffering? The NDP party's suffering. So we're going to double the subsidy. Maybe it was in the brochure. They can table it, and I can apologize if that's the case.

But even if it is in the brochure, they should bring it to a committee. They should bring it to a committee and say to the individuals who are having a hard time making their mortgage payments or to those young people who are thinking, I'm never going to be able to own a house the way the house prices are. Individuals who are going to the grocery stores and saying, my goodness, what has happened to the cost of this or the cost of that. I can't make my budget stretch.

They could bring those people to the Legislature, and they could say, okay, we understand that. I'm sure they would. I'm sure members opposite—the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) would probably be there, and he'd say, no, I understand your pain, but we really think the NDP party needs more money. I'm sure that that's what he'd say. He would try to defend it. He'd go to the good people of his constituency. He'd go to Dauphin, he'd knock on the doors in Dauphin, he'd say, I know you're having a hard time; I feel your pain. But nobody's in more pain than the NDP party, and they need money. That's what he'd say.

I'm sure the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) would say that. He'd go out to St. James, and he'd say, sure, interest rates are tough. Yes, I know grocery prices are really, really high. But there's no organization in Manitoba that's struggling more than the NDP party, and that's why we slipped this in.

Now, he might come across the door of a senior. He might come across the door of a senior, and he might say to that senior, yes, I know you're struggling, but we're going to give more money to the NDP.

And by the way, you may have heard about that report about how seniors—they've been treated in this province over multiple administrations over several decades. And he might be able to say to that senior, and you know the first thing I did. I was so angry when I heard about that report. When I got into government—well, not the first thing; the first thing he did was give himself a subsidy for the NDP. But the second thing that I did—he could say to that senior—is I made sure you couldn't say anything about it. I made sure that you wouldn't be able to come to the Legislature and say anything about it.

Now, maybe this is more the problem of his House leader—of his Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), and then he should say that.

But really, if he was walking in St. James—if he went door knocking this evening—or, he could go to Tuxedo and say the same thing. He could go to Tuxedo, and he could say to the senior in Tuxedo, the first thing I did was make sure that the NDP had more money. The second thing I did is make sure you didn't have a voice in the Legislature because I took this bill—it was supposed to deal with this horrible situation that was exposed by an independent officer of the Legislature, and I made sure your voice was silenced.

That's the new NDP. That's today's NDP.

They can say whatever they want. But the ultimate response is their actions. Their ultimate response is their actions. They're not going to let seniors speak to this bill. They're going to slide through in this House using, as the minister says, the rules—oh, the rules allow me to do it. That's going to be his defence.

He's going to go into the seniors hall. He's going to go into whatever hall he's going to be asked to speak in and say, yes, yes, I took money and I gave it to the NDP. Oh sure, I shut down the seniors from speaking to this. But you know why I did it? Because the rules allow me to do it.

And maybe there was something somebody else did that made me offended, too. So I'm just as bad as the—whoever he wants to point to. He can point to me if he wants. And I'll have that debate with him in that hall. And we can talk about whether there's ever been a government—ever been a government in the history of Manitoba—that's ever done something so egregious in the face of democracy—is to take a scathing independent report affecting seniors—terrible abuse that was put out; terrible abuse.

And the response to that—this Legislature could've come together in agreement—but the response to that

was, we're going to take a bill to try to deal with that, whether it does or not. We're not going to allow input. We're not going to allow people to speak to it. We're going to staple it to the back of a bill that isn't going to have public discourse. If he wants to have that debate, I'll have it anywhere in the province of Manitoba.

\* (16:10)

This is a government that should be ashamed of themselves. There's nothing new with that government. It's just like the old NDP. They should be ashamed; it's disgraceful.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** You know, the spring session's been fascinating, watching the opposition. At first it was funny, and now, it's just sad. And what you're seeing is this party that's lost; that has absolutely nothing to say to Manitoba. They're supposed to be the government-in-waiting, yet they have absolutely nothing to offer Manitobans.

And we've seen that in the debate this afternoon. They wanted to have this debate. They have been, you know, negotiating hard with our House leader to have this day. It finally comes, and what do they want to talk about? Do they want to talk about a seniors advocate? No. Do they want to talk about hydro becoming more affordable? No.

What do they want to talk about? They wanted to talk about we were playing procedural games in the spring session and that mean old government outsmarted us. That was what they came here to talk about today. That's what they think that Manitobans care about. And I can tell you they absolutely do not.

If this opposition actually cared about what was in this bill, they would've allowed it to—the bills to actually be tabled. They would've allowed debate. They would've had their day at committee. But they chose—they made a choice to block those bills. They are the ones that have prevented Manitobans from having their say on this bill.

If those Manitobans come to them and complain, they have only themselves to blame. They were in the driver's seat. They made a choice. They made the choice to take away the voice of Manitoba and prevent them from discussing this bill.

So then they turn around and go, well, you know, those mean NDPers outsmarting us again. Well, there was another choice. You could have made a leave application. You could have made every one of those bills a specified bill so that it—they could proceed through the committee process. That was another

choice that you made, and the choice you made was to silence Manitobans. This is not on the government. This is very much on the opposition.

And so why? Why are they preventing Manitobans from discussing these bills? Because they are important bills. They are, in fact, bills that will change the culture in Manitoba. Some of these bills I'm exceptionally proud of. But of course, in the time that they've had this afternoon, none of them actually talked about the bills because they know these bills are going to be—move Manitoba forward. They know that these bills are going to change the lives and—Manitobans in a real way, something they could not do in seven—a half years of government.

So I will actually talk about these bills because this is what Manitobans elected this government to do, and they're delivering on those promises.

Let's talk about a seniors advocate. This is going to be a game changer in Manitoba. BC, New Brunswick, Newfoundland all have a seniors advocate. When I had first got elected in 2019, this was on the table. People were talking about this. The former PC government had seven and a half years—seven and a half years—and they said no to this. They blocked this. They would not bring it forward. They opposed it.

And it makes sense. When the UCP government came in power in Alberta, one of the first things they did is they had got rid of their seniors advocate in Alberta. And, of course, we know that whatever they think is a good idea in Alberta, these—this group of opposition MLAs think it's a good idea here.

And so, of course, why? Why would the Alberta Conservative Party get rid of their seniors advocate when everybody else thinks it's a good idea?

So independent, non-partisan branch of this government, which will investigate complaints and provide policy recommendations for all of the MLAs in Manitoba, which will be evidence-based and will be a voice, a really strong voice for seniors in this province. Who could be against that? Why would you block that? Yet at every stage, this opposition has been opposed to this bill and has tried to use procedural tactics to take the voice away from Manitoba seniors, and that didn't change today. That continued. You saw the same, you know, shenanigans here today, and doing everything they can not to talk about this bill.

And the reality is, when we look at the PC record on seniors, it is abysmal. We lost personal-care-home beds under the PCs. We went backwards. Not only did they not build any beds, they shut them down. We had

less beds in 2023 than we did in 2016. We had—and I believe my friend from Steinbach had alluded to the scathing auditor general's report about elder abuse in our PCHs. And, again, nothing was done. You thought that that would be a wake-up call. He had obviously shocked his sensibilities, but he was in government and nothing was done.

We also have a crisis when it comes to affordable seniors housing in Manitoba, and something that affects my constituents in Fort Garry. I remember knocking on the door of a constituent. He lived in an 1,800-square-foot house; he was a widow. He, a man in his 80s, the house was too much for him. He wanted to downsize but the house was paid off, and he had looked into the rental market and he would have paid more renting a house than living, you know, basically on the first floor of this 1,800-square-foot house, you know.

And a street or two down the way, I'm meeting with a couple in their early thirties, and they're complaining to me that they can't find affordable homes to move into and start a family. And, you know, if we could develop a system where you have affordable houses for seniors, then that family home gets freed up and that 30-year-old couple will move into his home and that senior can age in the community and age in dignity.

But that is something that the previous government completely ignored. We would hear tales about high-dose flu shots from the seniors community and how they were advocating about how we need Manitoba to actually provide coverage for this because many seniors are obviously on fixed incomes and they can't afford this and it's not covered by our health-care system.

But it's preventative medicine. If you give somebody a high-dose flu shot or a high-dose—you know, then chances of them getting seriously ill and ending up into an emergency room or a PCH, which is much more expensive to cover. And so these things actually pay for themselves. But under the previous government, this just fell under deaf ears.

We can talk about The Labour Relations Amendment Act. This is going to change lives; this is going to be huge for Manitoba; this is going to be huge for our economy. This is the banning of the use of replacement workers in Manitoba. We are following the lead of Canada. Quebec, BC have all done this before us. This is a huge win for Manitobans—absolutely huge.

And, of course, this is another bill the PCs are trying to block and this is a bill that makes our economy fairer and makes it more efficient. The idea behind collective bargaining is you need two groups of people with equal bargaining power who sit down and make things work. If you have replacement workers, then excuse the power relationships between the parties. It gives an incentive to the employer not to bargain in good faith and try to wait out and starve out the workers and hope that they are as financially desperate, that they'll come to the table and take whatever, you know, terms that are offered to them even if it's not in the best interest of those workers or the company.

By doing this, it's actually going to prevent strikes. There will not be a financial incentive to have a strike for a company. The company will actually go out of its way to resolve conflict before it actually gets there. It will bring them to the table. And it's not me saying this; there is evidence of this from across Canada where this law has been in place and it will, you know, be less business days lost to strikes and we will have fairer deals here in Manitoba. And it ultimately will be very good to the business community.

You saw that with the 60-day arbitration rule, that at first the business community was opposed to it; now they think it's a good thing and support that. They've seen that it works and it actually makes sense for their business.

\* (16:20)

I mean, businesses work when everybody is, you know, working together for the same goal. So more people unionized, that's the path in Manitoba for middle class. And the more we do to support Manitobans and make it easier that they have protections—*[interjection]* Okay, all right.

All right, so there is a lot to say, and I certainly have a lot more that I want to say—*[interjection]* Yes.

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

**Mr. Wasyliw:** Well. Couple things I do want to point out.

I'm very excited, especially for the people of Fort Garry, that we're raising the rental tax credit. This was actually a cut that the PCs made; they raised taxes on people who rented in Manitoba—40 per cent of Manitobans rent. So they raised taxes on 40 per cent of Manitobans, making life less affordable for 40 per cent of Manitobans. And in Fort Garry, it's even

worse; it's 50 per cent of my riding are renters. So this is going to be huge.

The other big shout-out I want to make to the Finance Minister is taking the PST off of multi-unit housing, affordable housing. We need to build a lot more of it, especially in Fort Garry, and I've spoken to developers, construction industry, and they love this. In combination with the federal government tax credit, it is going to create a mini construction boom; we certainly need that in Manitoba.

I have so much more to say, but I want to give other people the chance to say it, so thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte):** Thank you, Assistant Honourable Deputy Speaker. I just wanted to make sure I got your title correct. It's an honour for me to stand up here today and put a few words on the record.

It's a tough act to follow when you have the experience and the wisdom of the MLA from Steinbach to speak to this motion that we bring forward to the House, and it's a very, very important one, and I have about 20 pages of notes here that I'm going to get into as this time goes on.

But one thing, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, that absolutely blows my mind, that should blow everyone's mind at home that's watching and members opposite, is that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) wants to stand up and go on his tirade of all the different issues and concerns he has, and not once—not once—does he address the main issue of what we're standing here talking about today: that this NDP government and this Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and this failed Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine), who couldn't plan and prioritize their session, is now forcing legislation through on Manitobans; that this failed NDP Government House Leader and this Minister of Finance and Premier (Mr. Kinew) and everyone on that side of the House now is forcing this legislation through—this bill through—without Manitobans having the right, the ability to come speak to this.

It blows my mind that he can get up there with the audacity to talk about what he's talking about, and I have a lot of respect for the member for Fort Garry; I think he's a very smart man. He actually—it's unfortunate that he's being used by this NDP right now, by this Premier and this Minister of Finance. This member for Fort Garry should rightfully be the minister of Justice, and maybe we'd get something done in this province.

After listening to him speak, he's a good speaker; he could probably get some stuff done. He has some experience in the law. He could get more done than this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) with his \$300-camera rebate program, which, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, be interesting how many people have actually applied for that. How many thefts has that actually stopped, or is that number on the rise? We could ask the Minister of Justice that question, but he won't answer it, so I'll leave it as a rhetorical one. It's unfortunate that the member for Fort Garry is being used by his party to stand up and talk about our motion today that we bring forward.

And not once does he mention the democratic right of Manitobans. He does go on to talk about—and it's comical. He said—I'll have to wait for Hansard—but he said that Manitobans do not want their say. What? Manitobans don't want their say? It's insane. Manitobans want their say. They want to come. We are not talking about the validity of the bills or what the Minister of Finance is putting through. We've had times at question period and we've gone back and forth, and the media's covered it and we've discussed it at times.

We are talking about the democratic right of Manitobans to come speak to these bills. That is what we're talking about, and the member from Fort Garry stands up and says, Manitobans don't want their say. Then he goes on to say, his second strongest point, and I really hope he's a better lawyer than he's an MLA, or maybe the Minister of Justice will just stay there, or maybe we can move the member from Waverley into being the minister of Justice, because he could probably get some more done there.

But he says that we're in the driver's seats, that opposition is in the driver's seat. Last time I checked, it was them that were in the driver's seat. But if they don't want to do it and they don't want to drive, we're more than happy to take over. We—we'll gladly do it. It's clear—he said it. He said we're in the driver's seat. And yet this Government House Leader—and anyone that's confused, you can go back to the member from Steinbach and listen to his eloquent, historical, rich, referenced dialogue and stories on history in this building here on how this legislation came through, and where we are, why we're here today.

It's the Government House Leader that sets the schedule, that drives the car, or the bus or whatever you want to call it. Apparently not. This cart that they love to talk about is obviously broken off its axles. They have no economic horse. I'm going to bring back

Eeyore the donkey, which is supposed to be their economic engine, and it's just completely blowing up in their first seven months. It is embarrassing that the MLA for Fort Garry will stand up and say we're in the driver's seat.

Then he goes on to say it's on the opposition. And these aren't even my notes. I just did this listening to him that Manitobans have to hear, but this is ludicrous. He says it's on the opposition; it's on the opposition. They're government. There are procedures in place to make sure that the government can get their agenda done, their legislation done. They just have to be organized. They have to not be partying in New York. They have to understand what's happening. They have to have open communication with their departments to get stuff done.

The sad reality is, it's on them. And now because it's their fault and their mistake, Manitobans have to pay the price. All we're asking for is that this motion that, and I'm going to say it here so we can understand what it is, is that they're—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act be not now read a second time, but that the order for second reading be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper, and the subject matter therefore referred to Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

So what are we asking for? We're simply saying take this and let's go to a standing committee. Let's have Manitobans come speak to this. They're still government; they'll still get it done. They have more votes than we do. I mean, people at home know this. The member from Fort Garry should know this. The Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), the Premier (Mr. Kinew), the House leader, they have more votes. Yes. They can get it done.

But due to their sheer incompetence, due to their sheer lack of planning, due to their sheer, just incomprehensible lack of knowledge on how this place works—they talk about a government seven years in waiting. Well, I guess in 2027, they're going to go back to waiting, because they weren't ready to take over, and this is proof that they weren't. This is proof that they're not ready. So in 2027, we'll get them back there, because they do not know how to govern.

Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker, it's clear. We are talking about Manitobans' democratic right. People want to come speak in this Chamber on bills. That's it. We're not talking about the specifics, the validity of each bill on its own, which we would love to get to. But before that is democracy. Before that is what we're all elected to do here, and the minister in

Finance and I might take jabs at each other back and forth, but he knows I have the utmost respect for him. And him and I have had conversations on this. For the life of me, I cannot understand why they are forcing non-budgetary bills through with this BITSA bill, the budget implementation bill.

Why are they cramming everything through? It doesn't make any sense, and if you're watching at home or if you're the media listening to this, it makes no sense, plain and simple. The member for Fort Garry (Mr. Kinew) stood up, he didn't talk once about democracy. I mean, that should show maybe where they stand, then.

\* (16:30)

I asked the Minister of Finance three times in question period prior to this, what is his stance on having Manitobans come in here. Forget about this bill. Does he believe Manitobans have the right to come into this building and talk and debate bills before they're passed? Refused to answer it. We've asked the Premier—refuses to answer it.

What are they so afraid of? Why do they not want Manitobans coming to speak?

And now I can hear them heckling, saying, we're not afraid. Great; you're not afraid. Let's bring it to committee. That's what this motion is for. I heard the member say it. We all did. That member wants to put their hand up who said it? There you go. The member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) said it. That's great. I'm glad the member for Assiniboia says so. She said, let's have people come speak to it. Great. So when we vote on this, I look forward to her voting and supporting our motion.

The Minister of Finance said in question period over today: We want to bring Manitobans in to debate this. Great; I look forward to the Minister of Finance supporting this motion.

This is how democracy works. You let people come—you might not like what they say. But I don't like 99.99 per cent of the stuff they say on that side. They probably don't like 23.6 per cent of the stuff we say. But the vast majority of the stuff we say, they still like.

But that is democracy. We're supposed to be able to talk about these things, Honourable Assistant Deputy Speaker. It is mind-blowing that they want to circumvent Manitobans. I just can't understand it for the life of me. It may be there was a mistake in the schedule.

The Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) messed up on the schedule. It's clear as day that they weren't ready for this. They were seven years in the making; they probably would have needed another 17 years in the making and we'll get them back there.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

But the issue is they are circumventing democracy, plain and simple. The MLA for Steinbach went on great detail on how and why we are discussing this and the historical importance of where we're at today for timelines and agendas and getting stuff done.

If the government wanted to get it done, why did they not bring this forward before the date they had to? Plain and simple. They had time to talk in front of media. They had time to go out and talk about the bill they're going to bring forward, but they didn't bring it forward. So it makes you think, hmm, if they had the bill ready and they talked to their stakeholders and they didn't bring it forward by the date, maybe they did this intentionally. Maybe they did it to go around Manitobans, plain and simple.

Again, Honourable Speaker, it is important for Manitobans to know that this NDP government is removing Manitobans' ability to come speak to all of the bills they have stapled onto the back of this 90-page document—90 pages—the largest substantive changes in legislative history through a BITSA bill done by this NDP government, with no debate from Manitobans. That's what it comes down to.

Now we talk about what Manitobans want. Manitobans want a lot of things. They want health care; they want affordability; they want education; they want economy. I let one of my colleagues from—the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) said it: They want to be heard. They have a right to be heard. They have a right to come into this building and have a say. They are government; they are in charge; they were the ones driving this bus or this cart that is now broken. They were the ones responsible for getting this through. Now, they couldn't get it through, so they forced it through. That is plain and simple.

Now, what is so important about having Manitobans come speak to this? Well, it's important because you get a different side of it; you get to understand a different perspective. The member from Steinbach stood up and talked about his great tank story and how the armoured cars came forward in the masses and that bill was then changed. I'll go something a little bit more recent and I'll talk about this gas stunt, holiday, that this NDP government is doing.

If we go back to just November, six, seven months ago, myself and the member from Portage la Prairie went to committee where Manitobans came and spoke about this bill. This Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and this Premier (Mr. Kinew) were so confident that they went to the media and said we refuse to change anything. It's perfect; we're not going to change it.

We went to committee. We heard from Manitobans. We lobbied them in this House. We went after this Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) in question period and what happened, Honourable Speaker? This Minister of Finance amended his bill. It still went forward; they're still government. They did that, but they amended it to make it better for all Manitobans.

That's what we're asking for. We can't stop what they're doing, but we can make it better for Manitoba. Why are the NDP scared of making this BITSA—this budget bill better?

It just—it really, like, when you're sitting there listening to this, it has to confuse you. You have to understand—why? Yes, they missed a—they missed the deadline. They weren't prepared. They weren't organized. But why do they want to get around Manitobans?

This motion simply states that we want to bring this to public committee—a Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs. We already have the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) said she would support it. The Minister of Finance today in question period said he wants to have Manitobans in here debating this. So we got two now. We got to get a couple more. That's how democracy works, Honourable Speaker.

The NDP have effectively removed any and all rights of Manitobans to come speak to the significant legislative changes being proposed here today. That's what they've done.

BITSA, Bill 37, with its stapled amendments to the back of it, goes above and beyond what the intention of BITSA bills was—the budget implementation bill. And this Minister of Finance, this Premier and this NDP government are abusing that. Plain and simple. Everyone can see it at home.

This budget bill—implementation—affects seniors, labour, homeowners, businesses—Election Financing Act.

I asked the Minister of Finance this in our earlier questions. There's right and there's wrong. There's historical precedent for things—how things have been conducted in the past. And then there's the reality of the situation we live in. Right and wrong.

You know, I don't need to tell somebody what's right and wrong for—you would think for most things in life you can just—you can—you know—it's right or wrong. Be wrong for me to assault somebody. That's wrong. We know that. We know there's a law for it, but we just know it's wrong. Common sense kind of kicks in.

The common sense of forcing legislation through at this level, at this scale, without having Manitobans come speak is mind-blowing. The NDP have removed all rights from Manitobans to talk to this largest substantial changes in legislative history in this province in a BITSA bill. They want to go around the public. It's clear they want to do that.

Now, when we get—talk about right and wrong, I want to just point out, unfortunately—and I have to bring this up—the hypocrisy by our Premier (Mr. Kinew) in this province. Referenced it in question period, and I'm going to have to do it again because it goes deeper than that. This Premier can stand up in this House a few years ago and say what was done in 2020 was wrong. And yet, here he is doing the exact same thing times 10.

So not only is it, like—earlier reference—you know, punching somebody in the arm maybe or assaulting somebody, it is going overboard. And UFC, GSP beating down whoever his last conquest was—whatever his last win was in the Air Canada Centre. It blows my mind that this Premier thinks it's okay. And I'm going to quote him. And it's just—it's—okay. I'll give another argument because maybe they don't like the wrestling argument and the UFC.

It's like having a seven-year-old child who says—steals candy from their sibling and then goes to the parent and says, oh, well, she did it to me, mom. I can do it back. Really? That's your argument, son? That she did it to you or your sibling did it to you, so you're going to do it back?

The Minister of the Finance went on the record and said that, well, they did it in 2020, so we're going to do it now. That's exactly what he said.

So somebody in your eyes did something wrong. You're going to go enact that. But you're going to enact it tenfold. The logic of this smiling Premier to your face while he has the audacity, with the Minister of Finance, to say the things that they're saying is, again, mind-blowing.

Manitobans should be worried. They should be concerned. If, according to the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), a wrong was done, why is he wronging it again? Why?

Now, I'm going to quote from the Premier, just so we're saying this. In 2020, he says, it is also undemocratic in that it takes away the rights of Manitobans to have a fair and open public hearing. Who said that? This Premier, in third reading of BITSA bill 2020.

\* (16:40)

So, if it's undemocratic then, but now it's okay because it goes to the NDP, their core supporters, their union bosses—not the workers who are going to be affected—the union bosses are going to benefit from this and their special-interest groups. That's what they want to get done with you. He says it's undemocratic then, but for him it's fine.

Now you go on to see the Premier again, says, and I quote: In which is undemocratic in the Stephen Harper sense of undemocratic, in which, you know, they would pass provisions that would change, you know, the environment and change people's rights and change, you know, the social safety net in Canada without people ever hearing it by burying those provisions in the back of an omnibus bill. Of course, that is one of the concerns we have about the lack of democratic process in this bill.

Who said that, Honourable Speaker? The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) wants to know who says it? I'll tell him who said it: the person sitting to his right—the Premier of Manitoba said that.

We have—this is one of the concerns we have about the lack of democratic process in the bill. Now the Minister of Health wants to join in on the party and heckle me down and that's fine. The Minister of Health is welcome to join because I got about five minutes left and we're going to talk about the seniors advocate part. And we'll get to the Health afterwards.

But the Premier said that. He said it in 2020. The Minister of Finance says it was wrong then, and he's doing it now. The Premier said it was wrong then; he's doing it now. But he's not just doing it now; he's doing it to the scale which has never been done in this province before. That is of major concern to Manitobans, as well.

This NDP, this Premier, this Minister of Finance are all carrying an authoritarian agenda. It is a dictatorship, not a democracy, on that side of the House. The Premier says what to do, they say how high—or, jump; they say how high. Unfortunately, the



Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) didn't get the memo on actually scheduling things to get done, so now here we are.

You know, between travelling New York and being too busy to answer phone calls on your file, you know, scheduling when bills should be presented this House is obviously of concern. It boils down to the simple amendment we are bringing today, the motion to have this amended.

Two members on that side of the House have already agreed. I'm just waiting for anyone else to say they want to agree this motion here. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is probably on the fence. The member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), after his opening remarks where he did not mention once the democratic process, yet went on ad nauseam about the bills themselves, which we're not even talking about. We're talking about the fact that this NDP government is circumventing Manitobans. That is the concern.

It's crucial for Manitobans to have a voice in this bill. I'm going to make a famous quote here. I'm sure some of the members opposite have heard this, maybe not. I don't know. I know we on this side have. And I quote: The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.

That could not summarize this NDP any better than that. When you are willing—democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.

Members on this side of the House are ready to work, have been working, holding them accountable. We're ready to have Manitobans come speak to these bills. We're ready to sit all summer, all night. We are ready to work for Manitobans. They are not. They're forcing it through.

Manitobans are ready to come and speak to these bills. And they want to have their voices heard. They will come all summer to have their voices heard. The NDP will not—the NDP will not. They are willing to give to those who would not and Manitobans, sorry to say, you got to learn the lesson the tough way with this NDP. Because the fact of the matter is that this NDP Finance Minister has now stapled this onto the back of this bill, which will inevitably have to pass in November.

But we are going to do everything we can on this side of the House to make this bill better. Democracy is a fragile thing. We see it all over the world, Honourable Speaker.

**An Honourable Member:** Are you quoting Thomas Jefferson, the slave owner?

**Mr. Khan:** It requires both discipline and hard work, discipline.

You know and I can hear member opposite from Riel where I talk about democracy being fragile and he's saying I'm a slave owner. I don't know what the member is saying. It's really unfortunate that when I'm saying democracy's a fragile thing and it requires discipline and hard work, I don't know, someone else might have said that, somebody else might have said that, but I'm talking about democracy; it is fragile.

I don't understand why the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) feels like he needs to shout me down when I'm talking about the validity of democracy. If he wants to continue to shout me down, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I would hope that at some point there may be some interjection so I can continue on with my speech so I don't have to hear this member continually heckling me.

Well, regardless, democracy is fragile. That's what I was talking about, and if it was someone else's quote, I don't think I'm the only person to put those three words together in the history of mankind. That, and hard work and discipline is required to govern. The Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) lacks both, and it's evident today. And Manitobans are going to pay the price under this NDP. And the bills crammed into this BITSA bill could have been read in the House, debated and subject to a democratic vote. We are all elected here to do that, and yet this NDP government wants to force it through without having that vote. It's plain and simple. They can yell all they want. They can heckle me all they want. At the end of the day, they got to look themselves in the mirror and say, we removed Manitobans' democratic right to come to this people's building, as they love to call it, as we all love to call it. The difference on this side of the House, we actually stand for the people; on that side of the House, they want to remove democracy from them.

So I can see I've obviously ruffled the feather with them because they don't like hard work. They don't like accountability. They don't like timelines, right? *[interjection]* And the members want to continue to chirp, and they want to continue to argue and talk about their validity. The members opposite, the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) probably has never worked out anything more in his life, than maybe his small biceps, that we could all see with his—

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The government bench needs to come to order. The member for Riel (MLA Moyes) would please quit hollering across.

**Mr. Khan:** I appreciate you calling out the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) for his behaviour and the government benches again. You know, it's—you know, I don't understand why they're so angry. If I've referenced a quote that was historically not correct, and I apologize for that. I'm simply talking about democracy, the right of Manitobans to come out. I was not aware of that. I sat down afterwards and I could kind of hear the member from Riel chirping me. Wasn't my intent.

The intent is that democracy is fragile, and we have to work with it diligently, with discipline, with focus to get it done. This Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) didn't. This Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), this Premier (Mr. Kinew), everyone on that side of the House didn't. And now we are forcing legislation through for Manitobans. That is what's happening today.

When you get into the detail of what's happening in here—Manitobans should be aware of this as well—is that historically, tradition in this great building has been you introduce things into—items into BITSA bills that have been spoken about in the budget speech or that—in the budget. I asked the Minister of Finance to say where in the budget or budget speech does it reference a 50 per cent subsidy to political parties. He could not answer that. Did they run on 50 per cent political subsidies to their party? They didn't. They missed—they held that back from Manitobans: another violation of trust and democracy in this province. It's not in the budget speech, it's not in the budget, and yet, here they are, forcing it through BITSA.

If you went to every Manitoban and said now they are increasing their political subsidy to 50 per cent where under the PC Party, we dropped it to 25 per cent; we decreased it to give more money back to Manitobans. And what are they doing in a time of affordability crisis, at a time where people can't buy food and pay rent, they are lining their political pockets with a 50 per cent political subsidy or rebate. They didn't run on it. They didn't tell Manitobans, and yet here they are doing that. Why? Because they can. It's not the right thing to do; the minister admits it's not the right thing to do, cramming things through; he says it was wrong in 2020. I've quoted the Premier—this Premier—twice, saying it's the wrong thing to do, and yet, here they are, doing it. Two wrongs don't

make a right, and that's exactly what they're doing, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

The NDP again are denying Manitobans: election financing amendment act, environmental amendment act, Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act. Where is that hydro freeze? Where's the hydro freeze? Where is the hydro freeze?

\* (16:50)

It's not—actually, buried in this BITSA bill is authority and power for this Minister of Finance to increase it to 4 per cent. They didn't run on that. They ran on zero per cent. In the BITSA bill, 4 per cent. This minister can do at the Cabinet table without bringing it to this Chamber.

What else is buried in here? Let's talk about the gas tax stunt. What's buried in the BITSA bill? He can do whatever he wants with it. He's going to—he can increase it to 20 cents in September if he wants.

Unprecedented power and authority now lies in this minister's hands if Manitobans don't speak up. Oh no, wait. They can't speak up. They took away the power for Manitobans to speak, so they can't.

Labour Relations Amendment Act. We've heard this minister and this government talk about pro-union, pro-union, pro-union. He said it twice in his speech. Union, union, union.

And we understand the importance of unions and union workers on this side of the House. We are not arguing against that. What we are arguing against is the fair and democratic process by which this NDP wants to force this legislation through.

They want to go to 50 per cent for forced unionization. They want to remove the right of a worker to have a secret ballot. What other terms of peer pressure, of forced, of coercion, of intimidation, could you get in the workplace? This is what they want in the workplace.

They want a group of people going up to Samantha or Bob or Frank and saying, sign this card, you're going—we're going to be unionized. How are you going to say no when a group of ten people ask you to sign a card? It's peer pressure. It's schoolyard antics. It's schoolyard bullying.

It's saying you did it wrong; we're going to do it wrong. And we're not only going to do it wrong, we're going to do it wrong a hundred times worse to you. And that's what they're doing to Manitobans.

I can go on and on and on. I've got another 20 pages of this stuff here, but it—when it comes down to it, Honourable Deputy Speaker, there's no hydro freeze. Surgery wait times are up. They have no plan for health care. They cut the minister of—the seniors department. They cut the funding to seniors. They cut the funding to infrastructure. They—this NDP government enforced the largest education property tax increase in the history of this province, \$148 million.

They should be ashamed of what they're doing. They should let Manitobans have their say and come to this House.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Other members wishing to debate?

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** It's a privilege to arise and put a few words on the record on behalf of the good folks of McPhillips.

And I want to start by commending our phenomenal Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) for his work. And, you know, I take a great deal of pride sitting alongside our—the Minister of Finance and seeing how much care and vision he brought to preparing this budget, and I'm proud to be supporting this bill.

You know, as a new member in this Chamber, you get to learn a lot of new stuff, and it is a privilege, and it's exciting sometimes. But, you know, every now and then you get a walk through memory lane with the member of Steinbach, and you get to listen to the member of Fort Whyte knee-deep in his own hyperbole.

But what I'm hearing today, and what I've been hearing for the last little while is a lot of whining and complaining from the opposition. Whining and complaining about what? That our government is delivering on its promises.

There are a lot of tools at the discretion of a government to deliver on its mandate. A pretty significant mandate, I might add, on October of 2023—we talk about democracy—they made their voices heard. They said, you know what, enough of the PC government. They're disconnected. They're tired. We need change. We need a government that actually listens.

And this budget rebuilds a health-care system that they destroyed and makes life more affordable for Manitobans.

And they're angry that we're doing that. I'm glad that we're on the right side and we're getting that work done for Manitobans.

I remember the day after the budget, being at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce breakfast, where the Minister of Finance spoke, and hearing from so many folks within the business community, saying how happy they were with the budget, that they understood that our government was delivering on promises that we had campaigned on during the election. And as much as I would love to talk about the campaign and the election and the campaign that they ran, I'm glad that we're delivering on solid, concrete measures for Manitobans.

You know, there's a—you know, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), my colleague, also talked about the PST removal on new builds, and I was talking to a friend of mine who is a developer, and you get to hear from people from all walks of life, right. There were many folks who were excited about removing the PST on—or, the gas tax, I should say—on—at the pump. And I heard about that before January 1, how excited people were. People were excited that we were extending it, and this is the kind of things that our government is doing.

We're making life more affordable for people, yet the PCs seem to have a problem with that. They spent a month here obstructing a bill that would make life more safe for Manitobans, and now they're complaining that we're using tools available to us to make life more affordable for Manitobans. So any Manitobans watching at home knows which party's on their side and which party's here just to waste time.

Imagine off the top you get a lot of opportunities, as a new member in this Chamber, to learn from different colleagues, and learn the processes and the procedures here. But I think the most important thing, and I'm sure my colleagues would agree with me, is what is happening within our own constituencies, right? What are Manitobans actually feeling? What are the concrete impacts of what we do in this Chamber? How is that helping Manitobans?

Homeowners tax credit, rebuilding health care, investing \$8.2 billion—a record amount—in health care to fix the damage that's been caused over these last seven and a half years—those are real impacts Manitobans will feel. They're not plugged into what members over there have to say, and the bickering and the heckling, and sometimes the name-calling, unfortunately. They want to know what their government is doing for them to make life better. And that's what our government is laser-focused on. That is what our Minister of Finance has been focused on in delivering this bill.

I'm incredibly proud to be standing alongside this team, and a team full of incredible talent and expertise that I will match up with the other side any day of the week.

With that, Honourable Speaker, I'm so proud to vote for this. I would love to see unanimous support from the members across the way.

**The Speaker:** If there are no other members wishing to speak, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is the amendment to bill number—bill—the motion—the amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax structures amendment act, moved by the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson).

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

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

#### Voice Vote

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The honourable member for Interlake-Gimli—the Opposition—Official Opposition House Leader.

#### Recorded Vote

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** With all due respect, I'd like to request a recorded vote.

**The Speaker:** A recorded vote has been requested as per the previously agreed changes. Five minutes will be the length of time that the bells will be allowed to ring.

\* (17:00)

Call in the members, please.

The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 37, The budget implementation tax statutes amendment act, brought forward by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli—the amendment to the second reading of Bill 37, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act.

#### Division

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

#### Ayes

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

#### Nays

*Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Wasyliv, Wiebe.*

**Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish):** Yays 19, Nays 27.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The hour being past—when the second reading of the bill is again before the House, the debate will be open.

The hour now being past 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 27, 2024

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