

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 15, 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 the 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 treaty 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

The Speaker: I have a report to table.

I am pleased to table the annual report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the year ending March 31st, 2024. Copies of the report have been placed on the members' desks.

Any other reports?

Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise in recognition of the Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba. Having begun as a small association by parents of kids with cerebral palsy in 1974, CPAM has since grown into a province-wide organization with multiple staff and

hundreds of community members. This year, the community celebrates CPAM's 50th anniversary.

CPAM advocates for adults and children with CP on both a systemic and individual basis. They help refer folks to proper supports and have created a fund for clinicians and researchers who focus on addressing the quality of life issues for people affected by CP.

They also provide supports in the form of a scholarship to post-secondary institutions, equipment grants for things like specialized bikes and gear that help everyone participate in the fun things in life, and they're partners in CoHabit, a housing initiative that will build universal communal homes for 120 adults with physical disabilities right here in Winnipeg.

Most of all, CPAM serves as a community hub for folks with cerebral palsy and their families to connect at community events, holiday parties, Goldeyes games, cycling races and more. It's a place for fun, relationships and community.

To mark their 50th anniversary, CPAM is hosting two major fundraisers this year: their 30th annual Westman's stationary bike race on April 20 in Brandon and their 35th annual stationary bike race on May 11 in Winnipeg. For years, both events have drawn in dozens of teams who've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in support of folks with CP across the province.

CPAM has a saying: Life is hard, and we just want to make it just a little bit better. Honourable Speaker, I invite all members to recognize David Kron, Tara Schaan, Suzanna Schanel, Pamela Mason, Stephanie Butler, Sheryl Miller, Manveer Seehra and Jhaz Navidad, for their extraordinary commitment to the CP community here in Manitoba.

Carman Health Auxiliary

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I am pleased to rise in the House today to honour the Carman Health Auxiliary, who celebrated 120 years of service on January 25. Today in the gallery, we are joined by current volunteers of the auxiliary.

Over the past 120 years, it has accomplished a lot for health-care needs of Carman and the surrounding areas.

In 1903, when the need for a hospital was identified by the growing community, two women took the

initial steps towards the construction of a hospital. They canvassed the community for \$200 to start building construction. The following year, 10 women formed the first Women's Hospital Aid Society.

The Carman General Hospital was completed in 1905 at a cost of \$6,500, along with donations from the provincial government, the RM of Dufferin and the Town of Carman.

The auxiliary supported the RN nursing program from 1908 to 1947. By 1948, the group committed to furnishing a three-bed ward in the new building at the Carman Memorial Hospital. This building was then replaced by the present hospital, which opened in 1982.

The Carman Health Auxiliary officially became a charitable organization in 1975. The name of the group has changed over the years, but not their mission, which is: a group of volunteers that strive to enhance the provision of quality health care for the Carman and area population.

Thank you for all the work that you do for the community, and congratulations on celebrating 120 years.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Stone: I ask for leave to submit the names of the current members into Hansard.

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

Leave has been granted.

Carman Health Auxiliary members: Val Adams; Hilda Beichter; Donald Bell; Shannon Bergsma; Muriel Derksen; Margaret Dracass; Susan Eastveld; Melissa Emerson-Froebe; Pauline Emerson-Froebe; Margie Fay; Christine Findlay; Kathie Findlay; Pat Findlay; Charlie Froebe; Evelyn Froebe; Madie Gylywoychuk-Winkler; Della Heaman; Betty Hill; Lucille Johnston; Ruth Johnston; Laureen Kippen; Wilma Kissick; Audrey Klassen; Bonnie Latimer; Marj Lehmann; Florence Lepp; Gail Maclean; Marie Maclean; Gwen McClement; Mary McGill; Susan Mooney; Bonnie Owen; Judie Owen; Betty Park; Norma Peckover; Deb Penner; Allen Peters; Dorothy Peters; Fran Phillips; Darlene Pritchard; Liz Rempel; Sandy Sinclair; Helen Stewart; Darlene Swain; Jane Swanton; Helen Toews; Sherri Unger; Betty Vandermeulen; Leta Wilson.

Northern Manitoba Affordability Measures

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): On April 2, our NDP government released its first provincial budget, delivering real relief to Manitoba

families who have been feeling squeezed by unprecedented rising costs.

This government's homeowners affordability tax credit will result in savings for 83.9 per cent of Manitoba households, compared to the previous school tax rebate and Education Property Tax Credit system. For Manitobans in the North, this percentage is even higher and the saving is even more impactful.

Northern communities did not benefit nearly as much as urban folks under the previous education property tax rebate scheme, because we don't have the same kind of pressures on home prices that have we seen—that we've seen in Winnipeg and other cities.

The new homeowners affordability tax credit will see everyone receive a \$1,500 tax credit on their principal residence. It is a more equitable and fair way to get more money back into the pockets of all Manitobans, especially for those who need it the most.

The cost of living in the North has been increasing at a dramatic rate, and the cost of food and transportation has been rising even faster than the national average. With our gas tax holiday extended for another three months, Budget 2024 has given us the tools we need to build up our robust northern economy and tackle these problems.

* (13:40)

Our government continues to show its commitment to work alongside northern communities in search of real solutions that work for everyone. Together, we will create a hopeful future in northern Manitoba; a future that our kids and the many generations to come will be proud of.

Ekosi.

PhiBer Manufacturing

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Honourable Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise in this House today to recognize PhiBer Manufacturing, out of Crystal City, for their great work and innovation. When Phil Friesen thought of a more efficient way to spread large square bales, he recruited Harvey Bergen to help him build his solution and take it to the market.

It is easy to identify problems. What Phil and Harvey did was take it to the next step: finding solutions. In 1996, PhiBer had been manufacturing solutions to problems that farmers might experience. As they say: made for farmers, by farmers.

And that's the mindset that we need to take with us every day, not just identifying problems but also

take the extra step. Phil and his team at PhiBer are doing this as they combine their own experiences with what they hear from the other farmers. Now they have 12 different designs to address and eliminate problems that farmers encounter. Local businesses, like PhiBer, is why the RM of Louise has outpacing the provincial average on growth, encountering a narrative that people are leaving the farming communities.

In 2020, PhiBer won the innovation award at Ag In Motion farm show that their triple cutter, which managed to increase production with dramatically reducing fuel costs.

Solutions like this are allowing farmers to do three times more work at once, and potentially, fuel savings of 50 to 75 per cent compared to other methods. And they are doing this with equipment that works for what Manitoba farmers already have. That's the Manitoba innovation we need to encourage.

To the team at PhiBer, keeping doing what you're doing; you're putting Manitoba on the map for the right reasons.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Leo Jansens

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Today I rise in recognition of Leo Jansens, whose stationary store, Pen and Paper, has served our Rossmere community for the past 35 years.

In 1989, Leo began Pen and Paper at a time when large office supply stores were beginning to expand, putting pressure on smaller stationary stores. However, Pen and Paper thrived by working closely with small businesses, places of worship and community groups who were looking for personalized orders. Leo is well-known and respected in northeast Winnipeg, and northeast Winnipeggers trust Pen and Paper to meet their unique needs.

Pen and Paper also offered printing services, but Leo gave so much more. Over the years, he helped many from the local Punjabi community and other newcomer families looking for assistance with paperwork. Leo walked alongside those who sought to put down roots here in Manitoba and became a true community leader.

Leo has always put people over profit and has made many friends and connections in the community.

Now, Leo is retiring after 35 years of running Pen and Paper. With the shift to online shopping, the stationary store is experiencing a gradual decline in

sales and decided to close at the end of last month. However, Leo is passing on the business to a local young entrepreneur who has a new vision for the shop. He sees this as the end of Pen and Paper, but it is the start of a new business that he is passing on to the next generation.

It's a chance for new life again.

Pen and Paper has been an incredible neighbour to everyone. I know Leo's generosity of spirit and community-minded business principles will continue to resonate throughout our community.

Please join me in congratulating Leo Jansens for his incredible contributions to our province.

* * *

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I ask leave to revert back to tabling of reports, please.

The Speaker: Is there leave to revert back to tabling of reports? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

(Continued)

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I'm pleased to table the 2022-23 annual report for Assiniboine Community College, and the 2022-2023 annual report for Manitoban Institute of Trades and Technology.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we proceed, I'd like to introduce some guests in the public gallery.

I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Alex Struthers, who is the guest of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) and the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Carbon Tax Government Plan

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, the Prime Minister said it can't be free to pollute. And the Premier (Mr. Kinew) isn't credible on this issue because of the many, many, many flip-flops. Much like Greg Selinger, this NDP leader says one thing and will do another.

Will the Deputy Premier—because I can't get the correct answers from the Premier (Mr. Kinew)—will the Deputy Premier stand up in their place today and come clean on their carbon tax plan to Manitobans?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question on an issue that is top of mind for Manitobans across this province, and that's affordability.

You know, our government has taken some pretty significant steps. I'm very proud to say that January 1, we did what the previous PC government refused to do: we eliminated the fuel tax for Manitobans on January 1. Honourable Speaker, 14 cents a litre gone for Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans can trust that when our government says we're going to take action to make life more affordable, that we are going to deliver. That's what Budget 2024 does. We're making investments to make life more affordable for Manitobans across this province.

For over seven and a half years, the previous PC government did nothing.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Still today, no answers, even coming from this Deputy Premier. Still no answers coming from the Premier as well.

Manitobans are quickly learning that the NDP government flip-flop tactics. Deputy Premier has the opportunity today in the House to change that. The Prime Minister's challenge to the provinces is essentially to replace his carbon tax with another. No so-called net-zero plan or talk from this Premier can change that.

Can the Deputy Premier please, for once, share their carbon tax plan with Manitobans, yes or no?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, you know, I remember from 2019 to 2023, Manitobans pleading for help, Manitobans asking the previous government for help to make their lives more affordable.

Honourable Speaker, I'm not sure if you can recall what the previous government did, but on this side of the House, we sure do. Every single day they charge Manitobans a fuel tax. Every single day they found new ways to legislate increases to the cost of hydro for Manitobans, something that had never been done before.

Well, Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we are committed to making life more affordable for Manitobans; that's reflected in our Budget 2024. We're going to keep taking steps in a direction the previous government didn't bother to go.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Same tired talking points of their leader of the NDP.

Let's recap: Manitobans challenged the carbon tax under our PC government. Manitoba later failed to sign letters called for meetings under the NDP. Most premiers in Canada are fighting the carbon tax. Manitoba's Premier is not.

We've heard it from the Prime Minister; he's excited to work with the Manitoba's Premier on a carbon tax. There's no path forward without one.

Why won't the Deputy Premier stand up in their place and be transparent with Manitobans about what scheme the Premier and the Prime Minister are cooking up and how much is it going to cost Manitobans?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans do not trust the Leader of the Opposition nor any member opposite, and that is why they voted them out of government on October 3 here in our province.

What Manitobans do trust is that our NDP government is putting affordability at the top of the list of priorities for Manitobans. We cut the fuel tax down to zero on January 1. We're introducing measures that are going to make life more affordable for homeowners across this province while making sure we're investing in health care and education for kids across Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, members opposite suddenly are trying to pretend they care about affordability when in reality, for seven and a half years, they made life more expensive for Manitobans.

* (13:50)

We'll take no lessons from members opposite.

Health-Care Worker Recruitment and Retention Competitive Tax Environment Concerns

Mr. Obby Khan (Fort Whyte): Honourable Speaker, I'm hoping this Deputy Premier can please 'sedsh' some light on this NDP's no-doctor-plan doctor tax. This Deputy Premier, as the Health Minister, has made irresponsible and misleading promises when it comes to attracting health-care workers to Manitoba.

The facts are that this Health Minister and everyone on that side of the NDP will be increasing the taxes on hard-working doctors in Manitoba. You don't attract people to Manitoba by increasing the amount of taxes they pay.

Can the Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) tell Manitobans how they are possibly going to attract doctors and health-care professionals to this province under this NDP, when this NDP government is raising taxes on them?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, here's how we're going to do it. We're going to do it by bringing forward, as we have with this budget, 21 new ways to save Manitobans money. Not that complicated.

We're very excited to encourage people to consider making Manitoba their home by reducing—or increasing our brackets, by bringing forward a broad middle-tax cut that will ensure more Manitobans can keep money in their pockets. That'll make it a much more attractive place for people to move to Manitoba, whether they be doctors, nurses.

We've also, of course, brought in our gas tax holiday for another three months, doubling the fertility tax credit—I could go on and go on and on, and I'm going to do that in my next response.

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, I'd asked the deputy minister to stand up, as the Minister of Health; they do not want to stand up and answer. The Minister of Finance, for some reason—I'll ask the Deputy Premier again—and the Minister of Health—if they will answer this question.

How can this Minister of Health possibly think that by taxing hard-working middle-class Manitobans, that they will attract more people to Manitoba? Under this NDP government no-doctor plan, they are going to raise the taxes on doctors in Manitoba.

How can this Minister of Health possibly think that they will attract doctors to this province when this NDP government is going to raise their taxes?

MLA Sala: This NDP government is lowering taxes for Manitobans. End of story. The member's got to get his facts straight.

How are we going to attract people here? Again, I'll go back to my list; I was at number five. I'm going to move to number six. Free prescription birth control,

\$10-a-day child care all year round, 5 per cent lower auto insurance rates, 300 per cent security system rebate for families, and, of course, rebates for folks who want to buy an EV.

So many ways to save, thanks to our government. So many great affordability measures in this budget. Can't wait to talk about more of them in my next answer.

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, again, not one answer from the Minister of Finance or the Minister in Health. They are—and the facts say in their budget, they are increasing the taxes on doctors working in this province. They are removing the basic personal tax from high-earning Manitobans, from doctors, from university professors, from managers, from engineers, from lawyers, from technicians, from 'artitects'—architects. They are increasing taxes on all of them.

This NDP government thinks that by punishing hard-working Manitobans, somehow they're going to magically attract more people to come to this province.

Can the Deputy Premier, Minister of Health, tell us how it is responsible, logical or even fair to think that they can tax hard-working middle-class Manitobans to pay for the NDP's—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

MLA Sala: For years, Honourable Speaker, the opposition made life harder for Manitobans. What are we doing? We're making life easier. Right?

I'll tell them. How are we going to do it? We're doing it by lowering the tax burden on Manitobans. Listen up. He won't take yes for an answer, Honourable Speaker. We're lowering the tax burden on Manitobans in multiple ways by bringing in a broad tax cut that's—are going to benefit Manitobans across—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sala: —the province. Including our \$1,500 homeowner affordability tax credit that's going to put money in pockets of Manitobans, those who need it most.

We're doing the good work; they made life more expensive. We're making life more affordable.

Health-Care Worker Recruitment and Retention Strategic Recruitment Team Staffing Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Anonymous sources from inside Shared Health reached out this week with an extremely concerning report. Last week the NDP fired half of the Shared Health strategic recruitment team.

This team's main goal was to target hard-to-find medical specialists to come and work in Manitoba. These specialized staff are hard to find due to their general scarcity, and they often require a targeted approach to attract them to Manitoba. That's why, up until last week, there was a strategic recruitment team dedicated to attracting and retaining them in Manitoba.

Why did the minister fire recruiters experienced with bringing health-care workers to Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, our government has taken steps from our first day of being in government to do the work the previous government refused to do: retain health-care workers, recruit and train health-care workers across Manitoba.

Our government is also doing something the previous government never did: we are standing up a recruitment and retention office that is going to be focused on bringing people together under one effort to make sure that we've got the staffing capacity in our province that Manitobans deserve.

Now, I recognize that these efforts are unknown to members opposite. I'd be happy to fill them in on what our efforts looks like and how we're getting it done for Manitobans, something that they didn't bother to do in seven and a half years.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin, on a final—no, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: This team was trained to fill hard-to-fill positions in Manitoba, and now as we've heard, half of that team has been fired by the Minister of Health. That's up to five recruitment specialists no longer working to fill vacancies in our health-care system.

With no tangible plan to attract, train or retain health-care workers in Manitoba, and now no staff to do it, the NDP seems to already be breaking their budget promises.

Why is the minister firing recruiters whose sole job it is to find health-care workers to work here in Manitoba?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, aside from what the member opposite being patently untrue, I find it interesting that members opposite would stand up and talk about staffing when they fired hundreds of health-care workers from our health-care system.

Those are the same folks that didn't allow paramedics to work to their full scope in rural Manitoba. These are the same people that cut over 500 beds from our health-care system and cut the staff that staffed those very beds. These are the same people who treated health-care workers with contempt and disrespect for seven and a half years.

We are taking a different approach. We're bringing people together. We're consolidating the effort to make sure Manitobans have the health-care workforce they deserve.

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

Mrs. Cook: This NDP government, this Health Minister, told Manitobans they had all the answers. They were going to fix everything. The NDP government's offering no incentives, no recruitment programs, no staff to even support people moving to Manitoba, tax hikes targeting specialized doctors and increasing the cost of housing.

Manitoba is quickly becoming the least attractive province in Canada for health-care workers due to this NDP government.

Can the minister please explain—I'll try one more time: Why did they fire these recruiters?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, let's talk about their record. They undertook an emission to bring folks from overseas. They planned to have 300 health-care workers by July of last year. By October of this year, they had six. I call that a failure on their part.

They had a contract with a private company to hire doctors. How many doctors have been hired under their contract? Zero. Their approach to health-care workers was to treat them with so much disrespect they left the public health-care system. Whose record is that? Their record.

Under our government we're investing in health-care workers in Manitoba. We're staffing up beds. We're adding capacity. We're treating them with respect. We're taking a different approach.

We'll take no lessons from that member or any member opposite when it comes to staffing health care in Manitoba.

Community Supportive Living for Seniors Funding Concerns in Budget 2024

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, in this government's budget, the NDP cut five of six planned personal-care homes.

* (14:00)

The PC government proudly delivered a seniors strategy for aging with dignity that not only included six personal-care homes, but also included other housing options, including a community supportive living program. There is no mention of that program in their budget.

Can the minister tell us why community supportive living for seniors was cut from the budget?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, I welcome the question from the member opposite in terms of long-term care, community care. These are all areas that we know are really important to Manitobans across the province.

We also know that these are areas that the previous government didn't actually plan to execute, which is why just a couple of weeks ago—a few weeks ago I was thrilled that the Leader of the Opposition and this member joined our government in Lac du Bonnet to announce the new personal-care home that is going to get built by our government alongside that community.

That was a great announcement and it's—reflects our government's commitment to improving these services for Manitoba, including community assisted living services.

Budget 2024 makes investments in communities for Manitobans and it moves us in a much better direction so that people can age in place in their own communities across Manitoba.

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

Mr. Johnson: Honourable Speaker, the member knows seniors with complex health needs do not always require a personal-care home, but they deserve affordable housing with on-site care supports that are available closer to home so they can continue to live independent lives in the communities they call home.

The community supportive living program was supported by the Manitoba clinical and preventative service plan.

So I ask the minister again: Why was this program cut from the budget?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, Budget 2024 is investing in community. It's investing in services so that Manitobans, regardless of where their needs are, can get the care that they need in their own communities.

We're investing in making sure that folks not only have more health-care aides and home-care workers in our communities but they have the allied health-care professionals that can discharge them from the hospitals and get them home so they can continue to recover.

We're investing in working with partners across the health-care system to strengthen these services across Manitoba, whereas the previous government cut services in rural Manitoba, in the North and, quite frankly, here in Winnipeg as well.

We're taking a different approach with a provincial lens for all Manitobans.

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

Mr. Johnson: Community supportive living program guides residents to housing within their community, accessing appropriate levels of support. We heard through extensive consultations then—when it is safe, seniors want to age in their communities, and this is ultimately achieved through programs like this.

On this side of the House, we know that Manitoban seniors should not be forced to stay in hospitals but in appropriate facilities within their communities. Our seniors strategy presented a real plan to keep seniors in their homes and communities longer, living with dignity.

Why does this minister insist on evicting seniors from their homes, communities and support networks?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, not only is our Budget 2024 investing in seniors and those in community having access to greater supports so that they can age in place in their communities if they choose, we're also investing in improving capacity in hospitals so that folks who are admitted can be discharged in a timely way.

Now, I find it interesting that the member opposite is standing up on a particular question like this given that under his previous government they cut over 500 beds from across hospitals, across the province. That directly affects the ability for seniors to be discharged from hospital, to get into the beds they

need, in a timely way and to ultimately return to their communities.

The previous government cut so much capacity from our health-care system that we can't respond to flu season. But that's okay. Our—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Boundary Trails Health Centre Number of Beds Available

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Can the minister please inform the House on how many beds are currently active and operational at Boundary Trails Health Centre?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I thank the member for this question about Boundary Trails. We've had the opportunity to meet with the leadership there many, many times, actually, in the last several months, and I want to commend those folks for doing a lot of great work, leadership, with community to improve capacity.

And I thought it was really interesting that when we went there and we sat with leadership at Boundary Trails, they hadn't had a meeting with the Health Minister there in a very, very long time. They were pleasantly surprised that our government was so engaged.

Assuring these folks we're going to remain engaged and improve capacity there at Boundary Trails and across the Southern Health region.

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

Mrs. Hiebert: Numerous health-care workers in my constituency reached out this weekend with concerns of the state of Boundary Trails Health Centre. Another 12 beds were taken off-line. This is after months of juggling bed operations at the facility. These workers are concerned about bed availability so that—because so many have been taken off-line at once.

Boundary Trails serves both Morden and Winkler, but also all of south central Manitoba. Tens of thousands of Manitobans rely on it running smoothly.

Can the minister please confirm for my constituents why these beds were taken off-line and when they will be operational again?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we have been working closely with Boundary Trails over the past couple of months to support their efforts as they've

been working with their front-line nurses to develop plans that support ongoing capacity.

Unfortunately, under the previous government, there were cuts made to the physician rural recruitment and retention fund. Those cuts to that fund made it very difficult for rural communities, including in Boundary Trails, to have the physicians needed to support their services.

Our government is working with them to restore that fund, maintain those investments, recruit the health care needed and make sure that those beds are open for Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Hiebert: Boundary Trails has an over 52 per cent staff vacancy rate as reported by media in February. Similar problems are happening across rural facilities across Manitoba, yet the NDP have not brought forward a tangible plan to attract, retain or recruit health-care workers in Manitoba.

As we heard from my colleague today, they're actually firing recruiters. Rural health-care facilities serve many roles for many communities across Manitoba. Sudden losses in capacity impact these communities drastically.

I'm asking a simple question of the minister that deserves a response for my constituents: Why were these beds taken off-line and when will they be operational again?

MLA Asagwara: I appreciate that question from the member opposite, and I can assure her, and she can assure her constituents, that we're going to continue to work closely with Boundary Trails to support them having the capacity that they need.

I would encourage that member opposite to ask her colleagues on that side of the House, why is it that the previous government cut the rural physician recruitment and retention fund? Why is it that they refused to meet with or visit Boundary Trails when they had time for seven and a half years to work directly with them to improve capacity? Why is it that they mistreated health-care workers and forced them out of the health-care system? Why is it they cut over 500 beds from hospitals across the province?

Our government's taking a different approach. We're working with them, not against them, to improve capacity, including addressing those beds at Boundary Trails.

Child and Family Services Child Protection Budget

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I previously asked the Minister of Families questions regarding cuts to Winnipeg Child and Family Services and rural and northern CFS. The minister responded there were no cuts. However, her department contradicted this and said there were cuts to financial assistance for child protection.

Myah-Lee Gratton needed protection, yet this minister failed her, and her life was cut far too short.

Can the minister explain to Manitobans why she's cutting funding for child protection this year when vulnerable children, like Myah, need those resources the most?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I say miigwech to the member opposite for the question.

As I stated before, there is no dollars, no funding that is being taken out of the CFS system. I think that's like the third or fourth time that I've stood up in the House to reiterate and put facts on the record that the member keeps putting erroneous facts.

In fact, we are investing over \$420 million into child welfare. We're also continuing to evaluate and adjust funding to deal with some of the inequities within the system, including in the southern and northern authorities.

So, again, we are not taking any money out of the child welfare system. In fact, we've put more.

Miigwech.

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

Death of Child in CFS Care Public Reporting on Internal Review

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, the budget doesn't lie, and clearly this minister has been too busy to read their own budget.

* (14:10)

Last week, I asked the Minister of Families if she would commit to a public inquiry regarding the terrible situation that happened to Myah on February 11. The minister has refused a public inquiry and said an internal review would be sufficient and would be completed by the end of this month.

Will the minister commit today to making all aspects of this review public and transparent?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): First and foremost, again, on behalf of our government, we want to send our profound love and deepest condolences to the family of Myah. It is an unfortunate and tragic death that nobody—no community, no family wants to see and wants to go through.

So certainly, I want to lift up the family and ensure that they know that us on this side of the House do support them. And in fact, our Premier (Mr. Kinew) supported them in very real ways by attending the vigil and the funeral.

Again, let me just reiterate that our commitment is to reforming child welfare, decolonizing child welfare and putting the resources that we need to best support families—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Stone: I will ask the minister a very simple yes-or-no question.

Will she commit to making the review from the independent internal investigation public for Manitobans, yes or no?

MLA Fontaine: When this tragedy occurred, myself, as minister responsible, and our team immediately went into action to ensure that there is a comprehensive and robust review of the totality of what occurred in Carman and that tragic death.

Again, it is the responsibility of the minister to ensure that all children are protected and are safe in care that we have in our agencies and within our communities. That is what we are focused on. That is the priority of myself and our department, is to continue prioritizing the protection of children that are in care and leaning into—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Security Concerns at HSC Secured Parking Request

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): The security situation at HSC has reached a boiling point, and MNU, the Manitoba Nurses Union, has given Shared Health 30 days to create a safety plan.

Security concerns at HSC is not a new issue. I brought this forward in QP on December 4 of last year. We understand that institutional safety officers have been deployed, but nurses and health professionals want more assurances that their concerns are being taken seriously by this government.

Will the Minister of Health commit today to securing and restricting access to all parking facilities at HSC with 24-7 security to monitor safety?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I welcome that question and I thank the member for that really important question. I've had the chance to look at the arbitrator's recommendations, and certainly, that is a part of the arbitrator's recommendations.

It's important to note that, under the previous government, institutional safety officers were never in place. Under our government, we made that a priority. Institutional safety officers are at place—or on site, rather, at HSC, and are rolling out across the province. And I gave additional directive, as well, for those officers to carry pepper gel.

There's much more work that needs to be done. We're actively doing that work. I had a good conversation with MNU and the leadership at HSC and Shared Health last week on this issue.

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

Private Health-Care Spending Cost for Agency Nurses

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to quote a page in Hansard where our Minister of Health, two years ago, as opposition critic at the time, said, and I quote, the government's over-reliance on agency care is destabilizing the public system. And I table this now.

Honourable Speaker, it turns out that while the former critic criticized the previous government for spending too much money, specifically \$46 million on agency nurses, they, as the minister, has reached an all-time high and is spending \$56 million on agency nurses.

Can the minister explain this discrepancy and why private health care spending has risen to an all-time high under this government?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): I think that's a really important question and I welcome that.

You know, after over seven and a half years of the previous government driving nurses out of the public system into the private system, our government has been working from day one to reset and repair the relationship with these nurses.

Our listening tour has been going very well, listening to these nurses on the front lines. We are seeing a lot of engagement with nurses who are coming back from the private system into the public system by way of

the nursing float pool, which Budget 2024 invests in expanding across the province.

So we're taking real steps to motivate and encourage and support nurses to come back to the public system. We're going to keep doing that work. We didn't get here overnight; it was seven and a half years of cuts, closures and—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Agency Nurse Spending Request for Budget Cap

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Agency nurse spending unveils a more systemic issue at hand, which is the amount of staffing vacancies. It is becoming less and less attractive to work in the public system, when agencies can attract nurses with the incentives of higher pay.

Will the minister commit today to instituting a cap on agency nurse spending, and will they commit to ensuring that agency nurse spending does not continue to increase?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): We certainly do want to see agency nurse spending move in a more sustainable direction. That's why we've taken real action to help repair the relationship with front-line nurses and welcome them back into the public system. It's why our budget invests in enhancing and expanding the nursing provincial float pool.

There are a lot of nurses—hundreds of nurses—who have expressed an interest in coming back into the public system via that pathway, and we're making it easier for them.

But, fundamentally, Honourable Speaker, it's about changing the culture in health care. And our government is doing that work each and every day: treating health-care workers with respect, valuing their expertise, making sure we're supporting them with the resources they need, training and retaining.

Our government is doing all of those things and more, something the previous government didn't care about and never did, and just talks about now, even though they cannot—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Seine River.

Security System Rebate Budget 2024

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I'll wait; I can't hear him.

Sorry, I'm assuming you called on me, but I can't hear because of all the noise on the opposite side.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Seine River.

MLA Cross: Honourable Speaker, in 2022 there was a 40 per cent increase in homicides, a 39 per cent increase in firearms offences and a 20 per cent increase in both robberies and break and enters.

Our government is investing in making our community safe, after seven years of cuts that increased crime and made it harder for communities to thrive. Earlier today, the Minister of Justice made an announcement in south Winnipeg.

Would the Minister of Justice tell us more about the announcement from earlier today?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, the members opposite won't ask a question about public safety. But this side of the House, we absolutely will, because we're talking about important investments in Budget 2024.

I want to thank the member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen) and Anamika Deb, who hosted us at her home today, talking about our \$300 rebate on home security systems that will also be applicable for small businesses. It's part of our commitment to not only making our community safer, but also making life more affordable.

These are real solutions, tangible solutions that members on the opposite side never wanted to tackle, never wanted to do anything about. Manitobans were not safer, as we heard, under the members opposite. But we're not going to make that same mistake. We're making life—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre Long-Term Funding Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): An organization that helps sexual assault survivors was delivered a devastating blow April 3, when they were informed their funding had ended.

Has this NDP minister reached out to this very important organization?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice. *[interjection]* The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor. *[interjection]*

Order. The honourable Minister of Justice has the floor.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, these are serious—this is a serious case and serious situations. I hear laughter, I hear heckling from the other side. I think the member—*[interjection]* I think the member—the minister—sorry, the Leader of the Official Opposition asked a serious question, and I'd like to answer it seriously.

* (14:20)

We reached out to the organization right away. We offered support and we look forward to working with them going forward.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, Pinawa survivor hope crisis centre is the only such program operating in the east—Interlake-Eastern region, providing supportive services to survivors of sexualized violence. They have delivered hundreds of counselling sessions each and every year, meaning their absence will leave hundreds of victims and those indirectly impacted without services they need. The program is not expected to last past May without funding.

I appreciate the partial answer from this minister, but what is the plan to make sure that the Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre is long-term standing within the Interlake-Eastern region?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, great question from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I'm glad that he's raising this important issue.

We were shocked that the federal government withdrew funding and essentially eliminated, as the member opposite said, programs that are not offered by any other organization in the Interlake and Eastman.

We stepped up right away. We talked to the executive director. We offered emergency funding to get them through this initial period and our officials are in constant contact with them to talk about that long-term funding. But we do hope that the federal government will come back to the table and start supporting these important programs.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, the minister, Honourable Speaker, and I appreciate the answer from the minister, to a point. So has the minister reached out to the federal government to make sure that the Pinawa Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre is going to be maintained for the long run?

He said, during emergency crisis, which is great. Thank you. That being said, this has been a service that has been in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority for many, many, many years.

Can those victims, the survivors, count on this government moving forward and what was the response from the federal minister?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, we reached out to the federal government but, more importantly, we reached out to the organization to assure them that there would be no disruption of service provided to the clients in Eastman and in the Interlake.

We are going to continue to work with the federal government to push them to continue to fund important programs like these; not just in Interlake and Eastman. Again, very important service, but we want to make sure that that's provided across the province. And so that's why we're proud to be announcing emergency funding now, but we're going to continue to work with that organization and many others across the province to ensure that victims are supported.

Woodridge Community Wells Closure Concerns

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Last week, constituents from Woodridge reached out to me, highly concerned about a sudden decision that came forward from the Office of Drinking Water. A long-serving bulk fill tap at the community well was suddenly not to code. The volunteer-run club was told to pay up for a chlorination system or shut the tap down completely.

This well is crucial for supplying water to livestock, crops and also an essential supply for wildfire crews. This water source is marked as non-potable and has been in operation for nearly 40 years without ever failing a water test.

Can the minister please tell the House what has changed in the last six months that requires the closure of this long-serving water source?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I thank the member opposite for that important question.

It's an important issue certainly, but I just want to take a quick moment to lift up our team today, and particularly, our Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) for their ability to answer questions and speak to Manitobans, despite the noise and the disrespect and the utter malarkey coming from the other side of the House today.

It's a new day here in Manitoba. Our government is committed to working with Manitobans. I'm committed to working with the member opposite on this important file and I look forward to following up with you.

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

Mr. Narth: These community wells have been established in communities, not only in La Vérendrye, but across the entire province. People have been accessing and relying on this source for decades. Now, suddenly, it's a liability for the government and needs to be shut down?

We're forecasted to have a tough, dry season, and communities rely on these bulk filling stations as a water source during fire season. And this well also is used for supporting agriculture and also wells like it across the entire province.

Can the minister responsible please tell the House how many other communities will be getting the notice right in the middle of wildfire season?

MLA Schmidt: Again, thank you to the member opposite for the important question.

We know that a safe and reliable source of drinking water is of top of mind for Manitobans this season as we head into—after an incredibly dry winter. We know that drought is at the top of mind for many Manitobans.

I am incredibly proud of public servants in our Office of Drinking Water, and we are on top of the issue. And we look forward to working with the community as we go forward.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with an average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by Bonnie Schmidtke, Judy Drabik, John and Liz Hannon and many other fine Manitobans.

The Speaker: Any further petitions?

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to market.

Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

* (14:30)

In food production, there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition is signed by Lisa Hogg, Tim Cornborough, Linda Newton and many, many more Manitobans.

The Speaker: Further petitions? Seeing—the honourable member for Spruce Woods.

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make an—18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying the carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production, there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agricultural producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the cost of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition has been signed by Cindy Scott, Lorie Howe [*phonetic*], Cliff Long and many, many, many more Manitobans.

The Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

Order, please.

Just for everyone's education and edification, when reading petitions the rules quite clearly state you can read the first three names only. You can't pick and choose which names to read. It can only be the first three names.

Any further petitions? Seeing none, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call the continuation of second reading of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended), followed by second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume debate on second reading of Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended). Then we will have second reading of Bill 29, The Body Armour and Fortified Vehicle Control Amendment Act.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 30—The Unexplained Wealth Act (Criminal Property Forfeiture Act and Corporations Act Amended)

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act, criminal forfeiture act and corporations act, stands in the name of the honourable member for Agassiz, who has 21 minutes remaining.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I am pleased to rise in the House today to continue speaking on Bill 30, The Unexplained Wealth Act. Not sure exactly where I left off last week, but certain to say it would have been on the topic of crime.

The fact—excuse me; bear with me here today—the fact that crime is not new to our world, but what is new is the level of crime that is transpiring and the depths to which criminals will go to get what they want or need and have no fear of consequences.

Some may get involved somewhat unknowingly to what is really going on, but are willing to do things

in order to gain money and financial gain, obviously. Some may get involved to support other habits of some nature. Some may get involved because of family ties and it may all start very innocently. *[interjection]* Thank you.

There are many contributing factors, and not every story is the same. However, one thing is the same, and that is, regardless of how one gets sucked into the criminal activity, let's say, and organized crime, they do become part of illegal activity, play a part in a much bigger scheme of the dark, underground world of crime.

* (14:40)

Crime affects everyone from individuals to families to businesses and the overall sense of security in our neighbourhoods. It is essential that we come together to understand the root causes of this problem and work together finding effective solutions.

There are many factors contributing to crime. One of the key factors could be socio-economic conditions, and these challenges that exist—these are challenges that exist in many of our communities today, things like poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunity for young people, which could lead to or push youth into criminal activity. A quick introduction to crime could be all it takes for some people to be drawn in.

Another contributing factor leading to crime is a much more obvious one, and that is addiction and perhaps drug use. Some prey on our most vulnerable and take full advantage of those that are seeking a sense of belonging. They get misguided and possibly promised great things and a high level of—at a high level of comfort, and then, before they probably even realize, they're living a life of crime.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution to combat crime. And like I said, many get involved in this criminal activity for a variety of reasons.

Now, I understand The Unexplained Wealth Act is not specific to the petty crimes that exist, but we all know crime starts at many different levels. We see it all the time. Just last week, I had someone reach out to ask me if the text message that they received from the Province of Manitoba was a real message or was it a scam. This particular woman was indicating that the carbon rebate is available, just have to click on this particular link. It's scary to think how many may have opened that link and opened themselves up to potential harm and fraud.

I know many people are looking for financial relief from this provincial government for sure, but unfortunately, they are not going to be seeing that kind of relief anytime soon. So many are vulnerable to this stuff and to the sorts of Internet and text message crimes. I've had situations where speaking with someone on the phone, they indicated that they were going to be making a big purchase but needed to get gift cards from the pharmacy in order to make this transaction. Knowing this wasn't right, I asked several more questions, and then explained to this individual what was really going on and that it was a scam, and I protected that individual and clearly that transaction did not happen.

Another situation not long ago, when an individual had a message come up on the computer indicating a credit card had been compromised and they needed to call a number to prevent further issues. I was able to explain that this too was just another scam, but it was certainly one of more detail and high level in terms of what the process entailed.

A number of years ago, while working with a senior, it was brought to my attention that, in this case, they would receive calls from Canada Revenue Agency. And this clearly confused and created unwarranted stress for this individual. Once we sat down and we discussed what this really was, I was able to explain that these calls, again, were phone scams, and when they get calls like this, don't engage, don't answer questions, just hang up.

These are just a few of the examples that I have personally experienced. I can't imagine the thousands more out there that were not intercepted. A report from the Province of British Columbia provides details and a wide list of avenues where you find criminal activity. Some of those I've already mentioned fall into the category of mass marketing fraud. This, in particular, is an umbrella term for fraudulent schemes that use mass communication media like cellphones, telephone lines, computers and other devices. Many of these scams can appear to be very reputable and look very legitimate.

The list is very daunting and concerning, listing things like corruption and bribery, counterfeiting and piracy, illicit drug trafficking, mortgage fraud, third party—third-party money laundering, tobacco smuggling and trafficking, currency counterfeiting, human smuggling, human trafficking, identity crime, illegal gaming, pollution crime, payment card theft. The list goes on and on and on.

Clearly, there is an endless way for criminals to do what they do. Obviously, some of these crimes are conducted and operated with a much higher level of sophistication than others and involve significant amounts of money, and these are the operations where this bill can play an important part in crime.

Technology has created a platform for greater theft and scams, and certainly opens the doors to seniors and those most vulnerable who may be taken full advantage of. I have seen it too many times when seniors get taken in by phone calls. Many of these seniors are lonely and are happy to help and have a conversation on any topic and be totally oblivious to the underlying scam that is going on.

Our most vulnerable are certainly at higher risk for phone fraud and more susceptible to these phishing scams. Many of our youth are vulnerable and they are susceptible to these scams as well, but also the lifestyle that might seem appealing to some youth who are struggling. This opens up opportunity for crime as they get involved with gang life and find a sense of community and family in that lifestyle of crime and criminal activity.

They often make choices which can lead to much bigger consequences. This could lead to many things in terms of crime like drug trafficking, theft—small and large-scale theft, even money laundering.

Money laundering is a growing concern and in 2021, the PC government passed legislative changes that strengthened the ability for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that investigators believe to be illegally acquired and could be subjected to money laundering.

Now with advancements in technology, things have evolved to where we now have to deal with cryptocurrency and how that opens the doors for much more criminal and sophisticated activity. This type of currency can be used by organized crime and can be very difficult to track as funds can be easily shuffled person to person without the ease of tracking. The Bank of Canada does not control cryptocurrency and could potentially disrupt the banking system.

I must also mention the great work of my colleague, the member from Steinbach, who has done great work in relation to making positive change and bringing in this legislation on the Justice file while the PC Party was in government.

* (14:50)

Also—[interjection] Thank you; excuse me.

Also, I would like to thank my colleague from Brandon West for his years of service at the Brandon Police Service. His dedication to service and contributions to the safety of Manitobans has been significant, and his knowledge in the field continues to benefit us all here in this Chamber.

It is important to note that The Unexplained Wealth Act is not intended to target individuals who have acquired their wealth through legitimate means. The focus is on those who cannot provide a reasonable explanation for their assets, in order to ensure that our resources are directed towards those who have engaged in criminal activities. This is about corporations, perhaps organizations, where there is suspicion and/or concern, where companies are trying to elude and/or hide funds.

This act, as may vary from—this act may vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, the general objective is to empower law enforcement agencies to combat money laundering, corruption and other forms of financial crime. If individuals cannot explain or fail to provide a satisfactory explanation, then their assets may be subject to confiscation.

This act is seen as a tool to deter and disrupt the flow of illicit funds, and to hold individuals accountable for their involvement in financial crimes. All of this is part of wider efforts to promote transparency, integrity and the rule of law in combatting financial crimes and holding criminals accountable.

The Unexplained Wealth Act, also known as Bill 30, is significant in the fight against financial crime here in Manitoba. By empowering law enforcement agencies to investigate and—seized unexplained wealth, this legislation helps to safeguard our society from the many negative impacts of illicit activities and the works—and works to protect the many great people—the province of Manitoba.

It is very disappointing to learn that the NDP budget just last week contained a significant decrease in expenditures for Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit. It's important to note cuts were made in other areas involving public safety, and it's important to have adequate funding for all public safety measures, enabling those officers on the front line to do—or, to—better to do their job and tackle crime.

In this government's recent budget, we can see all areas of public safety that need funding, not cuts. We need to be putting more funding into supports, like those on the front lines that are working hard every day to fight against crime and work to protect the great

people of Manitoba. That is the kind of investments our province needs here.

It would be nice to get clarity or further explanation on what this bill does, or how it is different from what already exists within this branch. Amendments to the act were made in 2021. What is different with the direction that this government is taking now?

Like many other Manitobans, I am all about fighting crime in our province and going after the ones who are leading the teams behind the scenes of crime. I just question the reason and rationale for changing what already exists.

And, again, Honourable Speaker, I would just like to go back and discuss here some of the other forms of illegal activity. I mentioned the mass marketing fraud. Some of the other things that we see taking place in our province and in our country is the mortgage fraud, which includes a wide range of practices relating to the provision of mortgage financing. It includes false and misleading statements made by a borrower on a mortgage application. A large number of sophisticated schemes exist and are used to defraud lending institutions and property owners.

We see tobacco smuggling and trafficking. Organized crimes have a high level of involvement in the smuggling and trafficking of illicit tobacco products, such as counterfeit cigarettes and fine-cut tobacco imported illegally by Canadian-based manufacturers.

We see currency counterfeiting. Large-scale currency counterfeiting is predominantly undertaken by organized crime groups that conduct currency counterfeiting, alongside other profit-oriented criminal activities.

Human smuggling is horrific, and it is unbelievable to think that this exists, but it does here, Honourable Speaker. And this requires international connections, along with a high degree of organization and planning. Organized crime groups are engaged in this type of criminality and are believed to engage in such sophisticated activities in relation to that.

I touched briefly on payment card fraud; that's another one that is growing rampant. And so many people can become susceptible to that and quite unknowingly and innocently, they, all of a sudden, now their credit card—shopping on Amazon, and now their credit card is compromised.

And, of course, we're all too familiar with robbery and theft, and that happens in every community, sometimes in our own personal backyards. We see

where vehicles are stolen, and taken right out of our yard sites.

Another activity is illegal gaming. It consists of a variety of activities: private betting or gaming in gaming houses, unregulated video gaming, lottery machines. These are all examples of criminal activity that some of us may be not too familiar with.

Firearm smuggling and trafficking; there's another organized crime activity that is—takes place, again, right across our country.

Tax evasion, there's another one, is carried out in many different forms in Canada. And the ultimate objective of this is obviously to avoid the payment of paying your taxes.

Wildlife crime: it's maybe on the lower risk, but there's something that exists as well.

And the list here just goes on and on and—in what people can get—are involved in in the criminal world and the criminal activity in our province.

Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): As we are all aware, imitation is the greatest form of flattery. We've heard that before, and Bill 30 is exactly one of those pieces of legislation.

* (15:00)

I know the Minister of Justice well, the NDP member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). He's been around these Chambers for awhile and he had many, many years in opposition and many years on the backbench even when his party was government the last time. And he's been Justice critic, on and off, often. So he's had the opportunity to get himself prepared for the day, some day, which, unfortunately, happened that he became Minister of Justice.

So he had to—*[interjection]* No, it was the NDP member for Concordia; it wasn't the name that the member across the way mentioned, but—

So the NDP member for Concordia had to cast about and look for some kind of legislation. Everybody wants to have sort of their benchmark, their legacy, a piece of legislation, and he needed something. Obviously while he was sleeping, things did happen, and all of a sudden he was appointed Justice Minister. He needed legislation.

So he cast about and he decided, I guess, to go look at one of his heroes, and I know there are many who would say the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is

their hero, and I think, for this current Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), he looks up to the member from Steinbach, who's been a Justice critic longer than anybody else in the history of British Parliamentary system, and also was a fantastic minister of Justice: knows his stuff, knows it well, knows it in and out.

So Bill 30 is actually a piece of legislation that's been introduced two different occasions with amendments under the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). We've amended that legislation and put into effect the changes that now seem to be referenced in this bill.

So, we understand, of course, the member for Concordia, maybe you didn't spend as much time as he should getting himself prepared for the day that he might become a Cabinet minister and he got caught sleeping.

So—[interjection] And members across the way want to speak, and I don't understand why they're not allowed to get up and give speeches. They seem to not be able to speak to this legislation and, you know, it's too bad because Bill 30 is an important piece of legislation and they are not being allowed to speak. And that's very unfortunate. They—we—I think we would like to hear what they have to say on this legislation, this pale copy of what's been passed previously, and we'd love to hear what they have to say about it.

But, you know, I guess we're just going to have to put up with them chirping at us from their seats. That's fine too. It is a way of communicating; it's an interesting part of this Chamber, so we will just have to pick up their little nuggets of wisdom that they're heckling at us.

But Bill 30 has already been introduced, and I would suggest to the Manitoba Legislature that it was in 2021, the Progressive Conservative government passed legislative changes that strengthened the ability for the Criminal Property Forfeiture Unit to quickly act on securing money that investigators believed to be illegally acquired and to be subject to money laundering.

And, again, it was amended in 2022, and that's where we come up with this imitation is the greatest form of flattery because Bill 30 mirrors what's already been passed. And that's okay because, as we know, it's important to have a NDP government engaged on this file. They tend to be particularly soft on crime. In fact, the now Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and some of her colleagues were big proponents of defunding the police, went out and gave speeches on it, and spoke about defunding the police.

And interestingly enough, I say to this Chamber, interestingly enough, they are now trying to run away from their record. They are trying to run from that record as fast as they can now that they've all of a sudden found themselves in government.

But, you know, they actually did put on the record, and they actually did state publicly, and the Minister of Health was another one of them who actually went out and said, we need to defund the police, showed up—their rallies. In fact, it was the Premier (Mr. Kinew) who was then the leader of the opposition, even posed so nicely with the hammer and sickle, the Communist flag of—the of Russia. And they were at a rally—[interjection]—they were at a rally for defunding the police. And so now they've decided they want to become crime fighters, and that's why they came up with Bill 30, which is an imitation of everything that the minister for Steinbach did when he was minister.

But that's fine, because we need the NDP to be focused on, amongst other things—and I know I have to be very careful I don't stray off of Bill 30—but their mismanagement of the finances file thing, which I'm now not—really, I'm looking at the Speaker and he's indicating maybe I should stay on Bill 30, so I will.

But so we need them to focus on finances and also crime, so Bill 30 is a good start. It's a copy of what we did when we were government; that's fine. But you know what? At least we got them off of the defund the police and all of that kind of nonsense that they used to push when they were in opposition. We got them off of that.

And we know that there is a learning curve when individuals get into government. Things they may have said when they were in opposition don't exactly fly as much when they're in government. And it is important, because there is an article out today in the Calgary Herald, and it talks about people leaving NDP British Columbia and moving to Alberta. And one of the main reasons is, probably, you know, over and above the fact that it's an NDP province, but more importantly, crime is listed as one of the important factors.

And people fear the kind of crime that's going on. And it's very interesting. They do quote several individuals in the article talking about the kind of criminal activity that's taking place in Vancouver, the kinds of deaths. The one individual is held up with a knife or a machete, knows that individual in the community, knows when that individual comes out, they will then still be in the community and they'll have to face them.

So, Bill 30, it's important that you not be able to get involved in criminal activity, accumulate wealth, maybe get caught at it and serve some time, and then get back out and just continue because you have all the wealth from it.

So it's important. Again, I've stated it's a pale comparison of what we had passed as government; it's a copy thereof. And again, that's good. We've got the NDP focused on important things that matter to Manitobans. But it's not just a Manitoba issue. And we see where NDP governments get in, they lose focus. They get their—take their eye off the ball, like in British Columbia, and crime then becomes rampant.

And I suspect the NDP in British Columbia probably got into defund the police and harm injection sites and all kinds of stuff like that, and crime just explodes and it just gets away on them. And, you know what? Perhaps they should, in British Columbia, the NDP should be looking at becoming a little bit more in tune to crime fighting.

What's interesting about Bill 30, though, is not just is it this provincial Manitoba NDP that's copying what our previous government, then the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), British Columbia also passed this similar legislation, copying what we had done. In fact, I believe there's a quote here in which—when British Columbia announced their new law in March of 2023, their Attorney General was quoted saying, there is a similar piece of legislation in place in Manitoba. They also copied what our Progressive Conservative government did.

And again, back to—[*interjection*] Yes, absolutely, and there is a thunderous round of applause for our previous government and the member for Steinbach, who used to be the Justice minister. Very important. And again, imitation, the greatest form of flattery here with this NDP government Manitoba. Imitation's the greatest form of flattery even with the NDP government in British Columbia. They saw good legislation.

We cannot allow criminal activity to pay, even if you do end up having to serve some time, that you don't get out and be able to avail yourselves from the proceeds of crime.

* (15:10)

So again, we are pleased to see that the NDP are starting to take this serious, because that article that I referenced from the Calgary Herald lists out individuals, stating how they are concerned about the crime—about the drug crime.

And I would caution members opposite, the drug industry is one of those that will be very much caught up in this. Because it is big money, and a lot of individuals view it as a very lucrative, quick way to make money. What they don't realize is once you get into it, it is very difficult for you to get out of it. And they get sucked into it. The money is good, the money is fast, it's quick, it's fast vehicles and expensive clothing and all the rest of that.

Thing is, is that when they are—[*interjection*] The member for Rossmere (MLA Schmidt) suggests to me that she's so fired up now, she's so excited, she wants to get up and give a speech. And in about 18 minutes, I will sit down, and we want to hear what she has to say.

Because the previous member for Rossmere, he would have put some very well-thought-out words on the record. He would have been a dynamic and we're waiting to—we are waiting to see what the current member for Rossmere is, can she also put some words on the record, because evidently the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) won't let her; she's just shouting her down now.

So anyway, with all of that having been said, I would suggest that we indicate to those who are in that criminal activity, especially when it comes to the crime—to the drug side of crime, which we know the NDP are misstepping and are making some terrible errors with their harm injection sites and free drugs for people and all the rest of it; instead of dealing with the root of crime, and that's addiction, trying to deal with people and help them with addiction, they would rather just do harm injection sites.

Which, by the way, the provincial NDP tried in British Columbia, and that's why, I think, what is it—I don't have the article in front of me from the Calgary Herald. I believe in one year, 47,000 people left British Columbia. And they're leaving those kinds of things. It is organized crime. It is individuals believing they're going to make really good money, and by that they're destroying our people. They're destroying our society. They're destroying families and lives.

So that's why what we did as a government, twice, which the NDP then copied, that's why this legislation is so important, because we know that individuals make a very good living. They get—they can get very, very wealthy from this kind of criminal activity.

But we have to make it so that, when you get caught, you get stripped of it, that it is not a thing that then you just 'geet' to keep—you get to keep compounding

your wealth, but rather that we have the ability to take that away from you, that in the end, the saying goes—and I have the former police chief of the city of Brandon sitting next to me and he will tell you we have to make sure that the saying always stands: Crime doesn't pay. And that's what this does.

And by the way, I would like to just for a moment, besides the fact I have the honour of sitting next to him, and tell him how much we respect and appreciate the service that he gave to the city of Brandon. As police chief, he did amazing work.

And he has already reflected on this piece of legislation. He's asked very important questions, insofar as crime goes, standing up for Brandon, which the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) seems to be a vacant landlord when it comes to standing up for Brandon, but we have the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), who is standing up for Brandon.

Now, Bill 30 is a very important piece of legislation, but before I get back into the details of it, I would like to point out to the member for Brandon West, I've actually served in this Chamber with a few members from Brandon West. They have changed periodically, and all of them that—the first one was Drew Caldwell. Some of you might remember him. There are a few others. I'd almost say—he's almost one of my favourites.

They're all very good, and of course and then your predecessor was fantastic. We really enjoyed Reg Helwer, he was a great guy. But you know, a police chief, that just holds a certain amount of cachet to it, and certainly appreciate you being in our caucus, very much so, absolutely.

And so I have a lot of years of experience in justice legislation, but I don't have—and reflecting on Bill 30—but I don't have the experience of the member for Brandon West, who, boots on the ground, looked the criminals in the whites of their eyes and had to face crime and had to deal with crime.

And I know he's reflected on this privately and publicly and he has said, like, this is important, and that's why our government reacted, that's why we brought—and the NDP are just trying to do the me too. And, like we said, that's excellent; at least we've got the NDP focused on crime, which they tend to always take their ball—eye off the ball. So this is a good thing.

But the member for Brandon West, he will tell you how important this is for law enforcement and then for the courts, as well, because then you can go out on the street and you can make it very clear that

when we catch you, you don't keep your wealth. Your ill-begotten gains will be taken away from you.

And that's why our government, under the MLA for Steinbach's leadership and the Cabinet and our premier's, that's why this was so important to bring forward. That's why we brought it forward. That's why British Columbia copied our legislation, brought it forward and even thanked us for it, and that's why the NDP are doing justice legislation, copy, part 2. And that's, like we say, we got them focused, and that's good; at least they're focused on it.

When families, individuals—and I would direct people to that article from Calgary; it's out of the Calgary Herald, I believe it's called. It's a very telling article because it's not just families, it's professionals. It's not just from Vancouver, they also speak to individuals from small communities. And they talk about their concern with crime and then, of course, housing costs, which we know the NDP cheer for because their federal cousins are part of the driving up unaffordability to the point where people can't afford to live in a home. So our concern is there as well.

But on the crime side of it, that as people view crime as being an option because they're struggling with making ends meet or they're not finding work, they're not getting good pay, so they get into crime: (a) we make it so that it's not advantageous to be in crime because we won't let you keep the avails of crime when we catch you. And catch you we will, certainly with members—with individuals like the member from Brandon West, who, you know, helped keep Brandon a beautiful and safe community, and we need men and women standing in the crease continuing to do that.

It's important to do that, but it's also important to take a strong stand. And that's something the NDP tends not to do when it comes to crime. The NDP is notoriously weak on crime, tend to be more into excuses for crime rather than dealing with crime, and we see that with British Columbia, and there's a frightening example of where things get out of hand.

Now, I believe the article even talks about people saying that crime is rampant, that's it's out of hand, and I would suggest to individuals they have a good look at it. I actually ended up getting a copy of it, and I read through it with great interest, and I handed it over to the member for—our Justice critic, the member for—

An Honourable Member: Fort Whyte.

Mr. Schuler: The member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan). I thank my colleagues for that.

The member for Fort Whyte, and to have him have a look at it just from the finance side of people giving reasons why 47,000 people or—in there somewhere—why they would move from beautiful British Columbia to Alberta and just the opportunities. But I also would like to say, on the criminal side of it, on the crime side of it, it's very important that when people don't feel safe, they leave.

* (15:20)

And I would say to the NDP this is a good start, but they've got to keep their eye on the ball, and they've got to be very careful that they don't slip, because they tend to do that. Under NDP governments, you always will see it. It's a cycle; you will always see crime going up. And that's what we don't want to see in this city. And in fact, crime is increasing. It's a problem.

And we've got to make sure that this NDP government—and I'm sure our Justice critic and our opposition here, from time to time, we're going to put really good suggestions in front of this Chamber. And we know how this works. We know how this is going to work. The NDP will vote it down, and then about two months later, they'll come out with this piece of legislation that will look almost exactly like our suggestion, and then they'll try to put it forward as legislation, try to get it passed.

And I would suggest to the NDP that don't take your eye off the ball. You've got to take on criminal activity. You've got to make it a disadvantage to be in criminal activity, because the proceeds you aren't allowed to keep. And that's where you need to have a healthy economy. It ties in, very much so; affordability.

And we know that members opposite, the NDP, who are great, great cheerleaders and supporters of Jagmeet Singh and the federal NDP, who have been driving up costs. The more you drive up costs and the less affordable you make stuff and just affordability of living, the more that you drive that up, the more you make it difficult for people to make ends meet, some—not all, some, few—will start looking to crime and will decide that that's the only way they can make it forward.

And what's also important about the legislation—and this is legislation that was brought in by our government, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) as Justice minister, copied by the NDP here in Manitoba. What's so important also is not just is it that the

criminals, the drug lords don't get to keep the money, but the funds from the program go to victims, goes to police agencies and to social services, those that are sponsored by the police. The money actually goes to very good use.

In fact, I know the member for Steinbach, when he was minister—and it was a public announcement—he gave a substantive amount of money to The Joy Smith Foundation. And there is one of the most horrific, horrific segment of crime activity that makes money off of 'trafficking' young people. And to go into the details is absolutely horrific, and I would suggest to any member of this House, The Joy Smith Foundation, the non-partisan group, they will come forward and tell you what these trafficked individuals go through. It is so horrifying. It is so disturbing.

And it was our government, under member for Steinbach, that was just a minister, we gave The Joy Smith Foundation substantial money to help reach in and try to get these young people out of human trafficking, because it is so horrific.

And then to go in and break up these rings and to seize that money, hopefully that money then goes back to these organizations to help individuals and help them get out of it. They know nowhere to turn. They've had their identification taken away from them. They've had their passports, they don't know how to travel, they have no money and they're then hooked on—further on to drugs, and they see no hope.

So the money that is taken from these evil and diabolically horrible gangs, that money, then, is stripped from them. And it goes to some really, really good causes. And that's another part of this that is so important. And we thank the provincial NDP for having copied our legislation, for coming, you know, to this Chamber with this legislation part 2.

And we get it, the NDP want a me-too moment, and so this is their me-too moment. They're just going to copy ours, and that's okay too.

And part of that money—and this was under our government, and we know the leadership from the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), when he was police chief, the Bear Clans in all the areas—the province have got funds for vehicles, safety vests, flashlights, radios, gloves, mitts and numerous other things.

And that is the kind of thing that we want to do, that we have—we take it away from the criminals who are making money off of the crime, making money off of drugs that is poisoning and killing, and the drug

overdoses across this country is horrific what—and they're making money off of that. That that money be put into organizations like the Joy Smith Foundation, like the Bear Clan.

And also the human trafficking part, which is truly the bottom of the barrel when it comes to these gangs and how horrific that is. And I would—again, I would suggest to any member of this House, call up the Joy Smith Foundation. They'll come out and speak to your community.

And it is shocking how in our communities there are human trafficking rings. It—this isn't a poor, rich, city, a rural, it knows no ethnicity, it knows no gender, it knows none of that. It is just a horrific crime, and it's all over the place. And I would suggest, avail yourself of the material, they now have a really good school program.

I know the Bear Clan, the kind of work that they do is just amazing. And even the Neighborhood Watch program, which is often funded—by and large funded through Manitoba Public Insurance. They go and they write down stuff. They don't intervene; they write down licence plates and that kind of stuff. And they have helped police forces go after these gangs that are using our young people, destroying families and destroying communities.

And often they just have to write down the licence plate or something, and the RCMP—I know, in the community I live in—they'll often ask for the books, and they'll go through the book and they'll see that there was a licence plate that keeps showing up at different scenes and there was criminal activity, and they'll go after them.

So we all have some responsibility, even in our own neighbourhoods. When we see something that doesn't seem right, go after them. Report that to police, and hopefully we can break these groups.

And I'd like to thank the Bear Clan organization. They do amazing work. And for us to take money from these drug lords and these human smugglers and these criminal rings and use it for good like that, that is fantastic. That's important we support that, definitely.

And we want to shut down these criminal organizations. Strip them 'therve' their money. Make it clear those that are thinking of getting into organized crime, that in the end, you will not keep that money. You will not have it for yourself. You are going to lose that money; in fact, we're going to take that money and put

it to good use, and give it to organizations and individuals that will go out and help our cities and our towns and our villages and our neighbourhoods.

And especially those people who are caught up in it, people who are caught up in the whole drug—and get addictions to it, and those that are being human trafficked. Those are the individuals we want to focus on. We want to ensure that they get the kind of services and the help—I would suggest to members opposite, harm injection sites isn't the right to go—way to go. Instead, that money should go into treatment, like the Oake centre and other centres. We don't want to signal one—single one out here. We want to—all of them, the work that they're doing.

Do they have people who relapse and go back into it? Yes. That doesn't mean we should ever stop trying. Keep working on these 'indivulge'—even with human trafficking. Sometimes these individuals go back into the trafficking, because they just don't know any other life, because they don't even know if they have the self-worth. We have to reach back in again, pull them out and give them the kinds of surrounding supports that they need.

So yes, let's shut down these organizations. Yes, let's take the money. Yes, let's put it into good organizations. And I'd like to thank the NDP for copying our legislation, for coming out with their legislation to—me-too legislation, and British Columbia did the same thing; let's try to make our community safer and better.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I'd like to put a few words about this Bill 30, Unexplained Wealth Act, information. It's very important that we address this.

MLA Robert Loiselle, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And I know, again, what the member from—Springfield—

An Honourable Member: Ritchot.

* (15:30)

Mr. Piwniuk: Ritchot? Yes, that's what—as he mentioned here—that he mentioned here that, you know, the importance of basically what our colleague, who was a minister at the time, a minister of Justice, member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), basically put the bill forward in 2021, saying that, you know, any forfeitures of any organized crime property that was 'forfershed', we created a unit that was established almost 16—over 16 years ago.

And this gives an opportunity to look at—with crime, and I would have to say, just a few months ago, just in my own constituency of Turtle Mountain, we had one of the biggest drug busts of all time in Manitoba. And it was—I don't know how many kilograms, I forget, but the value is over \$50 million worth of crystal meth. And that's a big impact—and—to the province of Manitoba.

And now it's like we have to make sure that if we—when it comes to organizations or people who have actually now have—now these properties and wondering where these—this amount of value would have come from, we want to make sure that there's a unit here that will continue to monitor any criminal situations that are happening out there.

And right now, like, as we see it, you know, we've—anytime—I—we could all talk about stories in our own constituencies. And I know in rural Manitoba, just by talking to my own kids who went to school in Virden area, people that I've talked to in—throughout the constituency that went to school and kids went to school in Boissevain, Killarney, Notre Dame, you know, there's drugs all over Manitoba right now, and a lot of it is basically run by organized crime.

And I remember when the legalization of marijuana was going to be legalized by the—this Liberal government back in 2015, one of the things that was interesting talking to retired police chiefs, I remember I was talking to the sergeant of—deputy Sergeant-of-Arms as he was city police, saying that a lot of cases when the—just before legalization of marijuana was coming in play, the drug dealers—the drug cartel, whatever, they realized that there was an income that they were actually going to generate were going to be lost by legalization of marijuana.

And so they realized that they had to get into another type of business just like any other businesspeople out there, like, if all of a sudden a—there's a generation of income is actually going to be lost, they had to be creative. And that's when they started to really ramp up the production of crystal meth and they've actually targeted a lot of—when it came to young people, to communities. I remember once, some of the chiefs used to say when they were evacuated from the North and the—when they had to stay in hotels, a lot of the young people were targeted by drug dealers trying to get them on crystal meth.

And that was, you know—and it happened in a lot of rural areas of Manitoba. It doesn't matter what income you are from or what standard of living that a person has, everybody's been affected by the drugs

that are being sold on the streets in the city of Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Steinbach, Virden, Boissevain, Killarney, Brandon, Portage la Prairie. These are all places that you can't hide from the organized—of selling of illegal drugs.

And so I would have to say right now that when it comes to anybody that is actually part of organized crime, that are finding property—you know, money laundering is the big factor here—we want to make sure that this unit is going to be on making sure their investigations are done to making sure that if there's any property that has been purchased and they're—can't be explained by a paper trail. I know when it comes to buying a house or for individuals, you know, you go through your—you usually go through your bank, you know, you probably sold one property. You might have sold a house before and now you're just purchasing another house.

That could all be traced from the actual original amounts where that money came from. But when all of a sudden a business is purchased and there's no—anywhere that actually where that money comes from, well, that's why there's always—when it comes to money laundering rules that are coming out there—I know, if anybody goes to the United States, they drive and one of the first questions that one of the customs officers will ask you is, are you carrying more than \$10,000? Because if you're carrying more than \$10,000, that's a good chance that that money is part of the money laundering, and who, now—in this day and age—carries \$10,000? Most people—I don't even carry—sometimes when I'm actually going to events, I have to be very careful because I don't carry cash anymore. I usually use credit cards, and not very many places only take cash. And so that's why it's so important.

In my accounting background, my—I ran number of businesses, and everything, every dollar that I spend is actually recorded and making sure that I keep track of where I spend my money. And I've—feel that everybody should be doing that, because that's part of your—when it comes to financial 'literasly', is making sure that every dollar that you spend, wherever you spend it, is accountable for it.

And so this is why investigators at this unit will actually investigate where, if there's more than \$10,000 especially, and in this case here, I think it's like 75 to 125 thousand dollars if someone's buying some property, a car that's a high-value car, they want to know where this money's coming from. And it's important that if this person, this organization, was, you

know, was investigated with any criminal—you know, established any kind of criminal type of activity and then finding out that there's property that is actually been purchased and that can be—can't be traced to actual—where the actual money originated from, it's very important.

And, I guess, back in the PC days, we actually—government—we actually made this amendment. I said, the member from Steinbach actually put in—this bill in, back in 2021, and we actually amended it back in 2023 to look at advisement, especially with—actually, cryptocurrency was also added to it. So it's important that we look at that, because now a lot of—especially criminals are using cryptocurrency now to provide transactions when it comes to illegal properties, illegal activity that's happening in, I guess, throughout the world right now.

And right now, a lot of the drugs that are coming, they're not only coming from the United States, they're coming from Mexico, they're coming from Colombia, they're coming from every part of the world right now. And that's what's really concerning right now.

And I find, when it comes to the youth, and one of the concerns I have is when it comes to illegalized drugs, you know, we've had so many people that I know in my own community that had overdoses. And this is how much of an impact on our health-care system, on our education system, because don't forget, a lot of those young people who have actually had an overdose of drugs, we educated them. We've invested a lot of money in those individuals for their education, and next thing you know, they're no longer with us. The cost of investigations on situations like that, it costs society a lot of money.

And it's very concerning that, you know, this day and age, how the illegal drug industry has now really—are so focusing on individuals. And what I'm finding right now is that we're finding, especially in rural Manitoba, we're seeing a lot of crime sprees happening. You go to places like Rock Lake or Oak Lake or Lake Metigoshe, more of these cottages that are seasonal are being broke into because of people who are very desperate of trying to find revenue, money to pay for the drugs that they're addicted to.

And it's causing a lot of grief when it comes to our police officers who now have to do investigations and finding out—and what we're finding out was, with a lot of individuals who live at these lakes are frustrated,

because the fact is there's so many break-ins happening that it's hard for them to actually get police to come because it's happening so much more frequently.

And I remember being in the insurance industry, had an agency in the Virden area, Reston, for over 20 years. And I remember we had a few break-ins in the town of oak—the resort of Oak Lake, because there was only maybe about, you know, there might be over 250 cottages there, but that probably only about 10 of them actually had full-time residents there. So then it was easy for somebody to come and actually break into these vacant cottages during the winter. The access was great. The road was plowed so that people can go to them every—throughout the winter. But also the criminals were able to get to these cottages, too.

And so what was happening is that—and recently, what are these—like, cabins are being broke into; even campers are being broke into.

* (15:40)

And what they're actually now breaking into and stealing is actually propane tanks. I guess propane tanks are now used to make a lot of crystal meth. I guess their value of them are higher now. So they're actually being used to—again, to produce crystal meth in the—for the sale of more drugs.

So, you know, when it comes to—I know these are smaller amounts, but then this, you know, as these criminals actually get more 'organistrated'—established, well, then they go into bigger and better things. It's like a business, like sometimes when a business starts out, like a family business, it goes into a big operation. I—and in a lot of cases when it comes to organized crime, that's where a lot of it starts. It starts with the small criminals and then it gets—they get—become more organized, they work together and they create more of an organization that actually now gets bigger and bigger.

And so this is why we got to make sure that we monitor the activity that's happening with some of these organizations that are getting more organized, creating more revenue and now causing more possibilities of—when it comes to money laundering.

So this is why it's so important that, you know, when we have these investigation units to making sure that if property—if someone is arrested, and there's a lot of property that this person owns, or that organization owns, we want to make sure that that investigation has been done to make sure that, you know,

we—you know, it costs a lot of money to do these investigations. It costs a lot of money to—you know, to—the cost of policing.

And right now, in cases, we've actually increased the policing in our budgets year after year. And whereas when the NDP were in as opposition, they were trying to defund the police. That was one of their criticisms that we should have more—less police officers out there.

And, in fact, you know, the crime has increased, even now that they're in government, they are seeing that—the true side of what's happening with our criminals, and actually increasing the activity that's happening, the break-ins, the home invasions. Home invasions are actually more rampant than we ever have heard before.

And we're—I remember one individual I was—my business partner, we were going to get together but he had to cancel his meeting with me because, the fact is, he had to go to a funeral, a funeral in the city of Winnipeg, because the guy that he was good friends with, his son was killed in an home invasion, that somebody actually broke into the house not knowing that he was there, and actually clubbed him to a point where he actually died. They left him to die.

And so there was a funeral—or, he was on life support, and they had to take the life support off, and then the father had to go into Winnipeg for that—for his—to be there for the last breath that his son took because he was beaten up and clubbed, and a home invasion.

But again, these home invasions are because of people are with their addictions, getting desperate, finding revenue to pay for their drugs. And next thing you know, innocent people are being hurt.

And it's very concerning that this government, in the budget, all they want to do is put a camera. What is a camera going to do when there's such a lot of it happening out there? Is the police going to get to it? And in one place where someone actually had some criminals that were breaking into a place on camera, they couldn't do anything with that—these individuals, because they had to be caught red-handed at the location.

And so this is where it's really concerning that—and what it's like about this is that any, I guess, over the years, we had over \$60 million that was actually allocated back to helping programs. Actually, \$22 million. And \$60 million actually went to grants that were actually helping such examples of the Bear Clan,

combatting cybercrime and reducing, you know, basically, when it comes to major 'threfts' in the area. So you know, we actually were the ones that really focused on changing the bill.

And now you guys are, like the member from Springfield-Ritchot was saying, that it's me too, that they're bringing forward on the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), who is bringing this bill forward. We've actually had done this, and we could—and we want to see more of it to continue.

So it's great that they're on board with this bill and moving forward on the amendment, and like I said, you know, when it comes to money laundering. Again, with that whole—that when it came to the—one of the biggest drug busts in Manitoba history, in Boissevain, at the border crossing, I give—commend the member who worked for—the customs officer actually being able to check to see what the—was in the truck. And, again, it was millions and millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars worth of drugs that were coming into the province.

And that's amazing how much that is actually now going to hurt the drug dealers out there who are providing to—a lot of this—drugs to the—to Manitobans, especially people who are addicted.

And this is why I think it's so important that our focus, especially if we continue getting some of these assets, continue to be spent on maybe drug addictions and making sure that the treatment that they get—I know we're the government that first put in RAAM clinics—the NDP never had it for 16 years—anything to help to get people off drugs.

And we actually help, working with organizations like the Bruce Oake treatment facility and helping making sure that that is happening. And we're looking—like, we were looking at more expansion to the—to helping individuals to get off of drugs. And anybody that actually has been—has come clean after being on drugs for many years, they will all say that they all wanted to get better; they all wanted to get off of drugs. They didn't want to be dependent on drugs.

And when it comes to safe consumption sites, I'm really concerned about that, because, again, that is—increases the activity that happens around that area. I think, also, just like when we actually had good intentions, like, the federal government had good intentions of legalizing marijuana, that people—less people would have criminal records when they were, you know, caught with marijuana.

But you know what? The consequences. I remember going to—like, going to midwest legislative conference. And one of the meetings that I had was with one of the senators from Illinois, and he was informing that they were finding—Illinois was going to legalize marijuana. And what I told him after, I said, you know, there's always consequences. Like it's good that you're legalizing marijuana, and maybe there's revenue for the state, but the criminals will be the ones that will actually now focus on another form of revenue. If they're an organized machine like that, they're going to look at other opportunities.

And the opportunities that happen, again, when I told this Elgie Sims, who was a senator, that in Winnipeg, we don't have a—you know, where a lot of other jurisdictions have 'epiloid'—what's that?

Some Honourable Members: Opioids.

Mr. Piwniuk: Opioids addictions. My wife, who was in health care, says we don't have opioid addictions; we have a crystal meth crisis that are happening.

And the fact is—and that's what I told the senator from Illinois, that, be careful, because sometimes organized crime will find other solutions to help with their revenue. In our case, in Manitoba, it was crystal meth. And now we're paying for it, I believe. We're paying for it big time.

And now it's like—and then COVID did not help, because then we also had more people at home, more people not going out to socializing and being with people. And I've talked to a lot of my kids, and they talk about their friends who, some of them got addicted during that time to different drugs. In a lot of cases, it was crystal meth.

And how it ruins their future, it ruins their focus, focus on getting a good career, providing a good revenue—tax revenue for—in society to help with paying for a lot of our services, now they're users of our services now. And it's costing, again, the Province of Manitoba a lot of revenue over these number of years that have happened.

And again, I think every community in Manitoba have seen that. And even the city of Winnipeg, we see that on the streets. We see people walking and confronted by somebody who was high on crystal meth. And you know what? You don't have to go to a certain area of the city. You can go anywhere in the city of Winnipeg, and you run into to somebody who is high on crystal meth. And that is very concerning. And you go—like, yeah, and you could go on to Portage la Prairie,

you can go to all small towns; we're all seeing that right now.

And what the important thing is is how do we get those people off addictions. And this is where this opportunity could be from, is to making sure that we can use this revenue that we get as a province.

* (15:50)

And that's where our opportunity was here, was to, you know, to fund a lot of organizations like the Bear Clan, and also making sure that we can put towards RAAM clinics and ramping them up, because the fact is, we will need them. We will need them so greatly, because the fact is, again, I saw the overdoses that happened in the last four or five years just in my community.

And again, it's not a certain demographic that this is happening to. This is happening to people over 50, this is happening to a lot of 20-year-olds. Male, female, doesn't matter where the—what family they came from. And when you're in a small town, you see the different demographics where this person had an overdose and what type of family that person comes from, because everybody knows everybody in a small town.

And sometimes it happens to some affluent people—families, and sometimes it happens to low-income families. But no one's immune to being addicted to drugs.

And with organized crimes that are still happening here—and it's—we probably don't even know half of the stuff that goes on that—you know, sometimes we have to watch, like, TV shows like Breaking Bad, or we have to watch Ozark, you know, just to see what really happens.

Because, you know, lot of times, we go in our own little worlds, and we're actually working and, you know, focusing on making a living for your families, to help our families, to guide our families, our young—our children, to making sure that they don't make the bad mistakes. But when all of a sudden you hear these—some of these stories, or sometimes in the news, that—how this, you know, this household gets shot up, because—a drug deal that went bad. We hear that all the time.

We're hearing that more and more in certain areas of the city of Winnipeg here, where a couple of young ladies who were just at a—happened to be at a—the wrong place at the wrong time end up getting in a situation where they were killed by somebody who came in. And this is happening more frequently, and this is very

concerning to our province, to our—like, anybody, no matter what age you are.

And, like I said, when we had the big drug bust in Boissevain, where was these drugs going to? What were the criminals, whoever was responsible for bringing those drugs in, what are they, what are—who did they sell it to? Who are their customers? How much revenue are they really bringing in? How do they actually now hide that money? How do they clean that money?

We saw with—on Ozark, they buy different businesses to clean the money. You know, it's a losing venture, but that's how they would actually be able to justify bringing that money and cleaning that money.

And so that's the first time I ever learned about how money laundering happens. I'm in the financial world many years, and I have to watch a program to get educated on how money laundering happens. And it's—it was quite interesting.

And so this is why it's so important that, you know, this bill that we would've introduced back in 2021, and the NDP just wants to basically take credit of something that we've already done. And we've seen so many different examples of some of the announcements that we did.

I remember on highways, I was just at the heavy construction reception, and all the—minister there at the time, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), was giving the highlights of what's—the projects are coming. Well, we've already announced those; we've already have—it's on TV, there's—we had—it was on the news that we announced them last year.

And this is just another thing that—another bill that we put through that the NDP just wants to really take credit for it. And we've—basically saw all the importance.

And, like, our member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen), who was a chief of police in Brandon; I'd like to sit down with him someday and just talk about some of the stuff that he had to go through. I'm—think he can—he probably can tell me stuff that I would never imagine that happens, because you know what? Again, I go on with my own life and—making sure that I look out for my constituents. But, at the same time, when you're actually in police services, you see a lot of good—lot of things that are happening. You know, they do a lot of good stuff.

But, when it comes to organized crimes that they have to investigate—and a lot of times, I heard stories

where individuals who were undercover, that I had the—my dad was always good friends with the RCMP. And I remember one of his friends that he became friends with moved away, was transferred to another jurisdiction, and talked about where he had—down the years later—how he had to 'infistrate' into different organized crimes, just to, like, to make sure that he does the investigations, he had to go in undercover.

And anytime it's, you know, how dangerous it really is, like, he could be—that individual could have been, you know, basically discovered that he was an undercover police. And every year, every day, these special covered police officers are putting their life, basically, at risk on a daily basis. And we commend them.

But it's unfortunate that they have to do that because of organized crime—criminals. And we're seeing that more and more, like, when it comes to places like Montreal, where there's, like, basically, a kind of a mafia. We're seeing that more organized crimes happening more and more throughout North America.

Motorcycle gangs is also—there was always known to have a criminal—organizations in some cases. And, you know, we have to make sure that, you know, when it comes to the amount of jails—people are in jail right now, it's cost the society a lot of money.

Again, we're seeing the cost of government having to provide, you know, when it comes to jails, our prisons and our jails, and are they—the people that work there. That's cost us all money. This all costs our taxpayers that money. And when it comes to, like, health care, when it comes to—when it—like I said before, when it comes to overdoses, you know, it costs our health-care system so much money.

And so the thing is we need to some way re-collect that money back, and this is an opportunity that, instead of having some of these organizes that we do fund from the 'comfinsation' of a bunch of property, we could fund, like, the Bear Clan, that would give more money.

So it goes back to our society and helps our society and making sure that we actually put the money in the right places when they—when we discover these assets and we are able to sell these assets as a government and put it back into, like—*[interjection]* Yes, food banks, to individuals that need it and helping and guiding people off drugs. Like, this could be programs that we could work with.

And, like, the member from Springfield-Ritchot was saying, the—when it comes to the organization

that—of exploitation of children—you know, we want to make sure that—that crime happens more than we think, and it's scary when he made that comment that the Joy Smith Foundation talking about—*[interjection]* No, it doesn't matter where you are in Canada or in the United States, exportation of children, it happens all the time.

And it's very concerning because the fact is, you never know. My daughter goes out by herself sometimes, and you always have to be worried about, you know, is that person at the wrong place at the wrong time? You know, we see people coming in through the Trans Canada Highway. I always said to a lot of my—you know, a lot of people that lived in Virden at the time when I was in business, that—and what—I was friends with some—a number of the RCMP officers that would actually be coming—be stationed in Virden.

And what they tell me that the Trans Canada Highway, they sort of nicknamed the steward line because there's a lot of people that come through there that are on—like, there are criminals, are causing troubles. We've seen where we had, you know, some child was abducted from both the Virden area and from Whitewood, and was discovered by a pedophile somewhere in Saskatchewan.

So these are the things that we always have to be careful about, and I try to tell many people out there, especially when their kids are—you know, we can't do what we did before when we used to play out in the streets and—but nowadays you have to monitor kids right now. And it's unfortunate that we're actually have to come to this.

So that is why I wanted to put a few words here today about the—of this bill, Bill 30, when it comes to The Unexplained Wealth Act. I think it's a very good bill that we've actually—we're the ones that put through when, like I said, the member from—the MLA for Steinbach, I commend him for the work that he'd done to make sure that this—the amendments that'd gone forward and again in 2021 and again in 2029, even so that the BC government also copied off us.

So, I commend our member from Steinbach.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's my pleasure today to rise on Bill 30. And I notice—put a few—I'll put a few words on the record.

* (16:00)

I know the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is excited to hear more about this bill. Of course, it's a

bill that he put forward I think that wasn't unexpected, certainly. During the campaign, there was much chatting, they were going to address crime by introducing an unexplained wealth act.

You know, that's—that was kind of shocking to me at the time, because I knew we had Justice ministers that had done that here in Manitoba, and we had seen the great work that they had done and the results of the legislation, how it applied across Manitoba here.

But, during the leader debate, the now-Premier (Mr. Kinew) got up and, you know, he was talking about gangsters driving \$100,000 cars. Well, you know, there's a lot of people drive \$100,000 cars here in Manitoba, so I'm hoping he wasn't referring to all Manitobans that drive \$100,000 cars as gangsters, Honourable Speaker.

Well, I lost my notes here. Just hang on a second. Okay.

And the Justice Minister said his truck is worth more than \$100,000, so we'll take him on his words. Haven't seen it yet, but I would assume it's not an electric vehicle—or it could be; I'm not sure.

And the Justice Minister, so he jumped on board too, and he said our government is going to crack down on drug traffickers and organized criminals by making it easier for police to proactively investigate their assets, seize the proceeds of crime and strike a financial blow to their organizations. And that's all great. That's all great.

But that had been done under bill 58, put forward by two great ministers in the former government.

And, you know, on this side of the House, there's been thousands of words put on the record here on Bill 30. And, you know, we support the premise of Bill 30. It just basically adds to the great work done by our government during our term in office. So this get-tough-on-crime thing is not new. It may be the New Democratic Party, but this part of it is not new, Honourable Speaker.

So The Unexplained Wealth Act, you know, aims to address and combat unexplained wealth and money laundering, and I must say, that's certainly a worthy thing to address. We all know what goes on with criminals in Manitoba and, of course, across Canada and around the world. So anything we can do to slow down crime, slow down criminals, is a good thing, and I commend the Minister of Justice for that.

He's clapping for himself over there. That's great and, you know, I think that's very good.

So, you know, the act certainly focuses on identifying, investigating individuals who possess significant wealth that cannot be reasonably explained by their known income or 'legitimate'—legitimate sources. It does put a lot of pressure on people sometimes. You know, there are a lot of self-made millionaires here in Manitoba. And does this bill allow them to be questioned more? I'm not sure.

I mean, it's—there are downsides to this. I mean, there's always rumours, should I say, Honourable Deputy Speaker, in communities about how people get their money, what they invest it in, things like that. So I'm just saying, just because there's significant wealth, doesn't necessarily mean you're a criminal, either.

So again, this Justice Minister has said the main objective of the act is to provide authorities with the necessary tools and powers to seize and forfeit assets that are suspected to be derived from criminal activities or unexplained wealth. And again, that's a great point, and I think that, you know, our bill 58 certainly addressed that as well. It strengthened previous legislation.

And I know this government wants to be tough on crime, and I think that the act here does add a little bit to what we had in place but—*[interjection]* So, again, it's nice to see the members come alive. And, you know, on this side of the House, we're not against getting tough on crime, you know, but it's nothing new. It's nothing new. We were tough on crime for eight years.

And we're certainly excited—I guess excited is maybe the wrong word. We're certainly happy that you're going to continue on that track as a government.

So, you know, under this act, authorities can obtain court orders to freeze and seize assets suspected to be linked to criminal activities. So I mean, there's going to have to be proof there, I'm sure. Not just rumour, not just innuendo; they're going to have to have some proof and I have to trust our law enforcement agencies to do their job and ensure that this particular legislation is used in the right way.

But the act certainly does provide a framework for conducting thorough investigations into the source of the wealth, including the power to compel individuals to provide information and documentation 'regarding' their financial affairs.

Now I think the majority of Manitobans are honest, Deputy Honourable Speaker, but we know there's certainly some unscrupulous people out there and I think that, you know, previous speakers have made mention about, you know, various things that

could lead to investigations such as this on people's assets.

Now it's not just money. I mean, you're talking expensive trucks, as the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) said. You know, \$100,000 is very cheap for a truck these days so, you know, I think the—I think when the now-Premier (Mr. Kinew) was talking during debate, he said \$100,000; I think he could have said \$150,000 and not been too far out.

So this act has a reporting system for financial institutions and professionals, requiring them to report any suspicious transactions or activities that may be indicative of money laundering or unexplained wealth. And this provision aims to enhance the detection and prevention of illicit financial flows and promote greater transparency in the financial sector.

Now, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I have had some experience with that recently, with, you know, with the money laundering rules and things like that. My daughter and her husband live in the Cayman Islands and, you know, as a good father I'm trying to help them get into their first house in the Cayman Islands. So I decided I was going to send some money down as a down payment on this.

Well, there's a lot of hoops to jump through in the local financial institution to send money to the Cayman Islands, let me tell you, because, I mean, the reputation of the Cayman Islands is for money laundering and things like that. But, being the honest guy that I am, I managed to convince the institution that it was for a worthy thing and I had to provide a lot of information to them and things, and I think that's good.

I mean, for a long time, I think people hid money offshore, you know? But I think the rules have been strengthened a lot these days to ensure that that doesn't happen. I know in a visit to the Cayman Islands a few months ago, you certainly had to declare if you were bringing money over in a certain amount. So the idea of hiding money offshore, I think, is harder these days, and I think we want to make it harder for criminals to hide money as well.

And I think, you know, the criminal forfeiture property act or The Unexplained Wealth Act, I guess, is certainly legislation, again, that is certainly another tool in the toolbox of law enforcement agencies across the province. So the act also provides protection for whistleblowers who come forward with information. And you would certainly hope that these whistleblowers have reliable information.

And, you know, sometimes I think people love to talk and, you know, there certainly could be people coming out and talking about people and not have the right information. So again, that goes back to the authorities and things doing their investigation of any information that comes forward from people. And, you know, and the whistleblowers are certainly protected in this as well, because of—I mean, they can say what they want and that's going to be investigated and their identity and confidentiality certainly won't be revealed.

And that has to happen, Honourable Deputy Speaker, because without that, we wouldn't have people, you know, coming forward as informants and things like that. So it's—that's a good part of it. The—you know, we're not on an island here in Manitoba, of course, and you know, our legislation here has to align with international laws and we have to make sure that we're—our efforts here are aligning with the other provinces in Canada and with other jurisdictions in the United States and indeed worldwide.

So the flow of money from illegal activities of—can end up anywhere in the world. We certainly know that from the amount of scams that are run on people here in Manitoba and where that money ends up.

So overall, this bill 58 that we had introduced and put in place and has been serving us really well.

* (16:10)

Bill 30 is adding some amendments to this and, again, on this side of the House, we're certainly glad that the Justice Minister and his government are taking the—these things very, very seriously and building on what the Progressives Conservatives did while they were in government.

So this is—The Unexplained Wealth Act, as a whole, is a crucial tool for the government to identify and target individuals who possess this money that is derived from criminal activities.

And, you know, criminal activities can be anything. It, you know—you could be—it's a drug trade, as my colleague from Turtle Mountain talked about the drug trade. And, you know, we seen that from the big seizure at Boissevain a few months ago. Great work by the CBSA down there on that. I think that they do great work.

And, you know, law enforcement here in Manitoba is not just a policing effort. We have the Canada Border Services Agency that does great work. We have our Conservation Officer Service that also deals

with many, many criminals across Manitoba, and, you know, they've certainly—there's certainly been a lot of things seized from poachers over the years as well. Money, firearms, vehicles, things like that have been seized, and the proceeds from the sale of some of those things have been reinvested.

I know the Conservation Officer Service benefitted from—during my time as minister, benefitted from spike belts that they used to stop poachers who tend to run from them. The Conservation Officer Service also received a number of unmarked vehicles. They received new firearms, things like that.

So some of that stuff was purchased through money that was confiscated from criminals that, again, the Conservation Officers Service played a role in apprehending these criminals and, in turn, the seizure of the assets, so I want to highlight the great work done by our police services in Manitoba.

And we have more than just the RCMP. My colleague here from—that was the chief of the Brandon city police, you know, brings a wealth of knowledge. Thank him for his service to Manitoba, to Brandon.

You know, we have the Manitoba First Nations police service that work on a number of First Nations in my constituency of Riding Mountain, and I know in my—some of my colleagues' constituencies as well. They do a lot of great work.

And, you know, we have a private force, the Rivers Police Service. Great bunch of guys and officers over in Rivers that do great work in the rural municipality of Daly. Pleased to have represented that area at one point, and now I've turned that over to the great member from Spruce Woods. He has the Rivers Police Service under his watch now, and I'm sure he would agree with me on the great work they do.

So there's potential misuse of the act, I think. I just want to highlight a few things here that are falling to the floor, but I'll—so—and I'm not saying this would happen, but critics could argue that the act could be used as a tool for discriminating—discriminatory targeting of certain individuals or communities. They may express concerns—well, the Agriculture Minister will agree with me; he's a rural member here too. You know, he would know a little bit about that, maybe.

So, you know, the—concerns could be expressed that the authorities might—may proportionately focus their investigations on specific racial or ethnic groups, leading to unfair treatment and stigmatization. So that's a concern. I'm just trying to put some concerns on the record here as well. I did the first half of my speech

complimenting the Justice Minister; now I'm going to put a few concerns on the record that his department might want to consider with this Bill 30.

Political targeting. You know, opponents may raise concerns about the act being used for political targeting. They may argue that authorities could exploit the act to harass or intimidate individuals who hold different political views or are critical of the sitting government, thereby infringing on their rights to free speech and political expression. You wouldn't like to think that would happen in Manitoba here, but you just never know. So, I mean, that's a concern I'm raising.

Personal vendettas, and I think that's what I was talking about earlier. I think many of us are from small communities, and, you know, there—sometimes people are jealous in small communities. You maybe don't see it as much in larger communities, but people are jealous. How did that person get his money? Why can that person drive a new vehicle? Things like that.

So you just never know. There could be a—there's the potential for personal vendettas or abuse of power. You know, it could be misused by individuals in positions of authority to settle personal scores or target individuals they may have personal or professional grievances against.

Now, I see the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) listening intently over there. I think he's really focused in on what I'm saying now. So that's great to see. Because I rather like the Minister of Justice; he seems like a very honest and upstanding person, and I've always quite liked him, even when he was on this side, so—*[interjection]* Yes, there you go, there. That's good. Yes. Yes, I think that—I think you can all see that—I think everyone likes the Minister of Justice to some extent, right?

Well, it—and the Minister of Health as well, you know. *[interjection]* Yes, yes, yes. Look at that. We've got some Kumbaya moments going here. That's good. I'll just continue on with some of my criticisms here, so—first I'm going to have a drink of water.

So opponents to this bill, which, you know, I don't know why anybody would oppose adding more things, strengthening PC legislation; I think that's a good thing, and I can't say—I don't know who's opposed to it. But they might question the accountability and transparency measures in place to prevent misuse of the act. They may argue that, without robust oversight and checks and balances, authorities could abuse their power and unfairly target individuals without justification.

Again, I would hope that wouldn't happen, but again, it's part of my notes here that I thought of, and I thought I should bring it up today anyways rather than repeat what a lot of my colleagues have said already. Because they've put a lot of great information on the record, and I know there's many, many more that want to speak on this bill as well.

So unintended consequences—again, critics might argue that the act could have unintended consequences such as chilling effect on legitimate economic activities. And we certainly don't want to slow down the economic climate of Manitoba. I mean, the horse is having trouble enough pulling the cart now, we don't want to slow it down any more, that's for sure. And my friend from Fort Whyte mentioned Eeyore the donkey is really what's pulling the cart.

But—and—so, again, critics might express concerns that individuals, out of fear of being targeted or having their privacy invaded, may decide to avoid having certain investments or business activities, leading to a negative impact on the economy. And I could see that happening.

I mean, there's certain businesses that maybe, you know, get accused of money laundering, maybe, and things like that. And maybe a businessman of high regard might not want to get involved in a business that could even be accused of that. So there is certainly—there could be that effect on the economy by the lack of business investment in some particular areas of the economy.

So got a little bit more here. There's a few more. *[interjection]* Yes, I know, I know you're—so—

An Honourable Member: You haven't said anything nice about Adrien yet. I think he's feeling left out.

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, I'll get on to him in a minute. Yes. I have a lot of nice things to say about most of the people on that side of the House, I'll say that. You know, they're—I think, you know, for the most part the—we all look—we all are in this House to make a better Manitoba.

And again, I commend the minister for putting forward these amendments—I call them amendments; it's Bill 30, but they're amendments to bill 58, just to strengthen it. You know, make it a little bit stronger. So I think that's good.

Privacy concerns, you know, critics could argue that the act infringes on an individual's right to privacy. It also—it—the act requires individuals to disclose their

sources of wealth, which some may view as an invasion of their personal financial information.

Now, I'm not sure I necessarily agree with this. I think that the authorities would certainly have to have reason to be investigating a person or a business or things like that. And my view has always been, if you're not doing anything wrong, you don't have anything to worry about. That's—that was always my view when I was the minister of Natural Resources, I thought that our enforcement bulletins that we put out every two weeks were just great. They told everybody about the crimes that were committed and what the charges were and the great hard work by our conservation officers to get to those charges.

* (16:20)

And a lot of people don't realize the amount of work that goes on by—behind the scenes and, you know, I'm pretty discouraged by seeing the latest report that come up. It made the conservation officers basically just look like zookeepers.

I think—I'm certainly hoping the minister is going to have a second thought on the Conservation Officer Service reports and continue showing the fine people of Manitoba the good work that our Conservation Officer Service does day in, day out. And again, if you do the crime, I think the crimes needed to be—need to be reported and they need to highlight, you know, the work of the conservation officers in investigating these crimes and indeed getting a successful prosecution.

So I would encourage the members on that side of the House, if they have any influence with the minister of Economic Development and Trade and Natural Resources, to ask him to maybe consider reinstating the Conservation Officer Service reports. I knew they were great for the morale of the officers that put in days and days of work to get to a charging process and then the amount of hours they spend in court to get a conviction. To see these not reported, I think, is a real slap in the face to them.

And I would think the same with Bill 30 here. If people—*[interjection]*—well, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) is speaking up and he obviously didn't read those reports because those reports were changed; they were very focused on the work the conservation officers did in terms of laying charges and getting convictions. There was no—nothing frivolous. Nothing was reported until they were charged and convicted.

And I honestly think that rural Manitoba loved to read them; the city people loved to read them. They

have—*[interjection]*—oh, and the Minister of Agriculture—I'm getting off topic a bit, but I'll talk about Bill 30 in a minute. The Minister of Agriculture is wondering why we didn't hire more.

Honourable Speaker, we invested last year \$154 million in the Conservation Officer Service. We have recruit classes going through. We announced the reopening of a Brandon office. We're reopening detachments across Manitoba. And again, I want to encourage him to speak to the Minister of Natural Resources and please tell him how important conservation officers are to rural residents and to city residents—

An Honourable Member: Very good friends of mine work there.

Mr. Nesbitt: —there you go.

So I think I have an ally in the Minister of Agriculture to talk to the minister of Natural Resources. Again, I think we agree on that and I would encourage the—my friends on the other side of the House to talk to the minister about that.

So, again, opponents—anybody that's opposed to this—what we're proposing or what the government's proposing here, I guess—may argue that the act places an unfair burden of proof on individuals to prove that their wealth is acquired through legitimate means. So basically, that takes away you're innocent until proven guilty. You have to prove—you're guilty until you prove yourself innocent here. So I don't know. I'm not a lawyer but it does sound like—again, it goes back to people being targeted and perhaps—I'm not sure about that.

But you know, it certainly goes against our legal system where we're innocent until proven guilty and get to have a fair trial. But here, if you can't prove that your wealth was acquired through hard work, I guess you're going to have to face the prospect of being charged.

So, I mean, I guess that's what an opponent might say. Clarity. Some critics might highlight the lack of 'clarity'—clarity in the act's provisions, making it difficult for individuals to understand and comply with the requirements.

Yes, I would think that, you know, a lot of our criminals, drug dealers, things like that, maybe don't have the education that some of the people—most of the—more of the people in Manitoba have, I guess, and they may have trouble. I don't suppose they go out and read the act anyway before they commit crimes or launder money, so I don't think clarity in the act is

really going to matter to criminals. It would matter more to their lawyers, perhaps, when they're trying to argue in court proceedings, so—*[interjection]*—well, we got some—we got more potential for abuse here.

There's possible abuse of power by law enforcement agencies or authorities—*[interjection]*—yes, I mean, I think that we've all heard stories of, you know—there's always bad apples in any bunch. It doesn't matter what profession you're in—politicians, law enforcement, whatever. There could be problems there for abuse. Who knows? It could be used as a tool for harassment or discrimination; again, targeting certain individuals or communities disproportionately, I think I talked about that before.

But again, I think we need to believe in this House that all law enforcement people are there for the right reasons and that they're going to take Bill 30 and, you know, what it adds to bill 58 and continue with the good work that was done by our previous government.

One more economic impact: critics might argue that the act could have a negative impact on the local economy. They may contend that it could deter foreign investment and discourage high-net-worth individuals from choosing Manitoba as a place to invest or reside.

Well, I think I could tend to agree with a little bit of that. I think that—but what I said before is a lot of jurisdictions have legislation like this, so I think if they were going to come to Manitoba or not come to Manitoba, it would likely be for the high tax rates that they would pay here in Manitoba.

You know, we have—you know, the Finance Minister, you wanted me to talk about the Finance Minister here. So in Budget 2024 I think we've noted that high-wealth individuals are going to be taxed more here, which is—kind of goes against the Health Minister's attempt to bring more—100 more doctors to Manitoba.

So I think, you know, there's a little bit of juggling has to go on there. Hey, doc, come to Manitoba, but pay more tax. So I'm just not sure how that's going to work.

An Honourable Member: And education property tax.

Mr. Nesbitt: Well, yes, and my colleague from Fort Whyte, who raised those questions today and didn't get an answer in the House, I think that he mentions the education property tax as well.

And, you know, the government is saying 83 per cent of Manitobans are going to pay less tax. I don't know; we'll see. The proof will be in the pudding when the

tax bills come out next year, I guess, and we'll be able to compare them to this year and see who the winners and losers were.

But I think as school taxes consistently rise over the years under this government, I think that \$1,500 will get eaten into fairly quickly, and we will likely see that many more people will be caught in the net, I guess, of paying more education taxes down the road, but—*[interjection]*

Again, the Agriculture Minister's talking. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but I think he's agreeing with me on—and I think he's worried about the farmers. He's not sure what's going to happen with the farmers, Honourable Deputy Speaker, because we have a lot of farmers out there with a lot of land, that pay a lot of education tax.

And I don't know if the Agriculture Minister's going to waive all the education tax on farm properties. That would be great if he would. If he could commit to that today, that would be even better. I think I could go back and tell my constituents, it would make my job a lot easier in my constituency, Honourable Speaker.

So—*[interjection]* Yes, there certainly is. There's nice houses all over Manitoba. And, you know, I've been getting emails ever since the budget was announced, and that's the first question coming from farmers and from cottage owners.

I had a cottage owner—just a little story, if you'll indulge me, Honourable Deputy Speaker; I know I'm talking about Bill 30—but I had a cottage owner send me an email. He lives in Saskatchewan, has a cottage just outside of Clear Lake. He told me he's going to have to sell his cottage. He loved our plan to reduce education property taxes on his cottage. Now he's going to sell it.

So there, again. We're losing investment from outside of the province in the province. He's going to sell it. So I mean, I think that's—we talk about deterring investment in Manitoba. I think the NDP budget will likely deter more investment and less investment in Manitoba than The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act.

So my time is just dwindling here. I didn't know how I would fill 30 minutes, but it was really good, and I really enjoyed the interaction with my friends on the other side of the House here.

And I—again, I want to thank the Justice Minister for the—putting these amendments, Bill 30, amending bill 58, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues. Thank you.

* (16:30)

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I thank you for the opportunity to put some comments on record about The Unexplained Wealth Act. And I want to thank the member opposite for bringing forward such—some legislation, good legislation, which were some great ideas that were originally brought forward by the PC government and the amendments that they would like to add, too. I want to appreciate that. I mean, a good idea is a good idea, so why not? We just continue to move forward.

So I don't know. Never knew much about The Unexplained Wealth Act, you know, until it was—the amendment was introduced here. Come to think of it, I was never that familiar with the explained wealth act, coming from the farm, you know, but I certainly hope that this amendment and this legislation doesn't offend some of the wealthy people that have worked really hard, you know, in their careers, their jobs and, you know, I look—a lot of people have worked very hard, very hard, and I'm sure the criminals think that they've worked hard too to make the money that they make, whether it be laundering or whatever act that they carry out to make this unexplained wealth.

And, you know, I did a lot of research—a little bit of research about the act, and I've come up with a lot of ways that there's money laundering and criminal activity out there that goes on, that maybe I was never really aware of. You know, I was never involved in any criminal activity myself over the years; I was always taught to be law-abiding and respect our officers, just as I respect my colleague here from Brandon West, who we're very fortunate to have on our team to teach us some of this stuff, yes, yes.

And, you know, I actually come from a family, like I said, we were taught respect. And I have a cousin who's the chief of police in the city of Edmonton right now. In fact, Wayne has mentioned to me over time that—how Dale McFee was a mentor of Wayne's and some of the great policies and stuff that he brought in through working through the Saskatchewan government, and now took on the job as chief of police in Edmonton.

So I come from a long line of people that have obeyed the law and respected the law and have done much my colleague here, has worked in that field. To catch bad criminals that seem to find ways of making money and, you know, launder it, or whatever the case maybe, but we get back to Bill 30 here, so—and the amendments.

Changes to The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act include the following: 'unexplait'—unexplained wealth orders. Court may take an order that requires a person to provide information about how they acquired property.

So yes, I mean, I could see that this is going to be great legislation for the people that are doing acts of crime. I would certainly hope that some—you know, we go back to our Premier's (Mr. Kinew) quote here during the campaign. I seen—I read and I got it here that he'll take action to address crime, introducing an unexplained wealth act. That will mean if there's a gangster driving a \$100,000 car, we're going to ask, how did you get that? So, I mean, there's a lot of people driving a hundred thousand, \$150,000 vehicles out there, but we're not—we're certainly not going to speculate that they're all gangsters.

I know myself I'll probably never drive a \$100,000 car like our member opposite, the Justice Minister, does there. But I would certainly hope that when my colleague here from La Vérendrye pulls out into the field with a new tractor that cost him, you know, three or four hundred thousand dollars, that somebody's not going to think that he's a gangster because he's driving a brand-new tractor.

So there's just a little bit of uncertainty there how, you know. So, yes, we know things are worth a lot of money now when it comes to vehicles and farm machinery, so we just hope that, you know, when this legislation comes in and gets advertised that people aren't going to start watching for every person that has—drives something brand new, and stereotypes them as a gangster. So we certainly don't want that to happen.

So if a person fails to provide the information required under an explain wealth order, provides false or misleading information, the property that is the subject of the order is presumed to be proceeds of unlawful activity, unless the contrary is proven. So yes, we would hope that anybody that is suspected of it and isn't a gangster or a criminal gets that opportunity to prove their innocence, absolutely.

So I did a little bit of research here on some of the stuff that could be done to create a lot of income from criminal activity, and corruption and bribery is one of them. So the national risk assessment states that corruption and bribery in Canada comes in many different forms, ranging from a small-scale bribe-paying activity to large bribery schemes aimed at illegally obtaining lucrative public contracts.

Well, I hope—I know on this side of the House, we're here to prevent stuff like that from happening, so I would hope—we're all here for those reasons, to make us all accountable, absolutely.

The Speaker in the Chair

So it goes on to state that money laundering threat from corruption and bribery was given a very high rating, principally due to the size of public procurement sector and the opportunities that this presents to illegally obtain high-value contracts.

So I'm hoping through all this I can educate some of my colleagues and some of the colleagues on the other side of the House, just to certain things that do go on out there, and make ourselves aware of them. Report of the commission of the inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts report, after the head of the inquiry, it provides considerable insight into this type of criminality in Quebec construction industry.

The report outlines various schemes used in the—to manipulate the public procurement progress—process, as well as the extent to which organized crime groups have infiltrated some of the construction industry. So these are things we want to definitely stay on top of.

Of equal if not greater concern are corruption and bribery offenses carried out by foreign officials on organized crime groups and other jurisdictions. While such conduct may be outside the reach of Canadian law, proceeds of that unlawful activity often make their way to countries such as ours and the United States.

Corruption and bribery, saying is—is something we need to be watching for there, and counterfeiting and privacy was another one. National risk assessment states that the number and selection of counterfeit and pirated products has grown 'significantly' over the last decade, being the key entry ports, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, for these products. So it also states that organized crime groups appear to have tapped into global illicit distribution channels, allowing them to bring increasingly more counterfeit products into Canada, and launder the proceeds derived from the sale of counterfeit goods.

So all indications suggest that the counterfeit and pirated goods marketed it—substantial, and continues—substantial—is substantial, and continues to grow rapidly. So as a result, authorities can expect an increase in money laundering activity associated with this type of criminality. So there again, probably loads of money, amounts of money that we're dealing with here, so

again, Bill 30 could probably deal with that, Honourable Speaker. Welcome back.

Thank you, I'm just going to take a little drink of water here. I'm getting dry.

* (16:40)

So another one, illicit drug trafficking, of course, as we know, is huge here in our country, and a growing concern in our province. The national risk assessment indicates that the illicit drug market is the largest criminal market in Canada. So, you know, that's where a lot of our criminal activity seems to be happening, according to this report.

So we had cannabis, cocaine, amphetamine-type stimulants, heroin making up a significant share of these markets. Since the release of that report, fentanyl and fentanyl-adulterated substances have taken over 90 per cent of the opioid market in British Columbia and resulted in significant public alarm, including the deaths of thousands of drug users. It's horrible. Horrific.

By 2016, fatal overdoses from fentanyl exposure, it increased to 8.4 per cent. So, no, that's 8.4, sorry, per 100,000 in Canada. And more Canadians died from fentanyl-contaminated opioid use than were killed in motor vehicle accidents. Can you believe that? So we're losing more people to drugs than we are to motor vehicle accidents, all from these criminals that are selling these drugs. And they don't really seem to care what happens to the people that they sell it to. They just continue to do this activity and to make money and look after themselves at the expense of other people's lives.

So by 2018, the rate of fatal overdoses from opioids reached 12 people per 100,000, approximately 85 per cent of the province's fatal overdoses. Horrible, horrible statistics.

So our 'resorch' report also says a criminology professor sets out the reasons that fentanyl is attractive to those involved in drug 'trackfing'. So anybody who's not aware of this, your high mortality from fentanyl exposure stems from its potency, reported to nearly 25 times more potent than heroin.

Fentanyl is cheaper than heroin, too, which means its emergence has been motivated by traffickers' desire to cut costs and increase profit. So here—we got these guys out here. They're just like, you know, any other business or farm; they want to find more efficient ways to capitalize on their criminal activity to make more money. So they're looking for cheaper ways to

push these horrible, horrible products out onto our street.

So fentanyl's high potency means traffickers can make considerable profits by smuggling very small quantities, and this production chain is shorter compared to heroin, which reduces overall manufacturing costs. Fentanyl's manufactured from chemical 'precursors'—sorry—so traffickers bypass the first part of the heroin distribution chain: farmers cultivating opium for—from poppy fields. Although bought and sold itself, fentanyl contaminates large quantities of heroin, 'opiodes' and 'stimpulants'—stimulants sold on the street.

So just an idea of what's going on out there is what we're facing in our communities with these criminals that continue to try and launder money or make money and push this stuff, and this is how they make a living, on—at the risk of other people's lives.

You know, the drug—

An Honourable Member: Trafficking.

Mr. King: Trafficking, that's the—thank you, my colleague from Portage.

It's becoming more of a real thing to us more and more every day. You know, growing up on the farm, we never knew much of it or heard much of it, but now it's an expected thing. My boys tell me, you know, like, I like to go down to the local watering hole once in a while which, you know, I did when I was that age, and have a few suds with their friends, but there's—it's openly happening in front of us. My kids tell me that there's people openly sniffing cocaine or whatever right there in the bar and it's disturbing and it's concerning.

And so yes, these organized crime criminals are openly just publicly trying to push their product onto other people and I'm 'verul'—very thankful with my—with how my kids have turned out so far, that, you know, they haven't bought into this type of activity that's—you know, my colleague from Turtle Mountain talked about the drug bust down in Boissevain there and quite proud to know the individual that opened up the back of that trailer or truck and found what he found.

You know, another customs officer, somebody who was in our public service there. I don't want to mention the individual's name, to put him at risk of any type of investigation, but I know him quite well, and you know, this individual, his—both his dad and

his uncle were customs officers as well all their lives. Both retired now.

But that's the great work that these people do, and put their lives at risk to come across an individual that is transporting \$50 million worth of whatever the drug was, from one—from out—from the US into Canada. So very proud to know that individual that was able to pick up on that.

You know, in October 2018, the Cannabis Act came in, we all know. And—indicates almost all these groups are involved in at least one other illicit drug market, now that it's been slightly—somewhat legalized. So it likely increased their involvement in those other markets to counteract the displacement of their share in the cannabis. So they've lost out on some of the business in selling cannabis, so they've all picked up on other markets of different products, of hard drugs, to make a living.

It just—it's—I find it hard to fathom this, but it's become so real in our society now, that we just—we have to accept it and expect that our legislation and our people of public protection services are going to do their best to take care of these criminals and get them off the street. And this legislation, Bill 30, I think is going to be a—getting back to that, Honourable Speaker—is going to be something that is going to help curb some of that activity and those people, and put them behind bars.

And again, as long as, you know, these people driving \$100,000 cars aren't stereotyped as being a gangster. That's not what we want here with this legislation. But we do want to put anyone behind bars that is involved in this.

Mass marketing fraud, another one. Boy, there's more and more of that going on. So the scams—you know, just today on my phone, I got a text from somebody wanting to know if I'm interested in some part-time work, which I'm not. But I know it's a scam; you can tell by some—you know. You know, I rely on my boys, they tell me, lots of times, they'll say Dad, that's a scam; Dad, don't click on this, don't—and they know more about it than I do. And I'm glad I got them; they know their technology and they know it's—
[interjection]

Yes. So we got to be—another thing we got to be so careful of is our electronics, our emails, our texts. There's so much fraud behind that where they're making money to, once again, own nice cars, build beautiful homes, at the expense of people that fall into their traps. So again, Bill 30 would definitely help with that.

Ransomware scams. Romance scams. You know, victims are lured into a false relationship with a fraudster, often through the use of information that's been posted online. So, you know, as much as technology is our friend, we have to be so careful and we have to 'edukeet'—educate people to be careful of these scams, to keep these criminals from getting richer off of these type of things.

So yes, mass marketing fraud is—

An Honourable Member: Thriving on us.

Mr. King: It is. It's among us, and we have to be cognizant of it.

* (16:50)

Tobacco smuggling and trafficking, another thing. We know in our country that the taxes are quite high on those products, and people look for cheaper ways to buy them. *[interjection]* Well, yes. Well, then, that's just it. Wait—they think the taxes are high—are now, just wait 'til—now that this 2024 budget has come through. *[interjection]* Yes.

How much more of this is going to happen; smuggling tobacco and trafficking of tobacco? Because people are looking for cheaper ways to support their habits.

Currency counterfeiting: have we heard of that? Are we aware of currency counterfeiting? It's another—large-scale currency counterfeiting is predominantly undertaken by organized crime groups to conduct currency counterfeiting alongside other profit-oriented criminal activities.

So the national risk assessment states that these actors exhibit a high level of 'sophistication' and capability. They also appear to have the network and the infrastructure in the place to successfully launder the cash proceeds arising from such activity. So they're making all kinds of money at this too. It's—these are all things I was unaware of until I did my research on this Bill 30.

But—so I'm sure my colleague from Brandon West was quite up on all this, but it gave me a great opportunity to—so maybe I'll understand a lot more what he's talking about now, when he mentions some of this stuff.

Human smuggling, another horrific and disturbing—well, maybe not disturbing. But, I mean, people—okay, human—we've got to think that there's two different—there's human smuggling and human trafficking.

Human smuggling is a business where they try to make money off the people that want to come to our

great country and get them in here, in our great province. So there's another criminal activity that we just—these criminals are making money off of people; to get them on a boat and get them over here and get them into our country and hopefully they can get a better life here. And these criminals are luring these people into this, taking their money and, once they get them here, they don't care if they end up with a good life here or not, or if they even get them here, for that matter. So that's human trafficking. And then that—sorry, that was human smuggling.

But human trafficking: that, to me, is very horrific, disgusting and disturbing criminal activity. You know, I've watched many a movie on TV and based on a true story, I mean, I wouldn't want to talk fiction here. But based on true stories of families and people that have gone on—gone through the human trafficking, the criminal activity of human trafficking.

I couldn't imagine. I couldn't imagine someone losing their child or their sister or their brother or their mother or their father.

An Honourable Member: Don't talk about it anymore.

Mr. King: To a—my apologies, but it's happening more and more all the time to—criminals that want to make money—

An Honourable Member: Take advantage.

Mr. King: Take advantage.

And, you know, if you watch these stories, you listen to these stories, they're—these criminals are such good con artists. You know, they build the trust in these people and look what happens. It's a horrible, horrible, horrific—I know my colleague from Springfield-Ritchot talked about it earlier and it came to my mind, some of the stories I've heard and some of the movies based on true stories that I've watched. And it's gut-wrenching. It really is.

So again, you know, if there's criminals out there making money off of this human trafficking and becoming wealthy, Bill 30, maybe we can—maybe it's the one we—reeling them in, and our great law enforcement people will maybe put a little bit of a curb on.

Identity crime. We all are aware of identity crime, I'm sure. You know, with artificial intelligence and that now, we're going to find that identity crime is going to become more and more. You know what? People are desperate. We're in desperate times here, desperate measures. Desperate times, people look for desperate measures.

And the criminals, though, they're on top of all this already, so they're only going to, you know, get better at it. They'll get better at it and they'll go bigger at it.

Identity crime such as identity theft and identity fraud. It's a—prevalent in Canada and is a particular concern because stolen identities are often used to support the conduct of other criminal activities. Stolen identities can also assist money laundering operations by giving offenders fake credentials to subvert customers' due diligence safeguards. So it's among us again. It—another thing that we have to watch out for.

National risk assessment states that the organized crime groups conducting identity crime are well-established and resilient and have well-developed domestic and international networks. I also—also evidence that is a—that a significant percentage of organized crime groups involved in this type of activity are located in British Columbia, and that many of those groups have international connections. So—and we're finding it here in Manitoba, too, the identity theft.

You know, our electronic devices, we're susceptible to this. We have to be so careful, and we have to warn our children to be careful and our grandchildren that this stuff's out there. You know, it's hard to believe.

You know, Manitobans are very trusting people. We trust in our neighbours, we trust in our colleagues, we trust in our co-workers. You know, when you meet someone on the street and they're friendly to you, you want to be friendly back, but when you—this day and age, when you meet strangers, you got to be so careful of what they try to lure you into, because it's hard to trust.

You know, but trust out there with someone you meet on the street is nothing like the trust we have here on this side of the House amongst our—amongst each other. We all trust each other greatly.

Illegal gaming, another one. Another one that maybe Bill 30 can, Honourable Speaker, can—you know, there's a—gambling of—they're hosting these fights or whatever, gambling, in residences or places that we're unaware of, but again, desperate times. People are gambling. They get an opportunity to, if they have this problem that we would hope our programs can take care of for them, but get lured into these illegal gambling facilities. It's—again, these guys are making

money, buying fancy cars, build houses—big houses, live in fancy hotels.

Again, not stereotyping; everybody can do that, because a lot of the people that can do that worked hard for their money, worked really hard for their money to get what they have. But getting it by criminal activity is not the answer. It's not an honest dollar. And we—that's not what we do here in Manitoba. We make an honest dollar. We work hard for our money, and if you become wealthy of it—from it, that's your reward, and you be successful—

An Honourable Member: Should become wealthy, yes.

Mr. King: Yes, should you become wealthy, that's your reward for being successful.

Honourable Speaker, there's just—I'm not going to have enough time to go on with what I've got here for illegal activities, but, you know, payment card fraud—credit card fraud.

Well, just Friday—just Friday—I open up my credit—I go online to my credit card, and I see there's a \$20 transaction on my credit card that I never made. I asked my wife; I asked anybody who I thought maybe had my credit card number, but no; no one. No one did.

So I had to—so, you know what, the pain in the butt for this is I had to go online and dispute my credit card fraud. So now my credit card's been cancelled. So now I'm without a credit card for 10 days, because I had to cancel my credit card. I know it was only a \$20 transaction, but it wasn't me that made it.

So this is—these are serious things here that, you know, that are happening out there. So that's the first time its ever happened to me, credit card—with a \$20 transaction. I almost paid it, but my wife said no, no; you deal with that. But there's probably hundreds and thousands of dollars out there that are being frauded by a credit card scam somewhere, so—but, I mean, that was \$20 of my hard-earned money, too. My wife was right. I should have—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is next before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 15, 2024

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