



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
**and**  
**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey  
Speaker*



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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
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, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	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, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Transcona	

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 6, 2025

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**The Speaker:** O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and 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, Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** I'd like to call Bill 202, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, 'til 10:30. And then Bill 203, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, from 10:30 to 11.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will debate second reading of Bill 202, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements), until 10:30, followed by second reading debate of Bill 203, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act.

### House Business

**MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader):** Could you please canvass the House for leave to debate the private member's resolution, Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local, sponsored by the member for Seine River (MLA Cross), during private members' business on Tuesday, March 11.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to debate the private members' resolution, Encouraging Manitobans to

Support Local, sponsored by the member for Seine River, during the private members' business on Tuesday, March 11?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The honourable Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Johnson:** I move—

**The Speaker:** We will now resume second reading of the bills previously announced.

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

### Bill 202—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements)

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk), that Bill 202, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Johnson:** Today, I'm here to talk about a topic that is not only timely with the Trump tariffs, but obviously crucial to the future of energy production. And that's solar panels and how they benefit our electricity grid.

As we continue to search for sustainable solutions to meet growing energy demands, solar energy has emerged as one of the most promising alternatives. From reducing carbon emissions to enhancing grid stability, solar panels offer a range of advantages to the grid and society at large.

The first and perhaps most obvious benefit to solar panels is that they harness energy from the sun—a clean, renewable resource. Solar panels offer a way to generate electricity with minimal environmental impact, making them a key player in our fight against global warming.

According to the International Energy Agency, solar power could account for over 30 per cent of global energy productions by 2050, drastically cutting down on carbon emissions from electricity generation around the world, so—also reducing strain on the energy grid during peak demand.

One of the most significant ways solar panels benefit the Manitoba electricity grid is by reducing the consumption of water that is required to generate our total demand. Typically, peak demand—peak energy demands occur in the winter when the heat is required to sustain our rural homes and farms that do not have access to natural gas.

Now, you may ask what help solar panels will have in electricity generation in winter. Well, in Manitoba, peak solar production is in spring and fall. During these times, a home, depending on the size of their system, can generate more electricity than they use. When a home does that, it requires no electricity from the grid, and therefore not requiring any water to run through a turbine, resulting in water storage behind our dams. And that water has potential energy as it has potential to flow through the turbines and create electricity. So water is backed up behind the dams.

Storing energy in this form is currently the most environmentally friendly, no need for batteries and the hazards that come along with them. The storage of water is quite important for drought years, as we have recently experienced, and Manitoba Hydro's books have been affected. As such, the reduction and consumption throughout the year will result in water savings for Manitoba Hydro and they can draw on that water when they need it.

Solar energy can act as a buffer, ensuring that supply meets demands without needing additional fossil fuel-based generation purchased from America. Generally, solar produces better in drought years, as the sun is shining a lot more, and less so in cloudier years, when water is usually more plentiful. So this correlation with Manitoba Hydro's needs is spot on.

Solar panels also promote distributed generation, meaning that electricity is produced closer to where the electricity is consumed. Rather than relying on dams and a vast network of transmission lines, solar panels installed on homes generate electricity locally. This decentralized production reduces the need for long-distance transmission, which is costly and inefficient due to energy loss along the way.

Another major benefit of solar panels is the potential to lower electricity cost, both for individuals and for the grid as a whole.

\* (10:10)

For homeowners that install solar panels, the ability to generate their own electricity means they can reduce their reliance on the grid, cutting their energy bills.

For the electricity grid, integrating solar power reduces the overall demand for electricity from more expensive traditional sources. When solar energy reduces the need to purchase power for fossil fuel-based plants, Hydro can lower their operational costs. These savings will be passed on to consumers in the form of lower rates.

Passing this bill is an incentive for solar energy installation. The incentive will not only encourage more people to adopt solar technology, but also make the overall electricity grid less reliant on fossil fuel electricity from MISO.

Now, looking at it from a financial perspective, as a government, this would be private money being invested to generate power. It's a win-win.

The solar energy industry is a growing sector that creates jobs and stimulates economic growth. As solar panel installations increase, so does the demand for skilled labour from engineers to technicians and whatnot. These jobs support local economies, reduce unemployment and create a skilled workforce that contributes to a greener, more sustainable future.

When electricity is being generated at a northern hydro dam, it must travel long distances to reach consumers. During this journey, a good portion of the energy is lost due to inefficiencies in the transmission and distribution system. By placing solar panels closer to the point of use, on homes for example, these losses can be minimized. This not only makes the grid more efficient, but also reduces the increasing need for investment in costly transmission infrastructure, freeing up resources for other improvements to the grid.

A critical component to solar panel is energy storage. This is not done with batteries, but as mentioned before, in the form of water with potential energy stored behind a hydro dam. While solar panels generate electricity during the day, hydro dams can store excess energy produced during sunny periods and release it during times of high demand or when

the sun isn't shining, and ultimately released through drought years.

This combination of solar panels and storage enhances the flexibility of the electricity grid. It allows for better management of energy supply and demand, helping to smooth out drought years caused by varying weather conditions.

Solar energy also contributes to energy independence by reducing the dependence on imported fossil fuel electricity from the Americas—from United States. And Trump's tariffs, obviously, will have an effect on this as well. Our neighbours to the south rely on coal or natural gas to generate their energy needs, and making them vulnerable to price fluctuations and supply disruptions as we import that electricity.

If we experience a year where we have excess water, we can still supply MISO with spot electricity. By generating electricity locally from solar panels, Manitoba can reduce their reliance on foreign energy sources, leading to greater energy security and price stability. This can also improve the trade balance as fewer resources are spent on importing energy, allowing funds to be reinvested into domestic priorities.

In conclusion, the benefit of solar panels to the electricity grid is profound and helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ease the strain on the grid during peak times, promote distributed generation, lower electricity cost, create jobs, minimize transmission losses and enhance grid flexibility. Furthermore, solar power contributes to a national energy independence, reducing reliance on imported fossil fuel electricity.

As the world continues to grapple with climate change and the need for sustainable energy solutions, solar panels represent a powerful tool for transforming our electricity grid into one that is cleaner, more efficient and more resilient. It is clear that investing in solar technology is an investment in a brighter, more sustainable future for all of us. And just a reminder: this type of incentive reduces government funding that is required to invest in generation. Private 'citizens' across Manitoba will invest for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party, this is to be followed by a rotation

between the parties, each independent member may ask one question, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** Members of the PC opposition are trying to run from their terrible record on Manitoba Hydro. For seven and a half years, the previous PC failed government tried to keep Manitobans in the dark about their raising hydro rates and selling off parts of our provincial Crown jewel.

My question for the members opposite is: Why did they bring this legislation forward now and not when they were in government when Manitoban hydro costs were rising under their watch?

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Yes, it's a great question on the inefficiencies of how NDP mismanaged Manitoba Hydro. Let's just look at Bipole III and running it all the way across the province, south, taking out thousands and thousands of acres of trees, and they claim to be green? I think not.

The inefficiency—extra inefficiency from that line alone is 25 per cent energy loss due to the extra distance that that line has—that route that the NDP government has chosen to take for that line.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Can the member please speak to the success that other jurisdictions in Canada have had with including net metering?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, thank you for that question. Obviously our neighbouring provinces, we often look to them for changes. and Ontario has done some changes similar to this years ago, and it has been very, very successful. Where the province themselves, or hydro—their hydro does not have to invest in new generation because private industry is now investing in generation to stabilize the grid and reduce cost for all ratepayers.

**Ms. Smith:** It's unfortunate that the member couldn't answer the question that I asked previously about why they didn't bring this legislation forward when they were in government, but I'll ask a new question.

PCs, all of a sudden now, want people to forget about their terrible record on energy production in our province. But Manitobans know the PCs don't have a leg to stand on when they talk about things like hydro. Under their member's watch, hydro rates increased under—over 20 per cent since 2016.

Can the members opposite, since he was a minister, tell us why he thought it was okay to set hydro rates at the Cabinet table and sidestep the Public Utilities Board?

**Mr. Johnson:** That's a great question on hydro rates and how this bill will help manage hydro rates and keep them down.

So if this bill isn't brought to committee and reported back to the House and passed third reading, I'm assuming that members opposite are against having lower energy rates for all of Manitobans through private investment in solar panels, and allowing net metering in the province of Manitoba.

This is a good step forward, not just for Manitoba Hydro, but for all Manitobans.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** I'd like to first of all congratulate the member for putting this bill forward. It's important. It's part of a progression as we move ahead for energy efficiency.

I'd like to ask him: We have Efficiency Manitoba, would this help them meet their targets?

**Mr. Johnson:** Absolutely. Efficiencies—Efficiency Manitoba's goal is to reduce consumption of hydro so we have more and less demand to build new hydro dams, for example.

\* (10:20)

This will help not only reduce consumption in homes that install it, but if the home is generating more electricity than it's consuming it will be spread out between the neighbourhood and consumed there, reducing the demand on hydro dams in northern Manitoba.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I'd just like to ask the member a question. So in net-metering arrangements, typically what happens is a homeowner who's generating energy behind the meter would sell that excess energy back to the utility, but they would do that at a rate that would be the equivalent of the market rate that we all pay for that energy.

However, Hydro, if getting solar energy—excess solar in the middle of the day, they need to sell that off at a spot market rate, at a cent and a half.

So Hydro buys it at 9 cents and ultimately, we sell it for a cent and a half. That creates significant rate pressures for Manitobans.

So I'm hoping the member can explain how that makes any sense.

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, I think the member has—hopefully, he would know as being the minister in charge of Manitoba Hydro that we would never get to a point in Manitoba where we would replace all of the electricity that the hydro dams generate. His philosophy is based on replacing hydro dams.

This is to accent the grid and help the grid become more stable and any of the electricity that is produced would be consumed in the neighbourhood, not exported out of Manitoba at a cent and a half per kilowatt hour on the spot market.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I just want to thank the member for bringing this forward.

Back in the day, when I was in Cabinet and we did a Hydro study and we did a Hydro impact study of what's going to happen in the future of our hydroelectricity—how does this complement the study that was done and the findings of the study?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, well, the study showed that we could potentially be in need of hydro generation in the not-too-distant future. If we start investing now in solar, that will push that date out and the need for new generation will potentially, with enough investment in solar panels, be pushed out a long, long time before we'd need new hydro generation in the province of Manitoba.

**Ms. Smith:** So the PCs talked a big game about energy production when Keeyask was initiated by the government before them.

What did they do during their time in government? They made Manitobans pay more to light their homes and prioritized privatization over building capacity. They left a mess for us to clean up with nothing to show after seven and a half years.

So my question for the member opposite is: Why did he and his PC Cabinet fail to produce a single megawatt of energy, here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, that's obviously a false statement. The member is misinformed because there's numerous solar projects that went up in Manitoba. And one alone is on Fisher River Cree Nation and Chief Crate and his efforts there are outstanding. He's a remarkable man and that alone was one megawatt solar project—that alone, plus all the other projects across Manitoba.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can the member please explain why net metering—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

The honourable member for Midland has the floor.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can the member please explain why net metering has more benefits to residential customers implementing solar panel systems, as opposed to net billing and the return on investment that would benefit those customers?

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, net metering is a kilowatt-hour-per-kilowatt-hour exchange, so as rates change, the produce—the production from the solar panels that you make earlier in the year, for example, that you would consume during the winter, you get an even-up change for that.

And there's no dollar value added in all the calculations that are on that, on the hydro bill. It would be a far easier solution to keep track of on the hydro bills as just rather than having a dollar value on your hydro bill, you would just have a credit in kilowatt hours.

**MLA Sala:** I just want to point out that the member opposite was shamefully trying to take credit for an energy project led by a First Nation community who drove that solar project. That was not an initiative of the members opposite. They had nothing to do with that. That had to do with a First Nation leading the way.

To the question that I asked earlier, it's a really important question. How does it make sense to have Hydro buy energy for 9 cents a kilowatt hour and then turn around and sell it for a cent and a half? That—those economics do not work, and I'm asking the member very honestly, can he answer how that makes any sense? We're proposing here—the proposal is to buy energy for 9 cents and sell it for a cent and a half. You don't have to be an economist to know that's not going to work out well for Hydro.

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, that's actually the system that was set up by the NDP. Right now you have to currently—Hydro currently purchases from the homeowners. And at any point, that homeowner could actually request a cheque from Manitoba Hydro. With this set-up, kilowatt hour per kilowatt hour, it is even trade for the kilowatt hour that you produce and your neighbours consume, and then you get that back in the form of a credit later on in the year.

So it's getting rid of the system that is set up by the NDP that does actually say the statement that he has just said.

**The Speaker:** The time for question period has expired.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Before we move on to debate, I'd like to introduce some guests in the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from Andrew Mynarski school, 25 students under the direction of Jennifer Besyk. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

We welcome you here today.

### Debate

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

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I am honoured to stand here again to be able to speak to this bill today. You know, I got to listen in yesterday, unfortunately, and the member opposite brought up tariffs. It was incredibly disappointing and frightening, to be completely honest, to hear some of the rhetoric coming from the other side. And attempting to defend their gratitude for the Americans bringing forward—and Trump specifically—bringing through tariffs.

And so it's relevant just because I want to speak to the comment that your member made earlier today during this debate, specifically about this bill. And so I wanted to take a second just to say that we on this side of the House are fully in support of Canada and our sovereignty and making sure that we do everything we can for Manitobans and their jobs.

But today we are here for an important bill, Bill 202, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (Net-Metering Agreements), and I am very happy to speak about this today. It's important. So—and you know, it's not that we're opposed to the expansion of renewable energy, obviously. As a government we've done a lot of work in that file; or the principle of affordability for Manitobans, which we've also done a lot of work on, continue to work with community on. But because this bill, you know, it's brought forward by the opposition and it does not, in my opinion, meaningfully address the realities of our energy system here in Manitoba, and that's incredibly important, nor does it provide a comprehensive plan that benefits all Manitobans equitably.

So let me be clear. You know, I and my colleagues on this side of the House, again, support a future where clean energy is a driving force in Manitoba. And we believe in the expansion of renewable options in energy efficiency and in making it easier for folks to lower their bills while contributing

to a greener future. But you know, Honourable Speaker, we also believe that legislation must be responsible, it must be strategic and above all else, fair. And that is where Bill 202 falls a bit short.

So this bill proposes to expand net metering which allows customers with solar panels and/or wind turbines to sell excess energy back to the grid in exchange for a credit on their hydro bill. On the surface, again, this sounds like an easy win for sustainability and affordability, but we can't afford to be surface level, in our approach to energy policy.

This isn't just about those who already have access to solar panels, it's about ensuring that all Manitobans—

\* (10:30)

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hour being 10:30, the time for debate of this bill has come to an end. The—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining.

### **Bill 203—The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act**

**The Speaker:** As previously announced, we will now go to second reading of Bill 203, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert), that Bill 203, The Earlier Screening for Breast Cancer Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**Mrs. Cook:** I think all of us in this House have been touched in some way by breast cancer. And unfortunately, if trends continue, we will continue to see our neighbours, our friends and our family members diagnosed with this disease and at increasingly younger ages.

So I think we all care about this issue; that's not in dispute. But caring about it isn't enough. We have to act today to save more lives.

And today, the people who have the power to act are on that side of the House. So I'm once again bringing forward this bill and urging them to do the right thing and move this bill forward to committee, so that the many members of the public who care deeply about this issue have an opportunity to come to this Legislature and present their views on why it's

so important that Manitoba reduce the screening age from age 50 to age 40.

The statistics—[interjection]—thank you. The statistics are scary. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. That's 84 women who will get their diagnosis today. And today, 15 Canadian women will die from it. But I think for a lot of us, the statistics don't hit home until it touches us personally.

And I told this story the first time I brought this bill forward, but I want to repeat it here quickly, because it really was the onus for me bringing this bill forward. I didn't know that an acquaintance of mine, in her early 40s, like me, had breast cancer until one day when I saw her and she had this new pixie haircut. And I complimented her on how well it suited her, and she started to cry and told me that she had breast cancer and that she was starting treatment the following week, and that she had proactively cut her hair because she knew it was all going to fall out.

She was devastated. She's got kids my kids' age. Her family was devastated. And I knew in that moment that I wanted to do something about it and that in my role as a legislature—legislator, I have a unique opportunity to try to do something to move this issue forward. So this bill is for her and for all of the other women I know and that we all know who have dealt with this disease, for their families who have been on that journey with them.

And I think we all know, anecdotally, that breast cancer is on the rise in younger women. And that's actually borne out in the data. Breast cancer in younger women now accounts for nearly 20 per cent of all breast cancer diagnoses. And younger women, when they're diagnosed, tend to be diagnosed with more aggressive forms of breast cancer, or cancer that hasn't been caught until it's already in its later stages and is more difficult to treat.

And, in fact, the peak incidence of breast cancer for Black, Asian, Hispanic and Indigenous women are all in their 40s. That's why it's so important that Manitoba adjust its screening age to 40 from the current 50. That means allowing women over the age of 40 to simply self-refer for a mammogram.

Currently in Manitoba, if you're under the age of 50, your doctor needs to make a requisition for a mammogram. But as we know—all know, not everybody in Manitoba has a family doctor. Given the rising incidence of breast cancer in younger women, it's important that we remove that barrier and allow younger women to self-refer for a mammogram.



And it's not just us saying that. Advocates in the community have been leading the charge on this issue. In response to new scientific evidence, over the last several months, multiple organizations, including the Canadian Cancer Society, Dense Breasts Canada and Breast Cancer Canada, along with medical experts and survivors, have all been calling for a lower screening age.

A lot of the movement on this issue just began last year when the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care issued its guidelines. Those guidelines were, frankly, bad. The guidelines recommended that governments maintain the status quo at the age of 50, and those guidelines were widely discredited in the months that followed.

The Canadian Cancer Society expressed disappointment in the draft guidance, stating that, quote: it places the onus on people to advocate for their own early detection and screening and gain access to a referral rather than being automatically invited to provincial and territorial screening programs.

Dr. Jean Seely, head of the breast imaging section at Ottawa Hospital, called the task force advice bad news that will lead to confusion for women in Canada, emphasizing, quote: Unfortunately, we know that will lead to loss of lives. We know that by screening women, we save at least three out of every thousand women screened.

And critics point out that those guidelines disadvantage racialized women, who often have a higher incidence of breast cancer in their 40s. Dr. Seely stated publicly, by saying that they should not start until 50, puts them all at a big disadvantage and is one of the reasons why we see in Canada that they are more likely to be diagnosed at an advanced stage of breast cancer.

So just last week, the federal Health Minister ordered a pause on that task force's work, which is a big win for organizations like Dense Breasts Canada that have been tirelessly advocating for those changes. But there is still so much more work to do.

Every province other than Manitoba has either already adjusted the screening age for breast cancer or put forward a concrete plan to do so, with timelines. Many of them have made that shift in just the last several months. In the months since we debated the first version of this bill, even more provinces have come onboard and lowered their screening age.

As of January, women in Newfoundland and Labrador can self-refer for a mammogram starting at

age 40. Next door in Saskatchewan, the referral age for self-screening is now down to 47. But here in Manitoba, it's still age 50.

Now, last year, the current NDP government announced their intention to move on the issue. We were in here debating the bill, the minister ran out to the rotunda to a hastily called press conference and announced their intention to lower the screening age. That's great news, but it's just words until it's followed up with action.

So they've said that they'll get to age 45 by the end of this year. Now this bill's calling for more. It's calling for age 40 by the end of next year.

So all of the advocates I've spoken to have told me that the government's words are nice, but they're not enough, because their announcement didn't include targets for hiring technologists or radiologists; it didn't include funding to expand the BreastCheck program; it didn't include a plan to reduce mammography wait times in Manitoba, which are far too high, and it did not include a timeline to reduce the age to 40.

So they made an announcement, but in the months since, they haven't followed it up with any action. So let's talk about how Bill 203 addresses and remedies some of that.

The bill requires the Minister of Health to develop and implement a plan to lower the screening age to 40 no later than the end of 2026. So I want to talk about that deadline for a minute and why we chose it. Because, bluntly, it's not quick enough. It needs to happen faster than that. Advocates want to see the breast cancer screening age lowered now. And the original version of the bill that I drafted had us moving much more quickly than that. But then the government said they could only get to age 45 by the end of 2025. And I'm a pragmatist. I just want to see this happen.

As we've said all along, we know that lowering the breast cancer screening age is going to require expanding screening capacity. I know that takes time. I know that doesn't happen overnight. But the time to get started on that has now passed. Manitoba women deserve a firm deadline. They deserve to know when we're going to get to age 40. They deserve a timeline and a road map to get there. They deserve more than just a vague intention.

With this bill, there's a deadline built in there, and it's a very reasonable deadline. The government should be able to meet it. It's such a reasonable deadline that there's no reason at all for the government not

to move this bill forward to committee today. If they choose not to allow the bill to move forward, I would suggest that's essentially admitting to Manitobans they have no intention of getting to age 40 within that time frame.

Conversely, they could allow the bill to move forward to committee, and that would signal to advocates, to survivors, to those who are currently dealing with breast cancer that they're serious about lowering the breast cancer screening age in Manitoba. And maybe they can even beat the deadline. That'd be fantastic. So much the better. I hope that they can.

And Bill 203 has one other important feature: it requires the Minister of Health to report annually on the number of screening mammograms that are done. That's all about accountability and transparency. What gets measured gets managed, and by reporting publicly on the number of mammograms being done, it provides reassurance to the public that there's progress being made. And if progress isn't being made, having to publicly report on it provides an incentive for the government to do better. So there's truly no good reason for government not to support this bill.

\* (10:40)

And I just want to, before I run out of time, quickly acknowledge some of the people who have worked so hard on this issue in Manitoba: Jenny Borgfjord, Shannon Coates, Mary Ann Henderson and countless other survivors. They're tireless advocates. They've dedicated their lives to advocating for this issue and making real change in Manitoba. They're doing it entirely in the hopes of sparing other women the same pain that they or their loved ones have had to go through.

I also want to recognize Jennie Dale of Dense Breasts Canada; Breast Screening Advocates Manitoba, Dr. Paula Gordon; Dr. Jean Seely, the Canadian Cancer Society, a number of local radiologists and radiation technologists that I've spoken with who've asked to remain anonymous.

To everyone who's spoken to me about this issue and who cares about this issue, thank you for your tireless work. I urge the NDP to move this bill forward today.'

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following

sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I imagine there are a number of very uncomfortable members over there who are sitting there listening to this bill that was brought forward by their colleague, who, unfortunately while they were in government, ignored expert recommendations for years and refused to lower the breast cancer screening age despite calls from health professionals across the country.

Can the member opposite please explain why her party, when in government, failed to act on any of these recommendations, and does she now support our government's decisions to right that wrong?

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I thank my colleague away—from across the way for the question.

But if he had done some research, he would know that movement on this issue didn't begin until last year. Most of the provinces that have moved to lower their screening age have done so within the last year. That's within their mandate. It's up to them to change the breast cancer screening age.

It gives me an opportunity to talk once more about why this is so important. Breast cancer screening saves lives. This is about saving lives, it's not about politics. It's unfortunate the NDP have chosen to make it about politics.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** I just want to thank my colleague from Roblin for bringing this forward. It's such an important bill, and it touches—breast cancer touches most of our lives in some way.

Can you explain to us what happened the last time you brought this bill forward?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you so much for the question.

The last time I brought this bill forward, while we were in the Chamber debating it, the minister went out to the Rotunda and called a news conference announcing that they intended to do exactly what I'd laid out in the bill, which was wonderful. And then the bill was—they didn't talk it out, which actually surprised me, but then they failed to call it to committee.

So they allowed it to just die on the Order Paper and then they took no further action to actually reduce

the breast cancer screening age, which is really unfortunate. Turns out, it was just words.

**MLA Pankratz:** So, again, I mean, during their time in government, the PCs cut CancerCare funding, they closed the Mature Women's Centre—and I know that this bill is well-intentioned and we all want to see this age lowered, which is why our Minister of Health is working on it right now.

But can the member opposite, again, please explain why her government made these choices—and I know that she's part of that team and she's going to try to stick up for them, but if this about the health of women, as I think it is and it should be, rightly, does she now regret some of those decisions her colleagues made?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you again for the question.

The member was right about one thing: this is an important issue for the health of women. But it's not just about the health of women. It's actually about the operation of the health-care system as a whole.

Lowering the age for breast cancer screening is going to save the health-care system money, which is something we, as legislators, should all be concerned with. Costs for advanced breast cancer treatment have risen. A patient diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer, their treatment costs average over \$370,000 per patient. Earlier detection through screening typically means stage 1 diagnoses, which cost far less to treat.

In fact, lowering the screening age is expected to save the Canadian health-care system almost \$460 million a year and, more importantly, save—

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

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** To my colleague from Roblin, don't let this die. Don't let people in Manitoba suffer.

Do you believe that early detection would actually lessen wait lists—lists and lessen the burden on our health-care system with these wait-lists getting longer and longer under this NDP government?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague from Portage la Prairie for the question. I know he cares deeply about the value of screening and diagnostics and screening tools in our province, and lowering the screening age for breast cancer has the potential to save the health-care system money, certainly, more importantly, to save lives, which we should all be caring about. And it also—he talks about wait-lists, and it will have an impact on wait-lists for more

complicated things like surgery because when we catch breast cancer at an earlier stage, it's typically much less complicated to treat.

So for so many reasons, that's why we need to lower the breast cancer screening age in Manitoba, get women under the age of 50 the ability to self-refer for a mammogram like every—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

**MLA Pankratz:** You know, our Minister of Health is doing the incredibly difficult work of building back up our health care here in Manitoba after many years of cuts from the government opposite.

And the member from Roblin, I really appreciate, again, this bill being brought forward, and that is why we're doing the work, our Minister of Health is doing that work of lowering the age. And I think that she even publicly said, you know, I think lowering the screening age for breast cancer is simply the right thing to do, which we all agree with.

So given this, does she now fully support our government's action to implement this challenge, or does she stand with her PC colleagues who failed for many years to do so during their time in office?

**Mrs. Cook:** The member across the way is mistaken because there has been no action for me to support. The government's announcement didn't include any targets for hiring technologists or radiologists. It didn't include funding to expand the BreastCheck program. It didn't include a plan to reduce mammography wait times in Manitoba, and it included no timeline to get Manitoba to age 40. So I'm not sure what action he's referring to, but there's certainly been nothing for those of us on this side of the House to applaud or support.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** As I was saying earlier, many of us—most of us have all been touched by losing somebody close to us to breast cancer. I lost a close friend. Had she would have been tested at a younger age, she would still be here today.

So my question for you is: As we wait and wait and wait for this government to do something, how many women are going to be—are we going to lose? How does earlier breast screening save lives?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague for Morden-Winkler for the question. I know that she cares as deeply about this issue as I do.

The statistics speak for themselves. So women aged 40 to 49 in regions without screening, that is

Manitoba, have higher rates of advanced-stage breast cancer, with a 10.3 per cent increase in stage 4 diagnoses since 2011. The trend is going in the wrong direction. Women are being diagnosed at younger and younger ages with more aggressive forms of breast cancer.

It's imperative that the Manitoba government act now. They can point fingers backwards all they want; they can spin it all they want, but the onus is on them. The ball is in their court. They are the only ones who can act to change this issue now, and their failure to do so speaks volumes.

**MLA Pankratz:** Again, I want to just say the Minister of Health is doing an incredible job of restocking our system here in Manitoba, which was absolutely eroded under the former PC government, unfortunately. I worked on the front lines, and I saw that first-hand. So I applaud the Minister of Health and our team for the difficult work of doing that.

But you know, the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) continues to minimize that damage that was done. And truly, like, if we're talking about actually getting this done and getting this screening lowered, we need to talk about the damage done and how we can fix that. So we're going to continue to work on that.

\* (10:50)

I would just ask if the member from Roblin is—why is she so keen on misleading Manitobans on that damage and—when we are, in fact, lowering that age right now in Manitoba? We're working on it.

**Mrs. Cook:** Before we run out of time on this question period, I just want to thank the member for the question because it gives me the opportunity to once again thank the many experts and advocates and survivors who are out there. They are the ones leading the charge on this issue. They are the ones who deserve the credit for bringing this issue to the forefront, for getting this issue on the floor of our Legislature today.

They are the ones who have dedicated their lives, who've spent their time writing their MLAs, writing their MPs, showing up at committees. They'd love the opportunity to come and present to a committee in this House, but that's incumbent on this government to allow this bill to go to committee, to call it to a committee, so they can get here and speak about the importance of this bill.

**MLA Bereza:** With diagnostic services—with over 24,000 Manitobans waiting for diagnostic services,

over a year waiting, can the member tell me any idea how many people out there with breast cancer are waiting for those diagnostic services?

**Mrs. Cook:** The answer is too many. And, currently, women who are over the age of 50 and can self-refer for a mammogram, they're waiting too long for a mammogram. So there's a dire need to increase capacity, capacity for women who are already eligible for a mammogram and expanding it so that women who are under the age of 50, between 40 and 50, can self-refer for a mammogram.

There's a lot of work to be done. What disappoints me is that we fail to see any action from the NDP on that.

Thank you.

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

### Debate

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

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** The NDP government knows that Manitobans deserve access to quality health care when they need it. For seven and a half years, the previous failed PC government cut and mismanaged health care, which left Manitobans with a reduced workforce and longer wait times.

In September, our Minister of Health announced that we would be lowering the breast screening age gradually, from 50 to 40, with plans to lower it to 45 by the end of this year. The purpose of calling this bill and recalling this bill is for the PC opposition to hide from their record on health care and attempt to undermine the work of our incredible Minister of Health.

The previous government spent seven and a half years cutting and mismanaging the health-care system. Despite this, our government is rebuilding and strengthening health services in Manitoba with a step-by-step approach. Lowering the screening age requires the buildup of resources, staff and clinics as to not overwhelm the system and further disadvantage those affected.

That was the PC approach to health care—overwhelming the system, not being smart about their decisions. And that's why Manitobans voted for change.

Our NDP government is committed to helping more women get screened for breast cancer. In September, we announced that we would be lowering the breast cancer screening age gradually from 50 to

40. In addition, we are working towards hiring more mammography technologists so that more people can access care through increased screenings, lowering wait times. We are also in the works of adding more screening clinics to increase the capacity to be able to provide 80,000 mammogram screenings annually.

Breast cancer awareness advocates have been waiting for this kind of progress for years under the previous PC government. And now our NDP government is taking the steps to deliver. And this is just the start, as our NDP government is working to rebuild health care by bringing in more workers and increasing capacity right here in our province.

Right from the start, the failed PC government made cuts to the health-care services that Manitobans rely on and disrespected countless front-line workers. The PC government closed the mature women's health centre in the name of saving costs, despite the WRHA stating that the centre was a cost-saving program. They ignored services at Women's Health Clinic for years. They cut lactation consultant services which assists new parents with breastfeeding and after-birth care. The previous government cut the development of a new \$300-million CancerCare Manitoba facility. Our NDP government committed to building the new CancerCare facility.

In 2017, they also cut 15 per cent of managerial positions at CancerCare. In contrast, our NDP government cares about the health of Manitobans which is why we're working—we've worked so hard over the past year to deliver on our promises. Manitoba is committed—we committed to have 1,000 new health-care workers, and we have been very proud to have already hired net-new 1,255 health-care workers as of last month. And we've also ensured that our budget includes strategic and targeted funding initiatives to clean up the mess left by the PC government.

We are thrilled with the success of the new clinics we've opened, Grace Hospital opening a minor injury and illness clinic back in September. In Brandon, we opened a minor injury and illness clinic downtown back in September, operating with extended hours. The Misericordia Minor Injury and Illness Clinic opened last month.

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

I would ask the member to please keep her comments relevant to the bill that we're discussing this morning.

**MLA Naylor:** Cancer, in all its forms, is a devastating diagnosis for anyone. The most common form of

cancer for women in Canada is breast cancer. Honourable Speaker, 900 Manitoba women will be diagnosed with cancer this year, and 200 women in Manitoba will die from breast cancer this year. Men also die from breast cancer; 270 men in Canada will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.

But despite these numbers, the failed PC government found it appropriate to cut health care and cut CancerCare in Manitoba for seven and a half years. These cuts have significant consequences for Manitobans who are disproportionately impacted by these cuts.

Canadian Black women aged 40 to 49 are at a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than non-Black women. First Nation and Métis women are at a higher risk of dying from breast cancer than non-First Nation and non-Métis women.

Our NDP government is making progress in—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Naylor:** —bettering women's health in Manitoba by rebuilding and strengthening cancer services and all health services.

The PC government should be ashamed of their record on health care and stop trying to undermine the incredible work of our health-care minister and support the gradual, well-planned, sustainable plan to lower the breast screening age to 40.

Honourable Speaker, I just want to say—I also have heard some talk in this House today that this topic isn't political. And I want to remind the members opposite that, as every feminist knows, the personal is political, and there is nothing more personal than our health care. Certainly for women, there's very little more personal than breast cancer. And so this is an incredibly political topic, something that we all need to work together on, that we need to support the Health Minister in their incredible work to strengthen this part of our health-care system.

Our bodies are political, and this is the work of our government, to embrace that fact, to make health care the highest standard that it can be in this province, and that means coming together in—across the aisle to support the incredible policies, to clean up the mess from the previous government and to move forward as a province with state-of-the-art health care, from north to south to west to east.

This Health Minister will get that done and it's incumbent on us in this House to support that work

and to support this policy on breast cancer screening going forward.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

\* (11:00)

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have two minutes remaining.

### RESOLUTIONS

#### **Res. 3—Calling on the Provincial Government to Implement a Volunteer Tax Credit**

**The Speaker:** The hour being 11 o'clock, time now for private members' resolution. The resolution before us this morning is the private members' resolution No. 3, Calling on the Provincial Government to Implement a Volunteer Tax Credit, brought forward by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte)—*[interjection]*

### House Business

**MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader):** Yes. On House business, Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to debate the private member's resolution Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local, sponsored by the member for Seine River (MLA Cross) during private members' business on Tuesday, March 11?

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to debate the private members' resolution, Encouraging Manitobans to Support Local, sponsored by the member for Seine River, during the private members' business on Tuesday, March 11?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I move, second by the member for Lakeside (Mr. King),

*WHEREAS Manitoba's volunteers play an essential role in strengthening communities, supporting charities, non-profits, and public services through their unpaid contributions; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to provide meaningful incentives to encourage and reward volunteerism, despite the rising costs of living that create financial barriers for many Manitobans who wish to give back to their communities; and*

*WHEREAS a Volunteer Tax Credit would provide fair recognition for the time and effort volunteers dedicate, encourage increased participation in community service, and help sustain critical nonprofit organizations; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has the opportunity to show leadership by introducing a tax credit that would directly benefit volunteers, particularly seniors, youth, and those supporting social services and emergency response.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to act by introducing, and implementing without further delay, a volunteer tax credit in order to ensure that Manitobans who dedicate their time to serving their communities receive financial recognition for their contributions.

### **Motion presented.**

**Mr. Perchotte:** Good morning to all in the Legislative Assembly today.

I bring this resolution forward out of compassion for the people who serve and give of their time to their communities, to the people around them, for the betterment of everybody.

*Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

I have seen over the years the number of people that willingly give their time to volunteer decrease by tremendous numbers. And it's not because a lack of passion; it's just for the simple fact that they cannot afford to give up time to go and volunteer.

Here in the phenomenal province of Manitoba, we have so many organizations that serve the needs of all members of our community. We have volunteer groups that look of every aspect. As a young child growing up, I had friends of mine that belonged to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization, where if it wasn't for volunteers in that organization giving of their time, these friends of mine would not have had the role models that they had to establish what's going on in their lives now, to enhance their future and give them some goals to achieve.

The amount of people that are currently volunteering in our province is 'exemplary.' But it's the work of few that do the work of many. I often talk to somebody or I'll be at an event and I'll see somebody there, and I'll say, hey, I seen your work you did on this committee or this organization, and then I'll go to another organization and I see the same people there. And it's the same people all the time that are there.

And the area that we're lacking is getting the youth involved and coming, because they just cannot afford it. With the cost rising of properties and homes, education, everything in our province costs more. They just don't have the financial resources to come out.

When I started taking a look at the different organizations that were out there, I was astonished in how many different ones there are, but what really shocked me is how many have disappeared over the years. Just through lack of volunteerism, some of them were luckily enough to be amalgamated into existing ones that took on that cause, and other ones just simply went away because there was nobody in the communities left to volunteer.

I myself have volunteered over the last few decades to many different organizations, community events, raising money, working on different projects. And everybody can find a little bit of a home or a little bit of something that resonates with them when they start taking a look at the different volunteer groups. And I took a look at ones that are kind of well known, just to talk about them here in the Chamber.

And one of them that struck out to me was Agape Table. Agape Table, in a situation where we're—we have people that are hungry, which being able to have a nutritious meal should be just a right in life. It shouldn't—you shouldn't have to go hungry, you shouldn't be facing malnutrition because you can't afford food.

And when I started reading about Agape Table, they say, what do we do at Agape Table? At Agape Table, we believe there is hope in nutrition, dignity in choice and power for change in the community. Our programs are designed to meet the diverse needs of people within our community. And they say, we can't do without you. Find out how to get involved.

And I think it's pretty important when you take a look at the power that actually happens when you have the ability to volunteer, you're giving of yourself back to your community, back to the things that are important to you.

And here's a story from a lady by the name of Laura. And her story says: my name is Laura. I'm a guest and volunteer at Agape Table. In my 36 years, I have suffered growing up in terribly toxic environments, experienced hunger and homelessness and struggled with a 14-year addiction to crystal meth. I have lived with the nightmare of schizophrenia

since early childhood and went undiagnosed until my twenties. I want everyone reading this to know that I am so much better now, and I want you to know how Agape Table helped me change my life.

I was 17 years old, hungry and homeless, when a friend brought me to Agape Table for food. I'll never forget how welcoming and non-judgmental to the volunteers—the volunteers and staff were. It wasn't long before Agape felt like a family to me. Agape Table was a safe place, food was provided, I was respected as a human being, they provided support and strength to me to help me break from my addiction and encourage me to rekindle my passion to become the best version of myself I can be.

I'm excited about the future as I know I am now taking classes at Red River College. My goal is to be able to help other people like me. Thank you, Agape Table, for all you do now and will continue to do in the future. Thank you for being a nurturing and safe place, for your guidance through my recovery and volunteer work and for being a family and community I needed the most. Whatever the future holds, you'll ever be—you'll forever be home to me.

These are the things that happen when people get involved in their community. And the great people over at Agape Table seen this a long time ago, and the people who volunteer there on a daily basis or weekly basis or even monthly basis give selfishly of their time. And throughout our entire province, whether it's the people over at Agape Table, the rotary club, the Selkirk community foundations, the big brothers and sisters, they are organizations for people to go and volunteer.

But the problem is we're not getting enough volunteers. The will is there but the financial offset just isn't there. If there was an opportunity to move forward where people can get credited for hours of work at some nominal amount, it would incentivize people to actually put a little bit more time in.

\* (11:10)

In every one of us's own communities, we know there is a great need for volunteerism. And it's the work of the many who make it easy for us to come here every day and showcase our communities. We have the wonderful opportunity to do private members' statements, and I choose to showcase the people in my community who do this work, day in and day out.

The Rotary Club of Selkirk recently gave \$150,000 to the community library. That library is only there because the Gaynor family, Jim and Betty Anne Gaynor, donated over \$1 million. It's—the philanthropy of people, the community involvement, the donations of people, whether it be monetary or with their time, that make our communities the phenomenal places we call home.

And I am a proud Manitoban. I'm a proud—to represent the people of Selkirk and St. Andrews. I'm very proud of the organizations we have throughout our entire province that make it their mission to go out and help people in need every single day.

The doors are open. They don't judge. They welcome people in with an open heart. They encourage people, like Laura said, to become the best version of themselves.

And when we take away the barriers and we allow people to grow and foster relationships that develop a perpetual outcome for tremendous humanity, when we make sure that everybody has something to eat in front of them and we don't judge those around for what their beliefs are or who they love, then we have a great society. We have an opportunity through these organizations to have people come out and volunteer a little bit more.

One hour a week can make a huge difference in the lives of the people in your community. So if you have an opportunity, spend a little bit of time, go out. You'll be rewarded much more than you can ever imagine.

Thank you, everyone.

### Questions

**The Deputy Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** I agree, volunteerism is an incredible part of our province. I myself have volunteered for many, many years, forming the Postpartum Depression Association of Manitoba, which was formed all with volunteers.

The member opposite I have a question for. Manitoba has the second highest rate of volunteerism

in Canada. How has volunteer work benefited his constituency?

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Thank you, honourable Minister, for that question.

Selkirk as a community, much like many other communities in the area, we love and respect the people around there. The volunteerism in Selkirk has gone up from different clubs—I'd be up here for hours talking about what they do.

The Rotary Club of Selkirk has raised money for medical equipment that went into our hospitals. They continue to generate funds through—for different programs. They have grants and bursaries.

The Selkirk community foundation, which, if you have a donation, the—only the interest of that donation gets spent, so your donation sits there in perpetuity, forever, enhancing the lives of everybody.

There's so many. I'm looking forward to saying more. I'm just out of time here.

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Can the member for Selkirk tell me what inspired him to bring this forward, this resolution?

**Mr. Perchotte:** I'd like to thank my colleague for the question.

This is something I've been noticing for a long time, that volunteerism's dropping. And it was one of my constituents who actually had a great conversation with—and said, we need to do something. He was on a number of committees and he's noticing that the numbers are just dropping and the people that are volunteering, the ages are getting up where they just can't do it anymore. And it comes down to finances. It just comes down to being able to have people come and volunteer and get a tax credit.

**MLA Kennedy:** So my question to the members opposite is, the PC government was in power for seven and a half years. In that time, they failed to produce or introduce any legislation that would honour the work of volunteers.

My question for the member opposite is: What did their government do to support volunteers when they were in power?

**Mr. Perchotte:** I thank the member opposite for the question. The answer is \$100 million on the ACSC Fund that was provided. The volunteer groups that worked at different clubs and organizations whether it had been the curling rink, whether it had been the dance group for, you know, the Ukrainian dance



group, there was literally \$100 million of—that was spent on the community that the volunteer groups could not have raised that money without the assistance of the PC government. So thank you for the question.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I would like to thank the member for Selkirk for bringing forward this incredibly important piece of legislation. I know that when we were in government, bringing forward \$100 million caused great significance for many of the volunteer groups and sadly it was cancelled by this NDP government.

Can you tell me—tell this Legislature—what effects would a tax credit on volunteering have on the supply of volunteers?

**Mr. Perchotte:** Thank you to my colleague from Brandon. The volunteer tax credit would incentivise people to get involved in their community, to make sure that there wasn't a financial burden, to understand that if you're—are volunteering and there may be some costs associated with that, whether it be your travel or some child-sitting or daycare costs while you're doing that, there is going to be some money coming back eventually to offset that cost. So you have a higher propensity to go out there and spend that time in your community.

**MLA Kennedy:** I think it's interesting that the members opposite are talking about the ACSC grants. Since my time being appointed as the Minister for Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, what I can say is when I've met with stakeholders throughout these last three months, what they have asked for is stable, predictable and long-term funding, which is not what the ACSC grant was at all.

Anyways, the previous PC government cut the renters tax credit by 25 per cent, putting a bigger tax burden on thousands of Manitobans. Our government is restoring that tax credit.

My question for the member opposite is: What did your government cut other tax credits for Manitobans and why, when they needed them the most?

**Mr. Perchotte:** I'm standing up here today, asking this Legislature to pass a resolution that would incentivise people to get involved in volunteerism. The minister across told me of the importance of the organization that she's a part of, the post-partum depression, and for that, I understand and I have witnessed it in my own family; it's a very important organization.

I'm trying to bring something forward that's going to help people, not talk about what would have, could have, should have, didn't happen in the past. Let's look at the future.

**MLA Lagassé:** Can the member for Selkirk elaborate on any tax credits in place for volunteers in Manitoba and if there are any at all?

**Mr. Perchotte:** I'd like to thank my colleague for the question. There is something very similar to what I'm looking to bring forward.

\* (11:20)

Currently, Manitoba offers a Volunteer Firefighter and Search & Rescue Tax Credits. It's a non-refundable credit; is available to individuals who perform at least 200 hours of combined volunteer firefighting and volunteer search and rescue.

I'm looking to get something similar to this moved forward, something that would recognize the hours, and we already have a basis we can work from.

Let's come together and get this done.

**MLA Kennedy:** Well, it's interesting that we're talking about why people may not be able to volunteer at this point. Obviously, there have been rising costs; people need to work more to be able to support their families.

And Manitobans made their voice heard when they voted out the failed PC government. They told us they were tired of rising costs and an increasingly unaffordable Manitoba. We introduced more ways to save by cutting the gas tax for a year and then permanently lowering and introducing the school nutrition program. We're empowering Manitobans to give back to their communities.

The PC government decimated our provincial finances and left Manitobans high and dry.

My question for the member opposite is: Do they still stand by the financial decisions that hurt Manitobans?

**Mr. Perchotte:** Honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm extremely proud of what the PCs did. As an employer in the private industry prior to this, the taxation that was done to the citizens who worked of approximately \$6,500 tax credit a year was increased to \$15,000 under the PC government, a huge savings to everybody that I know of in my community. The people who work for me were able to put a lot more stuff on their table thanks to the PC government, not

hokey-pokey tax deferrals and funny little amounts that manage into nothing in the real end.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Again, I can see the members opposite shaking their heads and wondering why didn't we think of such a great resolution and a great bill to bring forward. So I would like to thank the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte) for that.

I'd also like to remind the members opposite that the \$500 million that that gas tax holiday or pause caused this province that could've went into things such as this.

So what type of volunteer work would be included in this credit?

**Mr. Perchotte:** I had a hard time hearing the question from the excitement going on. It seems like everybody is very excited to try to pass this along.

But when you take a look at the volunteer tax credit, it needs to be a credit that is given based on the number of hours that somebody would put to volunteer. And once those hours are calculated, there should be a monetary value attached to that that somebody could claim on their taxes and at the end of the year have that offset whatever payment that they would have to pay or any refund that would come towards them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** And with that, the time for questions is complete.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we move on to debate, I'd like to encourage all honourable members to acknowledge our folks in the gallery. We have a group of students from Andrew Mynarski school joining us, 25 students under the direction of George Bravo, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

### Debate

**The Deputy Speaker:** And with that, we'll move on to debate.

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** Honourable Deputy Speaker, colleagues and fellow Manitobans, today I rise to speak on an issue that affects every corner of our province, the invaluable contribution of volunteers.

Volunteers are the backbone of our communities. They give their time, effort and skill, selflessly helping Manitobans who rely on their support, often without any expectation of financial benefit.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui au sujet d'un enjeu qui touche tous les coins de notre province. La contribution inestimable des bénévoles. Les bénévoles sont le cœur de notre communauté. Ils donnent leur temps, de leurs efforts, et de leurs compétences de manière dévouée pour aider les Manitobains qui comptent sur leur soutien, souvent sans attendre un avantage financier.

### Translation

*I rise today to speak about an issue that touches every corner of our province: the invaluable contribution of volunteers. Volunteers are the heart of our community. They give their time, their efforts and their skills selflessly to help Manitobans who rely on their support, often without expecting any financial gain.*

### English

Manitobans have a deep-rooted history of volunteerism, with the second highest volunteer rate in the country. These individuals not only strengthen our communities but also help fill the gaps left by past government cuts. Whether it's supporting food banks, mentoring youth, assisting seniors or responding to emergencies, volunteers step up where help is needed most. Their work fosters a sense of unity, strengthens social networks and enhances the well-being of those they serve.

Growing up in a small town, I know what it means to volunteer. Starting at a young age when I'd help set up the tables for a pancake breakfast, pick up the garbage at the fairgrounds at old Fort Ellice sports days and once past eighteen, started to work behind the bar at Pioneer Days.

I love serving my community, and Manitobans step up. I can't begin to add up the hours I spent volunteering during my time, before being an MLA, as an educator. In our educator agreement, it always stated: participation in extracurriculars is voluntary. Until the last agreement was signed, Brandon teachers never saw compensation for their work. For me, it was not necessary. I saw it as my duty as a member of my community.

My father was presented the Queen's jubilee medal for his volunteerism, always told my four brothers and Jen [*phonetic*], my sister, the following: be a part of something. Do what you can for your community.

So I cut my volunteer teeth in sport. I tried to count the number of teams I've coached, but lost track. For those wanting to do some mental math in the

House this morning, I taught for 27 years, coached at least two teams per year, usually volleyball and basketball. I ran two intramural seasons per year for 10 years, coached 20 baseball teams, 14 hockey teams, often at the same time, and several of the divisional director—and served as the divisional director for boys' basketball and was a track-and-field convener for eight years.

I was a director on the Simplot Millennium Park board for 12 years, served the Brandon Teachers' Association as vice-president and treasurer and a number of volunteer committees for a number of years.

So why did I do it? Not for credit, not for recognition, but to better my community. And I am not any different than the thousands of Manitobans that are out there doing great work that volunteers do. They make Manitoba great.

Thank you. We salute you.

Les Manitobains ont une longue histoire de bénévolat, avec le deuxième taux de bénévolat le plus élevé au pays. Non seulement ces personnes renforcent notre collectivité, mais elles aident aussi à combler les lacunes laissées par les compressions gouvernementales passées. Qu'il s'agisse de soutenir des banques alimentaires, d'encadrer les jeunes, d'aider les aînés ou d'intervenir dans cas d'urgence, les bénévoles interviennent là où l'aide est le plus nécessaire.

Leur travail favorise un sentiment d'unité, renforce les réseaux sociaux, et améliore le bien-être de ceux qu'ils servent.

#### **Translation**

*Manitobans have a long history of volunteering, with the second highest level of volunteering in the country. Not only do volunteers strengthen our communities, but they also help fill the gaps left by past government cutbacks. Whether they are supporting food banks, mentoring young people, helping the elderly or responding to emergencies, volunteers step in where help is needed most.*

*Their work fosters a sense of unity, strengthens social networks, and improves the well-being of those they serve.*

#### **English**

Volunteering is particular vital for youth and seniors. For young people, it provides opportunities to develop new skills, explore career paths and become

engaged citizens. For seniors, it offers a sense of purpose and social connection help combat—and helps combat isolation. Simply put, volunteerism makes Manitoba stronger.

Le bénévolat est 'particulièrement'—particulièrement vital pour les jeunes et les aînés. Pour les jeunes, il offre aux jeunes la possibilité d'acquérir de nouvelles compétences, d'explorer les cheminements de carrière et de devenir des citoyens engagés. Pour les aînés, il offre un sentiment d'utilité et de lien social qui aide à lutter contre l'isolement.

En termes simples, le bénévolat rend le Manitoba plus fort.

#### **Translation**

*Volunteering is particularly vital for young and old. For young people, it offers the opportunity to learn new skills, explore career paths and become engaged citizens. For seniors, it offers a sense of purpose and social connection that helps combat isolation.*

*Simply put, volunteering makes Manitoba stronger.*

#### **English**

The previous PC government left Manitoba in financial and social distress. For seven and a half years, they cut funding to essential services like health care, education and social programs. They sold off social housing instead of creating more, clawed back support for non-profits and slashed the Renters Tax Credit, making life harder for Manitobans. Their mismanagement of Manitoba Hydro resulted in job losses, increased rate and privatization attempts that threatened our most vital Crown corporation.

\* (11:30)

Des bénévoles et des organismes sans buts lucratifs sont intervenus là où les conservateurs ont échoués, empêchant les Manitobains de passer entre les mailles du filet. Mais la charité ne peut pas être remplacée—peut être remplacée par des services publics forts. C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement néo-démocrate prend les mesures pour rebâtir le Manitoba et rendre hommage à ceux qui ont aidé à maintenir notre province à flot.

#### **Translation**

*Volunteers and non-profit organizations stepped in where Conservatives failed, keeping Manitobans from falling through the cracks. But charity can't be replaced—it can be replaced by strong public services. That's why our NDP government is taking action to rebuild Manitoba and honour those who helped keep our province afloat.*

**English**

Volunteers and non-profits stepped up where the PCs failed, preventing Manitobans from falling through the cracks. But charity alone cannot replace strong public services. That's why our NDP government is taking action to rebuild Manitoba and recognize those who help keep our province afloat.

We believe in investing in Manitobans. We are supporting the vulnerable Manitobans by investing \$20 million into a new strategy to improve safety for Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people. We're protecting affordable housing by stopping the sell-off of public housing and securing \$27.5 million for housing benefits for survivors of gender-based violence.

We are making life more affordable by cutting the gas tax for a year, permanently reducing it by 10 per cent and restoring the renters tax credit. Strengthening our communities by increasing funding for gender-based violence programs and ensuring more support for those in need are all part of building a strong Manitoba.

Our opposition claims to care about affordability, yet they raised hydro rates, cut social services and placed higher financial burdens on renters, on low-income families. They left our province's—*[interjection]*

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

**Mr. Simard:** —finances in disarray, and Manitobans voted them out for a reason.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just ask that the member keep his comments relevant to the resolution before us.

**Mr. Simard:** Well, to sum it all up, we're making a difference. I commend volunteers. They are the backbone of our province. Bon travail. *[Well done.]* We will be here for you like you were here for us.

Thank you.

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Good morning, everyone.

I'm delighted to speak on a very important resolution brought forward by my colleague, my friend, the MLA for Selkirk, which is calling on the provincial government to implement a voluntary tax credit.

I'm proud to stand and speak about this as it is something that is often undervalued, yet essential to the fabric of our communities. The power of

volunteers is important and we should all do whatever it takes to show appreciation and thank them for the work they do.

We all know that volunteers are the heartbeat of any community. They show up when things get tough; they lend a hand when help is needed; and they dedicate all the extra time and energy that they have available to our communities, to causes, organizations in which they believe in.

They make the world a better place for us all. They give without expecting anything in return and their impact does not stop there. Volunteers support in—our local charities. They mentor at-risk youth. They champion human rights. They raise funds for research and for their communities.

The list of the ways volunteers contribute is endless. As mentioned in the resolution, a volunteer tax credit would provide fair recognition for time and effort volunteers dedicate. It would encourage increased participation in community services and help sustain critical non-profit organizations.

Let's not forget volunteers fill the gaps where resources are limited. Non-profit organizations and community organizations often don't have the funds to hire full-time staff for every role. Our volunteers are those that step up to bring—to bridge that gap. Our volunteers allow these organizations to extend their reach and provide the critical supports and services to those who need them.

I'm very thankful for my colleague, the MLA for Selkirk, for bringing this resolution forward after being approached from a constituent of his. I also was recently approached by a constituent with a similar concern.

The conversation was had about the need to increase our volunteer base in our communities and how it would be wonderful to be able to have the provincial government put in place a tax credit to show appreciation for their endless hours of service to our communities.

In 2011, the volunteer firefighter tax credit was implemented by the federal government in Canada. This tax credit allows volunteer firefighters to claim up to \$3,000 in non-refundable tax relief for their services. This credit helps to offset some of the costs and time they invest in their training and community services.

And while this credit doesn't fully compensate for the invaluable work volunteer firefighters do, it is

definitely a very important step in showing our immense appreciation. It is also an important step to help encourage others to get involved this—in this vital community service. It is a small gesture, yes, but it truly does send a clear message, and that message is that we value their contributions and are grateful for their services.

Our provincial government has failed to provide incentives to reward volunteerism, despite the rising costs and the financial barriers many Manitobans are facing. In the constituency of Dawson Trail, there's a noticeable decline in the number of volunteers that we have working for the non-profit organizations, running our youth sports programs, planning our community festivals, putting on our fall suppers and supporting members of our communities that are in need.

In Dawson Trail, we are blessed with groups of selfless individuals that give their unwavering dedication to keep our communities thriving. We have many community festivals, the Landmark Friendship Festival, we have family fun days, Dawson Trail Days, Richer Roughstock Rodeo, just to name a few. We have folks putting together baseball tournaments, basketball tournaments to bring community together.

We have folks volunteering at our food banks in Dawson Trail, volunteers running our local Métis groups. We have many who are involved with seniors' groups, doing what they can to support our seniors and bring joy to their lives. We have men volunteering their time to run a men's mental health support group. They list—the list really is endless.

One of the things that I have noticed, and so far many—and so have many others, is that often folks that we have working in our food banks are the same folks who are running youth sports programs, the same folks who are treasurers on our non-profit organization boards. Seeing this just confirms the need for meaningful incentives to be provided by the provincial government that helps encourage and reward volunteerism.

I don't think there is any individual, whether they volunteer themselves or not, who would not agree that such a tax credit is needed. This tax credit would be about recognizing and valuing the contributions of thousands of Manitobans who dedicate their time and energy and strength to our communities. Support for a volunteer tax credit is not about partisan politics. The request is simple. It is simply having a tax credit that would provide financial recognition for individuals who dedicate their time to charitable organi-

zations, non-profit organizations and community services.

The struggle to recruit and retain volunteers is not just specific to Dawson Trail. This is something that all Manitoba is struggling with, especially in sectors such as health care and social services. Having this tax credit would help ease financial barriers and incentives and encourage Manitobans to give back.

Today I ask all Manitobans to please say thank you to your community volunteers. Our volunteers deserve to be appreciated. And when they do, they are more likely to continue their work without feeling overwhelmed and undervalued. They deserve to know and be shown that their contributions are valuable and that they inspire others.

I urge the provincial government to act now without delay and implement the voluntary tax credit for Manitobans.

Today I would like to end my words by expressing my deepest gratitude to all the volunteers in Manitoba. Your dedication, compassion and hard work are, and is, truly inspiring. We see you, we hear you and we appreciate everything you do for our communities and for our province. Your contributions make lasting impact, and together you will help build a stronger, more connected Manitoba.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to make a difference.

\* (11:40)

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** C'est un honneur ce matin de m'adresser à la Chambre en français, dans la langue de Molière, dans la langue de Louis Riel, une langue que j'ai utilisée tout au courant de ma vie pour faire du bénévolat dans ma communauté, dans nos écoles.

Et j'aimerais rappeler aux gens que, tout dernièrement, d'ailleurs, à Saint-Boniface, on a eu le Festival du Voyageur, où des centaines de Manitobains et Manitobaines ont eu la chance de faire du bénévolat dans ce beau festival qui nous rassemble chaque hiver au mois de février. Alors pour tous les bénévoles qui ont fait du travail pendant le Festival du Voyageur, je vous partage un grand « Hé Ho! ».

Et quelle belle façon aussi d'aborder la question de bénévolat, qui est la pierre angulaire pour tellement de Canadiens et Canadiennes, Manitobains et Manitobaines, Winnipegois, et naturellement gens de Saint-Boniface, et ainsi que tous ceux qui vivent dans

nos belles communautés francophones à travers le Canada et le Manitoba.

Mais quand on parle de bénévolat, j'aimerais partager avec la Chambre aujourd'hui une belle perspective qui parle très bien du bénévolat, et c'est le Cercle du courage.

Alors quand on pense bénévolat, on pense aussi que, premièrement, c'est important de penser qu'on doit aussi parler à l'appartenance—ou parler d'appartenance. On encourage les gens de faire du bénévolat dans nos communautés puisqu'on veut — et on veut absolument — qu'ils se sentent comme s'ils font partie d'une communauté. Alors que ça soit dans nos écoles, nos centres communautaires, nos commerces, que ça soit aussi comme au Festival du Voyageur, au Club Éclipse à Saint-Boniface, etc., on veut que les gens se sentent comme s'ils font partie d'une communauté où ils peuvent faire du bénévolat.

Alors comme j'ai dit, c'est la pierre angulaire de bien de nos communautés ici au Manitoba. Et avec—à—la générosité, la maîtrise, l'appartenance, on parle aussi d'indépendance. Je pense à des jeunes adultes qui veulent avoir leur place dans une communauté, faire preuve de plus d'indépendance : quelle belle façon de faire avancer ce dossier, en faisant du bénévolat.

Faut aussi penser à la maîtrise. Alors souvent, quand un jeune adulte vient me voir ou quand je parle à des jeunes étudiants 'universitaires', on me demande souvent : « Comment est-ce que je peux aller chercher l'expérience que j'ai de besoin pour éventuellement aller dans un domaine, dans une carrière ? ». Et ma réponse est simple : c'est en faisant du bénévolat. Puis la question de maîtrise est très importante, parce qu'on sait que, tu sais, pour maîtriser un domaine quelconque, ça prend au-delà de 10 000 heures. Et souvent, les entrepreneurs cherchent pour des gens qui ont de l'expérience. Alors souvent ce qu'on encourage les gens de faire, c'est de commencer avec du bénévolat.

Et la dernière chose dans le Cercle du courage qui est très importante, c'est l'aspect de la générosité. Et quand quelqu'un fait du bénévolat, que ça soit dans un hôpital, dans une école, dans un centre d'apprentissage de la petite enfance, on fait preuve de générosité. Puis je crois qu'ici, au Manitoba, c'est évident que les gens sont généreux—sont généreux avec leur temps.

Et c'est aussi une question d'empathie. Quand qu'on veut aider notre communauté, quand on veut faire avancer des choses, quand on veut faire avancer

soit un festival, créer une garderie peut-être, créer un organisme pour une communauté où il y a un besoin, faut faire preuve de générosité.

Je sais que, dans le passé, à Saint-Boniface, j'ai eu la chance pendant beaucoup d'années de faire du bénévolat, que ça soit avec Sauvons notre Seine, avec le Festival du Voyageur, avec Francofonds, avec les Ami.e.s du carré civique de Saint-Boniface, j'ai eu la chance de travailler avec des gens qui sont engagés, qui sont généreux, qui sont rassembleurs, qui croient à leur communauté, qui croient au rêve de Louis Riel — comme on le sait : de créer une communauté bilingue, multiculturelle, autochtone, où les gens peuvent faire preuve de générosité.

Alors tout ça pour dire qu'ici, au Manitoba, notre gouvernement encourage le bénévolat dans toutes ses formes. Les bénévoles sont les partenaires essentiels pour connecter et renforcer nos communautés, servant souvent les Manitobains vulnérables qui ont le plus de besoins.

Le gouvernement PC a réduit les financements aux services sociaux, y compris la santé, l'éducation et l'environnement, nuisant aux Manitobains qui dépendent de ces services essentiels. Les bénévoles, en consacrant généreusement leur temps aux causes sociales, ont permis d'éviter que les Manitobains affectés par les coupures et les mauvaises gestions des conservateurs ne tombent pas dans l'oubli.

Notre gouvernement NPD soutient les bénévoles et les organismes à but non lucratif tandis que nous travaillons ensemble pour reconstruire notre province après les ravages causés par les conservateurs et tracer une nouvelle voie vers l'équilibre. Les bénévoles sont importants pour le Manitoba. Les bénévoles sont les partenaires essentiels pour connecter et renforcer nos communautés, servant souvent les Manitobains vulnérables qui ont le plus besoin d'aide, sans attendre de bénéfice financier personnel.

L'essence du travail bénévole réside dans le fait que les gens offrent librement leurs compétences et leurs services à ceux qui les entourent pour améliorer leur communauté. Le bénévolat est aussi une occasion pour les Manitobains d'apprendre de nouvelles compétences, comme je l'ai mentionné avant — de nouvelles compétences professionnelles — de nouer des liens avec les autres et de développer leurs compétences en leadership et en travail d'équipe. Les Manitobains ont également la chance d'apprendre à connaître les différentes communautés de notre province, qu'il s'agisse de groupes ethniques, religieux ou d'âges différents.

Les Manitobains ont une longue tradition de bénévolat, donnant généreusement de leur temps à leurs communautés, sans attendre de compensation en retour. Et les Manitobains ont le deuxième taux de bénévolat le plus élevé au pays. Cela montre clairement que les Manitobains sont déjà incroyablement motivés et prêts à donner leur temps pour améliorer leurs communautés et soutenir leurs voisins, qui est une belle façon de démontrer son empathie. La véritable récompense du travail bénévole est de voir nos contributions avoir un impact positif sur nos communautés. Et encore une fois : c'est preuve de générosité.

En continuant à faire du bénévolat dans notre communauté, en apprenant davantage sur le besoin, et en renforçant nos relations avec nos voisins, nous créons un sentiment d'unité, renforçant l'idée que nous sommes un Manitoba avec un seul avenir. L'esprit du Manitoba perdure grâce aux bénévoles du Manitoba qui donnent librement leur temps à leurs communautés.

Donc créer un sentiment de communauté est essentiel, et comme j'ai déjà dit, un sentiment d'appartenance. Le bénévolat procure à de nombreuses personnes un sentiment de communauté et une opportunité d'élargir leurs réseaux sociaux, particulièrement pour les aînés et les jeunes qui sont vulnérables au sentiment de solitude.

Pour les aînés, le bénévolat peut les aider à rester actifs après la retraite, et leur offrir un sentiment de but. Je pense au Centre Flavie à Saint-Boniface où beaucoup de bénévoles œuvrent dans notre communauté et qui font du beau travail.

Pour les jeunes, le bénévolat peut les aider à explorer différentes carrières et à développer de nouvelles compétences, augmentant ainsi leur confiance en soi. Cela leur permet aussi de prendre conscience des besoins de leurs communautés, les aidant ainsi à devenir des citoyens plus engagés.

Donc, pour résumer, pensons « appartenance », pensons « indépendance », pensons « maîtrise », mais surtout pensons « générosité », parce que notre Manitoba, notre Canada est uni. Nous sommes un peuple qui donne de son temps.

Et je pense encore une fois à Louis Riel, qui avait 25 ans, il y a 150 années, quand il a mis sur pied le gouvernement provisoire de Louis Riel du Manitoba pour protéger cette terre de gens qui veulent nous englober dans leurs rêves, peut-être dans d'autres réalités. Mais, le Manitoba est une province où nos

valeurs sont non négociables – comme le bénévolat. Et j'encourage les Manitobains et les Manitobaines à continuer à donner de leur temps avec amour et empathie.

Merci, l'Honorable Député Président.

### **Translation**

*It is an honour to address the House this morning in French—the language of Molière, the language of Louis Riel, a language that I have used throughout my life to volunteer in my community, in our schools.*

*I would like to remind people that, just recently, in St. Boniface, we had the Festival du Voyageur, where hundreds of Manitobans had the chance to volunteer in this beautiful festival that brings us together every February. To all the volunteers who worked during the Festival du Voyageur, I say a big: "Hé Ho!"*

*What a great way to talk about volunteering, which is the core value of so many Canadians, Manitobans, Winnipeggers and, of course, people from St. Boniface, as well as all those who live in our beautiful French-speaking communities across Canada and Manitoba.*

*Speaking of volunteering, I would like to share with the House today a wonderful perspective that highlights volunteering, and that is the Circle of Courage.*

*When discussing volunteering, we must remember, first, to talk about belonging. We encourage people to volunteer in our communities because we absolutely want them to feel that they are part of a community. Whether it is in our schools, our community centres, our businesses, the Festival du Voyageur, the Club Éclipse in St. Boniface or other, we want people to feel that they are part of a community where they can volunteer.*

*As I said, volunteering is the founding principle of many of our communities here in Manitoba. Along with generosity, experience and belonging, we must also talk about independence. I am thinking of young adults who want to have their place in a community, to show more independence: what a great way to progress in this aspect of their life, by volunteering.*

*We also need to think about experience. Often, when a young adult comes to see me, or when I talk to young university students, one of the questions I get is: How can I get the experience I need to possibly go into a given field or career? And my answer is simple: volunteer. The aspect of experience is very important because, as you know, it takes over 10,000 hours to master any skill. Entrepreneurs often look for people*

*with experience. For this reason, we often encourage people to start with volunteering to gain experience.*

*The last important element in the Circle of Courage is generosity. When someone volunteers, whether it is in a hospital, in a school or in an early childhood learning centre, they are showing generosity. In my opinion, here in Manitoba, it is obvious that people are generous with their time.*

*It is also a matter of empathy. When you want to help your community, when you want to make things happen, whether it is to promote a festival, set up a daycare centre, or create an organization for a community where there is a need, you have to show generosity.*

*I have had the opportunity to volunteer in St. Boniface for many years. Whether with Sauvons notre Seine, the Festival du Voyageur, Francofonds, or the Ami.e.s du carré civique de Saint-Boniface, I have had the opportunity to work with people who are committed, who are generous, who are unifying, who believe in their community, who believe in the dream of Louis Riel as we know it: to create a bilingual, multicultural, Indigenous community, where people can show generosity.*

*All this to say that here, in Manitoba, our government encourages volunteering in all its forms. Volunteers are essential partners in connecting and strengthening our communities, often serving vulnerable Manitobans who are most in need.*

*The PC government cut funding to social services, including health, education and the environment, harming Manitobans who depend on these essential services. By generously devoting their time to social causes, volunteers have prevented Manitobans affected by Conservative cuts and mismanagement from being forgotten.*

*Our NDP government supports volunteers and not-for-profit organizations as we work together to rebuild our province after the damage caused by the Conservatives, and to chart a new course towards balance. Volunteers are important to Manitoba. Volunteers are essential partners in connecting and strengthening our communities, often serving vulnerable Manitobans who need help the most, without expecting personal financial gain.*

*The essence of volunteer work is that people freely offer their skills and services to those around them in order to improve their community. Volunteering is also an opportunity for Manitobans to learn new professional skills, to connect with others and to*

*develop their leadership and teamwork skills. Manitobans can also discover the different communities of our province, whether they are ethnic or religious communities, or groups of a different age.*

*Manitobans have a long tradition of volunteering, generously giving their time to their communities without expecting anything in return. Manitoba has the second highest level of volunteering in the country. This clearly shows that Manitobans are already incredibly motivated and willing to donate their time to improve their communities and support their neighbours, which is a great way to demonstrate empathy. The true reward of volunteer work is seeing our contributions have a positive impact on our communities. And once again: it is a sign of generosity.*

*By continuing to volunteer in our community, learning more about the need, and strengthening our relationships with our neighbours, we create a sense of unity, reinforcing the idea that we are one Manitoba with one future. The spirit of Manitoba lives on, thanks to Manitoba volunteers who freely give their time to their communities.*

*Fostering a sense of community is essential, as is fostering a sense of belonging. Volunteering provides many people with a sense of community and an opportunity to expand their social networks, especially seniors and young people who are vulnerable to feelings of loneliness.*

*Volunteering can help seniors stay active after retirement and give them a sense of purpose. I am thinking of the Centre Flavie-Laurent in St. Boniface, where many volunteers work in our community and do great work.*

*Volunteering can help young people explore different careers and develop new skills, thus improving their self-confidence. It also makes them aware of the needs of their communities, helping them to become more engaged citizens.*

*In summary, volunteering is about belonging, it is about independence, it is about experience, but above all, it is about generosity, because our province – our country! – is united. We are a people who gifts its time.*

*I am reminded again of Louis Riel who, 150 years ago, was 25 years old when he set up his Manitoba provisional government to protect this land, from people who want to include us in their dreams and perhaps in other realities. But Manitoba is a province where our values are non-negotiable, values such as*



*volunteering. I encourage Manitobans to continue giving their time with love and empathy.*

*Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.*

\* (11:50)

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** It is an honour to stand and speak about something that I'm incredibly passionate about and that helped bring me to this space here. Volunteerism, as colleagues on both sides of the House have said, is essential to the fabric of our society, and specifically here in Manitoba.

While I have the opportunity, I want to take a moment to lift up the many, many, many volunteers like Morgan's Warriors, like Peace Walkers, who have dedicated time, effort, emotional labour, personal resources to searching for the relatives that we have lost. This is not easy work. This is not work that is often met with joy on the day to day, and I really want to take this opportunity to lift up those folks and thank them from the bottom of my heart for carrying that for all of us and for showing us the right way.

I want to talk about my own experience with volunteerism because I think that it helps paint a picture as to how valuable volunteerism can be both for the individual volunteering and for the organization that is the beneficiary of those skills. When my son was wee, I was back in post-secondary and found myself with the opportunity to volunteer on his daycare board. I had never served on a board before, I was invited by the executive director of the daycare to participate so that I had a better understanding of what was happening in that space.

And I'll be honest: I was terrified. A board. Imagine sitting at a board table. I didn't have experience in that way; I didn't understand how it worked, and I thought, okay, well, this is a volunteer position. I don't think I'm getting a grade on it. I'm going to give my very best but I also know that this is a great opportunity for me to learn and to network.

I was a volunteer board member and eventually found myself in the chair, which was a great, great opportunity to get to know the faculty, the administration, all of the people who worked at the daycares, the intricacies of how funding for child-care centres works in Manitoba and really to assert myself as somebody that belonged in spaces that I had seen were not available to me.

And when I think back to the folks that I sat around that table with, it was a very diverse group of

folks. We had professors, administrators, community members, parents that were a little older than me, parents that were a lot younger than me, and it was a really great opportunity to be able to contribute back to a service that I found so incredibly valuable in my life and allowed me to pursue my goals while also learning skills that I needed to be gainfully employed in the future.

And I think that, when we think about volunteerism, it is the unsung heroes in the spaces around us, and often it is the same people putting their hand up to say they want to help from a deep desire to make the world a better place. And I am so incredibly grateful for all of the work that is being done there.

I also don't want to lose the openness to volunteerism that allows people who haven't traditionally been allowed to participate an opportunity to sit at an important table to make important decisions.

I want to go back and speak to something that some of the members on the other side said about this not being a political issue. And I want to make note of simply declaring something not political doesn't make it so. We all come with our own worldviews, we all come with our own experiences and it is our privilege that allows us to say that something isn't political. It is our privilege that allows us to say that it isn't a partisan or political issue.

And so while I do agree that this is an incredibly important thing to honour, I want to ensure that members opposite understand that when they stand up and say things like that, that they're reflecting on their own reality and not that of the people around them because something for me—something that may not be political for you will one hundred per cent be political for me. Access to health care of my own choosing is political to me. It might not be political to you.

I want to talk about another volunteer experience that I think also highlights the social good that comes from volunteerism. A couple years ago, I found myself managing my son's football team, which was an incredible, incredible opportunity. I sent all the emails, got the kids to practice, got to meet all of the parents, and again, was able to hone in on my organizational skills in a good way, and really felt like I was giving back to my community while watching my son flourish in the sport that he was involved in.

I then found myself, shockingly, volunteering to coach a 15-year-old boys' baseball team. And, you know, I played ball myself when I was younger. I—my knees will tell me that I was a pretty good catcher,

because they don't work very well any more. But what I was able to learn and to help those young men learn in that space was that women belong in all spaces.

They were surprised to see a woman as a coach for a boys' baseball team, and it was an opportunity for me to get comfortable with teaching as I go, with being assertive in spaces where I might feel a little bit uncertain and to teach those boys about what being a good ally to women looks like, and also to never overlook the women around them as being folks who can participate in all spaces.

We didn't win the city championships that year, but we sure did get to the finals, and I will always look back on that volunteer experience as an opportunity to put myself in a space that I was very uncomfortable in. There's nothing more terrifying than a group of 15-year-old boys when your little girl inside is very shy. And it really, I believe, gave them an experience that they may not have otherwise had.

Volunteerism in all of its forms impacts our society in a really positive way, and it is up to all of us every day to uplift all of the volunteers around us, whether they're in our local faith institutions, gurdwaras, temples, churches and any given space, that it's up to us to uplift those folks and to thank them

for their contributions, and to also recognize that in their giving, that they are sharing their light with all of us, and we need to receive it in the most generous way possible.

In terms of volunteerism in this province, we know that great organizations began—were rooted in volunteerism. I will speak later today on some wonderful women from my community who helped launch the Winakwa community club, and each and every day, we encounter more folks in all of the places that we go who are highly motivated, highly skilled volunteers.

And I'd just like to close with a note to everyone, really: when we work together, we can do the big things. When we work together and we make space for others, and we show up as our full selves, we can and do change the world.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hour being noon, when this matter is again before the House, the debate will be open.

The House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 6, 2025

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