



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 1:30 p.m.***The Speaker:** Order, please. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

House Business

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House Business.**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** On House business, Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to allow the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) to second the motions at all stages for Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act?**The Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) to second the motions at all stages for Bill 41?Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 27—The Income Tax Amendment Act

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister for Agriculture, that Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu, be now read for a first time.*Motion presented.***MLA Sala:** I'm very pleased to introduce Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act.

The bill makes the cultural industries printing tax credit permanent, simplifies several formulas used to calculate various tax credits and removes outdated references to previous taxation years.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 223—The Official Time Amendment Act, 2025

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I move, seconded by the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), that Bill 223, The Official Time Amendment Act, 2025, be now read a for a first time.*Motion presented.***Mr. Schuler:** I am pleased to introduce Bill 223, the official time amendment act. Currently, the official time amendment act will come into force on proclamation to discontinue the seasonal time change from daylight saving time.

This bill will amend the commencement so that it will come into force on March 8, 2026, instead.

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

Bill 28—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister for Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, that Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'hydro Manitoba, be now read a first time.*Motion presented.***MLA Sala:** I'm very pleased to introduce Bill 28, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act. This legislation follows through on a key commitment in our government's affordable energy plan to ensure that Manitobans get the best possible economic return on our clean, renewable energy.

In our affordable energy plan, we committed to ending Manitoba Hydro's first-come, first-served approach for large grid connections. With this legislation, we will create a new framework where large grid connections are prioritized based on the economic benefits provided to Manitoba.

Let me put it simply: Manitoba's clean, baseload power is one of our greatest economic assets. It's a key natural advantage over other jurisdictions, but for far too long, important economic development opportunities have been stalled by the first-come, first-served approach.

By prioritizing requests for new large grid connections that maximize benefits for Manitobans, we can promote economic development, create more jobs and build the Manitoba for the future.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

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

**Bill 42—The Buy Canadian Act
(Government Purchases Act Amended)**

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by the Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation (Mr. Moses), that Bill 42, The Buy Canadian Act (Government Purchases Act Amended), now be read a first time.

Thank you.

Motion presented.

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, Canada will never become the 51st state.

In light of pressing economic challenges imposed by US tariffs, our government is standing up for Manitobans, standing up for Canadians. This bill signals our government's commitment to prioritizing goods and services that are made in Canada.

This bill directs the government to establish a buy Canadian policy. This policy would outline the steps government will take to stand up for Manitoba jobs and local economy.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Bill 37—The Manitoba Financial Services
Authority Act and Amendments to
Various Other Acts**

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, that Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts; Loi sur l'Autorité des services financiers du Manitoba et modifiant diverses autres lois, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sala: I'm very pleased to introduce Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts.

This bill is another in a series of measures our government is taking to modernize our financial statutes, to enable economic growth and create jobs. This bill will modernize the regulatory structure in Manitoba by reconstituting the Manitoba Financial Services Agency to a board-governed statutory corporation that would formally operate at arms-length from government.

Virtually all other provinces have moved in this direction, including British Columbia in 1996, Ontario

in 1997, Alberta in 2000, Quebec in 2002 and Saskatchewan in 2012. If we're going to grow our financial services industry in Manitoba, we need a modern, regulatory structure, and that's exactly what this bill will deliver.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to present this bill to the House for consideration.

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

**Bill 10—The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act**

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 10, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (2), be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sandhu: The Residential Tenancies Act is being amended to better support tenants who have been displaced from their rental buildings when they are forced to evacuate due to a provincial or municipal order or the tenancy is otherwise frustrated through no fault of their own.

* (13:40)

The bill—this—the bill represents the first step in the government's commitment and mandate to review The Residential Tenancies Act to strengthen renters' rights and protect affordable housing in the province.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Bill 25—The Public-Private Partnerships
Transparency and Accountability Act**

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), that Bill 25, The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sandhu: It is my great pleasure to rise today to introduce The Public-Private Partnerships Transparency and Accountability Act. The purpose of this bill is to increase transparency and accountability to Manitobans when the public sector is selected as a public-private partnership procurement model, also known as P3.

This bill ensures that benefits be evaluated, made public to keep the government accountable. This bill ensures accountability and transparency of all P3 capital projects. These steps include the following: conducting a preliminary analysis before initiating procurement process for major capital projects; conducting public consultations to provide reasonable opportunity for members of the public to comment on the project; engaging an external consultant to act as the fairness monitor for the project; providing a public report on the result of the project; and ensuring there is no conflict of interest.

Our government is committed to ensuring that public sector assets are always owned by the Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Before I recognize the minister, I'd just remind all people, when they're introducing a bill, the introductory passage is supposed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30 seconds, not a minute and 30 seconds. So please try and keep within that range. I'm a little bit lax in enforcing it, but try and keep it there.

Bill 26—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), that Bill 26, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sandhu: The Vital Statistics Act is being amended to remove the need for a supporting letter from a health-care professional for applicants age 18 years and older who want to change their sex designation.

The bill represents our government's commitment to support rights of gender-diverse persons and to advocate for the rights of self-expression and identification for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 31—The Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Moyes), that Bill 31, The Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Sandhu: Our government promised to eliminate restrictive covenants that drive up grocery prices.

This bill amends The Law of Property Act, Real Property Act and Municipal Board Act to stop the use of property control in ownership and leasing agreements so more locations are available for the grocery store and supermarket to sell fresh food and groceries. More competition in the grocery industry is accepted to increase access to food for sale and make life more affordable for all Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 206—The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I moved, seconded by the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux), that Bill 206, The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act; Loi sur la protection des propriétaires contre les offres d'achat non sollicitées, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm pleased to reintroduce The Homeowner Protection from Unsolicited Purchase Offers Act, which strengthens protections for Manitoban homeowners by curbing aggressive real estate wholesaling practices that target vulnerable individuals.

This bill introduces clear, enforceable safeguards to protect homeowners. It establishes an opt-out registry, allowing homeowners to refuse unsolicited offers altogether. It mandates full disclosure of homeowner rights in sale conditions, ensuring transparency

in the process. It also requires homeowners to be represented by licensed realtors at the buyers' expense so that they receive professional guidance before making any decisions. Finally, it grants homeowners a 30-day cooling-off period, allowing them to reverse any sale without penalty.

And I look forward to the passage of this bill.

Thank you.

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

**Bill 17—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Nutrition Equality for
Lasting Learning Outcomes)**

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), that Bill 17, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Equality for Lasting Learning Outcomes); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (équité alimentaire pour un apprentissage durable), now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 17, The Public Schools Amendment Act (nutritional equality for lasting learning outcomes), or Nello's law.

This bill builds off our historic universal nutrition program by amending The Public Schools Act to ensure nutrition programs are offered in all schools and to ensure the programs in each school are tailored to meet the specific needs of the school community.

This bill will also protect the universal nutrition program from any future government that may not see the value in feeding our own hungry kids, as it stipulates that Cabinet members will be subject to a 20 per cent cut in ministerial salary if a bill is passed to reduce or repeal Nello's law, the universal nutrition program.

Every child matters.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

**Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Indigenous Languages of Instruction)**

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Thank you, honourable Minister.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training, that Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (enseignement en langue autochtone), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

* (13:50)

MLA Schmidt: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act. Currently, The Public Schools Act only allows for French and English to be taught as the primary languages of instruction, meaning other languages cannot be taught for over 50 per cent of the school day.

This bill amends The Public Schools Act to allow for Indigenous languages, including Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuktitut, Michif, Ojibwe and Ojibwe-Cree to be used as a primary instructional language.

Amending the PSA to allow for the creation of Indigenous-language-immersion programs is one way that our government is taking action to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages and helps us on our way to meeting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action No. 14.

Every child matters.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

**Bill 19—The Public Schools Amendment Act
(Safe Schools)**

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the minister of business, jobs, trade—business, jobs, trade, mining—no, job creation—you got it—that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (milieu scolaire sûr), now be read for a first time.

The Speaker: Short ministerial names are a good thing.

It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, seconded

by the honourable Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation (Mr. Moses), that Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools), be now read a first time.

MLA Schmidt: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act, or Safe Schools. This bill amends The Public Schools Act to enshrine in legislation requirements for all divisional staff, volunteers and coaches to complete approved sexual abuse prevention training programs. This bill complements a bill brought forward by the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy) that aims to address abuse in non-school sports.

Together, these two bills will enhance the protection of children by creating training, policy and information dissemination requirements for individuals working directly with children in sports and in other volunteer capacities.

Every child matters.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

Bill 20—The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), that Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la garde d'enfants et la Loi sur l'administration scolaire, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act. This bill requires the department to establish a First Nations, Inuit and Métis policy framework for both the K-to-12 and the early-childhood-learning sectors.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis policy frameworks will ensure all Manitoba children are educated about colonial history, treaties and the contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and the path to truth and reconciliation.

The introduction of this bill demonstrates our government's commitment to advancing the TRC's education-related Calls to Action.

Every child matters.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

Bill 40—An Act respecting "O Canada" and Other Observances and Land and Treaty Acknowledgements in Schools (Education Administration Act and Public Schools Act Amended)

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Training, that Bill 40, An Act Respecting "O Canada" and Other Observances and Land and Treaty Acknowledgements in Schools (Education Administration Act and Public Schools Act Amended); Loi sur les activités scolaires soulignant notamment l'« Ô Canada » et la reconnaissance des territoires et des traités (modification de la Loi sur l'administration scolaire et de la Loi sur les écoles publiques), now be read for the first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 40, An Act respecting "O Canada" and Other Observances and Land and Treaty Acknowledgements in Schools (Education Administration Act and Public Schools Act Amended).

This bill amends The Public Schools Act to remove provisions respecting religious exercises that were found unconstitutional by the Court of King's Bench in 1992. Previous requirements regarding playing God Save the King have not been continued in practice and will no longer be reflected in Manitoba's education statutes or required in public schools. Consistent with common practice, this bill also introduces a requirement that school boards establish and implement a written policy respecting land acknowledgements and treaty acknowledgements.

Every child matters.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

Bill 39—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees)

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Moyes), that Bill 39, The Public Schools

Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees); Loi modifiant la loi sur les écoles publiques (financement des campagnes électorales pour les élections scolaires), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Schmidt: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees). This bill establishes campaign financing rules for school trustee candidates, including contribution limits, public reporting requirements and limiting contributions to individuals who reside in Manitoba.

These changes will align Manitoba with other jurisdictions in Canada and strengthen our elections to protect them from third party and foreign interference.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

Bill 21—The Protecting Youth in Sports Act

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable), that Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act, be now read for a first time.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable minister of sports—no—the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism, that Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act, be now read a first time.

MLA Kennedy: I am pleased to be here today to introduce Bill 21, The Protecting Youth in Sports Act. The bill requires sports organizations to adopt, maintain and apply safe sport policies and training for all. In addition, it establishes a third party review and disciplinary mechanism for any complaints of maltreatment against a young athlete.

This bill furthers our government's commitment to a safe and equitable sport system free from racism where every child knows they have the right to play.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 22—The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), that Bill 22, the environmental amendment and waste reduction and prevention amendment act, be now read a first time.

The Speaker: Moved by the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change, seconded by the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 22, The Environment Amendment and Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

MLA Moyes: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 22, which brings forward several important amendments to The Environment Act and The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act to strengthen environmental protections in Manitoba.

The first amendment that I would like to highlight is the strengthening of The Environment Act to ensure environment officers across Manitoba can prevent environmental damage and ensure that polluters are held accountable by reducing the threshold of adverse effects from pollution that are required to prosecute offenders. This aligns Manitoba with best practices in environmental protection.

This bill also introduces enhanced reporting and notification obligations to The Environment Act in the event a pollutant is released or there's an imminent risk of release.

* (14:00)

The bill also amends The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act to consolidate the semi-annual waste reduction and recycling support levy into a single annual payment. This will reduce the administrative burden for landfill owners, mainly municipalities, and improve the efficiency of government.

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

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala)—oops, sorry, the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe).

**Bill 13—The Minor Amendments
and Corrections Act, 2025**

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 13, the minor amendments and corrections act, be now read a first time.

The Speaker: Shortest one all day and I got it wrong.

It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 13, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025, be now read a first time.

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025. This is an annual omnibus bill that corrects translation, typographical and numbering errors. It also makes other minor amendments to statutes, all of which aim to provide clarity and consistency in Manitoba's statute book.

I look forward to being able to provide more information on the importance of this bill at second reading.

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

**Bill 23—The Public Interest Expression
Defence Act**

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 23, The Public Interest Expression Defence Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this bill to the Legislature, establishing anti-SLAPP legislation in Manitoba.

A SLAPP, or a strategic lawsuit against public participation, can be used as a mechanism to silence or deter participation on debates of issues of public interest. This bill ensures a defendant may bring a motion to dismiss the suit on the grounds the proceeding originates from a communication made by the defendant on a matter of public interest.

These lawsuits are often used to intimidate and suppress the rights of citizens to speak out, and this bill will safeguard their ability to engage in open

debates, hold powerful entities accountable and promote transparency.

I'm pleased to introduce this bill for—to the House for its consideration.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

**Bill 32—The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act
(Measures to Address Unlawful Activities)**

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Public Service Delivery, that Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister of Public Service Delivery (MLA Sandhu), that Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities), be now read for a first time.

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, this bill amends The Residential Tenancies Act and the safer communities and neighbours act to streamline the process for evicting tenants who are engaged in drug or human trafficking.

The proposed amendments will broaden the threshold needed for a five-day eviction from immediate risk to, quote, significant risk. This—these amendments will also clarify that drug and human trafficking are automatically deemed significant risks.

Bill 32 will outline the type of information that the Residential Tenancies Branch may consider when determining whether to grant an order of possession, due to unlawful activity by the tenant, and finally, Bill 32 clarifies that investigators from the Public Safety Investigations unit can present evidence as part of a Residential Tenancies Act proceeding regarding the unlawful activity by a tenant.

Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce this bill, and I look forward to its consideration.

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

Bill 35—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 35, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Currently, MPI's fleet insurance model can only offer surcharges and rebates at year end for its fleet customers. This bill will give MPI the legal authority to offer discounts instead of rebates in the fleet insurance model. This will also apply to blanket policies once those become available in the future. I look forward to consideration by the House.

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

Bill 36—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 36, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: This legislation makes several improvements with respect to MPI's services and road safety. It will enable MPI to bring charges against vehicle inspection stations that are involved in fraudulent inspections. It will expand the types of information that can be disclosed by an online tool, which MPI is building for stakeholders to check the validity of a driver's licence. And it clarifies several other provisions and repeals obsolete requirements related to driver licensing and suspensions. I look forward to consideration by the House.

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

Bill 30—The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 30, the election financing amendment act and elections amendment act, be now read a first time.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Justice, seconded by the honourable Minister

of Families, that Bill 30, The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 30. This bill will hold all political parties to a high standard of ethical campaigning, which is paramount to a healthy democracy. It will make it easier and more accessible for Manitobans to vote in advance, giving voters the freedom to choose and a guarantee that they will be able to vote.

It will protect the integrity of our elections by introducing offence provisions around false statements and impersonations. It will also introduce prohibitions on using deepfakes to undermine public confidence in our elections, and it will take big money out of politics.

These changes will protect our election processes, our democracy and our province, which is critical in an age where democracy faces growing threats. I'm pleased to introduce this bill to the House for its consideration.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 24—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 24, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Marcelino: The purpose of this bill is to introduce a fairer approach to workers compensation death benefit payments that recognizes the growing diversity of family units and relationships, better balanced WCB decision making to give the benefit of the doubt to injured workers when evidence is evenly balanced and align the act's annual reporting deadlines.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 29—The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 29, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Marcelino: Honourable Speaker, this bill addresses recommendations from The Workplace Safety and Health Act stakeholder review committee, including psychological safety, ensuring bad actors could be held more accountable, introducing a mechanism for collecting wages, order to be paid and providing a new penalty for failing to report serious incidents in the workplace and ensuring that monitoring is in place if workers are overexposed to a hazardous substance at work.

* (14:10)

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 33—The Public Health Amendment Act

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 33, The Public Health Amendment Act. This bill will ensure that persons who require treatment for a highly infectious disease in order to protect the public under the provisions of The Public Health Act s are not detained in correctional facilities. It will also set out that a court order to detain a person for treatment must now be made by a judge of the Provincial Court rather than the Justice of the Peace.

Thank you.

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

Bill 41—The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, that Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits) Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la présentation de rapports concernant les mesures de soutien destiné aux enfants survivants d'agression sexuelle (professionnels de la santé formés et troussees medicolégales), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 41, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault (Trained Health Professionals and Evidence Collection Kits Amendment Act). This bill will require the minister to report to the Assembly annually on the number of children under the age of 15 that are assessed by specifically trained health professionals instead of reporting the inventory numbers of sexual assault evidence kits.

The title of the act will also be changed to reporting supports for sexual-reporting of supports for child survivors of sexual assault act (trained health professionals and patient assessments).

I'd like to recognize the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) for her work in creating this important bill and thank her for her tireless efforts to protect children, especially in northern Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

Bill 34—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Motor Carrier Enforcement)

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 34, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Motor Carrier Enforcement), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Naylor: I am pleased to introduce Bill 34, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Motor Carrier Enforcement). This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to improve oversight of heavy commercial vehicle

operators and improve the protection of motor carrier enforcement officers while carrying out their duties.

The bill clarifies administrative monetary penalties and amends collision reporting requirements for property-damage-only incidents for heavy commercial vehicles. This bill continues our government's commitment to keeping people safe when travelling on Manitoba roads while also protecting Manitoba's infrastructure.

I look forward to further discussion in the House as the bill progresses through all stages.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Bill 38—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Traffic Safety Measures)

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), that Bill 38, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Traffic Safety Measures), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Naylor: I am pleased to introduce Bill 38, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Traffic Safety Measures). This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to increase the safety of all road users. It enables tow truck drivers to create safe work zones and clarifies for drivers when it is safe to pass snowplows and cyclists. This bill supports government's commitment to safety. All Manitobans should return home at night regardless of the vehicle they are operating or what job they are doing.

I look forward to further discussion in the House as this bill progresses through all stages.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Second Report

Mr. Josh Guenter (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on March 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report – eChart Manitoba dated October 2018*
- *Auditor General's Report – Forensic Audits dated October 2018*
 - *Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls*
- *Auditor General's Report – Main Street Project Investigation dated June 2021*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations dated March 2020*
 - *eChart Manitoba*
 - *Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations dated March 2021*
 - *eChart Manitoba*
 - *Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations dated April 2022*
 - *eChart Manitoba*
 - *Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2024*
 - *Main Street Project Investigation*

Committee Membership

- Mr. BRAR
- MLA CHEN
- MLA COMPTON
- MLA DELA CRUZ
- MLA DEVGAN
- Mr. GUENTER (Chairperson)
- MLA LAMOUREUX
- MLA MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. NESBITT
- Mr. OXENHAM
- Mrs. STONE

Substitutions received prior to Committee proceedings:

- Mr. BLASHKO for MLA DELA CRUZ

Officials Speaking on Record

- Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Scott Sinclair, Deputy Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care
- Chris Christodoulou, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Shared Health
- Christine Pawlett, Executive Director, Clinical Digital Solutions, Digital Shared Services, Shared Health

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following report as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – eChart Manitoba dated October 2018

Your Committee completed consideration of the following report as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Main Street Project Investigation dated June 2021

Your Committee completed consideration of the following chapters as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Forensic Audits dated October 2018
 - Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-up of Recommendations dated March 2020
 - eChart Manitoba

- Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations dated March 2021
 - eChart Manitoba
 - Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Audit Recommendations dated April 2022
 - eChart Manitoba
 - Pharmacare: Special Audit of Financial Irregularities and Controls
- Auditor General's Report – Follow Up of Previously Issued Recommendations dated February 2024
 - Main Street Project Investigation

Mr. Guenter: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. King), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**International Women's Day**

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): For generations, politics has been the domain of men. In Canada's House of Commons, only 103 out of 338 seats are currently held by women or gender-diverse peoples. In 151 years, the city of Winnipeg has seen 456 men elected as mayor or city councillors. Only 33 have held council seats, and just one woman has ever been elected as mayor. Since 1870, our own Manitoba Legislative Assembly has seen the election of 801 men, 77 women, one nine–non-binary person and one trans man.

In 2025, all of these stats aren't great. This isn't because we aren't adept or accomplished or savvy or skilled or capable. It's because, historically, these very systems and spaces have been constructed to keep us out. But now, more than ever, we need women and gender-diverse peoples to run for office, to take their rightful place at decision-making tables.

This isn't just about representation. It's about ensuring our rights, our bodies and our futures are not dictated by men who would seek to control us. We need our voices in legislative chambers, city halls,

parliaments and now, more than ever, in both the US Congress and Senate—voices that will stand up for reproductive rights, for gender equality, for trans rights, for justice and as a reckoning force against fascism and oligarchy.

* (14:20)

And if you are thinking, I'm not qualified, I could never run, I ask you to consider this: Since I was first elected in 2016, Manitoba PC caucus members, predominantly men, have denied abortion rights, with many of them not even capable of saying the word abortion. They've embraced anti-vaxxers, stood in this House voting against the rights of two-spirited and trans Manitobans, legislated away the rights of Indigenous children and are presently courting the leadership of the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), who proudly led an attack on trans children—on children, and my personal favourite, campaigned on the murders of Indigenous women.

Every day, we see more regressive and oppressive laws coming out of the US, some of them calling for the literal death of women who access abortion or, as of a couple of weeks ago, women who miscarry. The literal state-sponsored murder of women or gender-diverse folks who access health care. Make it make sense.

So I'm not calling for an election of women as ardent, faithful foot-soldiers of patriarchy, standing silently in collusion beside their male colleagues as our rights are stripped away from us. We need leaders, fierce, bold and unapologetic, who will fight for what's right.

Right now, patriarchy is fighting for its very life. It would have us believe that we are powerless and that we should just give up and shut up, but we cannot. I will not. We must not.

So my message for this International Women's Day: We must run, we must win and we must lead. Because when women do, women change the world.

As Black-American writer, intersectional feminist and civil rights activist Audre Lorde expressed, and I quote: I am not free while any woman is unfree, even if her shackles are very different from my own. End quote.

I wish all women here in Manitoba and Canada, but especially women in the US, a happy International Women's Day.

Miigwech.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Today, I rise to recognize and celebrate International Women's Day, a day dedicated to recognizing the achievements of women, raising awareness about ongoing discrimination and taking action to forge a future of gender parity. This year's theme, Accelerate Action, serves as a powerful reminder that while progress has been made, there is still much work to be done.

The world that we want to live in is a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination, one that is diverse, equitable and inclusive, where difference is valued and celebrated. Together, we can make this vision a reality.

Since its inception in 1911, International Women's Day has belonged to all of those who care about gender equality, and today, we affirm our commitment to this cause.

To be on a track of Accelerate Action means to be taking swift and decisive steps to breaking down systemic barriers that hinder women's advancement. It means actively supporting women's economic empowerment, increasing opportunities in leadership and decision making, expanding access to quality education and training and ensuring women and girls have the resources they need to thrive in business, STEM, sports and the arts. These actions are not just about fairness. They drive innovation, support economic growth and build a sustainable future for all.

As we reflect on history, we must acknowledge the trailblazers who have paved the way. Manitoba holds a special place in Canada's journey toward gender equality. It was here that women, led by Nellie McClung and the Political Equality League, first gained the right to vote in provincial elections. Their courage and determination were the catalyst for change, making it possible for those who are disenfranchised and excluded to be heard loudly from outside the halls that had long ignored their voices.

Indeed, gender equality is not the responsibility of women alone; it is a collective effort that requires all of us to take meaningful action.

Let us use this day as a day to call to action. Let us accelerate our efforts to dismantle barriers, to support and uplift women in all fields and to create a world where gender does not determine one's opportunities or successes. Together we can forge a future where equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.

To the young women and girls of Manitoba: your dreams matter. Your potential is limitless. You stand on the shoulders of trailblazers who fought for change

and now it's your turn to shape the future. Believe in yourself. Embrace your strengths. Cultivate and feed your ambitions.

While barriers may have a say in how you get there, they do not have to define where or when you arrive. The world needs your ideas, your leadership and your passion. Keep pushing forward because your future is bright and we are cheering for you every step of the way.

Happy International Women's Day.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World Lymphedema Day

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Today is World Lymphedema Day, a day for spreading awareness and increasing education on lymphatic diseases. Lymphedema is the buildup of fluid in the body's tissues, leading to swelling and decreased mobility. Those with lymphedema face a lifelong battle with the disease as there is currently no cure, but it can be managed if caught in time.

Diagnosis and early treatment are key, which is why raising awareness is so important for those at risk of developing the disease as well as for health-care professionals. In fall of 2023, shortly after the election, I attended an event hosted by Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, otherwise known as LAM, on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and Minister of Health.

Our Health Minister and I have met with members of LAM executive, and our NDP government is working closely with LAM. Our NDP government remains committed to working with LAM. LAM is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading awareness and providing education on lymphedema awareness here in Manitoba. Their support for those at risk of developing lymphedema and those living with the disease is invaluable.

With a patient-first approach, the organization has tirelessly advocated for better access to lymphedema resources and services for those—more patients can get care that they need to manage this disease. Their commitment to improving the lives of those living with lymphedema is truly inspiring.

Please join me in thanking the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba for their fierce advocacy. On World Lymphedema Day and every day, let's continue to support those living with lymphedema.

Thank you.

Lymphedema Awareness Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I am also pleased to rise today to recognize March 6 as Lymphedema Awareness Day right here in Manitoba. All members will know that Lymphedema Awareness Day was proclaimed in 2014 with unanimous consent in the Manitoba legislator, as private member's bill that I put forth declaring March 6 each year as Lymphedema Awareness Day.

Eleven years later, bringing attention and awareness of lymphedema in Manitoba continues to be a highlight of mine and to those in the lymphedema community. The message remains the same each and every year, which is to bring public awareness and education to this condition and the quality of life that affects thousands of Manitobans.

Through ongoing education, research and advocacy, there is strong support amongst those within and outside the lymphedema community to ensure that attention and change is at the forefront, not only on March 6, but throughout the year.

Lymphedema affects over 250 million people worldwide. In Canada, it's estimated that 1.25 million are impacted by lymphedema. It is a lifelong medical condition caused by buildup of lymph fluids due to a faulty or damaged lymphatic system arising from genetic factors, surgery or accident. Common symptoms include swelling and pain to one's body and to date, there is no known cure, Honourable Speaker.

In Manitoba, as we celebrate Lymphedema Awareness Day, I am so proud and humbled by the ongoing work and dedication of its staff and board members, volunteers and front-line workers to bring attention to lymphedema every day.

* (14:30)

I'm also pleased to rise today to honour these individuals and the team at LAM. To founding directors of Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, Kim Avanthay, Edith Mulhall and Sue Zwarich, as well as current board members Nancy Roswell, Leona Waldner, Craig Harren and Rhonda Sietz. Thank you for the impact and change you bring to this very important and ongoing work.

Please join me in welcoming both Craig Harren and Iris Cogger, who are with us today in the gallery.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Recognizing Women in Southdale Community

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Today, in honour of International Women's Day, I rise to recognize some of the many women who've left an indelible mark on our community. When we explore the history of our neighbourhoods, it's evident that women played an integral role in shaping them.

Back when Southdale and Windsor Park lacked some essential services, the Winakwa community club emerged as the heart of social life, providing a space where women could gather, support one another and foster a sense of community.

Another notable example was the Cottonwood Beauty Salon. This shop was more than just a place to get a haircut; it was a hub where women could connect, share stories and support each other's ventures.

One of our most beloved figures was Mrs. Weide, the Windsor Park librarian. We are joined in the gallery today by her daughter, Penny. Brenda Weide, a lifelong avid reader, dedicated 24 years to our local library. Her kindness, proper manners and unwavering dedication made her a pillar of our community. Her legacy lives on in the stories and fond memories shared by many, and to this day her children encounter people who remember Mrs. Weide from the library, or the lady with the English accent from the library. Brenda Weide retired in 1993 and passed away in 2013.

We also remember Mrs. Fisher, a perennial volunteer at the community centre, and Darlene Ringer, who served as convener for Tom Thumb hockey at Winakwa and president of the St. Boniface Warriors football club in the late 1970s. Darlene's outstanding volunteer work was recognized by both Football Manitoba and Football Canada. Her contributions were immense, from stitching name tags on uniforms to her many presidential duties.

These are just a few of the women who were the backbone of Southdale and Windsor Park, and their legacies continue to inspire us. Today, and every day, let us celebrate the immense contributions of women everywhere.

Thank you.

I Love to Read Month

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Opening a new book for the first time always feels special, especially when we take the time to read with children and step into worlds beyond our own. As Dr. Seuss

says: The more you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you will go.

This is the power of reading, and for decades, Manitoba communities have celebrated this during I Love to Read Month. Each February, families, teachers and local leaders come together to share stories and support young readers. Books inspire creativity and nurture critical thinking throughout our lives. As another saying goes: first, we learn to read, and then we read to learn.

We keep the I Love to Read tradition alive each year because many young Manitobans struggle with reading. National and international assessments show us that they often fall behind their peers across Canada and the world. This is why it is more important than ever to invest in reading education and ensure students have the tools they need for personal growth and success. This starts at home, when families read together and encourage children to put down your phones and pick up a book instead.

The benefits of reading are endless and as a proud parent and even prouder grandparent and a legislator, I have seen how reading changes lives.

I encourage every Manitoba family to pick up a new book and read it with their children. The stories we share with them today will be the stories they share with others tomorrow.

In fact, this year, I Love to Read month will spill over into March where, tomorrow, I still have the privilege to read to one of the smaller rural schools. Rest assured, although the school is small, the interaction will be epic.

And with the final weeks of winter upon us, I also want to encourage Manitobans to get out, make the most of the rest of the season. Since December solstice, we have gained two and a half hours of daylight. As we approach the spring equinox, we will enjoy even more sun each day.

Stay warm, soak up the sunshine and enjoy a good book.

Audrey Vail

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): It is my absolute honour and joy to acknowledge an extraordinary Tuxedo constituent today, an amazing woman: Audrey Vail. Her life has the makings of a Hollywood movie.

I cannot do her justice in two minutes, so I encourage you all to look up her documentary, titled Requestfully Yours.

I do want to highlight a few pivotal moments that she has shared with me.

First, Audrey had been—has been entertaining crowds since her childhood. One of her first public performances happened by chance at the 1937 New York World's Fair. She ended up separated from her parents and made her way onto a stage where she played piano in front of 1,000 people.

(2) Years into her career, one night she was followed by a fan after her performance. She was assaulted by him. The next morning, she went to the police station. Audrey was told she had no case; she would not be helped because she was an entertainer. As a woman entertainer, she was asking for it. When asked how to protect herself, she was advised to carry oven cleaner.

(3) At the age of 50, Audrey went back to school to become a registered nurse. She combined her passion for music and helping people and was an integral part of bringing the music therapy program to St. Boniface Hospital.

Audrey loves a big audience, and she continues to perform to this day.

And when asked if she had anything to share here, she gave me her favourite quote from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: music be the food of love, play on.

I feel fortunate to have met Audrey and learned her story. She is a strong, confident leader. She is a powerful woman, and she is joined today by her supportive husband, John Vail.

And so please join me in celebrating Audrey Vail, also known as Requestfully Yours.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business

House Business

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Honourable Speaker, 'pursurrant'—pursuant to rule 34(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on next Thursday of private

members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone). The title of the resolution is Provincial Government Job-Destroying Payroll Taxes.

The Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 34(8) that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Midland. The title of the resolution is Provincial Government Job-Destroying Payroll Taxes.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Before we move on to oral questions, there's some guests in the building I would like to introduce.

First off, joining us in the loge to my right is—with us—joining us today, is Mr. Brent Blakley, who is a member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan representing the constituency of Regina Wascana Plains. Mr. Blakley is the guest of the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko).

We welcome you here today.

Joining us in the public gallery, we have Carla Blakley. She is the Lutheran bishop of Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic Provinces.

And we welcome you here today as well.

And although these guests may have already been introduced, I'd like to reintroduce them and draw people's attention to the public gallery where we have with us today Audrey Vail, John Vail, Jennette Wright and Barend Otte, who are the guests of the honourable member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton).

* (14:40)

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

US Tariffs on Canadian Goods Request for Government Response

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, the Premier stated on numerous occasions that he's been preparing for 17 months for the Trump administration and his tariffs and anything else that President Trump was going to throw at him.

Well, so far today, Honourable Speaker, nada, zilch, nothing from this Premier and any action on any plan. Besides no Coors Light, 90-day deferral and

wrapping himself in a Canadian flag, the Premier have so far kept details of Manitoba's potential plan to tariffs a secret.

The Premier has promised to support businesses and individuals hurt by tariffs but refuses to tell them how.

Will the Premier table his plan to protect consumers and businesses from tariffs today?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): A reprieve until April 2 is not good enough. We cannot live as Manitobans with a persistent threat of Donald Trump's tariff tax, and so our countermeasures will remain.

While Donald Trump might be trying to look for an off-ramp and talking about April 2, for the time being American booze will stay off the Liquor Mart shelves. We're standing up for Canada. We're standing up for Manitoba. At the same time, we're standing up for your jobs. And so the tax deferrals will also stay in place.

We know that this is an important time for us all to rally together around the flag. Well, almost all of us know that. While the other members on the opposition benches rally around somebody who said thank you to Donald Trump's tariffs, we are instead rallying around the Maple Leaf, and we're insisting that all threats of tariffs be dropped so that Canada can remain the true north, strong and free, a country we all love.

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

Manitoba Delegation to Washington

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, more fiction coming from this Premier, and it would really be good if the Premier, for a change, would answer some questions.

Premier spent tens of thousands of dollars taking his entourage to Washington. He assured Manitobans that he would get—be getting a face-to-face time with President Trump to discuss tariffs and trade. Other than some TikTok clips, it appears the Premier accomplished little else in Washington. No meeting with the president, no meeting with Vice-President Vance. Local reports noted President Trump basically sent a couple of staffers to meet with our Premier.

Within days of the Premier's hastily arranged meetings in Washington, Trump was imposing tariffs.

What exactly did the Premier accomplish other than a few days away?

Mr. Kinew: You know, time was members opposite respected Doug Burgum. I seem to remember a former PC premier giving him the Order of the Buffalo Hunt. Seemed like that was a big deal at the time.

Well, now that Mr. Burgum is a part of the Trump administration, I thought it was important to take a meeting with him. We had a productive conversation. We talked about baseload power, we talked about energy and we talked about working together across the Canada-US border.

On the other side of the House, we have the captains of capitulation. They have a PC leadership race under way. One candidate full-throatedly endorsed Donald Trump in 2024, and the other candidate said thank you for the tariff threat.

Now, it's very clear the PCs cannot be stood—cannot be trusted to stand up for Canada, but we are happy to come to work each and every single day. Today, a new act to buy Canadian.

The question for the members opposite: You just left the government benches. Why didn't you ever insist on supporting the Canadian economy by legislating that tax dollars get spent on buying—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Checkmate Government Relations Payments to Public Relations Firm

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, Honourable Speaker, no plan, no answers to the questions.

The NDP barely spent anything to help promote Manitoba businesses, Honourable Speaker. We know Manitoba companies and entrepreneurs are the best in the world.

But the Premier doesn't have the same confidence in Manitoba businesses as we do. He failed to share with Manitobans that his government is helping to pay a Trump-connected lobbying firm called Checkmate Government Relations an eye-watering \$120,000 a month to grease the wheels with key players to set up low-level meetings in Washington.

NDP is spending more money on this Trump-connected lobbying firm than supporting Manitobans facing economic turmoil.

Why is this Premier more interested in investing in Americans than the Manitobans who elected him?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): When the budget comes through, the wonderful, amazing budget gets tabled in this very Chamber, you're going to see what our team is about. We're about building Manitoba. And here's the thing: when we build Manitoba, we buy Canadian every single step of the way.

We're building hospitals, emergency rooms; we're building schools; we're building personal-care homes in his own constituency. The only thing that we're tearing down is interprovincial trade barriers, thanks to our amazing Minister for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation.

Now, while we're doing all these great things to bring Manitobans together, what are the members opposite doing? They're doubling down on division. I'm surprised that he didn't stand up today to begin his statements by apologizing to trans children for the divisive parental rights campaign of 2023.

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

Manitoba Trade Office in Washington Government Staffing Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, the question was on the Trump-connected lobbying firm, and of course the Premier is trying to distract from his failings.

The Premier decided that our call for the establishment of a permanent trade office in Washington to address the threats of Trump 2.0 was warranted. We appreciate the Premier's endorsement, but remain concerned about the Premier's lack of faith in the skill set of Manitobans.

Despite a population of almost 1.5 million people, including world-class entrepreneurs and business leaders, the Kinew government has publicly said they are unwilling to hire local. Do as I say, not as I do has become the motto of this Kinew government.

Will the Premier commit today to hiring local for the promised trade office, or is he content with hiring another American?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, when we're talking about shopping local, we got the billboards up encouraging Manitobans to do just that. When we want to talk about buying Canadian, we've got legislation ensuring that's going to happen.

But here's the thing. I want everybody watching—because there's more people in the Chamber right now than are actually watching on YouTube—I want every-

one here to pay attention. They closed the DC office. They cut it when they were in government, and now he's trying to pretend as though it was their idea, when they only made the call after I announced it at the State of the Province address for the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.

Here's the thing. I know it's tough times for the PCs when the chambers and the business councils and the CEOs all line up behind us to build Manitoba, and leave them flailing along with Trump sycophants and people that are still chasing the convoy from years ago. But here's the reality: the world has moved on from COVID. You need to get with the times and stand up with us against Donald Trump.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, and once again this afternoon, I hope everybody watching today in Manitoba is seeing the fact that the Premier continues to put misinformation on the record.

Fact is, there was never, ever an office in the—in Washington for trade, and this Premier stands up, and just because he's yelling and getting applause from his members opposite, he thinks he's correct. Just another bullying tactic by this Premier, Honourable Speaker.

The only thing that we know for sure is that the Premier won't commit to hiring a Manitoban to represent Manitoba. Premier makes bold statements assuring Manitobans that, quote, if Trump is trying to take jobs out of our province, then we have to stand up for ourselves. End quote.

Who has Manitobans' backs when it's not just President Trump trying to take jobs out of our province, but our very own Premier, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: Brian Pallister cut our presence in DC. It was there one day, then they went into Cabinet and it was gone the next. Poof, gone. Just like the aspirations of the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) to lead this province after he said thank you to Donald Trump.

* (14:50)

And it was hilarious to see him run out and say that they needed to add context to those remarks. Here's the context—direct quote from the member of Fort Whyte: So how much of an influence did the 25 per cent tariff threat had on that—bad grammar is his, not mine—I would say a lot, and I would say thank you. I would say thank you. End quote.

Now, here's the thing. When we look deeper at the context, what becomes clear is this: the member for Fort Whyte is saying thank you to a foreign power for subverting the properly democratically elected leader of our country. That is a betrayal of our democracy and a betrayal of our country.

If the PCs had a single conservative bone in their body, they would demand that he be bounced out of their leadership contest.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, it seems that the member for Fort Whyte is indeed living rent-free in the Premier's head. Premier said he wants to ban American companies from doing business in Manitoba. *[interjection]* I know that the Education Minister wants to get up and say something, I'm sure, but I wish that things would get under control here.

He said he's going to restrict bids—beds from south of the border. Premier's publicly telling Manitobans to support local, but he's publicly telling Americans to not even bother applying for Manitoba jobs. But privately, he sends a cheque every month to an American Trump-backed lobbyist and refuses to hire a Manitoban to head his new trade office. The simplest way to show our American neighbours what Manitoba can do is to have a Manitoban do it.

Why does the Premier refuse to show confidence in the skills of Manitobans and outsourcing government right here in Manitoba, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: You know, they talk about outsourcing. They've outsourced every single original political idea south of the border. They just copy Donald Trump every single day.

The only difference between the ones in the front bench and the ones in the back is that at least the member from Borderland is honest about the fact that he supports Donald Trump. Everyone else in there is, you know, cloak and dagger, still trying to pass some urban progressive cred.

And, yes, they all live urbanly. They live in the constituencies of myself and the Minister of Health, every single one of them. Then, of course, the summer barbecue season comes around and oh, hey, we're here for rural Manitoba. No, not true, absolutely not.

We reopen our rural emergency rooms, we fund rural school divisions and we stand up for rural jobs. So what are you waiting for, rural Manitoba? Send more MLAs to our caucus.

Development of Manitoba's Natural Resources Government Position in the Wake of US Tariffs

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) has shown he has no economic response plan in the wake of tariffs. A photo op is not a plan. Stickers are not a plan. Advertising is not a plan.

Despite Trump's delays today, things are still uncertain for Manitobans. Manitoba businesses know that these economic attacks from the US show a need to harness and unleash our own resources.

Unfortunately, we have a Premier who has publicly pledged to oppose resource projects. The international market has shown they have no faith in the NDP. Resource industries have either left or investment dollars have gone to other jurisdictions.

Will the Premier stand up and admit he was wrong when he signed on as an antibusiness climate activist, and will he denounce the Leap Manifesto he once supported?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, of course, with today's announcement from the Trump government, we know we continue to face uncertainty, but one thing that we want to say clearly to Manitobans: every single member of this team has your back.

We're fighting for you, and we started right on day one when we were proud to stand in front of that big, beautiful Canadian flag in the front of this building announcing our measure immediately to provide tax deferral relief to businesses in Manitoba to give them a little bit of support with managing cash flow and ensuring that they can keep doing the important work that they do.

We've, of course, also taken other actions. Like the Premier has mentioned, taking US liquor off of our shelves, and we're bringing in buy Canadian legislation that will ensure we spend more of our dollars supporting our economy—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: The Premier supported the antibusiness Leap Manifesto. He was also quick to sign on to Trudeau's 30-by-30 plan, which actively discourages resource development: 30 per cent less food production, 30 per cent less energy development and 30 per cent less mining production.

We all know Manitoba is full of critical resources. But the Premier is locking them behind red 'teep'-tape with the ongoing threats of Trump's tariffs and our need to develop our own resources.

Will the Premier walk away from his commitment to plan 30/30?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we stand in opposition to Trump's tariffs and we stand together on team Canada.

Now, that's very different than the members opposite. We know that the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) went on Facebook the day after Trump won his election to celebrate that individual's success after he was talking about bringing crushing tariffs to Canada.

We know that one of the individuals running to be the leader of that party celebrated, again, Trump's tariffs in recent interviews where he was discussing and celebrating interference in our democracy here in Canada.

On this side of the House we stand for team Canada, we're going to bring people together, fight for one Manitoba, we're going to continue to fight to protect jobs every single day.

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

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, leaders in Canada have stood up and supported energy projects built on self-reliance. Premiers Moe and Smith have been vocal about this. Premier Houston is calling on Quebec to embrace a team Canada approach and support Canadian energy projects.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stand up today and commit to supporting and preapproving all east-to-west pipeline energy projects in Canada?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, our team is incredibly proud to be building Manitoba, and we announced an affordable energy plan in the fall that will see us commit to developing 600 new megawatts of wind energy in partnership with First Nations here in Manitoba.

That stands in contrast to what we saw for seven and a half years, when Manitobans had a government that didn't build one single megawatt over seven years. They didn't do the work; we're doing the work of ensuring that we have the energy to power our businesses long into the future, so we can build a successful economy for years to come.

Changes to Canada-US Trade Agreement Financial Support for Agriculture Industry

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, international trade has been a pressing concern for agriculture for many years. It is now coming to a head. With the—with agriculture accounting for 43.6 per cent of Manitoba's total export—or, exports and 46 per cent of that going to the United States, any change in our trade relationships is this—of critical importance.

What is the specific dollar value of financial aid that this minister has set aside to support the agriculture industry?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you for the question. There is no doubt agriculture is a key component with the tariff proposition that's being proposed. It's very challenging for us, as government, for anybody across Canada, to deal with the roller-coaster President of making decisions today, changing them tomorrow.

All I can say is that we, as the Agriculture Minister, and all agriculture ministers, call each other on a daily basis. In fact, on Friday we are having a meeting with all agriculture ministers and the Federal Agricultural Minister to develop a template to deal with issues, but we're not sure what exactly, based on the way Mr. Trump is operating. But I want to assure—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Manitoba's Agriculture Trade with the US

MLA Bereza: So obviously there's no plan.

The hog industry contributes \$2.3 billion to Manitoba's GDP. That's about 3 per cent of our total GDP. With nearly 100 per cent of Manitoba's live hogs heading to the US, any change in that trade scenario will be devastating. A 25 per cent tariff on Manitoba's hog industry would kill that industry very quickly.

Why is this minister willing to accept a multi-billion dollar hole in our economy?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Thank you again for the question. And I want to ensure the critic and members opposite, we in the Agriculture Department, we're talking to Mr. Dahl on a regular basis.

* (15:00)

We see the importance of the pork industry. We see the importance of the beef industry. We see the importance of agriculture commodities throughout this province and we continue to communicate with them.

I don't know what it's going to take to convince members opposite that we are very, very concerned about the situations, and we will continue. We as government rely on communicating with all agriculture producers and regardless we're stuck to their—from the farmland to the processors. And I want to ensure members opposite that we will continue to work together as one team, like—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Manitoba's Minister of Agriculture Meeting with US Agriculture Representatives

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Man, that sounded like all show and no go.

Manitoba's agriculture trade with the US amounts to \$4.3 billion annually. This government didn't send its Agriculture Minister on a trade mission to Washington. He did, however, attend the state agriculture rural leaders conference where he declined to meet with state agricultural representatives because they had differing political views.

Minister, how can you be fighting for Manitoba producers on the international stage when you can't set aside your political ideology?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Well, let me just put something on record that's actual facts, is that it was my privilege to be in Iowa.

It was my privilege to be dealing with the national accord—tri-national accord in Washington. In fact, members opposite, the critic was there at SARL convention with us, and I am not sure whether he intended to neglect to recognize the opportunity that we still believe as—we are one government.

Although, I somewhat rely on members opposite to help out the situation, but they tend to want to make daggers to gain some political—again, not us. We are one team. We represent everybody in the province of Manitoba, and the members opposite choose—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Order, please.

I would just remind members when they're asking questions to direct their questions through the Chair and not directly ask someone opposite.

Metis, Michif CFS Agencies Inquiry into MGEU Layoffs

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Breaking news that this failed minister of family services tried to hide from Manitoba: under the personal direction of the minister, 65 MGEU workers at the Métis Child and Family Services Authority and at Michif Child and Family Services.

A simple question for the failed minister: Why did she fire these 65 workers, or does she not believe every child matters?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): The audacity of the member opposite to stand on that side with all of those individuals who actually legislated the rights away of Indigenous children and lost that, by the way. The audacity of that member to use all children matter in this Chamber when they have such abysmal record on supporting and doing what is in the best interest of children within child welfare.

I certainly won't take any lessons from that member.

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

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, the president of MGEU described the minister's actions as, and I quote: these reckless layoffs threaten the safety and protection of at-risk children and youth.

Why is this minister threatening the safety and protection of children at risk?

MLA Fontaine: Our government takes seriously everybody who works at putting the best interest of children in child welfare ahead of political theatre here that we're seeing. But we also know that agreements are—for workers are best made at the negotiation table.

It's important to know that in Budget 2024, we have supported the CFS system with \$420 million. And since I've been in this position for 17 months, I've increased the annual dollars by \$33.4 million to child welfare.

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

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, fired workers say these layoffs are clearly, quote, an aggressive bargaining tactic designed to intimidate workers.

Why is the minister risking youth just to intimidate workers?

MLA Fontaine: Again, it's—the audacity of members to even get up and ask any questions on child welfare when they legislated the rights of Indigenous children away. But, also, their former boss, Heather Stefanson, would regularly accuse public servants of politics, and I would quote her that that's-where-I-draw-a-line fiasco that she tried to do.

But let me just put facts on the record here. We have—are providing an additional \$11.3 million to agencies' operations.

Allied Health-Care Professionals Possible Strike Action—Impact on Patients

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): More than 7,000 allied health professionals, paramedics, mental health and addictions workers, lab and diagnostic imaging staff and more are set to strike in less than nine hours.

MAHCP told media that a strike could, quote, set Manitoba back for years when you take into consideration wait-lists, wait times for surgeries, tests, different types of treatments, different types of assessments and particularly emergency rooms where there's already extremely high wait times.

How does the minister justify sitting on their hands while these critical health-care professionals prepare to strike? And what is their plan to mitigate the impact on patients?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our government has been very clear from day one that it is so important that we get to the bargaining table, employers get to the bargaining table, and negotiate in good faith so that health-care workers can have a fair deal. We've seen a lot of success around that under our administration.

In contrast, on that side of the House, for two terms of a PC government they froze the wages of health-care workers. They fired hundreds of them. They didn't care about unions or front-line health-care providers for two terms of government.

That member doesn't care about unions and she doesn't care about front-line health-care workers. We're going to continue to encourage that those negotiations happen in good faith. And all Manitobans can be rest assured there are plans to ensure essential health care is in place.

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

Mrs. Cook: A recent MAHCP survey tells a very different story than what the minister is putting on the record today. In that survey, 48 per cent of members reported staff losses in their departments in 2024; 59 per cent said morale had plummeted in the last year; and 62 per cent saw their workload increase.

As the MAHCP president put it in their media release on the strike, quote—*[interjection]*

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) may think this is hilarious but it's not going to be funny in about nine hours when 7,000 health-care workers go on strike. So I'd encourage him to stop jeering and pay attention.

MAHCP said, quote, the overwhelming strike mandate is another sign that the situation on the front line is not improving. He also said, quote, trust with this current government has been profoundly lost—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we value front-line health-care workers, why—which is why our government has ensured that employers are at the bargaining table negotiating in good faith. We've successfully seen collective bargaining agreements that benefit workers take place and we're encouraging folks to stay at the table to get this done.

On that side of the House, they froze health-care workers' wages, allied health-care worker wages, for two terms of government. They created an environment of moral distress and despair on the front lines. We're doing the work of cleaning up the mess and the damage that they created.

That member has less than zero credibility on this file. And she supports the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) who wants to privatize health care and fire health-care workers. Let her stand in her place and explain that.

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

Hospitals in Winnipeg Staffing Level Concerns

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Once again, the facts put a very different—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —story than what this minister is putting on the record.

FIPPA documents obtained by our caucus reveal the reality of allied health vacancies in Winnipeg.

As of October 2024, Grace Hospital had a staggering 41.7 per cent vacancy rate for allied health professionals, one of the worst in the province. MAHCP has repeatedly warned that a lack of allied health professionals leads to serious complications for patient care. And right now there are more than 1,000 allied health vacancies across Manitoba.

* (15:10)

Despite these alarming numbers, the NDP has no plan to retain health-care workers in Manitoba, and unions say they're not seeing the hires that this minister claims to have made.

Why is the minister refusing to address this staffing crisis in Winnipeg hospitals?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, our government has hired a net new 1,255 health-care workers on the front lines. Our government is listening to the front lines. We've seen several collectively bargained agreements at the table. We're encouraging folks to stay there.

On that side of the House, I know it's difficult for that member to stand up and take accountability for the damage that was done to health care.

On this side of the House, we don't run away from challenges; we face them head-on. We make investments on the front lines. We listen to front-line health-care workers.

On that side of the House, that member wants to privatize health care. That member supports members on that side of the House who want an American-style health-care system.

On this side of the House, we are team Canada. We are team health care. We'll take no lessons—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

Allied Health-Care Professionals Possible Strike Action

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I have been hearing from my constituents in Tyndall Park that almost 7,000 publicly employed allied health professionals represented by the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals are fighting for a competitive contract.

Allied health professionals here in Manitoba are committed to delivering front-line quality care to

Manitobans every day. They are problem solvers and innovators who continue to dedicate so much to our province.

Why is this government choosing to risk a strike instead of prioritizing health-care workers in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for that really important question.

I want to reassure Manitobans that there are essential service agreements in place to ensure that critical and essential care is provided.

But I also want to be clear that our government has continued and will continue to be supporting employers to be at the negotiating table so that collectively bargained agreements can be in place. We've successfully seen that happen and we're encouraging the same outcome in this situation.

I understand as the Health Minister that after two terms of a previous PC government, health-care workers are frustrated. They had their wages frozen for two terms of a Conservative government that didn't care about them. We're working to change the impacts of that.

We're going to keep listening to them and pushing for a good outcome in terms of collectively bargained agreements in this case.

MLA Lamoureux: Allied health professionals are integral for our health-care system. They increase the accessibility of care, they help patients to heal and regain mobility. They promote mental wellness and healthy lifestyles. They provide support for Indigenous patients who are in locations outside of their home community and they provide invaluable work in emergency rooms and other front-line areas.

Yet, Honourable Speaker, even after this government promised that they had a plan to help, support for health care continues to decline.

Why does it appear, then, that no action has been taken to avert a strike, which could happen as early as tomorrow?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I can assure that member that work is happening. We know that parties are at the negotiating table working very hard to have a positive outcome to this process.

As a government, we've made significant investments. Beyond the 1,255 net new health-care workers, we've made sure that we have seven-day-a-week allied health-care professional support across the

health-care system so they have more flexibility on the front lines, better work-life balance and can provide care at the bedside of Manitobans.

Again, after two terms of a PC government that disrespected them, didn't engage, fired folks from the front lines, we know we have a lot of work to do. But we're going to continue to do that work to the benefit of all Manitobans.

MLA Lamoureux: And I do appreciate the remarks from our Health Minister.

But members of the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals, they include paramedics, respiratory therapists, speech language pathologists, physiotherapists, social workers, lab technologists, perfusionists. They're all part of 40 specialized allied health professionals.

Can the minister please share with us what work is happening specifically with the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals?

MLA Asagwara: Again, I would reassure that member that parties are at the table. We know that their teams are there communicating, and we're all encouraging folks to stay at the table and to come an agreement the workers will be satisfied with.

You know, and I say this as somebody who worked on the front lines as a nurse, shoulder to shoulder with allied health-care professionals. We have a tremendous amount of respect for them. We know the value they bring to the bedside of Manitobans, which is why we've made investments to add more to the front lines, to continue to listen to them and to make sure they have a better work-life balance.

We're going to continue to support these processes moving forward and, quite frankly, do the work of repairing the damage—

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —that was done over two terms of a failed PC government that didn't care about health-care workers then and certainly doesn't care about them now.

Buy Canadian Initiative Promotion of Local Business

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Honourable Speaker, members opposite are fighting for Donald Trump and Donald Trump's tariffs.

The MLA for Borderland fantasizes about becoming the 51st state so he can live under Donald Trump. And

members opposite clap when they're told about Trump's election interference in Canadian politics as part of his efforts to annex us.

And the MLA for Fort Whyte recently said: I would like to say thank you to Trump.

But while members opposite support Trump and his tariffs, this government is supporting Manitoba businesses.

Can the Premier tell this House what we're doing to promote local businesses?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): It's been great to see Canadians stopping in the aisles of the grocery stores, in Costcos and markets to check where products are made. This feeling of Canadian pride is really, really amazing. It's important for us to ensure that young people, that people of all ages—seniors—have the support that they need at this time.

We've got a remarkable plan to support local businesses. We're deferring taxes for tariff-exposed industries and, of course, we're pushing back against the US by removing alcohol from that country from the Liquor Mart shelves.

On the other side of the House, what do they want to do? Each of them is racing to be Donald Trump's No. 1 cheerleader in Canada, in Manitoba. For us, you know, that was the choice that the US made; the choice that we made was to come together as Canadians. And while they may want to be the sellouts that they've always been and will be forevermore, we'll always stand up for you, the hard-working people of Manitoba.

We'll always stand up for Canada.

Constituent with Spinal Muscular Atrophy Health Minister's Letter to Canada Drug Agency

Mr. Grant Jackson (Spruce Woods): After months of advocacy and public outcry, the Health Minister finally met with Jeremy Bray and his family on January 21. The day before, the minister announced that they had sent a letter to the Canada Drug Agency to ask them to review their recommendations for people—for treatment for people suffering from SMA. That was six weeks ago.

Has the CDA responded to the minister's letter? And if so, what was the response?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): First, I want to thank Mr. Bray and his family and advocate for the opportunity to sit down and have a conversation; it was

really impactful to hear his story and lived experience directly from him.

Our government did send that letter to the CDA, and we've been actively engaged daily—sometimes multiple times a day—working with them to find a path forward. And we've been communicating regularly with Mr. Bray and keeping him up to speed.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Spruce Woods on a second—supplementary question.

Mr. Jackson: What the minister just put on the record is patently false. Jeremy Bray and his family had not received a call from the minister or their office for five and a half weeks, until the Brandon Sun approached them for comment on a story, just this past Friday.

That's the first contact that they had from this minister or their office since the meeting in January, so that is patently false.

Why is this minister misleading Manitobans?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, respectfully to that member, what he's put on the record is just entirely untrue. Our priority as a government and as a minister—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just remind the member that suggesting that something is entirely untrue would be unparliamentary.

* (15:20)

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the member opposite may not be apprised of the hard work that our team is doing every single day to address the concerns brought forward by Mr. Bray. I can assure him that we are in contact with Mr. Bray and his family, providing them updates as we do this work.

I will also state that it is a shame that, while I met with Mr. Bray and his family, when he brought this concern forward under the previous government, they never met. They never responded. They only said no. Fundamentally different than our approach, Honourable Speaker.

We'll continue to work directly with Mr. Bray and his family, unlike the failed previous government.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

And I would caution all members on both sides to be a little more cautious with the language they use. There's several instances today that were very close to crossing the line, and I will be keeping a closer eye on

it in the future and calling you if you're getting even close to that line in the future.

Petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Honourable Speaker, will you call for a debate, the re-appointment of the Manitoba Ombudsman, followed by resume of the government resolution.

The Speaker: Been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that we will debate the government resolution on the appointment of the Ombudsman, followed by resumed debate on the government resolution, Manitoba is stronger together against Donald Trump's tariff tax threats.

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Reappointment of the Manitoba Ombudsman

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala),

WHEREAS the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommends to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Jill Perron be re-appointed as the Manitoba Ombudsman.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to subsections 2(1), 2(1.1) and 4(1) of The Ombudsman Act, Jill Perron will be re-appointed as the Manitoba Ombudsman.

Motion presented.

The Speaker: There any debate?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House is the resolution reappointing Jill Perron as the Manitoba Ombudsman.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Manitoba is Stronger Standing Together Against Donald Trump's Tariff Tax and Threats

The Speaker: We will now resume debate on the government resolution as announced earlier.

Standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland, who has 27 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I'd like to start off my remarks today by saying, as I have been saying for three months, that I am against the US tariffs on Canadian goods.

The free market is critical to our success as a country, and protectionist policies distort the open market. This has been proven time and time and time again. It has been a disappointing week as decades of friendship and economic ties have been damaged.

I've had the opportunity throughout my career to work in agriculture and manufacturing sectors, and I know first-hand the devastating effects that these tariffs will have on Manitoba's economy. Today, these tariffs are hitting my family, my neighbours and my friends who own businesses in these sectors and farm and produce Manitoba's food. These are industries that are being directly hit. These are industries that my constituency is heavily reliant on.

Our constituencies on this side of the House are being directly hit: manufacturing, agriculture, energy. And this is why we have been pressing for an all-party committee to respond and develop solutions.

For months, we have been calling on this NDP government for a plan. They responded that they do not operate in hypotheticals, but now, this is reality. There is no more hiding from it. Although Trump gave us a delay, things continue to remain uncertain. People are frustrated. They're angry. And times are uncertain.

We could be living this for another two weeks. We could be living this for two years. We must come together as a country and a province to stand up for industries, businesses and Manitobans who will be impacted in one way or another by these tariffs.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

But standing up for Manitobans requires more than just a photo op outside of the Manitoba Legislature. It requires more than just words. It requires a plan, and it requires action. And I'm not referring to short-term delay tactics. I'm calling for meaningful solutions that will unleash our economic potential for Manitoba and create a competitive business environment for Manitobans to flourish.

Unfortunately, NDP and Liberal governments in Canada and Manitoba have created an anti-competitive climate through high taxation and protections against

land development and energy development that have limited our potential in this province.

The NDP are clearly caught between their own ideology and reality, and the reality is that it's time for the NDP to quit their anti-business rhetoric. The NDP and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) supported the Leap Manifesto. The Premier supported Trudeau's 30-by-30 plan, taking 30 per cent out of food production, 30 per cent out of energy production, 30 per cent out of 'minmor'—mineral exploration. And the Premier refused to stand up today and commit to supporting and preapproving an east-west energy pipeline project to ensure energy independence here in Manitoba.

The NDP should immediately eliminate the payroll tax for businesses. This is a job-killing tax. It is an NDP-created tax that penalizes companies that hire more Manitobans. This is a labour tax; this is a job tax and this is a company tax here in Manitoba. They've put it under the guise of health and education, but in reality, it just goes into general revenue of the—at the expense of employers and employees and businesses here in Manitoba. Manitoba continues to have the highest payroll tax in Canada—4.3 per cent on businesses with payroll over \$1.5 million. This is a huge slap on our current operating businesses in Manitoba and deters any investment and future business growth in the province.

The NDP should also slash income taxes and eliminate education property taxes. Last year, we saw this NDP government irresponsibly increase income taxes on Manitobans and increase education property taxes. This is the exact opposite of what governments in this country should be doing right now to ensure and encourage affordability and foster economic growth in this province. They are literally taxing out—us out of competition with other jurisdictions.

The NDP should also immediately remove carbon tax on home heating. Manitoba does not have a choice—Manitobans do not have a choice in how they heat their homes. The carbon tax is set to rise in a few weeks, costing Manitoba households hundreds of dollars.

And now I want to speak to our reliance on foreign markets and interprovincial trade barriers. Our reliance on foreign markets has grown significantly over the years, where it's often cheaper to import goods and products half a world away by sea, rail or truck than it is to domestically produce here in our own province and country.

There are more restrictions on interprovincial trade than intercontinental, differing environmental regulations, licensing, certification, labour mobility, trucking, health and safety, among a host of others. These barriers increase costs to Manitobans and they increase costs to businesses.

* (15:30)

This is a problem, and this is exactly why Canada is in the challenge that it is in. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has stated that removing these barriers could boost the economy by \$200 billion annually.

Labour mobility is one of Manitoba's weakest barriers, and Manitoba has the most to gain, and there's opportunity to streamline the certification and licensing requirements to attract labour from other provinces into Manitoba.

Further to this, the NDP should immediately repeal their Labour laws that trample workers' rights and deters business gross and—business growth and investment here in Manitoba.

As I spoke about earlier today, the NDP needs to put their ideology aside and remove protectionist land policies that deter investment and unleashing Manitoba's economic potential. In the last year, Manitoba has dropped to next in last in Canada for dollars devoted to mining and energy and forestry projects.

As I said, the NDP supported the Leap Manifesto. They proudly supported Trudeau's 30-by-30 plan. This deters investment in Manitoba and hangs a closed-for-business sign on our province.

This—these policies—these protectionist policies—limit our ability to unleash our own potential here in Manitoba, and I'm calling on the Premier (Mr. Kinew) to commit to supporting and improving all east-west pipeline energy projects here in Manitoba and across the country to ensure that we have Canadian energy independence. And I still have not received an answer to that question.

Over the past few months, economists have indicated a 25 per cent blanket tariff will result in zero economic growth in Canada, with higher inflation. This, in turn, is going to put pressure on our already-struggling Canadian dollar. We all saw this week as our dollar has dipped to near-22-year lows, and this has been happening since November, while stocks tumbled in response to these tariffs. We are all feeling the pain this week.

The weakened Canadian dollar will increase import costs, raising prices that Canadian households pay for the goods from the US and other countries. This pushes us further into the negative. Costs of living, weaker employment, inflation and a weaker dollar will all negatively impact Manitobans.

And what we have seen is weak leadership. We've seen weak leadership at the provincial level. It's a good thing that Canada has Premier Ford and Premier Smith standing up for Canada, because this Premier is so out of his league on this topic.

Canada is an easy target for Trump because of weak leadership, provincially here in Manitoba and federally. The Trudeau Liberals, which have been propped up by the NDP, have deteriorated Canada's strength and position on the global stage.

We do need a team Canada approach, where all the premiers are singing the same tune; but we also need a team Manitoba approach, as these tariffs will impact all Manitobans from every corner of the province. I've already spoken to the impacts that this is going to have on my constituency. Many of my colleagues on this side of the House all have these industries that are directly being hit and impacted today. My family, my friends, my neighbours are dealing with this: these costs that increased yesterday and this week. This is a direct impact to us, and our constituencies are suffering as a result, and this NDP continues to laugh and jeer and not take this issue seriously, when we are the ones—we are hearing this, we are seeing this, and we are feeling this in our constituencies on this side of the House.

We do need an all-party committee, because this Premier and this NDP government have shown that they are out of the—their league on this topic. He nods along with whatever Premier Ford and Premier Smith said, and as I mentioned, it's a good thing they're the ones speaking for Canada and not this Premier in Manitoba.

Any negotiations with the Trump administration that will impact our provincial industries should be consulted on with all members of this House to ensure that all corners and all areas of this House are well represented.

So we do—we need to come together as legislators. We need to consult with key impacted stakeholders and come up with a meaningful economic response plan. As I mentioned, advertisements, photo ops, stickers—that is not a meaningful economic response plan. We need to start unleashing Manitoba's potential.

We need to start ensuring that these land protectionist policies and NDP ideology that is hindering investment here in Manitoba is stopped, and we need to encourage investment and job growth in this province while ensuring independence in manufacturing, energy, agriculture and stop our reliance on foreign markets.

So, with that, I will conclude my remarks, and thank you, Honourable Speaker, for—Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to put a few words on the record today.

Thank you.

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Thank you, honourable assistant Deputy Speaker. I—Deputy Speaker; I apologize.

It gives me pleasure to rise today to speak to this issue. Certainly, you know, I appreciate members opposite and their opinion on how our Premier and our government are handling these enormous tariffs that President Trump is imposing on Canada. And what I would say is: It's just an opinion.

Our Premier has done an incredible job of deciding and figuring, with the leaders—the other first ministers in Canada—along with the Prime Minister, about how to respond to the threat of tariffs.

And now tariffs—and now I think there's a reprieve again, today, for 30 days. The plan is clear, is that we stand up for Manitobans. We work together, we ensure that people—their jobs—are protected, that we address issues with regards to industries and where tariffs may have the most impact. We have a solid plan and a strategy moving forward and we're releasing information practically on a daily basis.

So, the members opposite can stay tuned for all of the plans that we have come up with as a government. I appreciate this idea of all-party sort of situation, but really, at this point, I'd like to ask the members opposite: Did that happen when the pandemic was happening? Like, you came up with a lot of things on your own and that's not the way it works.

Our government has a plan to deal with tariffs, and thank goodness the NDP are in power under the great leadership of our Premier, Wab Kinew. And I just can't imagine where Manitoba would be right now—oh, sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, you can only refer to members by their constituency or their portfolio.

MLA Kennedy: Thank you, I appreciate that. My apologies.

I will continue on my point, though: Thank goodness that—for Manitobans that the NDP government, along with—under the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Kinew), are at the helm and being the ones who are in charge of producing a strategy to deal with Trump's threats of tariffs and his ridiculous language of annexing Canada and making it the 51st state. I can't imagine what would be happening if the PC government was in power.

So I am thankful and I know that our Premier and our Cabinet team and our caucus team are up to the task to ensuring that we stand together as Manitobans and that we have a plan moving forward with regards to addressing these tariffs.

Now I want to take a moment and talk about my portfolio specifically, which is Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism. So I know a lot of Manitobans, it's causing a lot of stress. People are asking: What can we do? It is a roller-coaster ride going up and down, up and down, with regards to whether Trump will or won't or if he stops or walks it back with the tariffs.

And a lot of people want to feel, like: What can I do? How can I take control of this situation? And so we see the efforts of our government encouraging people to buy local, to buy products made in Canada, which is incredibly important. And people have really stepped up in this regard. The patriotic pride that Canadians are feeling with regards to threats that our country would become a 51st state fills me with great pride.

* (15:40)

And so a part of buying local, supporting local, is also travelling local. Tourism is an incredibly important part of our economy in Manitoba, and we have thousands upon thousands of jobs that the tourism industry supports.

And while we continue to welcome our American brothers and sisters and folks from across the border to visit our beautiful province, we would encourage that Manitobans, instead of, you know, travelling to the United States or wherever they may take their next vacation, that they stay within Manitoba or within Canada and explore what we have to offer here right at home.

There are some incredible places that you can visit in Manitoba where you can be a tourist in your own province. I know for myself, in the summer

especially, I love to get out to our provincial parks. There are many camping opportunities available throughout our province to be in the outdoors—fishing and, you know, if you're into hunting. There's an enormous amount to do, whether it's boating or—I could go on forever.

We have incredible tour operators within our province. And in the winter, of course, there's lots of other things to do. There's groomed trails that are just incredible. You know, you can cross-country ski, there's snowmobiling, snowshoeing and there's so many things to do.

So what I would say is, you know, people are asking what can they do to take control and, you know, make a difference with regards to this scenario, and I would put that to them that Manitobans, you know, stick around home and in our province and explore what our province has to offer.

Certainly, I think what's—something I would like to really maybe shift gears a little bit here is to talk about Canadian values.

So for myself, I was born and raised in Canada, here in Manitoba in the Interlake, and I've lived here all my life. And I've always been a very proud Canadian and a very proud Manitoban. And so when I see things like Donald Trump coming and, you know, saying things like he's going to absorb Canada, the US is going to absorb Canada, we're going to become the 51st state, what I would—it really does elicit such a sense of pride—national pride in me.

And so the way I came to be is, you know, a person who is a part of this country and such a proud Canadian and Manitoban is, you know, my paternal grandparents moved here. They first moved from Lebanon and Syria to Crookston, Minnesota, in the early 1900s, and they lived there for, I think, three or four years—I might get that wrong, but in and around that time. And they were invited to move to Canada on the homesteaders act. And so they decided that they would do this.

They moved to the Interlake. They were invited to be there. They became landowners. This country afforded them the opportunity to become farmers, to become landowners and to settle in a place that was unfamiliar to them, but a place that they immediately loved and became a part of the community and were proud Canadians for their entire—and Manitobans. They never left Manitoba. And my father and his siblings were born in the Interlake and lived there. All eight siblings lived there. They were proud farmers.

They contributed to this province's economy and many remained throughout their many years.

And my mother was born and raised in Lebanon, and she moved here in her early twenties. My mom has lived in Manitoba and Canada for 50 years and she is proudly Canadian. I remember her taking her citizenship exam and being so proud of her and her being very thrilled. It's a great memory as a child, and she's proudly been Canadian.

The opportunities afforded to me as a woman, an Arab woman, from the decisions that my grandparents made and my mother made to make Manitoba and Canada their home, is incredible. I've had wonderful opportunities afforded to me by this country. I have pursued higher education. I have the freedom to choose how I want to live my life. I have the freedom to choose who I love, and we all as Canadians have these basic human rights and freedoms that our country provides to us.

And that is not the case throughout the world. And I will say even further to that, with Trump, you know, as the president in the United States currently, he's certainly—like, this is startling, the fascism that is occurring, and the way this person has systematically signed away human rights for people in the United States is startling.

And so we have people who were looking to move to Canada because of this, people who aren't recognized as the gender that they identify as. How can that be when it's just across the border? But it is. And it's terrifying.

So what I would say is I am truly proudly Canadian and I would put to folks that the basic human rights and individual freedoms that we enjoy here need to be protected. We cannot be absorbed by the United States. We cannot become the 51st state.

And I would have to argue with whatever figure the member from Borderland brought up yesterday. It just seems like truly unbelievable that 43 per cent, or whatever the case was, of people in his age group would rather be—like, I just—I don't even understand that.

The sense of Canadian pride in what people—the responses that we have seen from folks is overwhelming; it is overwhelming. And so how do we protect against this with the tariffs that Trump continually threatens, takes back, threatens, takes back?

And what I would say is, is that people need to ensure that they recognize just how serious this is

because which—what Trump is proposing to do under the veil of tariffs, or whatever the case, is to just simply take Canada over. We have our critical minerals here, which I'm sure is something that the president wants. And we need to ensure that we are not falling for this fentanyl business that the president says is an issue. I mean, these are all, you know, I think, just excuses as to what the president is trying to do.

And so what I would say is just to—for all of us to ensure that we recognize just how important us standing up for ourselves as Canadians is, that we need to ensure that we stay as a country, you know, that is united and strong and free, free to be sovereign, the—to continue to be the sovereign nation that we are.

So with that, honourable Deputy speaker—Speaker, I will end my words. I appreciate the time.

Thank you.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): It's an honour for me today to be able to speak on this topic that is so near and dear to all of our hearts here in Manitoba and Canada. For someone to threaten our sovereignty, for someone to threaten our way of life, we need to stand up.

I want to say, as the member of Portage la Prairie, and I say this a number of times, I am proud to be from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada. It's the place where I was born. It's the place where I live. And, hopefully, it'll be the place that I die, but not die before making a difference, hopefully, with this great country of ours, Canada.

Honourable Speaker, Tuesday, Manitobans saw our closest ally and neighbour was willing to wage an unprovoked economic war. We all knew it was coming, but held out hope that cooler heads would prevail and that all Manitobans would not be left holding the bag at the end of the day.

Unfortunately, in this case, when the world places obstacles in the path of Manitobans, we as legislators have a responsibility to step in, step up and act.

* (15:50)

Regardless of the industry, Manitobans are concerned this week. Prices for staples and essentials have already been out of control over the last year, and now we add economic chaos to this as well.

The extent of this government's plan or non-plan is to defer payroll taxes for three months. That isn't even relief. It is kicking the can down the road and hoping that someone else comes up with a solution

instead of coming up with a made-in-Manitoba-for-all-of-Canada solution.

The ideas are out there. Experts have done the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) homework for him. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has solutions for real help. Agriculture producers know what they need. Keystone agriculture produced a whole list.

It's really too bad that the minister and his government aren't listening. We could enact many of these today if there was a political will, and farmers could enter into the spring knowing that they were supported and not left fighting both disaster of man and nature alone.

Let's work through these suggestions.

One of the first ones is increase investment—this comes from the Keystone agriculture producers. Increase investment to align policies that will increase local demand and expand value-added capacity.

Manitobans want to support local. You can see that in the grocery store. In fact, the private sector has figured this out already, indicating Canadian products.

We can support these initiatives, empower our Crown corporations to provide that all-important and valuable shelf space to Manitoba industries with less regular access. We can also take a step in this direction, too, and stop shopping in American grocery stores like our Premier talked about today with Costco.

Again, from Keystone agriculture producers: expedite permitting to facilitate expansion of value-added production and processing. In the long-term, this idea of supporting demand—local demand to get ahead of another problem we know is coming.

In January 2026, new product label restrictions in the US will have a dramatic impact on Manitoba pork, where many weanlings are finished and processed in the US. Between these tariffs and the threats for next year, pork producers need to know that they're supported and that their industry will not be decimated when the route south closes. That would require investment now. These weanlings don't stop growing. This industry will be decimated within a very short few weeks, and we have not heard of any plan to work through that.

Work with other prairie provinces to leverage our shared interest and resources, including through engagement with individual key US states identified by industry.

I've had the opportunity to communicate with and work with—for colleagues across Canada and now across the US. I was elected to the board of SARL, the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders. What we all know is that producers and manufacturers on both sides of the border will be the ones footing the bill for this political grandstanding.

Our side was called out yesterday by the member of St. Johns for not doing anything, not being seen out there. This started for me when I thought about becoming part of the SARL board to be elected to in early December. What I did at that time is I walked across the floor and spoke to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), because I think it is important in this situation that we put politics aside from this.

After the US election ended, we needed to be ready for tariffs. From working in the agriculture business on both sides of the border, I could see what was happening, and I spoke to the Ag Minister about this not once, not twice, three different times, and told him that I was thinking about running for the board of SARL again, to let him know that if he wanted to run against me I was fine with that, but we needed a representative from Canada. We needed someone from Canada to sit on that board, that board that represents 40 states and every province in Canada, and I was so proud to put my name forward to be a member of—on that SARL board.

The other thing to let the member from St. Johns know, and if they followed me on Facebook they would be able to tell, that I was so proud to stand up on the stage of SARL, invite the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) to join me, invite all the Canadians to join me in the singing of O Canada. I feel so good about that today that if I knew I wouldn't be called out, it's time for us to all stand together in this Chamber and sing O Canada.

"O Canada. Our home and native land. / True patriot love in all of us command. / With glowing hearts we see thee rise, / The True North, strong and free. / From far and wide, / O Canada, we stand on guard for thee. / God keep our land glorious and free. / O Canada, we stand on guard for thee. / O Canada, we stand on guard for thee."

The Deputy Speaker: I will caution all members that we don't usually sing in the Chamber.

MLA Berez: Honourable Deputy Speaker, thank you for giving me that latitude and thank you for letting me sing the greatest anthem in the world, and I'm so proud.

Again, when we were down at SARL, I have to say in meeting with both Canadian, American representatives, meeting with, also with our consul down there, too, there's a lot of people that want to deal with Canada.

The thing that I'm concerned about is when we are in places like that, and again, right now, in a situation that we're in right now, why is our Ag Minister not at the Commodity Classic, again, which is one of the largest agriculture trade shows in North America, to meet with the US agriculture minister, Brooke Collings?

Shaun Haney with Real Agriculture was able to get a meeting with her. Why can our Minister of Agriculture not go to things like that?

Here's another tip: Next week is a conference that I used to enjoy going to called World Agri-Tech in San Francisco. That will be ag people from all over the world, and what a place to be to try and attract business to our country than to be at Agri-Tech.

* (16:00)

We need to continue to look for opportunities out there, like our neighbours in Saskatchewan are doing right now. The deputy minister of agriculture, Bill Greuel, has been in India looking for business in the protein and pulse industry right now. The minister of trade, Warren Kaeding, has been all over Southeast Asia looking for places that we can use as other opportunities to sell our goods.

Where's our Ag Minister been? Right there, sitting here waiting for those businesses to come to us. They're not coming to us; we have to go and look after them.

The minister of agriculture for Alberta has just announced another canola crushing plant. We have some of the best canola yields in all of North America. So why are we not looking to those places? Why are we sitting here and not doing anything about trying to do this? Again, it's all show and no go.

Our farmers are feeding the world. The—our feeders are—our farmers are trying to feed the world. They provide carrots, potatoes, onions for the less fortunate. Yes, we—yet we want to continue to make them less competitive than our—than those that are in provinces right next to us in western Canada.

Our farmers right now have to deal with our federal carbon tax that this NDP government is backing in order to make things more uncompetitive. The Manitoba Trucking Association, who is going to move potatoes and hogs and canola and wheat all over the place, but yet they are stuck with a federal carbon tax.

This isn't about words; it's about action. And it's time that we stood up and made some action out there and did something for this great country of ours, Canada.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker, for letting me put some words on the record.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): It's always my pleasure to talk about agriculture and the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba and in Canada, in the world.

Obviously, the tariffs situation is making it more and more challenging for all of us in the agriculture sector. As I indicated earlier, it is truly a roller coaster of regulations, ideas, starting at—in our second month now of delays, of what's it going to be?

I have to tell you, my conversations with the Manitoba Pork, Manitoba beef associations, a number of other organizations, they're just as frustrated as I am. And, as I indicated in question period, we've been in constant communications with all agriculture ministers or deputy ministers throughout Canada. And as I have said earlier, tomorrow, at about 1:30, we are having a live video meeting with all ministers across Canada and the federal agriculture minister as well.

Our intent is to be proactive to have a chance to work with the agriculture departments in—across Canada. And I know that the member opposite, the—from Portage la Prairie is kind of chirping in the background, and I think he's trying to get some attention. Well, I'll give him the attention if I could, but, obviously, at the end of the day—

An Honourable Member: I'm looking right at you, buddy.

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, it's okay.

Well, you know, here we go. Here's—our critic would sooner be kind of the joke of the conversation of the importance of agriculture, and I'm saying to him, and I'm trying to explain to him that the situation that we are facing because of the tariffs of the government to the south—and I have to honestly tell you, when I was down in Iowa, I was down in Minneapolis, we were down there, we met with a number of organizations. And I honestly have to tell you, deputy honourable Speaker, that the reception we received as a Canadian, Manitoban delegations of the importance of agriculture products that we have a great trading relationship.

In fact, to the point when I talked to Mr. Cam Dahl, and he kept reassuring me we have the greatest working relationship with the US counterparts, to the point of 3.2 million weanlings get shipped every year down south to Iowa.

And when I spoke to the Iowa pork producers, they said we have choices in our country to obtain weanlings somewhere else. But, no, because of the quality of the breed of weanlings that we, in Manitoba, produce, it's top notch. And that is why—that is why Iowa continues to want to buy pork from us.

And it's almost at a point where they're probably in a situation of doing the financial calculations of where they see that they want to maintain this trading relationship of the importance.

We talked about the beef industry, and as I indicated it earlier, when we—Matt Atkinson at the Manitoba Beef Producers general meeting, we had a great conversation. His comment to me was a concern of where the beef prices may land up given the proposal of tariffs. And being a beef producer for 40 years of my life, honourable Deputy Speaker, the prices today—it's been long-awaited for the rightful people in the beef industry.

Although probably prices today should be maintained for a while, but unfortunately, the government across from us, when they chose to make changes to the Crown Lands Act, accelerated the financial burdens that they are dealing with today. And they are still trying to recover from a 300 per cent rental increase in operations.

And I say to the member—to the critic across—I'm not sure if he knows what a beef animal is, but I will assure you that I will share the point, as agriculture producer for 40 years of my life, that I knew darn well what was happening.

And it's unfortunate, Deputy Speaker, is that the beef industry is in the numbers of what they were in 1960, cow numbers North American-wide. And what we see of no encouragement by the members opposite to give the young family farms an opportunity to continue to grow.

But the tariffs that are being proposed, the reality is that animals will be moving between US and Canada on a regular basis, and some animals may have crossed the border twice. So every time that one animal goes across, it's a 25 per cent tariff.

And as to the conversation we had with the Iowa pork, Minneapolis young farmers, the government,

the commissioners, and while we all agreed on the fact, is that this is nothing more than an accelerated cost for consumers in the US side and in the Canada side.

Unfortunately, you know what? The members have no understanding. The members—in fact, almost to the point where they—the member from Fort Whyte said thank you to Donald Trump. Can you honestly accept the fact that—why would you want to say that in the face of the tariff discussions and the threat? Do you really think that you're sticking up for the farmers? I don't think so.

* (16:10)

It's unfortunate that we build bridges for allies to work against this action. I'm thinking this as the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has assembled the US Trade Council, and unfortunately your government chose to dismiss the individual that was in Washington for a lot of years, that provided an opportunity of continuing communication for the agriculture industry in the province of Manitoba, or a representative from Canada—from Manitoba—that stuck up for a number of things that exist.

So unfortunately what we have is, we have a situation where members opposite choose to go on the high roadside, on the US side. In fact, we almost have individuals that are saying that they'd sooner be an American than being a Manitoban or Canadian. It should have been—too bad that we've had this situation continue on for as long as it had. *[interjection]*

Oh, here we go. Here we go, Honourable Speaker—Deputy Speaker. I love the attention that I'm creating, because obviously I must be hitting a few notes, for the members opposite, of concern, and the—but you know, when we talk about the importance of trade—and I'm not sure if the members opposite has ever really brought it to surface, but—agriculture with the trade that we have between Canada and Manitoba—or, US and Manitoba is \$9.28 billion worth of ag food products in 2004. We exported that many dollars, a decrease of about 1.3, and we exported 9.4 in 2023.

So we built a great relationship, deputy honour Speaker, and we continue want to build a great working relationship. What we are faced with: the uncertainty of the roller-coaster decisions that being made. As I said, we've been talking to the agriculture ministers throughout Canada. We've been talking to a number of individuals that are directly going to be affected by the food processing industry, and we know

for a fact, deputy honourable Speaker, is the price of food continues to rise.

And you wonder why, when we are 'pomoting' buy local, that members opposite choose to vote against something like that. They'd sooner do what, they'd sooner find food from somewhere else? The importance of food and agriculture is a main staple in our opinion. What we need to do is get together, and as we are—as I indicated earlier—with the agriculture ministers across Canada and the federal agriculture minister, that we continue to provide some programs.

So we need to do—*[interjection]* That's right, team Canada. Team Canada. And what I'm hearing from members opposite—he chooses not to have that conversation whatsoever. He'd sooner be on the US side, much related to the hockey game, and we have to win in overtime to make it—

An Honourable Member: What about the blue panel? The Obby jersey?

Mr. Kostyshyn: Yes, exactly.

So—no, unfortunately we are living in a world—and I want to stress the importance of agriculture. Now only are we worried about the—a machine we manufacturing, increase cost, and these members across are somewhat more on the side of not considering being a team Canada player. We have got potential—potential someone—to be recognized, and all of a sudden he is choosing to be more supportive of the US kind of lifestyle than support Manitoba and Canada opportunities.

I do want to say it's definitely too bad that members opposite choose to make this a political game. I'm not doing it this way. I've gotten together with a number of agriculture producers, and we continue to fight for the betterment of what we have today in Manitoba, and we have in Canada.

The—*[interjection]* Well, well, well, well. It's unfortunate the members opposite is choosing to want to criticize what we're doing, such a great—all I can say to them is that, if it was such a great mentality of the member opposite chirping, why did he allow for agriculture Crown lands to be at the state it is today? And we tend to see this coming along in a long, long way.

In fact, almost to the point, it's almost to the point, deputy honour Speaker, that he is choosing to say that the sale of Crown lands was to be used for what a purpose. Was it really a purpose to provide young entrepreneurs a chance to get ahead? Was it an opportunity to have corporate involvement and dismiss of a

lot of the family farms organizations? And maybe what we have to do, a 'frippa' investigation, to see whether there was that underlying current as I'm—just referred to earlier. And we unfortunately might have to see the truth may eventually come out.

The importance of the opportunity of the highest paycheck would get property lease rates, but yet—but poor young farm—generational farmers—stood no chance. And why would that government across the road there choose not to support young agriculture producers in the province of Manitoba?

We continue to ask that question, but yet we have no answer.

I know the member opposite chooses to—you know, he spent most of his life selling agriculture commodity products. I'm not sure if he ever even got on a horse, but he—definitely it's interesting that the member opposite is talking about the importance of the fact, almost to the point where this morning we had a conference call, Roquette, and the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba. And Roquette—the MLA for the Portage area and the dollars that have gone into the—we continue to work with them. And the tariffs definitely will be a concern for them as well when we're talking about the protein that Roquette as a manufacturer does as well.

In fact, what we have today—we spoke to Simplot a week ago, and the question that was asked just yesterday on the opportunity of potato production—well, you know what? The actual—what happened was is that prior to the last provincial election, that government went around and promised a lot of the potato growers we're going to provide more irrigation water so you can grow more and more potatoes.

As it turns out, that did not happen, actually. What it was is that, as we spoke to the producers and the farmers that said that, well, we were more or less told that's what going to happen. Well, unfortunately, we have regulations that regulate the use of water and we need to be very conscientious of the water usage that is provided. But yet, it was more of a campaign promise that that side chose to use and take advantage of the farmers that exist and they're trying to make a living at it.

So, Honourable Speaker, I—Deputy Speaker, I stress again to you: members opposite choose to make it a political game. I spent 40 years of my life doing the cattle industry, worked hard on the farm to make things happen. I was not a salesman; I was an actual

farmer doing what I was brought up to do and I continue to do that on the up.

What we need is an opportunity for the young producers today to stay on the farm and make an attractive living at it. They don't want to be millionaires. They don't want to be whatever they are. They just want a comfortable lifestyle.

But they are making it very challenging. Members opposite made it very challenging for those family farms to continue on, almost to the point where there was no regulations of farms that were recently sold, compliments to their template of opportunity that took it away, took it away from young family farm producers and opportunity for them to continue to benefit of the opportunity of benefitting in the program that exists today.

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, I'm being very repetitious in what I'm going to be saying here, but I think the point is this—can I have a glass of water, please—yes—is the fact that this is not a game. This is not a political game, as I hear members opposite chirping about. I think what I'm saying is what we need to do is we need to revisit the opportunity, because agriculture is not only beneficial for the family farms in geographic areas.

I am a rural individual. I believe in rural economic development. And what was taken away from the young producers, well, the Crown lands situation was all their fault. They'll never admit to it, honourable Deputy Speaker, but they will have to accept it sooner than later because the truth will come out. Opportunities—the truth will come out of what was happening in that opportunity soon.

* (16:20)

What needs to be done is we need to continue to work with the rural economy, and I know our department will definitely continue to provide opportunities of economic development processing in the marketplace.

Well, honourable Deputy Speaker, he's asking me the plan. I can tell you what their plan was, the members opposite. They were prepared to take all Crown land away from individuals because the size of the cheque was the only way that they would be able to obtain the Crown lands.

So what we see is now apprehension and then put it into an auction. All we're going to have is a number of large corporations owning a bunch of land, and maybe I could refer to—in the—any stolen country. Let

me use that for an example. Let's—I'll give you some actual facts when I talk about the producers in that area, where they can honestly tell me that it was very conveniently set up to make high prices, and there was no opportunity for anybody else to move in.

And in fact I talked to a number of ranchers in that particular area, and they've said, you know what, it was very strategically planned by the larger operations coming in and conveniently picking up land in that designated area, so that even if a young family farm wanted to expand, there was no chance of that ever happening because it was out.

So now we're almost at a point where we're starting to see land, land that's going to be probably 50, 60 quarters of land that's going to be owned by corporations. And I don't have any disagreement with corporations, but I do respect the fact that if there was a—given a choice to go to a family farm to expand rural economic development versus someone that's a large affiliated farm, I'd sooner give it to the young family farm and generation and all.

Unfortunately, we see members opposite, they look at the big dollars and that seems to be the choice that they choose to go with. In fact, you know what's—it was so ironic, honourable Deputy Speaker, is when they started to have meetings.

And I'll refer to Ste. Rose, Manitoba, where there was 200-and-some-odd beef producers when this all started up. Not one individual was even wanting to be there. They were high-tailing out of that geographic area, because they did not want to even have a conversation with any of the producers. Much like to the point when they closed the jail we had in Dauphin, Manitoba, what we had at that time. The Justice minister showed up, he made the announcement to the city, put the car in drive and let's get out of Dauphin before they have a meeting about the economic.

So we want to talk about the economic development of growth. Thank goodness to the Justice Minister sitting beside me here that he—now we're moving forward to rebuild—rebuild what this government is all famous for, is to continue destroying communities and opportunities for development in the long run.

An Honourable Member: Why is there less Crown land today?

Mr. Kostyshyn: So what we do see—and I hear a little bit of chirping in the background there, but he refers to Crown—I'm sure it's hard for him to even say Crown

lands, because he's a victim of the problem that we have in existence.

But, honestly, you know what, we've had numerous discussions with Crown land representatives. They are patiently awaiting, as we move forward to bring fairness—to bring fairness to the young individual farmers, ranchers in this province.

We're not going to go base it on who has the largest cheque and whether you even live in Manitoba or do you live in Alberta or do you live in Canada, period. That is where we are now in consultation, and we'll be in consultation for a while to develop the importance of what Crown lands was all about.

So what we see is that opportunities where generational farmers were able to offload or sell property on the unit transfer opportunities. And so we had Albertans, we had 'saskatans' moving in, small family farms choosing to come to Manitoba and continue establishing their ranching operations.

No, that wasn't good enough for that government across the room. They'd just as soon say no, we're just going to make it out who's got the largest cheque, so they increased Crown land rates by 300 per cent. Six months before the election, well, let's cut it back because we're going into an election so we might lose out some votes in the long run.

So, let me tell you, I wish when there—when we get back to having these consultations, I'll gladly entertain inviting the critic from Portage la Prairie, please come to Ste. Rose, Manitoba, and talk to the 200-and-some-odd ranchers that were there before The Crown Lands Act was changed and make that opportunity because, sure as heck, deputy honourable Speaker, is that these individuals choose to make tough decisions but they don't want to stand behind their decisions for the benefit of the agriculture people.

At the end, I am really honoured to be the Agriculture Minister, and I will continue for the betterment of agriculture, and I hope members opposite, the critic especially, come with us. I'll even give you a pair of skates with us, yes.

So, in closing, I would like to say—[interjection] Something else? You're good? Okay.

So, in conclusion, I will say this again: it's my honour to be the Agriculture Minister, second time around, and it's a privilege to be here and talk about the importance of what we have in this province. And

we talk about the tariffs that we are dealing with today.

And I know members opposite have their favourite colour, so to speak, that they would sooner have that side of the fence. I'm telling you—I want to tell you all—is that we, this government, our Premier (Mr. Kinew), all stand together for the betterment of agriculture in the long run. We want to maintain rural economic development and we will continue focusing on, with all of us from this side of the House, and not pick out the beneficial benefits of large cheques for the benefits of their party.

Thank you so much, and it's my pleasure.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I don't know what to say. Wow, wow, wow. I—my job now, moving forward, is definitely to show Manitobans the government that we have in charge right now because I'll reiterate what the title of their resolution is, and it's Manitoba is Stronger Standing Together Against Donald Trump's Tariff Tax and Threats. And this is a resolution that this NDP government brought forward.

And I thought, great. This is an opportunity for us as Manitobans, as legislators of this House, to come together to work on a plan or at least for this government to deliver the plan that they have to combat the tariff trade war threats that are coming out of the US currently.

Instead, what I heard was absolutely disgusting yesterday. We heard from the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) for more than an hour speaking in circles about absolutely nothing of relevance to trade, nothing of relevance to trade for our country and our province. Nothing of relevance.

So she stood up to talk about transgender rights of children in schools, and that was of importance, which none of us are disputing the importance in the general scene of our provincial politics, but it has nothing, zero, to do with trade relations between the United States and Canada. That trade relationship is important to families in Manitoba. It's important to all of our neighbours.

On this side of the House, we represent small businesses, small-business owners, the staff that work for those businesses.

* (16:30)

And unfortunately the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) seemed to be so out of touch with reality, and it may be because of working a lifetime career in social services where you're protected by the

government and the taxpayers of our province in a job that you don't need to show your value to our economy. And that's true. These are positions that they fill on that side of the House that you don't need to show the relevance that it has to the economic position of our country.

So we had the Minister of Families stand up yesterday talking about how patriotic they were to our country. This is the same person that's reluctant—this minister is the same minister that's reluctant to sing O Canada, reluctant to stand up for O Canada. And it gets worse than that. It gets worse than that. Anybody that knows the Minister of Families also knows—anyone who's spoken to her knows that in her—how she feels. But it gets better than that. In her master's—I found this quote and I'd like to share it with Manitobans. In her own master's thesis, she wrote: Canadian nationalism is a racist ideology.

The Minister of Families who spoke for more than an hour yesterday about the trade position of our country is the same person that made a quote saying Canadian nationalism—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. While the motion is quite broad, you have gone beyond relevance, the border of relevance. So I'd ask that you bring it back to the resolution.

Mr. Narth: I'm speaking to definitely Manitoba standing up against a trade war. Disappointed in our government and the leadership in our government not showing any relevance throughout two days of debate. But I wanted Manitobans to know exactly how they function. On this side of the House, myself, many others, are small-business owners, have been small-business owners, and we know that a tariff war directly threatens to speed drain corporate money out of our province. This is the reality of what's going on. This government had absolutely no plan.

We listened to the Agriculture Minister, which I'm actually embarrassed for this government right now. I'm embarrassed for this government, and I should be on the other side, happy that I can showcase this to the great people of La Vérendrye. But instead, I feel some level of embarrassment that this is the government that we have representing all of us today. And it's really, really unfortunate.

So I'd like to use some examples that are maybe closer to home because me representing La Vérendrye, the furthest southeast corner of Manitoba, we have close relationships with friends on the US side, businesses that our businesses rely on, agriculture com-

modity trade. But we do realize that this is a government with a caucus disconnected from business and agriculture. Unfortunately, we heard 24 and a half minutes of the disconnect from agriculture by the Ag Minister.

But an example that I could use is Evolution Wheel, a Winnipeg start-up business, owned by Dennis [phonetic] Hird, a great, local Winnipeg entrepreneur that started an industrial wheel company that manufactures wheels and the rubber right here in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These are the businesses that we need to be proud of. These are people that are innovative entrepreneurs that employ people, that feed families and contribute back to our province. One in three small-business owners generated over half of their sales with the US. One in three rely more than 50 per cent on the US for trade.

So right now we need to be coming up with solutions instead of bickering back and forth on political ideologies, as we've seen over the last two days. Evolution Wheel was recently interviewed and had made mention that they are left with no other choice but to continue to compete with the 25 per cent tariff.

So, right now there is no plan from the government, no plan whatsoever other than potential subsidization. But other than that, no plan for this business owner to compete with the tariffs and compete with the American counterparts that are within his industry. He's forced to pivot. That's the reality right now.

And the Agriculture Minister laughs. The Minister of Families went on a rambling rampage for an—over an hour about nothing relevant to trade. But a business owner in Winnipeg is left no option other than to pivot and split part of their operation into the United States. This is what they're looking at. Derek himself had mentioned that counter-tariffs will only add to that burden.

So we look at what are the solutions that we've heard? Well, we've heard taking liquor off liquor store shelves in the government-run stores within Winnipeg and our largest centres in Manitoba. The Finance Minister's solution is a tax deferral. I wish the Finance Minister was here. And I don't know if it's really frustrating—oh, there, the Finance—sorry—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

We can't reflect on whether a member is in the Chamber or not in the Chamber.

Mr. Narth: Thank you, deputy honourable Speaker, and I'm sorry for that. I should've known.

It has been clear to see that this government doesn't have an understanding of basic economic theory. We've seen that time and time again now. But this goes further. It is now clear that the government doesn't have a basic understanding of business financial accounting. And I'll explain it for the Finance Minister. Unfortunately, I have an accounting background, so these are things that fundamentally frustrate me when I look at them at face value.

But tax deferral is tax owed. So that's a liability on their financial statement. What that means is it's a liability that affects the company's liquidity and their ability to access funding. So, right now, as we have Manitoba businesses, like I've stated with Evolution Wheel, needing to continue on with business, the NDP government comes with a saviour plan of deferral of taxation, which accomplishes nothing.

But I guess with this NDP government that is absolutely fearless of debt, they think that it's no big deal to accumulate debt and that the business should be thankful of carrying further liability. That's not reality when businesses—small businesses, medium businesses—go to the bank. They—the bank looks at their liquidity and they see that this is a carried liability.

So I think we all can agree, and it's safe to say that everyone was disappointed to wake up on Tuesday morning and realize that this threat of a 25 per cent tariff on all Canadian products was fulfilled by President Trump. Since the president's inauguration, we have seen a serious threat to our cross-border trade and relationship with the United States in general. Since the first threat, we have heard many commitments from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and also the Prime Minister, but nothing to support and build our economy.

We need to act, but I am convinced that trade retaliation is not the answer out of this mess. Donald Trump is in office for four years, and he has set the stage for our relationship during that time. The only way to combat the effects on our economy is major deregulation and economic incentives in sectors that are most dependent on US trade. And I'll reiterate that: We need to deregulate and provide incentives for businesses in Manitoba right now, today. Talking about what may have been done or may not have been done in the past isn't going to sign the paycheques for Evolution Wheel. Instead of retaliation on trade of products that substantially affect our citizens and insignificantly affect theirs, we need to instead give our economy the tools to compete.

The most certainty that we can see from retaliation is that it's going to push the president to increase tariffs in days to come, which could outright cripple our economy.

* (16:40)

The Speaker in the Chair

We instead need to remain competitive with US companies, making it harder on the people of the United States and their economy. This will in turn force them to put pressure on their government and their President. We see substantial regulation and taxation in each of the main trade sectors within our economy.

My region of the province is significantly based on agriculture and manufacturing. Within these two sectors of our economy, we can easily see far more than 25 per cent government burden on production, as well as significant opportunities for government to enable growth.

The same approach can be seen and used across all major sectors within our economy. Examples of these taxes and regulations that make up more than 25 per cent of costs of production are things like the carbon tax: the carbon tax that we've been talking about—Canadians have been talking about—for two years now.

Also, production levies, payroll tax, corporate tax and most importantly, income tax. If we can cut taxes and regulations by more than 25 per cent for our local businesses and manufacturers, it will allow them to not only compete, but also provide them more flexibility to react to ongoing market changes while keeping their employees happy and working.

This not only will allow the economy stability, but avoids the alternative government reaction, which is debt-driven subsidies, which we have seen and learned in recent history can be devastating to inflation and the stability of our economy.

We are an economy heavily dependent on exports of raw or near-raw materials that—our effect of retaliation is insignificant in the grand scheme of our trade position. Governments should never get into business, and get out of the way of business. It should be government's position right now to step out of the way of business and the economic growth of our province and country by allowing businesses the tools they need to remain competitive.

The more money left in the pockets of Manitobans, the more money left in our economy. This trade war

can be won with less government involvement instead of more.

Thank you.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we are proud to be Canadian—proud to be Canadian. Unapologetically, with our full chests we can say we are proud to be Canadian.

In stark contrast, on that side of the House, you have the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) making comments about how his friends and the people he connects with and the voices he's listening to are people who want to be Americans.

You have the member for Borderland standing up while Manitobans and Canadians are worried about very real economic consequences as a result of Trump's damaging and reckless tariffs, standing up and talking about becoming American.

Honourable Speaker, it should concern every single person in this House and every single Manitoban that the PC caucus is comfortable with members of their team standing up and proclaiming that they want to be Americans. That is truly unacceptable.

Honourable Speaker, in addition to that, in an environment where Manitobans are worried about tariff threats, in an environment where Canadians are coming together in incredible ways we have not seen in a long, long time, you have members opposite like the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), who is going out and thanking Donald Trump for his tariffs.

Honourable Speaker, it should quite frankly frighten Manitobans that there is a PC caucus, in the midst of the economic challenges that we're facing not only in Canada but certainly globally as a result of these tariff threats and realities, that are championing the very same person who is inflicting this harm and instability on Manitobans and Canadians.

And so I will say it again so that Manitobans can know in their minds and in their hearts, on this side of the House, this government is proud to be Canadian.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans, Canadians, I've heard from so many folks. In fact, just yesterday night, I'm leaving the Leg., it's dark, and I see a woman walking past the Legislature, and she walks up the steps of this incredible building and is trying to take a selfie of herself with the flag, the incredible Canadian flag that is now outside of our building reminding Manitobans each and every day that we are united as a country and a province. And I was thrilled to help

her get a good photo on the steps of this Legislature with that flag behind her and to chat briefly about how proud we are that Manitobans are coming together in this way.

During a time where Manitobans, Canadians, are really unifying, are going out of their way and above and beyond to support our local Manitoban economy, to buy Canadian; during a time where folks are having conversations with their children about what it means to be Canadian and all the privileges and the rights and protections it affords us and that we will always, on this side of the House, work to uphold and protect; during this time, members opposite are doing just that: the opposite.

They continue to do the work of dividing Manitobans, driving wedges in between communities, taking an approach that is harmful not only for today but will be harmful for tomorrow and for years to come. It is so important. I am so grateful, Honourable Speaker, that during this time of economic challenge and uncertainty, we have not only the most popular Premier (Mr. Kinew) in the country leading Manitoba through this time, we have a person who unapologetically stands on the side of the citizens he represents and focuses on bringing people together.

Manitoba has a Premier that stands with families who have been impacted and affected by tragedy, in contrast to members opposite, member for Fort Whyte. In the midst of these tariff threats, in the midst of all of these challenges, cannot find it within himself to apologize for the harms he participated in in the last election here in Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, I think we've all learned, we've all watched and we've seen the impacts of not learning from mistakes and not committing to doing better. I sincerely hope that during this time, at some point, while Canadians role model the behaviour they should be seeing from members opposite, that they will catch up, that they will join team Canada and finally start focusing on bringing people together, on pushing back against these damaging tariff threats, and on being representatives that actually proudly represent this country and represent the voices of the Manitobans they were elected to serve.

Honourable Speaker, the tariff tax is a real attack on Canada. It's part of a broader, sweeping attack on human rights that we're seeing. It's so important that Canadians not only stand united against these Trump tariff threats but also against the harmful rhetoric and

policies and division that we're seeing that we know has an impact on our own Canadian soil.

* (16:50)

You know, I've had the privilege and the pleasure of putting on a Team Canada jersey and uniform, many years ago, back when my knees were in much better shape. And I had the privilege of travelling the world and meeting with folks from all different backgrounds and countries who were also very proud to don the uniforms of the countries they represented. And everywhere we went, people were so excited to connect with Canadians. And we were always so excited to learn and connect with folks from other countries.

And the thing that I heard consistently when I was a younger person, in my twenties, playing basketball, representing our country, was that people would always reflect on how welcoming Canada seemed to be. People who had the opportunity to compete in Canada or travel there, or have loved ones in our country, they talked about the economic opportunities Canada provides. They talked about the cultural connections that Canada facilitates and fosters. They talked about: Wow, what it must be for you to put your Canadian flag on your uniform, on your backpack, and anywhere you go, people are happy to see you.

I have always carried that with me.

And, Honourable Speaker, during a time where we reflect on what it means to be Canadian and what makes our Canadian economy strong, it is really our diversity as a country and as a province here in Manitoba that generates so much of our economic strength, which is part of the reason why our government stands on the side of human rights, which is why our government celebrates the diversity in Manitoba. Our diversity is one of our greatest economic drivers. It is something to be celebrated, to be protected, to be enhanced.

And so, we stand up for Manitobans. Our Premier (Mr. Kinew), our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), our Minister of Business and jobs, our whole team from day one worked very hard and swiftly to ensure that Manitoba jobs are protected and we'll continue to do that work.

But it's important to note that when we say we're protecting the jobs of Manitobans, we're talking about all Manitobans. We're not saying some Manitobans or

these Manitobans. We're saying all Manitobans of all identities.

It's deeply concerning, Honourable Speaker, in a climate, in an environment where we see these escalating attacks on targeted and already marginalized communities. One would hope that in this time, we would see members opposite, including the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan), who was the face of a targeted attack against trans kids in the last election, take this moment and then use it as an opportunity to say two very important words that can contribute to healing: I'm sorry.

I think that people forget that in our country, we have this incredible foundation that people that came before us worked very hard to build and establish, where you can be a young two-spirit kid, a young queer or trans kid who has dreams of becoming a doctor, a nurse, an allied health-care professional—I'm talking about health care because I'm the Health Minister; I'll need more of you folks on the front lines. But, you can dream big. And your dreams in our country will be met with love and support and compassion and affirmation.

And if Donald Trump comes for your job when you grow up and you're an adult working in our workforce, your Premier will protect you and your job. That is a privilege that we have in Canada, we have in Manitoba, that not everybody has everywhere. It's an important distinction that we must recognize sets us apart in ways that really, really matter.

And, again, it's strength in not only our collective social fabric, not only our health-care system, but our economy, whether it's Harvard, Wall Street Journal, whether it's Stanford, whether it's—oh my goodness, there's so many different business magazines and reviews that have been done that have shown definitively that diversity results in innovation, enhances collaboration, sparks and ignites investment, drives economies. This is a fact. It's been scientifically proven. It's evidence-based. It's not just, you know, political rhetoric. The science actually tells us this is the case. It's an advantage we have in our Canadian infrastructure and economy. It's an advantage we have in Manitoba that we should be very proud of.

In our province, our government has taken steps to not only be very clear that we stand on the side of a strong economy, we'll push back against these damaging tariff threats. We've been really clear that we're going to do what is necessary to make more

visible what it means to have innovation on the ground for small businesses, what it means to lift people up and make sure they have the opportunities to thrive in our economic market.

And we've done that in a way—and I'm really proud to say it—in a way, again, that brings people together. You can do the hard things in a way that isn't divisive. You can do the hard things in a way that doesn't leave people out of the conversation.

I think it's very bizarre to see members opposite choose to do the opposite of that. It's actually much easier just to be kind. It's actually much easier just to bring people in. It's much easier just to say that everyone should be treated with kindness and respect—much easier to do that. Much more success comes from that.

And so, on this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, we are going to continue to do the work of listening to Manitobans, bringing people together, being proud to be Canadian, investing in making sure our businesses can be successful, that our health-care system, which, to be very clear, these tariff threats in realities will have a direct impact on our health-care system. And so it is even more concerning when you hear the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) talking about privatizing health care and thanking Donald Trump for tariffs.

Those are very scary comments to be making when we know that tariffs are not only going to damage our economy, they're going to damage our health-care economy as well. It shows what little regard you have for Manitobans to make flippant statements about privatizing health care and not talking about what you actually mean. You either don't understand what you're talking about, or you don't care. Neither one of those is acceptable.

Fundamentally, what Manitobans have been shown very quickly, like, in an—at an alarming rate of quickness, is how disconnected fundamentally the PCs are from the realities of Manitobans, how completely detached they are from what the priorities of Canadians are.

I think it really fundamentally also speaks to this gap between why we're here and who we serve and what it is that we want to see happening in our communities. You know, we work to bring those things together.

On that side of the House, huge gap in between those two things.

I do want to acknowledge these comments in the—that were made by the MLA for La Vérendrye in terms of social service workers, and I, because I know he won't do it, I want to apologize on his behalf to those folks who work in social services, who work every single day in our communities in Manitoba, who contribute to our economy, who are all very nervous about what's going on in terms of these Trump tariff threats and whose work is invaluable to Manitobans. That member stood up in this House and mocked their jobs, criticized their employment.

On this side of the House, we're talking about, and we're committed to, protecting Manitobans' jobs. On that side of the House the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) made fun of the jobs of social service workers, minimized the impact they have to our

economy, to the communities and the Manitobans they serve each and every day.

Honourable Speaker, that is disgraceful, and I know that that member will not apologize, so I'll say it again. I apologize on his behalf. Every single Manitoban who's employed, contributing to our economy, making a difference across a myriad of systems, you are valued. We respect you, and we will fight to protect your jobs.

Honourable Speaker, I do want to take a moment to talk a bit about the campaign—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 13 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 6, 2025

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