



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*



**Vol. LXXIX No. 27 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, March 17, 2025**

**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

Monday, March 17, 2025

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

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

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

Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### **Bison's Women's Volleyball Champions**

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Honourable Speaker, last night the U of M Bisons women's volleyball team achieved something truly incredible.

In four breathtaking, action-packed sets, after a full weekend of battle, they defeated the Montreal Carabins and reclaimed their rightful position as national champions and the best volleyball team in the country. It was truly a moment of triumph for the women and a testament to the growing culture of volleyball and sports—women's sports in Manitoba.

All seven of the starting players were raised in Manitoba. All played volleyball in Manitoba high schools. And communities from all across Manitoba produced players that contributed to their national championship win last night, communities like

Ile des Chênes, Hamiota, Petersfield, Landmark and Flin Flon.

It was one of the first times in our province's history that a women's team sold out the stadium, with over 3,500 attendees, many of whom waited in line for over an hour for the best seats to watch the best team in the country.

Honourable Speaker, it's hard to put into words the feeling in the stadium, especially while sitting next to my own 12-year-old daughter, when these incredible athletes put up block after block, kill after kill, and dig after dig. It was electric: mastery, determination, strength, physicality, grit, camaraderie, endurance and trail-blazing.

Honourable Speaker, these women are not only national champion athletes but all of them are top-tier students, as well, in some of the most challenging academic programs. These women have redefined university- and college-level athletics in our province, and we are all better for it. When we talk about women breaking down barriers and being in all spaces, this is what we're talking about.

We are joined today here by Bisons captain Light Uchechukwu. Also here is Ken Bentley. Ken has coached the Bisons women's volleyball team for 39 years and has just won his seventh national championship out of eight in the team's history.

On behalf of our 'previen'—on behalf of our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our government, we thank Light, Ken, all other team members, staff, University of Manitoba leadership and the fans for making all Manitobans proud.

We ask leave to have the rest of the team members' and staff's names recorded in Hansard.

Horns up.

*Players: Andi Almonte, Julia Arnold, Brenna Bedosky, Emma Benson, Katreena Bentley, Bethany Carter, Eve Catojo, Chloe Ellerbrock, Elia Falcone, Ella Gray, Ella Gurr, Julia Horne, Alexandria Haip, Addisen Neill, Aviendah Plett, Chelsea Siebenga, Raya Surinx, Kameryn Vanwalleggham*

*Staff: Jyra Geronimo, Jim Grape, Mike Hamm, Michelle Sawatzky-Koop, Mandy Los, Joe Moore, Gene Muller, Ashley Sawatzky, Cole Scheller, Curt Warkentin*

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Honourable Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the University of Manitoba women's volleyball team in their wonderful achievement in this past weekend by capturing gold at the U Sports national championships held at home on the U of M campus in front of thousands of fans, family and friends.

The gold-medal game was a riveting—was riveting and exciting. Through teamwork and determination, the University of Manitoba secured the gold-medal win with a score of three sets to one over the Université de Montréal.

This gold-medal-winning performance was the first since 2014 but eighth overall since the team's interception in 1970. With eight national titles, the team is now ranked second in most titles across all of Canada, a proud achievement for the U of M women's volleyball program indeed.

Student athletes play an integral role in the campus community especially—*[interjection]* Can you still hear me? Hello?

**The Speaker:** Yes, we can hear you. Please continue.

**MLA Lagassé:** Okay. Something popped up on my screen there and interrupted. Excuse me, sorry.

Student athletes play an integral role in the campus community especially and are well known for their strong work ethic both in the classroom and on court. With this amazing win, I know there will be many female volleyball players encouraged to keep on playing knowing that they, too, can perhaps win in a university championship one day.

To all those connected with the U of M women's volleyball program this past year—all the coaches, athletic therapists, student athletes and their families, including professors who taught these amazing players—our sincerest congratulations on a job well done. Now that your dedication each and every day to training and to practising, to playing the sport and to your education, we know you will do well in the future.

To the game leaders, including players Raya Surinx, Light Uchechukwu, Andi Almonte and Brenna Bedosky, what a great match. And to coach Ken Bentley, whose 39-year career as a coach with seven titles to his credit, saw his own children Katreena Bentley and Julia Arnold win gold, who are both graduating seniors on this team.

Again, congratulations to the University of Manitoba women's volleyball team on your gold-medal

performance this past weekend. All Manitobans are proud of what you have accomplished.

\* (13:40)

**The Speaker:** Before we move on to members' statements, I've got some introductions I'd like to do at this point in time.

### Speaker's Statement

**The Speaker:** Members may have noticed a familiar face returning to the table today. While we cannot refer to the absence of members in this Chamber, I'm allowed to note that our Deputy Clerk has been absent from his duties for the last few weeks, as he's had something that—he thought, at least—was far more important to attend to than all of us—becoming a father for the first time.

On February 24, 2025, Tim and his wife Becky became the proud parents of a baby boy, Finley John Stajkowski-Abbott.

Finn and his parents are all doing very well, and we are thankful for this good news. Tim's Assembly family is very happy for him, and we are happier still to welcome Becky and little Finn to the Speaker's Gallery today.

And now it's time for Tim to get back to work. *[interjection]* I said now it's time for Tim to get back to work.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Corporal Kiernan Underwood

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** So today, as our government team continues to take a united team Canada approach to standing against US-imposed tariffs, I want to recognize another leader of team Canada: Corporal Kiernan Underwood of 17 Wing Winnipeg.

Corporal Underwood recently served as co-captain of Team Canada at the Invictus Games. Like so many who serve, he has given deeply of himself; his body, his sense of peace, his own well-being. And the Invictus Games were more than a competition for him; they were a turning point. Both he and his wife Tanya, who's here with him today, a paramedic, live with PTSD. And Corporal Underwood courageously asked me to share that here today in the hopes his openness may help others.

The weight of service, whether in the military or on the front lines of emergency response, is often invisible. It's carried in the struggle to find solid

ground after years of giving so much to others. But through the Invictus Games and power of sports and connection, Corporal Underwood found a community of people who truly understand.

And since returning home, Corporal Underwood has been reflecting on that experience, not just for himself, but for his family. His wife, through this journey, made the incredibly brave decision to seek more support. And it's a reminder that healing isn't a solitary path. It happens in connection, in courage, in the willingness to reach out.

Corporal Underwood embodies the very best of us: the resilience to face hardship; the selflessness to serve others; the strength to ask for help when it's needed. These are values that define our Armed Forces. These are values that shape our first responders. And, at our best, these are the values that define Canada itself.

And today, we honour Corporal Underwood—who joins us here in the gallery, as I said—not just for his achievements in rugby, Nordic skiing, rowing and ultra marathoning, but for what he represents. It's because of people like him that we fight to protect the things that matter: dignity, opportunity and the freedom to live a full life, no matter what challenges we face.

Thank you.

#### **Harrison House Meals for Seniors**

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Newdale recently celebrated a remarkable milestone: the 35th anniversary of its Harrison House meals for seniors program. The program's enduring success is a testament to the dedication of its board members, staff and community residents.

The meals program began with a simple, yet profound mission: to provide nutritious meals three times a week for seniors while fostering social connections among participants.

Spearheaded by Enid Clark, who served as the chairperson for 25 years, the program has become an integral part of the community. At the anniversary celebration, she shared her memories of the origin of the program and then was asked to cut the anniversary cake.

The meals program operates out of the Harrison House seniors residence, offering meals and a welcome place for socializing.

Lori Brewster, who is the current meals co-ordinator and has been a vital part of the program since 2018,

said the table is so much more than just a plate to—place to eat and be physically nourished. She said connections are formed, plans are made, stories are told and laughter is shared. It's a space where everyone feels welcome and emotionally nourished and there's always a seat at the table for anyone who wants to join.

The program has played a crucial role in helping seniors remain independent in their homes longer, aligning with the goal of aging in place.

Like many communities, Newdale has faced challenges, including a declining population, which means less participants in the meal program. However, the board and staff remain committed to maintaining and growing the program, encouraging area residents to participate.

Increased government funding has alleviated some financial pressures, allowing the team to focus on enriching the program experience.

As Newdale celebrates 35 years of this wonderful community initiative, it's clear that the meals program is more than just a service; it's a lifeline, a community and a testament to the power of coming together to support one another.

Thank you.

#### **Gurdwara Kalgidhar Darbar**

**Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery):** Today I rise to recognize Gurdwara Kalgidhar Darbar, a divine Sikh place of worship for Manitoba's Sikh community. Since the late 1970s, Manitoba's Sikh community has flourished, particularly in Winnipeg North, creating a clear need for a larger gurdwara.

Originally built in December 2001 as a 7,000-square-foot temple, Gurdwara Kalgidhar is now expanding to a new 35,000-square-foot facility on six additional acres of land. This great new project, made possible by the dedication and generosity of its members, will accommodate over 400 people, ensuring the preservation of Sikh traditions for generations to come.

The current gurdwara will be repurposed into a new community centre, providing space for meetings, celebrations and outreach programs focused on health and well-being. By bringing together different social and generational groups, this centre will foster a stronger sense of belongingness and pride to the Sikh community.

Another key addition to this redevelopment is seniors housing, offering safe and accessible living spaces for the elderly. By integrating seniors residences within the property, Gurdwara Kalgidhar Darbar will provide a supportive environment where seniors can remain close to their faith and culture.

This initiative is more than just an expansion. It is about creating an inclusive, multi-functional space that strengthens the Sikh community while enriching Manitoba's diverse cultural fabric.

I would like to enter the names of today's guests into the Hansard. They are Jaswinder Gill, Kalwinder Toor and Avtar Singh Sidhu.

Thank you.

*Jaswinder Singh Gill, Avtar Singh Sidhu, Kalwinder Toor*

### **Southeast Mens Group**

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** Today, I'd like to recognize an organization that is truly making an impact for men in southeast Manitoba. Today, I want to recognize the Southeast Mens Group, who are truly making that difference.

The group has started as a support group with one goal: help end the stigma and let men know they are not alone. It's a group that is open to men 21 years of age and older, and is designed to allow men a safe space for meaningful conversations, to build connections and community.

They had their first meeting in January and it just finished—and just finished their third meeting this month. To date, it has brought together 42 different men. This group allows time to share, whether that be sharing wins or losses, struggles or successes. Some men come to find community and others come to be part of a community.

Along with the meeting—with meeting new friends, new neighbours and sharing, this group of men want these meetings to be purposeful. They bring in different speakers to teach important coping skills, and are excited to expand and have more speakers come to enrich the lives of all those who attend.

The Southeast Mens Group has gained a following, and individuals and businesses have reached out to their organization to graciously provide donations to help cover the cost of the facility and other expenses that may come up. They've also been contacted by bands who will be putting on concerts, with all proceeds being given to the men's group.

I would like to thank the Southeast Mens Group for starting up. After all, men's mental health is important, and anything we can do to end the stigma helps us all.

**The Speaker:** Just before recognizing a next member to speak, I would like to remind members that are virtual to please use the proper headsets; it makes the sound that we can hear so much better. We do have trouble hearing sometimes with other headsets.

\* (13:50)

### **Recognizing the Women of Kildonan-River East**

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** Honourable Speaker, women in Kildonan-River East are daughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers and omas. They do so much of the silent work behind the scenes, yet they are still met with the same expectations as men to lead in their communities.

There are countless amazing women here in Kildonan-River East who exemplify this and I request that their names be entered into Hansard: Irene, a devoted oma, has been a rock for her family for decades. She ensures they attend church and that her grandchildren stay connected to their German heritage. When winter roads are unsafe, her home is always open to her grandchildren after school.

Molly, whom I met during the last election, is a fierce advocate for transgender rights. She has worked to remove barriers and documentation, including the hurdle of changing her name on a local store's membership card. Getting to know Molly has been inspiring.

Lisa, a mother of four, left her nursing profession to raise her children and was unable to practise under her licence due to time away from the front lines. With the help of our incredible Minister of Health (MLA Asagwara), Lisa's now back on track to rejoin the workforce and be one more nurse staying and working here in our great province.

Women in KRE support each other despite all that is on their plates. True success isn't about competition with one another; it's about lifting each other up.

Thank you to the women who rise each day as strong, brave leaders in our KRE community. Even if it looks a little different for each of us, we are all on the same path. Every kind word that you share, and every time you acknowledge another woman's struggle, you are helping to break down barriers.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** And before moving on, I've got some more guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce.

In the public gallery, we have from Fairholme School 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Evelyn Maendel, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. King).

Further, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Lieutenant Colonel David Cronk and a contingent of 18 soldiers who are here visiting us from the Canadian Forces base. They are all guests of the honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz), who is the special envoy for military affairs. On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you all here today.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Release of Child Sex Offender Timeline for Bail Reform

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, in February 2025, the Winnipeg Police Service's Internet Child Exploitation Unit was alerted by the National Child Exploitation Crime Centre that an online undercover police officer from the United States law enforcement agency was engaged in an online chat with a male from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

On March 6, the Winnipeg Police Service's ICE investigators executed a search warrant and arrested a 46-year-old male from Winnipeg. He was arrested and charged, but then was released.

Honourable Speaker, is the Premier okay with this?

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** I want to take this opportunity to say to the Canadian Armed Forces members: thank you for your service. We appreciate your patriotism and what you do each and every day.

I want to take the chance to also thank the students who are here. Only take the good things out of what we do in question period, not the more controversial language that we use from time to time.

Again, given the roles that we have in government, I will refrain from commenting on specific issues before the justice system. But what I would say is, no, child sexual exploitation is not acceptable. It never is. And our team is working hard with law enforcement to ensure that they have the proper resources,

both inside the city of Winnipeg and across the province, to keep you safe.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, 17 months since this Premier said that he was going to keep violent criminals out of our communities. So far, a big F to that Premier.

Just days ago, this failed Justice Minister released a man charged with six counts of making, possessing and publishing child pornography. He sent him back home to River Heights. Did he even give his colleague, the MLA for River Heights, and his neighbours the heads up?

The Premier said there's no need to wait for other levels of government for bail reform. That's what this Premier said, Honourable Speaker.

So why did he release this pedophile only to allow him then to reoffend?

**Mr. Kinew:** I want to say that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has brought in a series of measures on bail reform here in Manitoba that follows the recommendations of the National Police Federation.

The National Police Federation, for the record, brought these recommendations forward in front of Heather Stefanson, who was the premier at the time. I was in the room; I can attest to the fact that that happened. Those recommendations got nowhere when the PCs were in office. However, with this Minister of Justice, they are being implemented, and the National Police Federation is now calling on other provinces to follow the lead of our Minister of Justice.

I do want to caution the member opposite. He knows full well that the justice system is administered by the judiciary. That is a separate branch of government from the legislative and executive branches that we are a part of. I think it does a disservice to the debate that he brings forward here when he tries to muddy the waters for partisan gain.

We will not do that. We will focus on real concrete steps to make you, children and everybody in Manitoba safer.

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

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Once again, Honourable Speaker, this Premier stands in his place and passes the buck.

We know that he nor many of his ministers and colleagues like to be held accountable to Manitobans. They told Manitobans, and I quote, they would stop violent crime. End quote.

They promised to reform bail within 100 days when they were elected. It's now been over 525 days and still nothing, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I'll try one last time: How exactly does releasing an individual charged with making child pornography—accessing and possessing child pornography and making arrangements to commit a sexual offence against a child—how does it keep communities safe?

**Mr. Kinew:** I think the fact that his team wouldn't applaud for their leader says a lot about the issues that they bring forward here.

Child sexual exploitation is wrong. We are working for the Canadian—we are working with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and many other partners in the community to combat that.

What is inappropriate is for the member opposite to try and use for partisan purposes a misrepresentation of the facts. He may be doing so unintentionally, of course—I would say on the record for your consideration—but what I would say is this: He knows for a fact that within months of taking office, this Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) brought in new resources for Crown attorneys. He provided them with direction, that they had to think about community safety when bail was being applied for. He brought in new resources for law enforcement.

We lost 50 police officers inside the Perimeter when the PCs are in office. We're hiring police officers in our time in government.

The reality is this: We're working with you to make our communities safer. They're stuck trying to divide Manitobans against one another, just like they were in the last election.

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

#### **Safe Consumption Site for Point Douglas Community Consultation Report**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, the Premier sure is telling today. For him, it is all about applause, and that shows his true character.

NDP's only plan, Honourable Speaker, for economic development in the Point Douglas constituency is a

public injection site. The minister's been caught on several occasions providing false information to residents, saying they didn't have to consult with residents and claiming a location hadn't been chosen, even though an application was already submitted.

As part of the proposal for this legal drug injection—lethal drug injection site, the government is to provide a community consultation report and a letter of opinion from the relevant minister.

Can the Premier table that report and a letter of opinion, or is he unwilling to make those documents part of the official record?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier):** Now, I take the opportunity here to say we have an amazing Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith). If the members opposite ever want to stumble their way back into the government benches, they would do well to follow her lead.

The reason why the comments that she made were accurate is this: we're listening to the community. We are taking the time to have fulsome consultations. And if the community makes it clear that this location is not the right fit, then we will not move forward. Everything that she has said is consistent with that imperative.

But there is also a humanitarian imperative. Hundreds of Manitobans are dying from overdoses. I saw a bunch of PC MLAs there on the weekend at the fundraiser to help support a recovery centre, but where are they today with a substantive plan to counteract drug use in the communities? Never. They would—never brought one forward in government. All they want to do is throw stones and continue to divide people.

We're listening to the experts so we can—

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

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** Once again, Honourable Speaker, more false information coming out of this Premier, and I would attest that many residents of the Point Douglas area would fully disagree with this Premier.

The minister spends more energy creating drug injection sites than she does cleaning them up. Local residents see a lack of representation by the NDP MLA for Point Douglas, and residents have been



trying to get some answers. But all they've gotten back is nonsense and noise.

The NDP's drug injection site is close to Children's House Montessori School daycare, Argyle Alternative High School, the Manitoba Museum and Sport for Life Centre.

One resident asked in an email, which I table, in relation to the safety of children in the area, I quote: What measures will be taken to mitigate concerns related to safety, accessibility or public order?

**Mr. Kinew:** We're going to ensure that the community that eventually sees a site like this located in is kept safe.

The reality under the PCs is that the bathroom at Tim Hortons became an unsafe consumption site because they never did anything to combat the drug epidemic that's affecting people right across this great province.

We, on the other hand, are listening to the experts. The experts are telling us, you know what? This is one tool in the toolbox that could save lives. We want to save lives so that people stick around long enough so that they can find a pathway to recovery.

The reality is this: the members opposite continue to try and oversimplify, they continue to try and misrepresent, they continue to try to underestimate the intelligence of the general public in Manitoba.

We won't do that. We have confidence that when presented with the truth, the actual facts, that Manitobans will make the right decisions. That's why we listen to you; that's why we're a listening government.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** The lack of consultation seems to be the new MO of the NDP party. The Union of Public Painters and Allied Trades publicly stated that, and I quote: Consultation process has been insufficient. End quote.

From lack of consultation to the Health Minister's decision to misrepresent support from businesses and residents, residents and Winnipeggers are just not happy, Honourable Speaker. A local business, Automotive Connection, located less than 200 metres from the site, wrote, and I quote: We were really surprised that we were, I quote, excited and open to the idea, end quote, of a drug consumption site so near to us. This,

according to the NDP Health Minister and MLA for Union Station, and I table that email.

David Chartrand, president of the MMF, who also doesn't seem to be very happy, said, and I quote: In my view, it's definitely not thought out, he said, calling it another band-aid solution.

The Premier said his injection site wouldn't be near schools. Can he share the other locations for—

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, the minister responsible from Point Douglas has done a lot of consultation. They've met with many, many people. There have been some challenging conversations, there's been some very encouraging conversations.

But the reality is that there are conversations. That never happened through two terms of the PCs.

And now, only in opposition are they taking the time to consult with people, but they're only consulting with their membership in this so-called leadership race. That's right: there's a debate in the city that's going to be held this week where the PC leadership candidates can answer such important questions as, sorry, not sorry, how old is the planet Earth? Is it, in fact, 4,000 years old? Is the planet Earth actually round, or is it flat, as we've been hearing in our Facebook groups?

The people of Manitoba look forward to hearing the answers from the members opposite so that they can allow them to remain in the opposition benches for generations to come.

#### **Safe Consumption Site for Point Douglas Location of Site—Constituent Consultations**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** The Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) told Point Douglas residents at a secret community consultation meeting in January that the proposed drug injection site at 200 Disraeli was not written in stone. There was still time to move it if residents objected to it, but we now know 200 Disraeli was always the location.

I table this letter from the senior director of the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre to the Point Douglas Residents Committee which says, I quote: Welcome to the neighbourhood. The supervised consumption site is coming to Point Douglas. Not might be coming, or proposed to be coming to Point Douglas; it is coming.

Had the minister made up her—made her decision before consulting residents?

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** Well, I'd ask that member on that side if they were okay with people overdosing under their government. They took a blind eye to folks losing their lives. These are mothers. These are fathers. These are people's loved ones. These are human beings. These are Manitobans. These are people that they claim to represent. Well, they weren't representing them.

On this side of the House, we take this seriously. We know that these are lives at—on the stake here, and we will represent them and take care of them and support them the best that we know how, that the experts tell us.

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** There's something curious about the letter from the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, the organization that will be running the drug injection site. It's dated October 26, 2024, but the application to the federal government to open the site wasn't submitted 'til November 21, 2024, weeks after this letter was already sent and months before the location became public on December 4.

So, Honourable Speaker, if the location is not written in stone, how did the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre know about the drug injection site was coming to Point Douglas months before the rest of us knew? Will this minister admit she made the decision to make the location at—is located at 200 Disraeli?

**Ms. Smith:** We're consider—we were still consulting, we're still listening to experts, we're still making sure that we're saving lives in this province. We're continuing to support Mobile Overdose Prevention Site, MOPS—something that that government, when they were in government, refused to do, which saves lives.

I want to table a letter here from 14 community organizations supporting those who use substance uses. Without a safe place to go, people experiencing homelessness often use substances in public spaces. The reality is that supervised consumption sites make communities safer, not more dangerous. They reduce public substance use, connect people to treatment and—

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

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, we all know this minister and the NDP government are bent on opening this drug injection site at 200 Disraeli across from—the street from a high school, around the corner from a daycare. The residents—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** —don't want it. The—they told the housing, addictions minister loud and clear during a meeting at the end of January they don't want it. Point—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** —Douglas residents also—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler still has the floor.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** It's a—they're putting it across the street from a high school and around the corner from a daycare. The residents don't want it, and they told the housing, addictions and homeless minister loud and clear during a meeting in January. Point Douglas residents also called for more community consultations.

Will this minister participate in—

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

**Ms. Smith:** Well, safety and security is our No. 1 priority. That's why I just finished meeting with the mayor this afternoon and members of the police service.

We want to ensure that we are saving lives. We look at four pillars: the first is harm reduction, so that we can get people to the support that they need on a path to recovery.

\* (14:10)

We also look at enforcement. That's why we're working with the police to ensure that we are getting drug dealers off the street, which is under the great work of our Justice Minister. We are also work from the pillar of education, which is why we are investing in nutrition programs in our province.

That member across the way, does she support not saving lives in our province? A supervised consumption just does that; experts have told us. Her government threw that report on the floor.

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

### **Injection-Based HIV Transmission Rates Addiction Treatment Services for Swan Valley**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Since October of last year, more than 40 new HIV diagnoses have been reported in Swan Valley. The Chief Provincial Public Health Officer told media, quote: We've noticed increasing transmission and, from what we've seen in this region and what we see in Manitoba, the majority of the transmission is related to injection drug use.

Knowing that drug use is driving this spike in HIV cases, why have the NDP failed to open a single new addictions treatment space since taking office?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** Under the leadership of our minister for housing, homelessness and addictions, we have opened additional addictions and treatment spaces in this province, including more accessibility at RAAM clinics.

But I want to talk about the ignorance that is—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —outlined in that member's question.

Honourable Speaker, part of what keeps people from accessing the care they need, when they need it, is stigma. And we have heard in this House, countless times, members on that side of the House perpetuating stigma, the very barrier that keeps people away from the care they deserve to access.

That member would be better served asking her colleagues to take a different approach: treat people with respect and play a part in reducing the shame that Manitobans struggling with addictions should not have to face.

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

**Mrs. Cook:** I think the minister's words are cold comfort to the 40 Manitobans who have been newly diagnosed with HIV just since October.

We know that injection drug use is the cause of most of these new cases and that this differs from the rest of Canada, where statistics show sexual contact is the source of most HIV diagnoses. So Manitoba now has the dubious distinction of leading the country in drug-based HIV transmission. Clearly, the NDP's approach is failing, and now record high numbers of people are contracting a life-altering illness as a result.

Why is this NDP government utterly failing to address the drug crisis in Swan Valley?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I'm old enough to remember, in 2019, actually sitting on that side of the House, when the previous PC failed administration refused to take any steps whatsoever to address the rapidly escalating rates of HIV in this province.

Within our government's first six months, we allocated millions of additional dollars to front lines of the HIV challenges we're facing in this province, across Manitoba. Now, on that side of the House, what have they done? They have chosen to shame people struggling with addictions; they have chosen to go against science, which tells us very clearly: harm reduction, distributing clean needles reduces HIV transmission.

And what did they do instead? They said, don't do that; leave those people on their own.

Shame on that member, shame on every member—

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

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

**Mrs. Cook:** Honourable Speaker, distributing needles also requires a solution to clean them up. Meanwhile, used needles litter the streets of Swan River, leading Swan River's Town Council to pass a resolution calling for the end of needle distribution in their town. And this—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:** —is the NDP's response: no new addictions treatment beds, no solution to dealing with used needles, and now Manitoba is leading the country in injection drug-based HIV transmission.

Why is this NDP government continuing to ignore the pleas of people in Swan Valley and failing to bring forward any real solutions to end this crisis?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House we stand with those struggling with addictions and their families. We believe and we know the science that says harm reduction saves lives. On this side of the House, we are going to continue doing the work of cleaning up the mess of the failed PC government that under two terms did nothing to address primary health-care needs, which is what we're talking about when we talk about HIV care.

Honourable Speaker, we will take—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:**—not a single lesson from that member whose team—and her—continue to stigmatize the care that Manitobans need to turn their lives in a healthier direction. We will work with the community of Swan Valley and neighbouring communities, First Nations as well. And on that side of the House, they would do better to start with an apology to those very same communities.

#### **Discarded Needles in Swan Valley Disposal and Clean-up Plan**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** If there's one thing—or, shall I say 500,000 things that this minister of addictions likes to hand out: it's needles. And, of course, that was just to one community here in Manitoba.

We are seeing first-hand the consequences of this minister's hand-outs. I table a picture of one Swan Valley resident's morning collection of dirty, HIV-laden needles.

With the melting snow exposing more and more dirty needles, parents are asking if this minister will be supplying steel-toed boots and puncture-resistant gloves to assist the children with this year's school-yard cleanup.

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** Shame on that member, all those members across there. In 2021, Heather Stefanson handed out 200,000 needles with no plan. Let's see, look, in 2022, the Health minister, Audrey Gordon, 300,000. No plan.

Guess what? Our government came up with a plan. We worked with Swan Valley. We're sending out folks every day to clean up needles, and we'll continue to work with the community—something members on that side never did.

All you do is divide, divide, create division.

We'll continue to destigmatize the addictions crisis that we're facing in this province—

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

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** The minister has a history of trying to sweep things under the rug, and in this case, it's hundreds of thousands of used needles she has handed out here in Manitoba.

Last November, she gave the four regional health authorities outside of Winnipeg \$30,000 to develop,

I quote, comprehensive disposal and cleanup plans. That's less funding than she spent on her junket to Houston.

Can the minister table for the House a copy of the four comprehensive disposal and cleanup plans that taxpayers paid \$120,000 for?

**Ms. Smith:** Well, let's take a look at that member's record.

Months after that member from Brandon West became the Brandon police chief, groups like Bear Clan—Brandon Bear Clan safety patrol, went from collecting 50 needles a month to nearly 280 needles.

Even Brandon mom Kim Longstaff [*phonetic*], who is actually Moms Stop the Harm—she, and I'll quote: We have kids growing up here. We have children. There's this real concern that we don't get a handle on what's taking place in our community. We should take the blame as a community. It's our responsible—'bility' to do what we need to do.

Did that member from Brandon West take responsibility? Did he ask his colleagues in that former government—

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

The honourable member for Brandon West, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Honourable Speaker, the minister's crack commando committee simply cannot keep up with the volume of needles that she's distributing.

Prairie Mountain Health needle pickup task force only operates two hours Monday through Friday to pick up and safely dispose of over half a million needles that she has distributed in a single community will take over 4,000 years, Honourable Speaker.

Is there any chance the minister can accelerate her timeline, or is she good with just injecting this problem into the community for years to come.

**Ms. Smith:** You know, it's pretty shameful of that member to get up in this House while people in Swan Valley, the HIV rates are continuing to rise. We should be talking about harm reduction and how we come together and support that community.

Instead, what is that member doing? He's dividing. He's talking about what is—what are we doing? Why don't we talk about what are we doing together? Look, in 2020—twenty—from 2017 to 2022, crime rose under their government by 50 per cent. Did they do anything? No, they didn't.

Under our Justice Minister, they're actually working with Swan Valley. They're actually working to get the drug dealers off the streets.

\* (14:20)

What did they do? They didn't do a thing. They didn't take a harm reduction approach. We won't take—

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

#### **Oak Tree Towers Residents Government Response to Safety Concerns**

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Honourable Speaker, on Friday I met with a group of Manitobans that deserve to be treated much better by this government. The residents of Oak Tree Towers in Portage la Prairie are prisoners in their own homes. Now, as things in their facility have gotten worse every month for the past 18 months under this minister's leadership, residents are reporting to my office that Manitoba Housing officials are telling them, and I quote: Stop calling here. Stop calling here or we'll evict you.

Is this the new policy of this minister, or will she commit today to acting?

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** Well, ensuring that people are safe and secure in Manitoba Housing is something that I take seriously since becoming minister. Under that government, they cut funding, they cut security, they cut staffing.

We're not taking that approach. We're working with tenants. We actually hired more tenant service co-ordinators. We met with residents of Oak Tree Towers a few months ago to hear from their—hear their concerns.

They actually tried to meet with that government. They actually asked them to come. Did they ever go? No, they didn't. They turned a blind eye against them. They didn't listen to their concerns. In fact, they continued to cut the services in that very building.

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

**MLA Bereza:** Honourable Speaker, a yes—a simple yes or no answer. That's all the residents of Oak Tree Towers are looking for.

Residents with over 15 years—[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Bereza:** —are not sleeping; they're scared. Long-time resident Jody Pearce spoke to the media, and I quote: Used condoms, urine, feces. You name it.

I table the article. The minister needs to see it for herself.

We will rise at 12:30 on Friday. So, Minister, will you join me in an afternoon sitting down with these residents, or is she telling me to stop calling, like the residents are being told? Yes or no?

**Ms. Smith:** So I don't think that member heard us. We met with the residents of Oak Tree. Last month, we tripled the security patrols at Oak Tree Towers, and we've already completed the design for security upgrades. We're including floor-by-floor cameras and card-access doors. And we're upgrading—this upgrade will start this spring, and we're continuing to meet with those tenants to ensure their homes are safe and secure.

I don't know if that member didn't hear me, but we're investing in Manitoba Housing, something that all the members on that side—look to your left, look to your right; ask them why they continued to sell off Manitoba Housing and fire Manitoba Housing staff.

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

**MLA Bereza:** Honourable Speaker, if this government is doing such a wonderful job, why are the residents calling me? Used condoms, urine, feces are a common sight. These residents called me because they're worried and they're not feeling safe in their own homes.

We spoke about the fear of drug sales and production. The media even photographed a shopping cart of ingredients for production of illicit drugs. Everything that isn't nailed down, including cameras, have been stolen or broken. They chained up the dryers; the chains were stolen. It is far beyond absurd.

What is the minister committed to doing today to give these residents the dignity they deserve?

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

**Ms. Smith:** Well, like I said to that member, he can look to his left, he can look to his right; he can ask the members why they cut 67 positions in Manitoba Housing. In fact, they cut housing staff, they cut repairs, they abandoned Manitobans who needed support. They even sold housing under Manitobans' feet and sent them packing out into encampments. I'd

walk out of this building every day and see people in bus shacks; they were okay with that.

You know, that member across should apologize, apologize to Manitobans for what that government did when they were in government to Manitobans—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Smith:** Look at what we're in right now—encampments, people living without housing. That's because of the former government that you're a part of.

Wear green because you need all the luck you need. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

### **Literacy Rate for K-to-12 Students Reading Supports in Budget 2025**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Last month was I Love to Read Month, and there were several articles published in local media that focused on the need for more supports to help students learn to read.

According to educators and parents, many students are experiencing distress and declining mental health because they lack the literacy skills necessary to read.

Can those within our education system, along with the parents of young students, expect to see anything in Thursday's budget to improve reading supports for struggling K-to-12 Manitoba students?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** And I will address the question. I just want to take a quick moment to give a shout-out to our incredible Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) for the incredible answers that she provided the House here today and how excited I am to work with her department in addressing the issue of homelessness going forward, which really begins in the classroom. It begins—*[interjection]* That's right.

And our \$30-million annual investment in the universal nutrition program is only one of the steps that our government is taking to help address the issues that the member opposite just asked and some of the questions that the members asked earlier this morning.

I look forward to sharing in my next answer more details about our government's plan on literacy here in Manitoba to support Manitoba children.

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

### **Mandatory Screening Inquiry**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Honourable Speaker, the minister doesn't need to waste our time here this afternoon. Providing children nutrition—we are absolutely on board with that, and we are so grateful the federal government enabled this government to do so.

Honourable Speaker, despite there being several reports indicating that Manitoba has a fragmented approach to literacy, it's alarming to learn that some of these school divisions do not use the tools to assess for the appropriate levels of reading.

This results in students not being assessed and often leaving them disadvantaged in life.

Does this government support evidence-based universal mandatory screening for all students to determine their level of literacy?

**MLA Schmidt:** And I thank the member opposite for that question. However, I do take exception to her insinuation that talking about the universal nutrition program is by any means a waste of time.

I also disagree that members of this House are agreed on that issue. We know that members opposite, on many occasions, many different of their members, including the former premier of Manitoba, the failed Brian Pallister, called the universal nutrition program a bad idea.

We know that assessments are important. We know that supports for students are important. We know that small class size is important. But what the sector knows and has been telling successive governments for years is if you really want to make progress here in Manitoba, whether we're talking about literacy or whether we're talking about math, it begins before kids—

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

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

### **Reading Recovery Strategy**

**MLA Lamoureux:** This minister is using this here as a platform to take credit for the federal movements.

For the past 30 years, here—*[interjection]*—Honourable Speaker, for the past 30 years, many school divisions here in Manitoba have been using the Reading Recovery model for students who are not meeting literacy grade expectations. The proven method for literacy is called structured literacy, and there are school divisions, like Louis Riel and

Evergreen, who are leading the way and have seen their literacy scores improve.

Does this minister believe that Reading Recovery is an effective literacy strategy, and if so, what evidence supports this belief?

**MLA Schmidt:** We know that there are different models that are adopted and used across school divisions across Manitoba to varying levels of success, and we know that there is great debate about this.

I really look forward to the details that we're going to be able to share on Thursday in our budget when it comes to how we are going to further support students.

I do have to correct the record, though, Honourable Speaker. The member opposite has suggested that Manitoba is somehow following the lead or taking credit for the federal dollars on nutrition program.

\* (14:30)

Let it be known that it was Nello Altomare and the leadership here in Manitoba that inspired the federal government to follow our lead and feed children across Canada. That will be Nello's legacy, and that is something that our government is going to protect into law—

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

Order, please.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** If we could stop the clock for one minute, I've got some guests in the gallery that are leaving right away.

We have seated in the public gallery, from the University of Manitoba, 30 students under the direction of Carol Johnston. They are guests of the honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen).

We welcome you here today.

### Property Controls for Grocery Stores Introduction of Bill 31

**MLA Billie Cross (Seine River):** Food prices exploded under Heather Stefanson and the members opposite. Between May 2017 and October 2023, egg prices went up by 37 per cent, tomatoes by 41 per cent and infant formula by 53 per cent.

But as Manitobans across the province begged their PC MLAs to help them with grocery costs, members opposite chose instead to focus on hiring

intimacy coaches and campaign against the families of murder victims.

And as Manitobans were worrying about how tariffs would make food more expensive, the MLA for Fort Whyte was thanking Trump for imposing them.

Now, this government is taking a different approach—

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

**Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery):** Thank you to member for that wonderful question.

Our government understands that affordability is a top priority to Manitobans right now. That's why we introduced Bill 31, to end property control in the grocery sector.

Bill 31 will open up the market and create more competition, helping to stabilize the grocery prices for the families and to give more access to healthy food. Our government will keep making life more affordable.

More good news is coming this week when our incredible Finance Minister delivers Budget 2025.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Education Property Tax Timeline for New Funding Formula

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, last year, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) made promises to Manitobans that he had no intention of keeping. In an interview last April with Pembina Valley Online, he said, and I quote: There'll be a new model in place for how public education is funded in Manitoba by the next tax season. I table that for the House.

Tax season's now here, but there is no new education model. In fact, school divisions are coming out with double-digit tax increases as a result of a broken funding formula.

So will this Premier and minister stand up today and tell school divisions when they can expect a new funding formula, or will the NDP keep hiking taxes on hard-working families in Manitoba?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** You know, for many, many years under the former government, Manitoban students were not getting the supports that they needed. And that's because the members opposite failed year over year to provide the funding that was required to our school divisions to make sure our kids could become all that they can be.

Now, under the leadership of our Premier, our incredible Education Minister, we are actually funding school divisions in the way they need to be funded.

That's important work. Manitobans can count on us to continue doing that important work, and I cannot wait to bring forward an education-focused budget on March 20th, where we're going to talk about the more—great investments we're making to support Manitobans.

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

### PETITIONS

#### Child Welfare System—Call for Inquiry

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba [phonetic] Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) On Sunday, February 11, 2024, Manitobans witnessed an unimaginable tragedy when five individuals were murdered.

(2) The victims ranged in age from two months to 30 years.

(3) Manitoba has the second highest rate of intimate partner violence among Canadian provinces, at a rate of 633 per 100,000 people, according to police-reported data from Statistics Canada.

(4) Public reporting indicates that on December 9, 2023, Myah-Lee left a voicemail for her Child and Family Services worker in which she pled to be moved out of her home in Carman.

(5) Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth noted, quote: This case highlights the failures of the government to respond to our recommendations. End quote.

(6) On March 6, 2024, the Minister of Families, the MLA for Fort-St. Johns, indicated on the public record that she was too busy to discuss issues surrounding children in care, including calling a public inquiry into unprecedented tragedy.

(7) The last inquiry held in Manitoba was for the death of five-year-old Phoenix Sinclair in 2008.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Families to develop better policies to protect youth in care from potential physical or psychological abuse; and

(2) to urge the provincial government to immediately establish a public inquiry to identify the failings of the child-welfare system and ensure that no child—sorry, that no call from a child ever goes unanswered or ignored again.

This petition has been signed by Cindy Alexander, Jeff Alexander, Alyssa Buscemi and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional hospital is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on No. 1 Highway in Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage la Prairie regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nation reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

\* (14:40)

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport.



This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in Portage la Prairie regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This is signed by Kamilla Paige Garrioch, Diane Fingas, Brenda Hales and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### **Provincial Road 352**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Provincial Road 352, PR road 352, is an 87.5-kilometre–54.4 miles–route where it begins at Provincial Trunk Highway 5, PTH 5, near Birnie, Manitoba, and terminates at PTH 34 near Arizona, Manitoba, intersecting with the Trans-Canada Highway.

The–(2) the route is gravel for most of its length, with two paved sections: one from PTH 5 to Birnie; and the other from PTH 16 to Arden.

(3) PR 352 has had considerable amount of deterioration over the years with little to no regular road maintenance and has seen ruts and damage to the gravel sections, those of which are featured online at CAA's worst roads.

(4) The promotion of PR 352 weight restriction to an RTAC classification of 140,000-lbs weight restriction has caused further damage, as the route was only built to accommodate the original 80,000 lbs and has not seen upgrades to accommodate the increase. The 1.5-mile stretch on PR 352 from the community of Birnie is the main access off of PTH 5 to the community.

(5) Residents in the area were advised these weight increases to PR 352 were due to commerce movement, although there is no commerce in Birnie.

(6) Within this stretch, there is a bridge that has–is damaged structurally and rests only five feet above the creek, causing it to sit in the water and deteriorate. With increased agriculture traffic, such as heavier trucks hauling grain and livestock, the bridge may not have the capacity to sustain further neglect.

(7) Community members have reached out and have spoken to civil servants. The issue must be resolved before it becomes a bigger problem, someone gets injured or an accident happens.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to meet RTAC road designation by providing upgrades and regular road maintenance to the Provincial Road 352 in Manitoba, specifically the 1.5-mile stretch from Birnie to provincial trunk highway, and ensure the road remains paved with asphalt and not reduced to gravel.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reduce load weights on PR 352 until the upgrades can be completed.

(3) To urge the provincial government to replace or repair the bridge located on the 1.5-mile stretch from Birnie to PTH 5 and to provide an integrity assessment.

This petition has been signed by Coleton Venne, Dan Walker, Ray Smith and many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would be–would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and

computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is currently located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently, there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait time for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Marilynne Green, Robin Carter and Elizabeth McDonald and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

#### **Phoenix School**

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Phoenix School, a kindergarten to grade 5 school located in Headingley, has experienced consistent enrolment growth over the last several years. Enrolment is expected to reach 275 students in the next two years.

Because the school is now over capacity, the school division has had to install portable classrooms on site as of fall 2024.

For several consecutive years, the top capital priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division has been the renovation and expansion of Phoenix School.

In 2022, the Phoenix School expansion and renovation project was approved to proceed to the design phase. The project included, among other amenities, a new gymnasium, two new classrooms, a multi-purpose room and room for 74 child-care spaces.

In June 2024, the school division received notice from the provincial government that the project has been deferred. There is no guarantee if, or when, the project will move forward.

\* (14:50)

There are currently hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. The daycare operator in Phoenix School has been told that they will continue to have space within the school for the 2024-2025 school year only, that further expansion of child-care space within the school is not possible and that space may be reduced moving forward due to the shortage of classrooms. If new space is not constructed as planned, many families may be left without child care.

It is critical that the expansion and renovation of Phoenix School proceed as planned in order to support the needs of students, teachers and families in the growing community of Headingley.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to proceed with the planned renovation and expansion of Phoenix School without further delay.

And this petition is signed by Jen Ziesmann, Colleen Turney, Selena Njegovan and many, many other Manitobans.

### Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Kellie Verwey, a beloved young woman from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, was tragically killed in a car crash caused by a repeat violent offender with a long criminal history.

(2) Despite repeated violations of his bail conditions, the offender was free to roam the streets and to ultimately claim Kellie's life. This tragedy was entirely preventable.

(3) While the Criminal Code falls under federal jurisdiction, provinces have been given the responsibility for the administration of justice, allowing for meaningful provincial action on bail reform to ensure public safety.

(4) Other provinces have taken proactive steps to strengthen bail enforcement, but Manitoba has not used all of the available tools to address this issue effectively.

(5) The provincial government has the ability and the responsibility to advocate for and implement measures that protect its citizens by ensuring that repeat violent offenders are not released into our communities without proper safeguards.

(6) Immediate action is required to close gaps in the justice system that allow dangerous criminals to remain free, which puts innocent Manitobans at risk.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate and decisive action on bail reform to address serious deficits in enforcement by utilizing all available provincial mechanisms to strengthen warrant enforcement, increasing bail supervision and opposing release of offenders, thus ensuring that repeat violent offenders are held accountable and that public safety is prioritized over leniency; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to immediately repeal provisions of the Criminal Code that allow for the continued victimization of law-abiding Manitobans while granting repeat offenders additional rights.

This petition is signed by Danny Fletcher, Chancie [*phonetic*] Fletcher, Paula Mellen and many other fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

### Teaching Certification

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects that they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early/middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including math, physical or biological science, English or French, and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside their faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teaching—for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements, which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by Tara Sangster, Brent Bamforth, Julie Becker and many other Manitobans.

### **Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

\* (15:00)

### **MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility**

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently, there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than

adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

### **Morden Waste Water Project**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** I wish to present the following petition.

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

Between 2011 and 2021, Morden's population grew by an impressive 27 per cent, outpacing the national average by 16 per cent, according to Statistics Canada.

(2) While growth is welcome and encouraged, Morden has long faced a critical need for infrastructure upgrades to meet current demands and support future development.

(3) Morden's waste water system has operated beyond capacity for years, prompting the Province in 2019 to halt property subdivisions due to insufficient water–waste water storage.

(4) As of 2024, after exploring all options, the City announced in July that the estimated cost for the critical infrastructure upgrades has risen from \$70 million to \$88 million to possibly \$108 million.

(5) These revised estimates leave Morden with a significant funding shortfall of 13 to 33 million dollars.

(6) Despite efforts to address the gap, including plans to raise utility fees for residents and businesses, such as increases—such increases have been delayed since 2017 due to the lack of an approved capital project, taxation is not enough.

(7) The lack of waste water capacity has severely impacted economic activity and growth in Morden

and the surrounding communities. Without much-needed water–waste water infrastructure investments, growth and economic development will be hindered in all of southern Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate action and recognize the critical need of this waste water project for economic growth and 'environmal'—environmental sustainability by committing to advocate and working with the federal government to close the gap with additional funding for Morden's waste water treatment system.

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure all levels of government and regulatory bodies will expedite necessary funding and approvals necessary to advance the Morden waste water project with no further delay and ensure no hindrance to growth and economic development for Morden and southern Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Tricia Falk, Darlene Blatz, Janelle Chawrun and other—many other Manitobans.

### **FortWhyte Alive**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) The community of Fort Whyte has over 22,000 residents and the RM of Macdonald has over 8,000 residents, many of them using McGillivray road and Provincial Trunk Highway 3 as a means of transportation or commute to and from the city of Winnipeg. Provincial Trunk Highway 3 is a major traffic corridor that services many communities, including Oak Bluff, Sanford, Brunkild, Carman, Morden, Manitou and Killarney, to name a few.

(2) Thousands of vehicles travel down McGillivray and PTH 3 each day, and with the growing industrial park in this area and connections to the Perimeter Highway, many transport vehicles, large trucks and farm equipment need to travel down these roads each day.

(3) In the last three years under the previous PC provincial government, two new sets of traffic lights were installed along this roadway. Local officials praised these initiatives, stating that it was greatly needed to help reduce traffic incidents.

(4) FortWhyte Alive is located in this area, which is a reclaimed wildlife preserve, recreation area and environmental education centre in southwest Winnipeg that attracts 100,000 visitors each year. This 660-acre park is located along the migratory path of Canadian geese, and is named after the surrounding community of Fort Whyte. A failure to install traffic lights poses a significant safety risk to all those who frequent the area.

(5) FortWhyte Alive has been undergoing renovations along 2505 McGillivray Blvd., across from the Brady Road, and is to be transferred into a new building called—transformed—sorry—into a new building called Buffalo Crossing, which will attract many more visitors to the area by vehicle, transit, bicycle and by foot.

\* (15:10)

The City of Winnipeg has been slated to install a new crosswalk at the intersection of Brady Road and McGillivray Boulevard by the summer of 2024; the previous PC provincial government committed to working with the City and the FortWhyte Alive to complete this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to assist the City of Winnipeg to address serious safety risks for all that frequent the FortWhyte Alive area by twinning and installing a traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of McGillivray Boulevard and Brady Road, as it transitions into Provincial Trunk Highway 3.

This petition was signed by Murray Jenson—[phonetic]—Jaenen, Terry Jaenen and Paige Jaenen and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Vocational School in Ste. Anne**

**MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

In March of 2023, a much-needed new vocational school was planned, budgeted for and announced, to be completed and operational for the 2027 school year.

Hundreds of families have participated in an outreach done by the Seine River School Division,

expressing a strong need for vocational training in the community.

The current provincial government paused the project upon taking office, and work has not resumed in spite of the Deputy Minister of Education admitting to trustees: You definitely need a new school.

Every delay prevents students in Ste. Anne and surrounding communities from having skills programming to which they are entitled to and that they deserve.

Seine River School Division trustees have identified areas of focus for this school of real local demand, such as health and daycare, which are greatly needed.

The current high school is just not suitable for the limits on programming that—and limits on programming—that can be offered as 400 students currently share a single three-stall boys' washroom and a single three-stall girls' washroom.

This planned school was to include a daycare spaces that the community greatly needs. At present, the lack of available space has limited the ability for some parents to return to the workforce, which hurts both families and the local economy.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately begin work on the new Ste. Anne vocational school and allocate necessary resources to meet the original 2027 timeline that residents were expecting.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Road 210**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba..

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 210, PR 210, is a 117.3-kilometre, or 72.8-mile, highway, in the eastern region of Manitoba that connects the towns and communities of Woodridge, Marchand, La Broquerie, Ste. Anne, Landmark, Linden, Ile des Chênes and St. Adolphe.

(2) A significant portion of PR 210 also runs through the constituency of La Vérendrye.

(3) PR 210 is a significant commuting route for eastern families, and also notably used by those in the agriculture, tourism, trade and commerce industries.

(4) The condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(5) The planned pavement upgrade was promised more than 20 years ago when it was constructed with a flat surface suitable for pavement but has yet to be completed.

(6) The condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in such bad shape that firefighters, police and paramedic services are severely delayed when responding to emergencies.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the Premier have a duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Road 210.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Road 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Danny Auch, Lynne Mavor, Anna Mavor and many, many other Manitobans.

### Teaching Certification

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early- to middle-years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early- to middle-years credit

requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early- to middle-years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary education—educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby 'compromising' the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early- to middle-years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This petition has been signed by Dr. Mary LeMaitre, Sebastian Wright, Jaya Roe and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

\* (15:20)

### Breast Screening

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off of 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast

cancer starting at the age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age or announced their intention to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of Canada and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition has been signed by Harmony Franzmann, Nolan Lytwyn and Curtis Zadervies [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

### **Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices**

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I wish to present the following petition—the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Glenn Vercaigne, Darryll Bermisch [*phonetic*], Garry Serruys and many other Manitobans.

### **Medical Assistance in Dying**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.



(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance.

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition.

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This is signed by Marylyn Gibney, Mary Gorman, Corinne Chartier and many, many other Manitobans.

### Breast Screening

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North):** I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society, or CCS, is now urging all

provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to age 40.

Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that the screening of women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

\* (15:30)

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intention to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into the public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase the screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to health-care system because cancers that are caught early are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower breast cancer screening to age 40.

This petition is signed by Shannon Ryman, Leomer Dingling *[phonetic]*, Roman *[phonetic]* Santarin and many, many more Manitobans.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Due to the evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who do not—or don't receive screening.

(5) Every other province and territory in Canada has already lowered the breast cancer screening age, or announced their intentions to do so. Other provinces in Canada have already commenced the work of expanding screening programs and hiring additional technologists into their public health-care system.

(6) Manitoba is currently behind the rest of the country and has no formal plan to increase its screening capacity or lower the breast cancer screening age.

(7) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast screening capacity and to lower the breast screening age to 40.

This petition is signed by Gemma Dorado, Arlene Samoy, Maria Inducil and many, many other Manitobans.

### **Provincial Trunk Highway 34**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 34, PTH 34, is a two-lane provincial primary highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

(2) PTH 34 runs north-south in the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The deterioration of PTH 34 has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) The construction of a new bridge in accordance with current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

This petition has been signed by Marilyn Wakely, Carson Cain, Bryce Desrochers and many other fine Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** There are no other petitions?

Grievances?

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Matt Wiebe (Acting Government House Leader):** Would you call for debate at second reading this afternoon, Bill 31, The Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act (Various Acts Amended), followed by Bill 42, The Buy Canadian Act (Government Purchases Act Amended).

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will proceed with second reading of Bill 31, The Property

Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act (Various Acts Amended), followed by debate on second reading of The Buy Canadian Act (Government Purchases Act Amended).

Just for the record, the second act we will be doing is Bill 42.

## SECOND READINGS

### **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 a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

\* (15:40)

#### *Motion presented.*

**MLA Sandhu:** This bill amends The Law of Property Act, The Real Property Act and the Municipal Board to stop the use of property controls in ownership and leasing agreements so more locations are available for grocery stores and supermarkets to sell fresh food and groceries.

The industry's large grocers use property controls like restrictive covenants and exclusivity clauses to control access to the real estate necessary for new grocers to enter the market.

Our government promised to eliminate restrictive covenants that drive up grocery prices. Prohibiting new property controls and avoiding for amending—or amending existing controls—property control will increase competition, which will help make groceries more affordable.

The proposed draft bill amends three separate acts to help increase competition by allowing more grocers, grocery stores and supermarkets to set up shops in Manitoba.

Under amendment to The Law of Property Act and The Real Property Act, certain property controls can no longer be created and new ones are voided. Existing property controls are voided unless the holder makes a registration under The Real Property Act within six months after the amendment comes into force.

An individual may initiate review of the property control. The matter may be referred to the Municipal Board if the minister considers the property control to be contrary to the public interest. The Municipal Board will make a determination on whether the property control should be voided.

More competition in the grocery industry is expected to increase access to food for sale and make life more affordable for Manitobans.

This is just one of many actions our government has taken to lower costs for the families.

I look forward to this bill receiving the unanimous support of this Assembly.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

## Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any opposition or independent member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by opposition members. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** I thank the—or congratulate the minister across the way on his new appointment and on this—on his work on this legislation.

I want—I'm wondering if he could talk about why this bill is needed, what prompted him to bring it forward and how does this bill help.

**Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery):** As the member opposite knows, the grocery prices are out of control across Canada, and the Competition Bureau has suggested that we should take these kind of steps where we are opening up the market for more grocers to enter the market and so there's more grocers are there and then there's competition and the—hopefully with this, we will have stable grocery prices into the future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Who has the government consulted on this legislation?

**MLA Sandhu:** This is a very simple—a very good question. And, you know what? This side the House, all the ministers, all the MLAs are out listening to Manitobans. This is what Manitobans want. They want to see more competition in the grocery sector, and with this bill, we are creating more, you know, competition.

And also, while we were doing some door knocking in Transcona, and when you're talking to people, the constituents there, all they want to see is the government working for them instead of for, you know, rich people. So that's why out here, we are listening to Manitobans and we are delivering on their priorities.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** I think all of us here would like to see our grocery bills go down. I know certainly I do. So if there's more grocery stores available, but not more grocery suppliers, how will this reduce the price of our groceries today?

Thank you.

**MLA Sandhu:** When you open up the market for more grocers or independent grocers to come into the market, each and every one wants to make sure have more business coming to their stores. And with them having a grocery store from opposite from each other will create more competition where more competition will—led to stable grocery prices into the future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Speaking to constituents and other Manitobans similarly to myself, many of them unaware that this even exists, so would the minister please answer how common this is in Winnipeg and across Manitoba? How often is it seen and how much can this expand competition and expansion of businesses throughout the province?

**MLA Sandhu:** Very good question. There are—pretty much every single big grocer have a restrictive covenant. So there's two kinds of property control right now. One is on the property itself. The second one is in the lease. And in the lease, they don't have to register with the Land Titles office, but the restrictive covenant is registered with the Land Titles office. But we have seen, pretty much, it's very, very common to have these property controls when grocers are opening up their businesses in certain places.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Guenter:** This bill appears to be addressing a rather minor problem in the grocery industry that it

seems won't have much of an impact on grocery prices, if any at all. What is this government doing to lower trade barriers to allow more competition in Canada? So far, we haven't seen much action from the Premier (Mr. Kinew) or from this government on improving internal trade. They've talked a lot about it. There have been no improvements, no action.

What action—what have they done? What about diversifying our markets and expanding international trade? Can the minister talk about what the government has done on that file?

**MLA Sandhu:** Canada will never be the 51st state of America. Our Premier is taking the lead with other premiers. We are opening up more tacks to see how can we create more opportunities here in Manitoba and across Canada. And our Premier is leading the team and the other premiers are also talking it. You probably have seen it out in the east.

And also the bill we have 42, which is—also talk about the buy Canada act. I'm really also looking forward to debating that bill after we pass this bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Narth:** The minister had answered in my last—for—the answer for my last question that this is commonplace for large grocers to use in the marketplace.

\* (15:50)

So my question to the minister would be, if this bill passes, how is this to increase competition in the marketplace? Will it expand the interest of large grocers, or is the idea to expand the market presence of small grocery stores?

**MLA Sandhu:** Honourable Speaker, what we are trying to do with this bill, as I said, there are very common to have a restrictive covenant from the big grocers. With this bill, they will have six months to register, otherwise their restrictive covenants will be voided. And into the future, you know, anyone can open up a grocery store, be it the independent grocers or be it bigger grocers who want to come into the Manitoba market.

So we are giving an opportunity for the businesses to flourish, and this is one of the barriers we are taking away—that one is there for the business to operate.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Bereza:** So this ban bans any restrictive covenants on the property where a grocery store or supermarket is operated.

Is there any other covenants that this government is a signatory to?

**MLA Sandhu:** Honourable Speaker, this bill is related to the grocery prices only, so this is a regular grocer, a grocery store and supermarket only. So we are not looking at any other restrictive covenant that there are, such as probably, you know, small grocers that might have it that's under 3,000 square feet; we are not looking into those ones. These are the ones that are currently—they are on bigger grocers, plus on the lease as well.

Thanks.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** How often has this been a problem in Winnipeg, or is this a bigger issue in Ontario and we're just trying to take that same and do it here? But is it really a big problem here in Manitoba?

**MLA Sandhu:** Honourable Speaker, this is the first bill ever there is in Canada, so our government is taking a lead on this one across Canada. And I'm very proud to be part of this team and who are—they care about Manitobans.

And this is—we are seeing it's common in Manitoba here where the restrictive covenant and the property control there are. So with this we are trying to get rid of the property controls and open up the market for more grocers to come into the market.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Guenter:** I'm wondering if the minister could answer why the legislation doesn't retroactively remove all of the covenants. Why have this registration process and then an appeal process to the Municipal Board?

**MLA Sandhu:** Well, Honourable Speaker, our government is a listening government. We want to make sure the people—there might be certain places where that is okay to have a restrictive covenant. But with this bill, what we are trying to do is open up the market.

And with this bill, I'm sure into the future and we also giving an opportunity for the businesses to tell the board or why they need this restrictive covenant into the future, and it will be the board who will be deciding into the future: yes, this is important; they have to have that restrictive covenant, or not.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Narth:** My question for the minister is: Has this government, and himself as now the new minister, listened to businesses within the grocery sector to see

how many businesses are awaiting for this legislation to be passed to allow for them to compete in their community? And if so, how many businesses are currently waiting to enter the market within that sector?

**MLA Sandhu:** Honourable Speaker, we are giving grocers, grocery store owners or—big and small to enter into the market. This is the purpose of this bill, to bring more competition into the market and to stabilize the grocery prices and, going forward there will be no restrictive covenant or exclusivity clauses in Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Bereza:** Minister, I just want to make sure I'm clear here: the—this is the first bill of its kind in Canada. This is aimed at the big grocery store properties of a specific size.

Honourable Speaker, the minister mentioned 2,000 square feet. Is 2,000 square feet the minimum in order to be called a larger grocery store, or is there a minimum number of what the square footage would be to not qualify for this?

Thank you.

**MLA Sandhu:** Honourable Speaker, 3,000 and less is considered a convenience store; 3,000 to 7,000 considered a grocery store; 7,000 and above is considered a superstore. So that's the—it's in the act there, yes.

**Mrs. Hiebert:** We discussed a question earlier about who was consulted with. Did—was the—were the large—or, large grocers as well as small grocers all consulted as well as convenience stores? Thank you.

**MLA Sandhu:** As I said, we are listening to Manitobans and we are delivering on their priorities. And also, yes, Loblaws, Sobeys, Walmart have all indicated that they are prepared to give up their property control with some conditions.

Their condition was if other grocers will do it, and we will do as well. So we are bringing a bill in so where it will be more competition, and we will—there—probably be stabilizing the grocery prices into the future.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Narth:** Just to get clarification to expand on my previous question is, how many grocers are currently waiting in the market to enter that sector? Right now, how many grocers have asked the minister and his department to create this legislation to allow them to enter a market that they are currently blocked from?

**MLA Sandhu:** This bill's purpose is opening up the market for more grocers to come into the market. With this bill there will be more competition between the grocers as bigger and smaller grocers come in, and with this bill grocery prices will be stabilized, and this bill allows more grocers to open up the shops. There are right now certain places, there are controls over certain properties that are sitting empty right now because they have a restrictive covenant on those grocers—those properties. So we are getting rid of those ones.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

### Debate

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

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to put a few words on the record with regard to Bill 31, The Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act, and I thank the minister for the bill briefing in his office last week as well, and, you know, I think this is notionally a bill that is reasonable and one that we can support.

But my broader concern is that I don't think that it's going to have any impact at all, and we'll talk about that a little bit more. And I just want to, for those who are listening, to explain that the restrictive covenants, these property controls which have taken the form of restrictive covenants and exclusivity clauses that prevent grocery stores and supermarkets from opening are really the target of this legislation and opening up the market to allow for more competition.

\* (16:00)

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

So existing property controls are void unless the holder registers them under The Real Property Act within six months after the amendments come into force and property controls that are not registered are then considered void.

Certain existing exclusivity clauses that restrict supermarkets are amended to remove the restriction, and the minister or another person may initiate the review of a property control, and the matter may be referred to the Municipal Board if the minister determines the property control may be contrary to the public interest. Under amendments to The Municipal Board Act, the board may order a property control discharged or amended if the board finds it to be contrary to the public interest. Any person who holds

a property control cannot sue the government for any loss that may—that might arise from the enactment of the amendment.

So a fairly reasonable bill. It is the first of its kind in Canada. It's aimed at big grocery stores and properties 2,000 square feet or larger, and it does not apply to small convenience stores like the 7-Elevens and other small grocery stores.

So, of course, on this side of the House, the PCs, we have always been champions of business; of small business, in particular, mom-and-pop shops that we're so proud of across Manitoba. And so we believe in supporting them and allowing them to compete with the big players. And it is unfortunate that—but it is the way it seems to be—that Superstore and Costco and Walmart are often able to provide their goods for less than some of the smaller grocery stores.

But I'm always so glad to see people in my community and Manitobans all across this province, when we support our local grocery stores—like I said, the mom-and-pop operations, the family operations within our communities—that there are so many benefits that come from supporting them even though, perhaps, you know, economically, prices may be higher. And so, you know, these are organizations, these are businesses and families' operations that give back to the community in so many ways. And so it's important that we, especially in these days, patronize our smaller grocery stores.

As I said, the—this bill, I think nominally is a reasonable bill. It—this legislation stems from a 2023 report of Canada's Competition Bureau that recommended that provinces move forward with restricting these anti-competitive covenants and property controls to help improve competition amongst grocery chains and this, like I said, this legislation is very specific to supermarkets and large grocery stores.

So the main benefit of this legislation is that it may encourage greater competition in the grocery industry and will prevent large vacant superstore properties from remaining vacant because of a lack of a tenant. This will obviously help avoid vacant properties from becoming derelict eyesores, among other things.

But, as I said, as good as this legislation is, I just—I don't—I find it hard to believe that it's going to do anything to actually bring down grocery prices. And I think perhaps that that's why this NDP government has brought it forward because, like everything else in their agenda, it's—really they're all about the window

dressing. They're all about the showmanship. They're all about putting something out there and telling Manitobans that they're actually acting on an issue when really they're not.

And we've seen this time and time and time again where they put forward legislation that really has no teeth or that even duplicates legislation that we already have on record, even legislation that was brought forward by the, you know, previous PC government. And the NDP will then—they, in fact, they'll go so far as—this current NDP government has gone so far as to cancel projects, to cancel things that were initiated by the previous PC government, just so that six months later they could reannounce them. And so we've seen that with personal-care homes, schools and many other things. And, like I said, they do it with legislation as well.

So my concern is that, you know, this is not a bad bill per se, but when we're talking about actually lowering grocery prices across Manitoba, well, that's a whole 'nother' matter. And if this does—if this legislation does anything to help towards that end, you know, that's a good thing.

But we know that the issues with grocery prices really lie elsewhere. We know that Manitobans are struggling with skyrocketing food prices under this NDP government, you know, and industry experts themselves have said that this is a bill that won't lower grocery prices.

We want more competition and lower prices but, unfortunately, this piece of legislation misses the real issues, which are high wholesale food costs. And I believe it's a local businessman, Munther Zeid, who said that we have to be able to buy it cheaper to sell it cheaper. So the real problem is wholesale pricing, not necessarily retail competition.

But like I said, this government, which is very invested in their image—extremely image-conscious government and very invested in what they put in the window for Manitobans to look at—really isn't that concerned about substance and, unfortunately, we have legislation like this that, like I said, you know, is not bad legislation per se, but misses the mark and will do nothing, it seems, to actually lower grocery prices, which is a very real, a very present problem facing Manitoban—Manitoba families today.

Grocery store owners—those that are actually setting the prices—are saying loud and clear that wholesale costs are the actual problem, not where stores are located. And like I said, you know, Munther Zeid's

quote, I think, sums it up pretty well, that grocers have to be able to buy cheaper to sell it cheaper.

Experts—industry experts—have said it won't work. Food economist Mike von Massow has made it clear that there is no evidence that scrapping restrictive covenants isn't going to bring prices back down. Even the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, which supports the bill, admits this move alone won't lead to major savings at the checkout.

And we did ask the minister about this, as well, in the question-and-answer time, but this bill does have a built-in loophole. The government says they're banning restrictive covenants, but they're letting property owners keep them if they register. So at the end of the day, what is really changing? And the minister said these restrictive covenants are widespread across the province.

And so it's not clear that any of these grocers are going to want to give up their restrictive covenants. They're probably already registered. Like the minister said, a lot of the larger players in the industry are very keen on having these restrictive covenants in place, so they've already gone ahead and—well, they're likely to—one can assume they're likely to register their restrictive covenants as soon as they have the opportunity to do that. So if they all do that and they're allowed to keep them, then it's fair to ask what does this legislation really change?

And it's also fair to ask: If the Premier (Mr. Kinew) really believes in this bill, why he is leaving a back door open for businesses to keep their exclusivity clauses? I suspect, as I said, it's because this government has a penchant for putting things in the window and then hanging up the mission accomplished sign when nothing of consequence has been done.

They've done things like the gas tax holiday stunt. Manitobans are now paying the gas tax again. When the gas tax holiday was in place, you know, that's one of those things, over time, you kind of get priced into the market, it kind of gets priced into the economy. Manitobans take that and price it into their budgets and then a year later when it's—when the tax is reapplied, when it comes back, you know, then it amounts to another hit to the pocketbook.

And so the Premier said temporarily removing the provincial gasoline tax would reduce grocery prices, but that didn't work either, and we saw that. Grocery prices didn't go up—didn't go down, they went up.

\* (16:10)

Other things. You know, businesses—when we want to—if we want to talk about bringing down prices, we have to start to talk. We've got to get the conversation to a place where we're talking about making Manitoba competitive.

And in some of that language—you know, the minister used some of that language, some of that language is in the bill. But we've actually got to start to focus on what that means and talk about what real competition means and promoting a climate of competition among business here in Manitoba.

So, you know, that means that we can't have an anti-business climate. And one of the main features of that is our payroll tax, Manitoba's provincial payroll tax, which the previous PC government lessened the burden of on Manitoba businesses. We raised the threshold over several budgets; raised the threshold for and allowed several thousand businesses to come off the payroll tax obligation.

So that helped, but, of course, it's a \$600-million cash cow for the provincial government and puts Manitoba at a distinct disadvantage relative to other provinces, and it impacts grocery stores. And so, this government, we've got to start to have a conversation about payroll tax. And I thank my colleague, the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), for bringing forward a bill to do just that last week.

But taxes have a real impact on grocery prices. You know, if grocers have to pay higher taxes, they pass those down, just like all businesses do. They pass those taxes down to consumers. And, ultimately, it's the consumer that pays, so. That we know that the payroll tax is a real job killer. And we need the anti-business NDP government to permanently eliminate the job-killing payroll tax in Manitoba.

Businesses also need real relief to bring down prices. Food prices are skyrocketing because of global supply chain issues, inflation, high fuel costs. The carbon tax is another one. If you think of how much money farmers pay in carbon tax—and I'm proud to have a few farmers on this side of the House—and, you know, the amount of carbon tax alone that they pay in drying grain and the carbon tax that's paid on fuels running those tractors and combines.

My colleague for La Vérendrye could probably spend his full 30 minutes talking—and more—talking about that with real passion. And so—because he's had to pay tens of thousands, and probably hundreds of thousands of dollars—probably more. Pay a lot of carbon tax. And, unfortunately, that puts farmers like him and

Manitoba farmers at a distinct disadvantage. So what that means is then they have to find a way to pass those costs on. And, unfortunately, farmers are price takers, not price makers, and so the carbon tax is something.

But then if you think about, you know, the trucking industry that then transports those groceries and the warehouses that store them and the big grocery stores and the small grocery stores, buildings that then have to pay a carbon tax on heating and things like that. So, you know, that's something that has a real impact on grocery prices.

So if the government wanted to lower prices, perhaps they'd be working on cutting transportation costs. Perhaps they wouldn't have reapplied the fuel tax. Perhaps they would have lobbied to have the carbon tax removed. And perhaps they would reduce credit card fees for grocers, something that's very important. And perhaps they'd push for fairer wholesale pricing.

And, again, I touched on, you know, the whole aspect of wholesale pricing does have to do with interprovincial trade and access to international markets. I asked that question of the minister, and unfortunately, you know, I would have appreciated perhaps a little more of an answer on what the government is doing to open up new markets for Manitobans because as I said, I provided that quote by Munther Zeid, who said that in order to sell it for cheaper, they need to be able to buy it for cheaper.

And that's where the government of Manitoba could really get to work and open up new markets and new opportunities for buyers in Manitoba to be able to access goods at cheaper prices, and promote competition.

And yet, as I said, not much of an answer and very little action, if any, on that front on the part of this government. So, one thing is clear though, is that—and I touched on this a little bit, but—is that the NDP is making life more expensive. The Kinew government is taking more money out of the pockets of Manitobans this year. They're making more—life more expensive by raising gas taxes, as we saw—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I'll ask the member to keep his comments relevant to the bill.

**Mr. Guenter:** As I said, the government, if they were serious about bringing down grocery prices, would act on a number of fronts in a, you know, real way to try to bring out—bring about real change on this issue.



And, unfortunately, they've put forward a bill that, on the face of it, is not a bad bill, except that it's going to have no impact. And as I said, it's just—it's part of their modus operandi; they do this on a regular basis.

You know, they'll put something forward in the House here. It allows them to talk, to feign concern and interest on behalf of Manitobans, and it allows them to talk about an issue and then they go to the media and tell Manitobans that we're acting on this, whether it's bail reform or education or anything—you know, this bill here, grocery prices—except that the legislation that they bring forward really all too often has no teeth and is of no consequence to the issue. And so these issues just keep on going and going and going, and Manitobans wake up every day and—like I said, whether it's on crime or affordability or health care—they're reading the same old headlines day after day after day.

Nothing's being done, and yet this government is going out there and waving the mission accomplished sign. So I'm concerned about that, and it's why I talked about the need to reduce taxes on Manitobans. We can't have this NDP government, if we want a—lower grocery prices, we can't have this NDP government reinstating the gas tax, for example.

We can't have this NDP government—which is what they're doing—raising the provincial property and school taxes on homeowners by \$150 million. We seen just in one school division this year a 15-and-a-half per cent tax increase. That hits Manitobans squarely in the pocketbook. Last year we saw school division property taxes in the order of 18 per cent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'd ask the member to bring his comments back to the bill before us.

**Mr. Guenter:** Yes, so I think if this NDP government was serious about bringing down grocery prices, I think that they would not be raising taxes on a wide variety of fronts and hitting Manitobans square in the pocketbook at a time when we can least afford it.

So, you know, as I said, not only are education taxes—property taxes going up by 15 and a half per cent, Autopac rates are increasing by 5.7 per cent. That also, by the way, has an impact because it's commercial motor carriers; it's semi trucks that haul goods on our highways and if they're paying more in insurance, well then, as I said, that cost has to be borne by someone. And, ultimately, it's borne by the consumer who buys the product on the shelf.

So, as a result, you take it all together. Under this NDP government, the average family of four is

expected to spend \$800 more on groceries this year, according to the latest Canada food price report. Food prices are expected to increase by 3 to 5 per cent in 2025 and, according to the latest HungerCount report from Food Banks Canada, over 50,000 Manitobans now rely on a food bank every month.

These are our fellow, hard-working Manitobans: 50,000 of them now relying on a food bank every month. And that is incredibly concerning. And I know I've had experience speaking with constituents who have had to use these, or who are relying on these food banks. And it just boggles the mind because southern Manitoba is a veritable bread basket; we've got very fertile land there—some of the best land, I think, in the province. And, you know, we grow potatoes and canola and corn and beans and all kinds of great crops there.

\* (16:20)

And yet, you have people in our communities who are relying on food banks. How is that? You know, that shouldn't be the case, that grocery prices are unaffordable for Manitoba families when you go out and we've got acres and rolling acres, just a vast expanse of land that is growing crops for the world. And yet, folks here can't afford that.

And that is—that's a real problem in this province. We're—and across this country. We're wealthy in so many ways. You know, Canada has the third largest—home to the third largest proven oil and gas reserves in the world. We should not be paying \$1.60 per litre at the pump. That is absolutely crazy. We should be paying—I mean, pay something, but we should not be paying \$1.60.

And, you know, all the lumber—the boreal forest—all the trees we have growing in this country, and yet we can't—you know, home ownership is just a—pipe dream for many young families, for many Canadians, regardless of age.

And yet we're home to all of these supplies, all this wood, you know, vast forests, and so it's a conundrum. It should not be the case. And all too often, it's government mismanagement; it's bad government policies that force Manitobans, that force Canadians, to pay absolutely ridiculous prices when it comes to groceries, when it comes to gas fuel, when it comes to, you know, lumber for building a home or whatever it is, and we're paying, you know, as if we're Europeans. You know, and there's a scarcity of resources. And yet, we have this—all this abundance. That shouldn't be the case. That shouldn't be the case.

Government's got to get out of the way, got to start cutting taxes, got to start rolling back regulations and allow for greater competition and allow for prices to come down. And, really, we should be self-reliant as Manitobans and Canadians.

Like I said, representing an area where we grow each year beautiful crops and it's been a long, cold winter, and I think it's been hard on a lot of people, you know, and I do somewhat get affected by long winters. It—you know, I think it runs in my family. But I think there's a lot of Manitobans who are looking forward to spring, and spring is the time when we're going to see farmers out there—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

So I'll just—I'll remind the member what the bill is about. The bill is about exclusivity clauses and restrictive covenants that affect supermarkets and grocery stores in Manitoba. So I'd ask that your comments be related to the bill before us.

**Mr. Guenter:** Thank you.

So—and I'll get to, certainly, my relevant comments on the bill, which is that this bill does nothing, has no real teeth, does nothing to actually lower grocery prices, and that is the stated intent of the government.

But the bill does absolutely nothing. And so, representing an area where we grow, like I said, beautiful crops, and I was talking about how we're coming out of a long, cold winter, and soon people will be driving along our southern Manitoba roads and looking at all the beautiful crops, the sunflowers. Altona is home to many beautiful sunflower crops and the canola fields and, really, the breadbasket of this province.

And my point is just simply that with all this abundance, why is it that grocery prices are so terribly high? And the point I'm making is that all too often it's government's gotten in the way with regulations and taxes and made it so that it's impossible in—you know, for us to have lower grocery prices; for us to be able to buy gas at dirt-cheap prices; for us to be able to build homes with Canadian lumber at dirt-cheap prices when we have all this abundance in Manitoba and Canada.

It makes no sense that we're having to pay as if we're Europeans and there's a scarcity of resources when we're Canadians and we have an—40 million people and this—on the second largest piece of land in the world, and we have all this abundance. So I think the government's got to take a look at the tax regime

in Manitoba, they've got to take a look at regulations and they've got to get serious about actually promoting farm to table within Manitoba.

Manitobans, we should be benefiting from the surplus of good—natural goods, the abundance of—the abundance that nature has blessed us with, that we've been blessed with here in this province. Manitoba families should not—50,000 Manitoba families going to food banks each—depending on food banks each month under this NDP government. That is a record of failure.

This government—this NDP government has got to do better. And so, with that, I yield back.

Thank you.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

Every time that we have the opportunity to speak about competition and opening competition in the open free market, I find it important to stand up and put words on the record because it's important that we move forward with allowing free enterprise to compete in a free and transparent way within our province.

The bill itself allows for additional competition within the market that that sector operates within, so on that front, I support the intent of this bill. Unfortunately, the bill is like the member from Borderland had referred to it as: window dressing. This bill does not solve the problem of affordability and grocery prices for Manitobans, and we just basically need to take it back to basic economics.

Unfortunately, the intent of this bill is for a favourable media headline—that this government cares about business in the private sector and competition of business in the private sector—but, in fact, this bill does very little to achieve the goal that the minister who brought the bill forward had expressed it sets out to do, and that is to lower the cost of groceries for all Manitobans.

We need to realize that this bill and the situation that it aims to solve is very limited. We've got an industry that functions within a sector allowing a 1 to 3 per cent profit margin. Margins in the grocery business are razor-thin. Definitely grocers and the industry are affected by many, many influences: by regulation, taxation. And limitations on competition, as this bill aims to resolve, are one of them.

But as in question—the question period for this bill just earlier, I tried to get the answer from the minister on how many businesses have asked for this

legislation to be brought forward, how many businesses are immediately affected and will enter the marketplace.

I represent a constituency in Manitoba that is very entrepreneurial. My wife and myself own a store, and we realize the razor-thin profit margins in retail stores, especially retail grocery stores. And that's just a fact that I'm hoping to express to Manitobans here today, is that this isn't the silver bullet to solve the problem of affordability.

\* (16:30)

To give examples for this, this would be a large grocer, generally—a significant-sized grocer like Sobeys or Safeway owning real estate within the city of Winnipeg or a larger community across our great province. And when they transition out of that market because it's no longer feasible or may not be feasible for the short term within a community of our great city of Winnipeg, they would put this caveat in the real estate deal to limit the competition.

This isn't right, but at the same time, so that viewers today of this broadcast realize that these stores are large, significant-sized grocers in a market that is no longer profitable, definitely, that wouldn't mean that a small independent grocery store would be interested in this real estate, purchase the real estate or lease the real estate, and open a competing grocery store.

So definitely we need to limit these restrictions into accessing the market, but it isn't the widespread effect that this bill sets out to portray. These businesses aren't going to come overnight. You don't have a sector of the economy where businesses are functioning on a 1 to 3 per cent profit margin and all of a sudden, because of real estate restrictions, open up an entire new market for competition; that doesn't exist. And to what end would that competition be?

When we're talking one to three—and these are the stats: 1 to 3 per cent profit margin—how much competition could a new grocery store in that market be? If the next closest competition is at 3 per cent, does that mean that 1 per cent difference you would see in your price of grapes and oranges in the competing store? This does not address affordability for Manitobans.

But a very interesting stat that I found was that for a long period of time in the early 2000s and prior to that, grocers were functioning at a 1 to 3 per cent profit margin. And prior to that, it was similar for the recent history and currently it is. The funny thing with the stats are that grocery profitability and the ability for

grocery stores to create a larger profit margin was from 2016 to 2020, the start of the pandemic.

So it's a clear correlation between the Progressive Conservatives leading this province and the affordability for Manitobans, and also for businesses to be able to achieve higher profit margins. This allows, then, for a larger margin of competition being attainable.

Right now, like I said, we've got a 1 to 3 per cent profit margin in this sector of the market. That doesn't allow for a whole lot of competition, because there aren't a lot of businesses that are willing to invest significant capital in or—and function with very limited, razor-thin margins. But there are a lot of things that this government is able to do. Those things are supporting businesses within our province, similarly to that time that we saw grocers being able to be more competitive and earning a larger profit margin. That was a time that the Progressive Conservative government was in power in Manitoba.

At that same time we saw regulatory accountability incentives. The PC government introduced a regulatory accountability act, which established mechanisms to streamline regulation and reduced unnecessary administrative processes for businesses. These are the things that allow for affordability in food for Manitobans, reducing the regulation for those businesses to function.

Another one was the one-for-one rule. So under this policy, for every new regulation introduced, an existing one had to be eliminated. This aimed to prevent the accumulation of regulatory burden, and like I said, regulatory burden is one of the largest contributors to businesses in all sectors of our economy to limit their profitability.

A third one, very important move in regulation, was the red tape reduction reporting. The government published annual reports highlighting progress in reducing red tape, showcasing efforts to simplify processes and improve regulatory efficiency.

These are the things that allow businesses in all sectors of our economy to enter the market, especially in grocers. So this was a move forward. But, however, it is important to note that subsequent policy changes under a different administration have impacted these initiatives. The current NDP government has moved to repeal certain measures, such as the regulatory accountability act and the one-for-one rule, which has led to criticism from business organizations concerned about the increasing regulatory complexities.

This is a prime example of the negative effects of increased regulation in the marketplace. This is widespread marketplace across all sectors of our economy. This has a direct impact to—as we saw from 2016 to 2020, grocers were able to achieve higher profitability. Higher profitability increases the attractiveness for other businesses entering into that market within that sector.

We've seen a fall back to the momentum that we had seen that allowed Manitobans to enter into the business community, create a profitable business to contribute to our province, provide affordable food, affordable housing and a more affordable place for Manitobans to live, grow and prosper and raise their families.

The supply chain for grocery stores is vast and it is significant to the impact that we see on affordability of food. It isn't as simple as taking limitations out of the real estate market and having grocers set up to provide cheap food to Manitobans.

The fact is that cheap food does not exist today, and it doesn't exist because the farmers are profiting at a tremendous rate. It doesn't exist because the transportation industry is profiting at a tremendous rate. And it doesn't exist because of packaging industry profiting at a tremendous rate.

\* (16:40)

The problem that we see in Manitoba and we are seeing across Canada, but we see us in Manitoba going down a path that all Manitobans should be concerned about, is a lack of affordability and a lack of profitability. Profitability is not a bad word in the marketplace. Profitability allows for businesses to be more competitive and allow for less inexpensive products to Manitobans.

Unfortunately, what we're seeing is further government involvement in each one of the steps of the supply chain for food within our province, and it's increasing. We're seeing that government is stepping more in the way of the prosperity and growth of businesses all along that supply chain. This is right from the inputs that go into agriculture to provide the foods, then the transportation, the packaging, the wholesaling, and finally the retailing.

We have more government regulation, more government involvement, and, of course, more than ever, more taxation. These are the things that are truly affecting the affordability for Manitobans. This is affecting your grocery prices. There aren't grocers, big or small, and especially not small, the large grocers

are able to function on an economies of scale model, where the larger they are, the more produce that they sell and move out their door, the more net profit that they are able to achieve.

But with those razor-thin profit margins you're not allowing the profitability of a small business. Your small corner store, the communities, the families, that build our neighbourhoods across our province, we're not allowing them to grow and prosper and become competitive.

So with the NDP's model of increasing regulation, red tape, taxation and interference within the free market, we are seeing costs of everything increasing. And we will continue to see the costs of everything increase. There's a tax on a tax on a tax, and some of this isn't new for this administration and the NDP government, but—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I'd encourage the member to bring his comments back to the bill, which is related to exclusivity clauses and restrictive covenants that affect supermarkets and grocery stores in Manitoba.

**Mr. Narth:** Bill 31, The Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act, aims to limit the restrictions of competition for grocers within that sector and that market. But where I was going was speaking to the fact that this bill, although addressing one aspect that is very minimal to the effects of high grocery prices and the general affordability that that creates for Manitobans, I want Manitobans to know that this isn't the solution. I was happy to hear the minister in question and answer period that he had said that this will directly impact the affordability of groceries for Manitobans, because now this government, this minister and his department are going to be taking responsibility for results.

So I'm hoping to see that with this piece of legislation, Bill 31, that we're going to be able to see the effects.

Where I was going, honourable Speaker, is that it's far more widespread than that, and although opening competition to businesses and entrepreneurs across our province and not limiting where they're able to access that sector of the market is important, I feel, with my background in economics and business, both by education and through experience of being an entrepreneur my entire life is that the effects of the entire—the effects that the entire supply chain has on the end cost of groceries is far more impactful

than this bill, Bill 31, reducing a real estate limitation for businesses.

Where I would like to see more done is that we create an environment that businesses—in this case, the grocers—and all the—all of the people, the individuals, the Manitobans, Canadians along the way on the supply chain, are able to see increased profitability. With an increased profit margin, allows for them to be more competitive and it allows for more entrepreneurs, more businesses, to enter that market. And that's really important. That's what we need to see.

If we don't see that, we—we'll continue to see Manitobans and this province continue down the path that we're on today. Manitobans—headline out: inflation in January of 2025, just this—beginning of this year—was 2.7 per cent, the highest in Canada. Gas prices increased by almost 26 per cent.

And why was that? It was because of another one of these pieces of legislation that sounded good, may have had good intent but may not have had the involvement of any type of economist.

So the gas tax holiday—the government was celebrating, some Manitobans were even celebrating the reduction of gas prices. But that's about all that it was, was a short-term celebration. It was like having a house party. The effects of that aren't widespread or long term, so like a house party, can turn into a house fire in a hurry. And that's what we're seeing today with the gas tax holiday.

So why did this government bring forward the gas tax holiday? Apparently, not to bump their personal image for Manitobans, but it was to increase affordability. And we were supposed to see this directly impact grocery prices.

Unfortunately, we didn't remove any of the other regulatory barriers. We didn't remove any of the other taxes along the way. And, in fact, we worked the opposite. And the results today are groceries being even less affordable than they were prior to the gas tax holiday.

So what I take from that is that whatever we do cannot be limited and walk away as Bill 31 would be, eliminating a real estate, essentially, a real estate restriction for entering a certain real estate market. It is important, and it's necessary, but other than being a signal with very little impact, it doesn't achieve anything else.

What it does need to do is it needs to be accompanied by much more. It needs to be accompanied by a progressive business model on how to make grocers

more competitive. And along with competition comes profitability.

And, unfortunately, this NDP government thinks that private-sector profitability is something negative and a bad word or bad term, but it is necessary. Without profitability within any sector of the market, you will not achieve competition unless you have direct government subsidy.

\* (16:50)

So we've seen this government, as we look to the potential of looming tariffs, they've used that terminology, and it's concerning because government, instead of getting more involved with the impact on businesses, with the operation of their ventures, what they need to do is get out of the way of business.

*The Speaker in the Chair*

In order for us to achieve affordability, we need to have profitability. Everybody doing better allows for those within the market to be more competitive. And also, everybody doing better will allow for more affordability.

So if Manitobans are taxed less and the government is less involved with regulation on how businesses, farms, transportation industry and every other aspect of the supply chain, you will see that Manitobans are able to enjoy greater wealth, and with greater wealth comes greater affordability.

So our concern right now in the marketplace is that there is an imbalance. We don't see the earning potential of Manitobans increasing, but yet inflation of the cost of products is out of hand. Much of that can be directly attributed to the involvement of government and a lot of it can be attributed to direct taxation.

So if you see, now, farmers, independent businesses, paying property—or school tax on their property tax—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would remind the member to keep his comments relevant to the bill. We're not talking about school tax; we're talking about grocery stores and restrictive covenants. I believe you've been warned already, so I would expect you to keep your comments relevant to the bill we're discussing today.

**Mr. Narth:** And, yes, the restrictions that restrictive covenants has for grocers entering the marketplace and achieving affordability for consumers, I think, is directly related to the affordability of produce that is raised and grown by Manitoba farmers.

Some might be surprised, but what's in the grocery stores comes from farmers. And these farmers are the ones that pay carbon tax, they pay school property tax and they pay all taxes along the supply chain.

So like I say, I don't think it should be a surprise to you, Honourable Speaker. Shouldn't be a surprise to Manitobans. Shouldn't be a surprise to the minister who brought this bill forward, or to his department, that definitely this is one aspect to achieve affordability, but without the support of, definitely, a far wider spread recognition of affordability for Manitobans, it will not achieve what it set out to, and that being affordability for our agriculture sector, our manufacturing sector.

You know, manufacturers in our province, they are the ones that are producing shelving, they're producing the products that are used in transportation and the transportation industry as well.

So my point here today is that all sectors of our economy have an impact—and literally, it's all sectors of our economy—do have an impact on the food costs for Manitobans. So as much as Bill 31 may have been drafted with good intent, without being far more in depth, far more widespread, my concern is that it will do nothing for affordability for Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important bill today.

Couple of the questions that I had that I thought would get talked about here was, in regards to the Municipal Board when it comes to this bill—and again, just let me—the bill prohibits all future restrictive covenants going forward and requires store owners in existing covenants or property controls to register the covenant or property control within six months if they want to maintain controls.

The problem is, is what if the Municipal Board cannot get back within six months with a decision, as what's currently happening now? So that was just one of the small things that I had on that, but anyways, with that, Honourable Speaker, that was all I had to say on this matter.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 31, The Property Controls for Grocery Stores and Supermarkets Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

We will now—the motion is accordingly passed.

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

**The Speaker:** As previously announced, we will now move on to Bill 42, The Buy Canadian Act (Government Purchases Act Amended), brought forward by the honourable Minister of Public Service Delivery.

**Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery):** Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 42, The Buy Canadian Act (The Government Purchase Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to the—to a committee of this House.

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

**MLA Sandhu:** In light of the pressing economic challenges imposed by US tariffs, our government is standing up for Manitobans; standing up for Canadians.

This will signal our government's commitment to prioritizing goods and services that are made in Canada. This will direct the government to establish a buy-Canadian policy. This policy will outline the steps government will take to stand up for Manitoba jobs and our local economy. It establishes framework to prioritize the procurement of Canadian-made goods and services.

We know that in these challenging times, we must all work together to support our local economy. Our government is committed to standing up for Manitobans and changing our practice in order to protect the jobs of Manitobans and Canadians.

In response to the US tariffs, we are bringing forward this legislation to support Canadian suppliers; this will indeed reinforce our commitment to supporting local industries and protecting jobs.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have unlimited time remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 17, 2025

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