



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

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
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>	Spruce Woods	
<i>Vacant</i>	Transcona	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 27, 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, 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 that we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territory and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations, and 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.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: And before we begin, I have a short statement for the House.

Yesterday, during debate, the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak used some words that are unparliamentary. It was a very emotional speech on her part, and somehow it just, to me, didn't seem right to interrupt her at that time. So I am going to caution the member now and ask her to withdraw those words at her earliest convenience.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): Retract those words that I used yesterday during my emotional speech.

Ekosi.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS****Bill 207—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals)**

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the member from Tyndall Park, that Bill 207, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm proud to introduce The Public Schools Amendment Act, a common sense measure to strengthen the quality of school leadership in Manitoba. Principals play a crucial role in shaping the education culture of our schools. They mentor staff, hire our teachers and provide critical guidance that shapes both teaching practice and student success.

To lead effectively, principals must first understand what it means to be a teacher. This bill ensures that all principals have at least two years of classroom teaching experience unless they already serve in that role or work in a very small school.

In a time where Manitobans have seen a decline in educational outcomes, this legislation will help ensure our children have access to schools that are led by experienced, knowledgeable educators who are grounded in evidence-based practices and are committed to excellence.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Committee reports—oh, sorry.

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

And one of these days I'll remember that.

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

COMMITTEE REPORTS**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Third Report**

MLA Jim Maloway (Vice-Chairperson): I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and—

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on March 26, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office: Performance for the year ended March 31, 2021*
- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office: Performance for the year ended March 31, 2022*
- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office for the year ended March 31, 2023*
- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office for the year ended March 31, 2024*

Committee Membership

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

Officials Speaking on Record

- Tyson Shtykalo, Auditor General of Manitoba

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office: Performance for the year ended March 31, 2021*
- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office: Performance for the year ended March 31, 2022*
- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office for the year ended March 31, 2023*
- *Auditor General's Report – Operations of the Office for the year ended March 31, 2024*

MLA Maloway: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): March 31 marks Manitoba's first official Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility, thanks to the legislation brought forward by our colleague, the MLA for Kirkfield Park.

As this bill moved through the committee stage, two-spirit and transgender Manitobans and their allies came out to show their support. Presenters shared their stories about their lives as two-spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse peoples. They talked about hiding parts of themselves from the world because they didn't feel safe, including at home. And they talked about how visibility isn't just a buzzword; it is truly life-saving for two-spirit, transgender and gender-diverse Manitobans.

Members opposite sat in that same committee and heard these stories. They heard about the transformative power of this legislation. And still, they decided two-spirit and transgender Manitobans didn't deserve their humanity recognized.

The MLAs for La Vérendrye, Borderland, Springfield-Ritchot and Steinbach stood up in the House and voted against this legislation. They couched transphobia as concerns about youth, while voting to send those same youth back into hiding. They did so at a time when attacks against two-spirit and transgender peoples are increasing and their rights are being stripped away.

* (13:40)

So for members of the House who missed these stories and for those who chose to ignore them, I want to share stories of the voices from youth again.

Mikayla Hunter, a queer and gender-diverse graduate student at the University of Manitoba said, and I quote: I didn't even see a pride flag in person until I moved to Winnipeg in 2011 and started university. I didn't know that this was something I could be. I didn't know that it was okay to be proud of who I was. End quote.

Adam Donaghy, a transgender high school student said, and I quote: Though it pains me to think that

transgender and two-spirit people have to put up guard around a person that they don't know, it brings me joy to see a community like ours can recognize each other's struggles, pains and joys, through each other and connect through that. End quote.

Alex Rana, a student from Manitoba 2SLGBTQI+ student action coalition said, and I quote: We want those who come after us to experience the same thing and not have to struggle for the bare-minimum acknowledgement that we exist. Transgender Day and two-spirit Manitobans are here, and ensuring our existence is visible and recognized is essential for our community to feel supported. End quote.

And Luca Gheorghica, a genderqueer advocate said, and I quote: Our community has struggled enough. Let us rest. Let us be. Let us be visible. End quote.

So today we celebrate that visibility. Two-spirit and transgender people must be seen and heard. They must be supported and respected. They must be valued and protected. They must be celebrated and loved.

I have always believed, and said, two-spirit, queer, transgender and gender-diverse peoples are among the bravest that I know, choosing to live authentically and joyfully in a world that too often meets them with ignorance, transphobia and homophobia and just pure hate.

Their resilience, love and truth inspires me every day.

Happy Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility.

The Speaker: Before we move on, were the quotes that the minister was reading from a public source?

MLA Fontaine: Yes, they were.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I am honoured to rise today to recognize Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility, which takes place this Monday, March 31. I know how important this day is for many Manitobans, so I want to show respect and recognize the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) for ushering in this day here in our province.

Two-spirit and transgender people have existed throughout our history and more than often than not they have struggled to be seen, heard, protected and accepted. Today, is an opportunity to commit to changing that.

The full participation of gender-diverse Manitobans is vital to building a stronger social and economic

fabric in our province, but it starts with visibility and safety. That's why our previous government invested in Canada's first 2SLGBTQ+ campus with the Rainbow Resource Centre, supported 2Spirit Manitoba Medicine Wolf hearing-healing place, supported Canada's oldest 2SLGBTQ+ film festival and partnered with Pride at Work Canada.

I know that we as fellow humans can do better to foster understanding for one another and make Manitoba more inclusive. We must continue working to end discrimination, keep violent offenders off of our streets and invest in our communities.

All Manitobans deserve to be treated with dignity and to have their existence acknowledged, their lives protected and their freedoms ensured. I say to all two-spirit, transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse Manitobans: I see you, I respect you and I will stand for you to live your best life.

As legislators and colleagues, as people, we will keep working to ensure Manitoba is a place where you can grow and thrive.

Thank you.

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

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

MLA Lamoureux: March 31st marks the international two-spirit, trans day of visibility, an annual event dedicated to celebrating trans people and raising awareness of discrimination faced by transgender people worldwide.

In today's world, the hatred toward trans and non-binary people has risen dramatically. People who are simply trying to exist authentically are being scrutinized, shamed and attacked by others who have made an issue out of their very existence and their attempts to live normal, happy lives like everyone else in the world.

It is important to recognize that jurisdictions with laws that limit 2SLGBTQ+ rights have a significant uptake in hate crimes towards members, and the psychological effects of bullying and shaming, especially trans kids, is very real today.

It is also well documented that trans and other 2SLGBTQ+ youth are at far higher risk of suicide than any other demographic.

Honourable Speaker, I feel very privileged to have on my team Ms. Shandi Strong, who many of

you already know. She's given me permission to share a bit about her story here this afternoon.

Honourable Speaker, 15 years ago Shandi was fired from a local business for coming out, and following that her life fell apart. Her suicide attempt was luckily interrupted. She went to the Human Rights Commission for justice, but didn't find it. She was forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement because trans people didn't have human rights at the time.

Shandi's a strong woman, and she is one of Manitoba's most visible trans people and has, for over 15 years, done incredible advocacy. She has received much recognition from her communities and others from being the first trans grand marshal for Winnipeg's Pride Ride, to the first trans trailblazer award from the LGBT Chamber of Commerce. I'm exceptionally grateful to have her in my life.

In conclusion, I want to thank the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) for bringing forward this important legislation here in Manitoba and, Honourable Speaker, I stand with the members of this House in condemning all forms of transphobia and the hateful campaigning.

Visibility truly matters. When others see people like themselves succeed it makes the world a better place, especially those who are marginalized. For with truth comes understanding and acceptance.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ramadan

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I rise today to recognize the end of Ramadan, which will be taking place at the end of this month.

This year in Manitoba, Ramadan began on March 1st with the sighting of the new moon. Millions of Muslims worldwide observe this holy month through fasting, Iftar gatherings, prayer and reflection.

Ramadan is an important opportunity for worship, for charity and a time to reflect and give thanks.

It's a time of togetherness and bonding within the Muslim community. And it's an occasion to be mindful and reflect on life and its blessings.

After the last day of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr begins. Eid is a joyous occasion when communities come together to celebrate the end of Ramadan and fasting. It is a day of prayer and gratitude and shared meals.

After a month of abstaining, it is a celebratory day of feasting and partaking.

* (13:50)

Here in Manitoba, thousands of Muslims have observed this month of dawn-to-dusk fasting and will soon celebrate Eid. I was honoured to be invited and to intend several local Ramadan potlucks and Iftar gatherings over the past month. These moments of coming together always encourage and uplift me. The generosity and hospitality I encounter is incredible. As we share food, we bond. We share our lives, our hopes and our stories. There is such beauty in these gatherings.

I am also encouraged by the growing visibility of the Muslim community in our province. I am proud today to add to that visibility by officially recognizing Ramadan here in the Chamber. Muslims enrich our communities and add to the wonderful tapestry of our province. It is so important that we recognize and appreciate this.

To all observing, Ramadan mubarak [*have a blessed Ramadan*] and Eid mubarak [*have a blessed Eid*]. From my family to yours, I wish you a blessed Ramadan and a joyous Eid.

Thank you and shukran [*thank you*].

Recognizing Michif Language Teachers

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the important work being done in my home region of St. Laurent. This endeavour helps preserve and promote the Michif French language. Michif is a distinct part of Métis heritage and unique to the St. Laurent area.

Started in 2021 by Crystal Millar-Courchene and Bobby Ellis at the St. Laurent School, this outstanding program was funded by the Progressive Conservative's teacher idea fund. This portion of the curriculum has provided students with the opportunity to learn Michif French alongside Métis history and traditions. This program is unique in that it is taught by elders from the community, who share language lessons as well as cultural knowledge and traditional skills.

Lesson plans were initially developed by Patsy Millar, who was my teacher and principal many, many years ago. Ms. Millar's collaboration with the Louis Riel Institute has since evolved to include everyday language use and hands-on cultural experiences, such as ice fishing, trapping, bannock-making and Métis beadwork.

Of course, Ms. Millar had tons of help over the years. Those previously involved include—teaching Michif French—do include Beverly [*phonetic*]—Debbie Lavallée, Barbara Leclerc and Laurent Dumont. Currently, Denise Coutu and Elizabeth Denny, along with resource teacher Traci Turko, currently teach the class.

The continued dedication of those involved have played a significant role in ensuring that this unique Michif French program continues to be passed down to future generations.

As National Indigenous Languages Day approaches on March 31, it is important to recognize the efforts of those working to preserve Michif French and Métis culture. Their contributions are invaluable.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I wish to submit the names of those who join us today in the gallery into Hansard.

Please rise and help me recognize these outstanding individuals.

Denise Coutu, Elizabeth Denny, Debbie Lavallée, Crystal Millar-Courchene

U of M Muslim Student Association

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to recognize the incredible contributions of the University of Manitoba Muslim Students' Association.

As an alumna of the University of Manitoba, I have witnessed first-hand how UMMSA has created a positive and welcoming space for students. Since 1971, their dedication to providing a space for spiritual connection has been truly inspiring. In 2010, they achieved a remarkable milestone by establishing a permanent *muṣallā* [*open prayer ground*], ensuring that students have a dedicated place for prayer and reflection on campus.

Each year, UMMSA works tirelessly to raise funds, secure sponsors and ensure that the month of Ramadan is meaningful and accessible for everyone. This year, UMMSA provided over 7,000 free iftar meals, creating a warm and inclusive space where students could gather to break their fasts.

During the last 10 nights of Ramadan, they led one of the largest initiatives at a Canadian university by offering suhoor, providing students with pre-dawn nourishment. This extraordinary effort was made possible by 85 dedicated volunteers and generous dona-

tions from students, community members, local businesses and organizations.

Beyond their work during Ramadan, UMMSA has been a strong advocate for important causes, such as raising awareness and combating Islamophobia. Their efforts foster an environment of understanding, compassion and inclusivity, leaving a lasting impact on both the university and the wider community.

I invite everyone to join me in thanking UMMSA, many of whom are constituents of Fort Richmond and are here with us today, for their remarkable contributions and unwavering dedication.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to add the following guests' names to Hansard: Ayesha, Bareera, Faisal, Mahedi, Mahfuz, Arifah, Maham, Nahian, Aryan and Ayaan.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Nahian Chowdhury, Arifah Gheesah, Mahfuz Haque, Mahedi Hasan, Ayaan Imran, Bareera Kamran, Aryan Nur, Maham Shafique, Ayesha Sultan, Faisal Shamim Zahed

Royal Manitoba Winter Fair 55th Anniversary

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, please welcome, from the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, Kristen Lang Breemersch and Wayne Buhr, who have joined us here today in the gallery.

Honourable Speaker, in these challenging times, as we navigate through the turbulence and uncertainties of our world, it is more important than ever to find moments of joy and celebration. Today, as the MLA for Brandon West, I have the unique opportunity to have us come together and showcase the 2025 Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, marking its remarkable 55th anniversary from March 31 to April 5.

For over a half a century, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair has been the beacon of community spirit, resilience and tradition. It has brought together people from all walks of life to celebrate our agricultural heritage, enjoy thrilling entertainment and create lasting memories.

It has a significant financial impact on the city of Brandon as it generates approximately \$18 million in local economic activity and it boosts tourism with over 100,000 attendees.

This year, as we gather once again, let's be reminded of the strength and the unity that defines us as Manitobans. Despite the challenges we face globally, our commitment to preserving and celebrating

our tradition remains unwavering. The fair is not just an event; it's a testament to our collective resilience and our ability to find excitement even in the most trying of times.

As we walk through the Keystone Centre, let us take pride in the hard work and dedication of everyone who has made this event possible. From the farmers and exhibitors to the performers and volunteers, each one of you plays a vital role in making the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair the success that it is.

Let's celebrate the 55th anniversary of this cherished event with gratitude and hope. May it serve as a reminder, that no matter the challenges that we face, we can always find strength in our community and pride in our shared traditions.

I invite all of my colleagues on both sides of the House to visit the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair and experience the majestic hospitality.

Welcome to Brandon; your royal adventure awaits.

Tec-Voc Hornets Currie Bowl Champions

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, Notre Dame is proud to lift up the Tec-Voc High School community and to celebrate the Hornets for claiming the Currie Bowl AAA 2024 Championship title. The Hornets had a winning record of 6-1 through the season and secured the championship game with a winning touchdown.

There is inspiring leadership on and off the field from this football team, which also includes four women players. This team, along with support from Tec-Voc broadcasting, culinary arts, cheerleaders, the photography department, parents and grandparents have made our whole Notre Dame community proud.

Most notably, Indigenous community leaders, including grandmothers and youth mentors, took on vital roles offering cultural grounding to spiritually strengthen the Hornets as they faced challenges on and off the field. A grandmother led the team in prayer on the field before each game.

* (14:00)

Head coach Ryan Karhut credits the importance of community and the recruitment of Indigenous assistant coaches as to what makes this team strong. Coach Karhut also highlighted the leadership of the Grade 12 players that started this program and somehow, in only two years, have set a disciplined standard for everyone on and off the field.

Notre Dame would like to lift up captain Noah Heppner, who was named the championship game's most valuable player. Noah plans to attend RRC Polytech to get his electrical engineering technology diploma. I also want to lift up captain Cooper Newnham, who is planning to get his welding certificate.

And I also want to lift up Dale Turcotte, who plans to graduate high school in 2026 and currently volunteers at Rossbrook House. Notre Dame is very fortunate to have you, and all the Hornets, as generational leaders.

The Tec Voc motto is: Think Green, Act Gold, Be a Hornet. And these are words for all of us to live by to make Manitoba a better place.

Honourable Speaker, this team has survived numerous obstacles; they have thrived together and won. May this championship be a reminder of how strong you really are on the inside and what you can accomplish as a disciplined, united team.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Please include my guests' names in Hansard.

Mierra Bermisa, Trenton Bourassa, Austin Cowie, Vince Cruz, Brett Hendrickson, Noah Heppner, Jack Holland-Tepp, Ryan Karhut, Zach Mah, Chriss Manness, Cooper Newnham, Steven Quill, Lweh Say, Dale Turcotte, Solomon Young

ORAL QUESTIONS

Premier's Travel on Charter Flight Premier's Response

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, some things are still unclear from the Premier's story on Monday.

Months and months after his ethics violations, he decides to finally talk to the Ethics Commissioner, but only after the CBC broke the story and his office was caught in a cover-up.

He claims to have apologized, but then says he did nothing wrong. He comes to question period and again claims he did nothing wrong. But then he goes back into his office and tells the media a different story than what he said right here in the Legislature.

So I ask the Premier, which message is correct: the denial in the Legislature, the non-apology to the media or what he claims to have told the Ethics Commissioner, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, first of all, I want to say: to the football players in the audience, I love the Winnipeg Blue Bombers; go, Bombers. That's one blue team Manitobans can get behind, unlike the members opposite.

So just to repeat for everybody who's trying to follow what the member is trying to put down here, I went to the Grey Cup and I paid my own way. On the other hand, Heather Stefanson went to the Grey Cup twice and billed you for her trip both times. Brian Pallister also went to the Grey Cup, and guess who footed the bill for that trip? You paid the bill.

So I would welcome them to keep asking about Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson taking vacation time on taxpayer dime. I'll keep paying my own way, and I'll keep standing up for you and your jobs.

Earlier today, I was very happy to be there with the minister of business, mining, trade, as well as the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) in Selkirk at the Gerdau steel mill.

We're pushing back against Donald Trump—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, to all those football lovers out there, and of course, we on this side of the House love the Blue Bombers as well.

But that does not necessarily mean, Honourable Speaker, that it's okay for the Premier to continue to break the rules and the law. That's a story to the people in the gallery and to those of you watching, is the fact that the Premier broke—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —the law, said he didn't, his staff lied and tried to cover everything up, and unfortunately, he just continues to switch his story.

So the Premier's not willing to show humility in this legislator, a place he calls the people's House, and stand up today and apologize that you've—did something wrong. Why can't you do that, Honourable Speaker?

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition knows the rules very well. He knows that things have to go through the Chair, not directed at a member. So I would expect the leader to do that.

Mr. Kinew: So again, I paid for my vacation. Heather Stefanson and Brian Pallister made you pay for their trips to the Grey Cup.

I will strike a tone of humility here, though, because I want to read some praise into the record.

This is a quote from the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) that he shared this week, and he said, and I quote: The Manitoba NDP have some strong, mean people. And they're very good at that, being mean. And I don't mean to sound weak when I say that either, but, boy, do they attack you like you're fresh hamburger meat and they're dogs. They just go for the jugular. End quote.

That's what the member opposite said to apparently try and encourage some young conservatives to follow in their footsteps to the opposition benches.

But all I want to say on behalf of the Manitoba NDP, who he says are strong in the face of their sounding weak—all I have to say: Thank you.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask the First Minister if he was quoting from a public document.

Mr. Kinew: These comments were obviously made in front of a public audience because we heard them. But if you would like copies, I would be more than happy to bring them in with the background of a motivational poster that we now have them framed on in our office.

The Speaker: I would ask the First Minister to please table the document.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So again, Honourable Speaker, just another example of this Premier hiding, dodging and denying and not being held accountable.

Why did the Premier have his office conduct a cover-up of his ethics violations for over a year, only to issue a fake apology after a late disclosure? He still doesn't get that his office was trying to cover up all of his wrongdoing. And the Premier and his staff not knowing the rules is a serious problem. He still hasn't admitted that flying to BC to help Premier Eby campaign is a violation.

Will the Premier stand up, humbly apologize for this failure to follow the ethics rules and disclose this public—there's—this private benefit he has provided to the Ethics Commissioner, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: I went to the Grey Cup and paid for it. Heather Stefanson and Brian Pallister billed you, the taxpayer, for their trips to the Grey Cup.

I hear some chirping from the members opposite. I don't think that they properly heard what their leader said to a group of young conservatives, so I'll just read this into the record again.

And I quote the member opposite directly: The Manitoba NDP have got some strong, mean people. And they're very good at that, being mean. And I don't mean to sound weak when I say that either, but, boy, do they attack you like you're fresh hamburger meat and they're dogs. They just go for the jugular. End quote.

Again, I know the football players are always looking for bulletin board material when you're talking about your adversaries. Holy cow, is the member opposite a great source of bulletin board material, because when I read this in caucus, there was laughter; there was applause, and it's the only time the member from Lac du Bonnet ever got a standing ovation in this building.

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

Change to Education Requirements for Teachers Concern for Student Outcomes

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): So, unfortunately, Honourable Speaker, here is the 'classless' actions of the—of—that does not—of a Premier that shouldn't be happening on a day-to-day basis. Manitobans are seeing this clear as day.

Honourable Speaker, qualifications are important, and they allow individuals to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, and teachers to play a 'pivotal' role in shaping our students for a future right here in Manitoba. But, unfortunately, the NDP, and under this Education Minister, have scrapped all of that. They don't feel that teachers in the future need to actually be taking the courses that they're proficient in teaching our youth.

The NDP's decision to dumb down the curriculum was described by a U of W math professor, Anna Stokke, as, and I quote: probably the most alarming thing I've seen. End quote.

When this Premier—will this Premier acknowledge that he made a mistake and reverse the MLA for Rossmore's decision to dump down teacher education, Honourable Speaker?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And I would also ask if that's a public document that the member is quoting.

* (14:10)

Mr. Ewasko: Yes.

The Speaker: And I would ask the member to please stand when he's replying.

Mr. Ewasko: Yes.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So the member opposite stands and says there's no class when I read a direct quote of the words that he said. Tough day at the office.

But you're not going to believe this, Honourable Speaker. Guess what? At the same exact event that I was quoting in the first set of questions, the member opposite was actually also talking about educators on that same day. And do you think he was standing up and defending educators, as that question would lead you to believe?

Well, I'll read this direct quote from the same event this week of the member opposite and let you decide. And I quote the member of Lac du Bonnet: You people, men and women, to get back to your schools and start to tell your teachers that you're not pumping out the right kind of students that we could accept at our post-secondary institutions. End quote.

Again, I have no idea what the member opposite was talking about. We love teachers; we love educators and EAs; we love—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So once again, Honourable Speaker, this Premier is putting misinformation on the record and misquoting his—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —document, Honourable Speaker. Unfortunately, I was speaking of presidents of post-secondary institutions, and I was quoting them from way back into 2007-2008.

So if he wants me to go back in time and start quoting some of the members here that are in the Legislature today, especially the MLA for Fort Rouge, I can play that game, Honourable Speaker. But I just want him to stand and apologize. Even more concerning, Professor Anna Stokke said, and I quote, is that it's fairly alarming and it's quite poor that the students

are going to be reduced in their educational opportunities.

Will the Premier reverse this decision, set up our students for success for a change?

Mr. Kinew: I want to acknowledge the member opposite for sharing the truth that he did actually say those words, that from the stammering and, I guess, at a loss to find a path forward to some cogent line of questioning here, he clearly reveals that he knows he was, in fact, attacking educators.

Again, the direct words that he said was: get back to your schools and start to tell your teachers that you're not pumping out the right kind of students that we could accept at our post-secondary institutions, end quote.

Again, I don't know if he's attacking educators or if he's attacking young people in Manitoba. What I do know is that that is inappropriate for somebody who claims the title of a leader to be saying. But, again, the member opposite is at a loss for words. I'm not. I'll table the remarks that he made at this event so that he can review them. Perhaps they'll like to hang them up in their caucus room, same way that they're hanging up in our caucus room now.

And I'll just point out the following for everybody: the reason why the leader of the PCs is asking these questions, and not their Education critic, because their Education critic quit this week in disgrace.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, there is a beginning to that quote and there is an end to that quote. But as usual, this Premier doesn't want to tell the whole story. He doesn't want to stand up and apologize for his own misgivings, his words, his actions, that he is going to have to carry on into the future.

Self-reliance and economic independence are not achieved but earned, and we quote: we need engineers; we need people to work in technology, AI and data science, and all those people have to take calculus. Clearly, we're not preparing students 'adequally' for those careers. Quoted by Anna Stokke.

I have heard from parents across our province concerned about the NDP shortchanging their child's education, parents who have taken it upon themselves to hire math tutors. This option's not available to all parents, like the Premier has done. What is available to all parents is publicly funded education.

Will the Premier today listen to the experts and reinstate—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: On this side, we're not like the elitist PCs. We know we need engineers and computer scientists, but we know we need electricians and welders and tradespeople, too. We're for everybody on this side of the House, including the blue collar.

Maybe that's why Grant Jackson jumped ship and quit this week. I'm sure Grant Jackson quit not only because of the terrible education policy, but he looked at the two leaders in the PC leadership contest and he thought, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan)? Wally? I'm out of here. And, again, who could blame him?

When we're talking about the members opposite, they come here day after day without any substantive points. Meanwhile, our team is investing in health care. Our team is standing up against Trump to defend jobs in this province. But most importantly, and this is a thing that they never done, we listen to you because we respect you and we know that you're the boss. We come to work each and every day to serve you, the great people of Manitoba.

Removal of Interprovincial Trade Barrier Labour Mobility and Licensing Certifications

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, all we saw from this budget is soaring deficits and conflicting data. But one of the most alarming is that this budget does the exact opposite of eliminating interprovincial trade barriers.

Manitoba has some of the most protectionist measures on labour mobility. Yet rather than committing to reducing barriers, on page 63 of the budget, this minister actually says labour mobility will actually negatively impact Manitoba jobs. I table that for the House.

So I ask this minister: Is he truly committed to eliminating interprovincial trade barriers, or is this just smoke and mirrors for the media?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, this team fights every single day to protect jobs and fight for a better economy here in Manitoba.

Led by the incredible work of our Premier (Mr. Kinew), our minister of business, mining, jobs and trade and, of course, the entire team, we are fighting for Manitoba, and we just released a budget

that has the biggest capital plan in this province's history: \$3.7 billion to build, build, build a better Manitoba.

We're getting it done with schools, PCHs, ERs. We're going to keep doing that work, we're going to keep investing in health care. We're going to make life more affordable. This team is going to keep moving Manitoba ahead.

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

Mrs. Stone: This minister says one thing in public and another in their budget documents. This minister is actually fencing off our economy from the rest of Canada despite unemployment skyrocketing over 6 per cent under this NDP government.

If Manitoba truly wants to remove interprovincial trade barriers and expand our workforce, will this minister commit to making licences and certifications equivalent with other jurisdictions in Canada?

Yes or no question, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Sala: The members opposite, as their parting gift to Manitobans, left us with a \$2-billion hole that we had to dig out of. That's their record, a record of poor fiscal management, bad budgeting, a lack of vision, doing really nothing at all to support moving our province ahead.

This team is focused on doing what Manitobans want us to do, which is building a stronger Manitoba. We're investing in infrastructure like 11 new schools, three new PCHs, NEWPC. We're going to get NEWPC done, something they sat on their hands on for years.

We're moving the province ahead, and we're doing what Manitobans sent us here to do: building a stronger Manitoba, building a stronger economy and fighting for jobs every single day.

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

Manitoba's Trade Strategy Request for Plan to Address Tariffs

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, this NDP and his—and their Cabinet have had months to come up with a tangible trade strategy. The Manitoba chamber said in a public statement and, I quote, businesses have called for a more robust trade strategy as they navigate the need to diversity into new markets.

Yesterday Canada got hit with tariffs in the auto industry. Next week, Manitobans could be faced with another tariff hit.

When can Manitobans expect a robust trade strategy, or is this NDP government still operating on rosy outlooks and hypotheticals?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Again, Honourable Speaker, while the members opposite fight amongst each other to decide who likes Trump more or who supports the tariffs more, our team has been focused on building on a plan to build a stronger Manitoba.

Our last budget not only had that \$3.7-billion capital plan, we cut the payroll tax. We brought in a permanent gas tax cut. We brought in buy Canadian legislation. We're making more investments in tourism. Why? Because we know what it takes to build a stronger economy.

Manitobans sent us here to do just that. They sent them packing. They know that this party is the party focused on moving Manitoba forward, and we're going to keep working every single day to do just that.

* (14:20)

Métis CFS Agencies Strike Action Wage Parity with Civil Servants

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Over 100 dedicated Child and Family Services workers, represented by two Métis CFS authorities, are currently on strike. These workers have the same qualifications and provide this—provide the same level of support to families as their provincial counterparts, yet they are paid significantly less.

When asked about this wage disparity, the minister refused to provide an answer.

Why doesn't the minister believe these workers, who are performing the same vital work, deserve equal pay for equal work?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): As I've said in this Chamber before, we support those that are on the front lines of working with and supporting the most vulnerable of Manitoba, including children and our families, and that's why, since I have been appointed minister, we've seen an—6 per cent increase into annualized payments to the overall CFS system in the amount of \$33 million, which includes \$11.4 million to agencies for wages.

I don't think I can make it any clearer that we support workers, and we hope that folks will get back

to the table where those agreements are done in good faith.

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

Ms. Byram: While the minister's remained silent on the pay disparity affecting CFS workers, it's important to note that she, herself, received a healthy raise this year.

If the minister can justify an increase in her salary, how can she continue to ignore the essential workers on the front lines who support the most vulnerable children and youth? Shouldn't these workers, who are doing the same work as those in the civil service, be entitled to the same wages?

MLA Fontaine: As I shared a couple of days ago, it's important for folks to remember that members opposite, including the member asking the question, let Michif and Métis workers go without a contract since 2022. They didn't care about workers when they were in government. In fact, they forced the universities to go on strike and multiple people to go on strike.

So members opposite don't have a leg to stand on when they're trying to feign that they actually care about workers or those on the front lines. They don't.

Our government has put real money on the table, including \$2.4 million for Métis and Michif wages.

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

Ms. Byram: There are more than 60 employees that received layoff notices and over 100 workers are on strike, all demanding one simple thing: wage parity.

These workers provide direct one-on-one support to children and families, playing a crucial role in the well-being of the most vulnerable.

The funding minister refers clearly—the funding that the minister refers to clearly falls short.

So I ask once again: Why does the minister refuse to acknowledge the need for wage parity in the CFS system, especially when the workers perform the same essential roles as other agencies?

MLA Fontaine: I appreciate that the member has finally put it on the record that she knows that we've put money on the table, and we've put \$2.4 million for Métis and Michif agencies, and those are for wages.

And so our expectation, our hope, is that folks are going to get back to the negotiation table, do what's in

the best interest of the children and the families that they work to—work with, and hammer out an agreement, and expeditiously as well.

Miigwech.

Impaired Driving Causing Death or Bodily Harm Individuals Charged with More than One Offence

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Earlier this week at committee we heard from Manitobans about Bill 5. Presentations were impassioned and heartfelt, and anyone who has lost a loved one to impaired driving knows this pain. Karen Reimer, in memory of her daughter Jordyn, has become a tireless advocate for reform.

As I previously noted, the format of the committee did not allow the minister to answer a question about the effectiveness of this legislation.

Yesterday, the minister wouldn't even rise in his seat to answer, instead embarrassingly asking his colleague, the Education Minister, to help him out.

Ms. Reimer is watching—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —so, on her behalf, I'm asking the minister if he can share with this House—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —how many Manitoban drivers were charged with two counts of impaired driving causing—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The Minister of Families and the Minister of Education will please come to order.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm asking how many people have been charged with two counts of impaired driving causing bodily harm or death within the—in this last decade?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to acknowledge the important work that the our Minister of Justice has done with Bill 5, and MADD Canada and many other organizations have been the ones to make those comments; I'm merely supporting them.

I do, however, have to defend my colleague against some very unfair comments by the member for Brandon West. He really ought to know better.

Yesterday afternoon, I was at the press conference where the Winnipeg Police Service announced that the name of Mashkode Bizhiki'ikwe was Ashlee Shingoose. I was very honoured that the Minister of

Justice was with me during that event. It was an important time for us to stand together and to say that the relationship between law enforcement, the Indigenous community and all Manitobans needs to be on solid footing for us all to feel safe.

If the member from Brandon West wants to make his comments today, I invite him to weigh in on the 2023 PC election campaign regarding that very same issue.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Despite days and an entire government department at his disposal, the Minister is unable to answer even the most basic question about his own signature bill. The answer to Ms. Reimer's question would give Manitobans an idea about the effectiveness of Bill 5, about whether if it will have a real impact or if it's simply window dressing.

While I understand why the Minister of Education had no clue, surely the Minister of Justice must know the answer by now.

If his legislation is so groundbreaking, why—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: —won't he share this data with Manitobans?

Will Bill 5 impact 500 people, 100 people or zero? Why the secrecy?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Once again, Honourable Speaker, the member opposite shows that he really isn't concerned with making our streets safer and supporting victims of impaired driving.

I had an opportunity yesterday and the day before to speak with the Reimer family. They, like so many victims, are experiencing such grief and such pain with the loss of their daughter Jordyn. I was encouraged, when speaking with them, that they are eager to work with us to continue to improve legislation going forward. But it was important for them to be—to note that, in the seven and a half years that we had a PC government, not once did they increase the penalties for impaired driving. And that shows where their real priorities are.

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

Amendment to Impaired Driving Legislation Increased Penalties When Children Present

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): This minister dismissed any suggested amendments to Bill 5. He says no bill is the silver bullet when it comes to impaired driving. Manitobans aren't asking for a silver bullet, just some common sense.

He must recall that in 2009, with all-party support, the government banned smoking in motor vehicles if a child was present. This protects children. A similar amendment was put forward on Bill 5, imposing consequences if an individual is charged with impaired driving with a motor—in a motor vehicle with a child present. Children strapped in a car seat don't have a choice, but we can make a difference.

Will the minister amend his bill to ensure that specific consequences for drinking and driving with children present is included?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Again, this legislation brings—will Manitoba back to become a leader when it comes to impaired driving legislation. We know that some of the elements around zero BAC, the blood alcohol level, will have a real impact in keeping our streets safer.

And we know this because we're supported by Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada—MADD Canada—who said: Manitoba's a leader in terms of policies and laws that focus on getting impaired drivers off the road before they injure and kill someone. Penalties should be targeted towards minimizing the risk of recidivism. Bill 5 targets these individuals.

We're going to continue to work with advocates and with parents and with victims, and we're going to make sure that we get this right. We are asking: is—are the members opposite finally going to get on board—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 5 Request to Build Overpass at Intersection

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are clearly seeing that this government is all talk and no action. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) and the Finance Minister promised to build, build, build in their budget.

Then, the Infrastructure Minister had promised that road safety is of the utmost importance, but according to the mayor of Carberry, an overpass at the

Trans-Canada Highway and the intersection of Highway 5 is now off the table.

* (14:30)

Why won't this NDP government put the safety of Manitobans first and build, build, build an overpass at the notoriously dangerous intersection at the site of the deadliest vehicle crash in Manitoba's history?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I appreciate the chance to stand up and speak about the work that's happening at Highway 1 and 5 that—as we all know and all experienced an incredibly tragic time in Manitoba's history.

And it's absolutely been incumbent on our government to take steps to make improvements at that intersection. Those were announcements we went out on almost immediately after coming into government.

The work is absolutely on track. We're in the final design stage. The final round of consultations took place in the community this week, and I'm very proud of the work that our department has done towards these improvements.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: If I can get the clock stopped, there's some guests that are leaving right away that I'd like to acknowledge.

We have, seated in the public gallery, from Lockport Christian school, 12 high school students under the direction of Tanya Kleinasser. The group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte).

We welcome you here today.

Highway from Falcon Lake to Ontario Cost to Twin the Highway

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, that's a prime example of all talk and no action. The community isn't seeing the action.

Another example of no action is that in May of 2023, our PC government announced the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway from Falcon Lake to the Ontario border. Now, this NDP government is trying to take credit for the project, promising in their 2025 Budget to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to twin the Trans-Canada Highway from Falcon Lake to the Ontario border.

They're only 18 months into their government and they've already run out of their own ideas. Now they're resurrecting our projects.

How much has this project now gone up in cost over the last two years of it sitting on the minister's desk without—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): It's a little bit entertaining to me to hear the member opposite talk about an announcement to build something 10 years down the road, long after they were ever going to be in government, long after an—they probably, the rate things are going with their leadership campaign, can't expect to be in government for at least two decades, from what we're seeing.

But this is our project that is moving forward at a much quicker pace. I'm—we're doing an incredible amount of work around design, around relationship building with affected First Nations. And this project will move forward under this government's banner, and we're very proud of this work.

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

Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin Channel Project Concern for Increase in Project Costs

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, once again we're hearing the talk but we're not seeing that action.

Back in May of 2018, our PC government promised funding to the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin channels project. This project is to protect Manitobans—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth: It was in the books, but last year announced that it was shelved by this same Infrastructure Minister.

Now, lo and behold, it's back on the books, once again resurrecting one of our projects.

How much has the price of this project now gone up under this on-again, off-again NDP government?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I really appreciate the member opposite's master class in all talk and no action. Because what we have seen—what he is bringing into this room is project after project that was announced and talked about, but nothing happened. No work moved forward. Honourable Speaker, 2018

announcement? That's, what, eight years ago? I think my child was in elementary school.

I—the—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Naylor: —exciting thing about our government is we're actually building the province. I think you've heard the term build, build, build.

The channels project is moving forward as we do the government-to-government work with First Nations that—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Patient Access to Allied Health Services Need for More Post-Secondary Training Spaces

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): A recent access to information request by the union from Southern Health found that 4,428 Manitobans in the south region are waiting for services provided by technical and professional therapists and clinicians. These critical services include community mental health professionals and physiotherapists that were both cut, and speech pathologists and audiologists that are retiring at rates faster than they are being replaced.

What is this government doing to assist post-secondary institutions to create more training of these valuable professions here in Manitoba?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I've been waiting to talk about the great things that are happening in post-secondary related to health care.

We—this budget this year, we gave a 2 per cent operate increase overall to every post-secondary. But more exciting than that: we have 60 new primary care paramedic seats in Thompson; we have 100 new health-care aide seats in northern Manitoba; we have a new medical lab tech program and combined lab and X-ray tech program at AC.

There are tons more investments. This is on top of all of the seat expansions last year. I have a great partner, with the Minister of Health, in working together to make sure that our RHAs are reporting in what they need, and we are actively recruiting—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Southern Health Region Staff Recruitment and Retention

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, this government committed to doubling the rural doctor recruitment fund; however, there is still currently a 23 per cent overall vacancy rate for medical professionals in the Southern Health region alone.

What is this government currently doing to retain and attract health-care professionals, specifically in our Southern Health region?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Really appreciate that question from the member.

Our government came in, and one of the first things we did in our budget was to restore the rural recruitment and retention fund for doctors that was cut by the previous PC government.

Our government had an ambitious target of 100 net-new doctors in Manitoba, many in rural Manitoba, and we've surpassed that. Right now, we're at about 138 net-new doctors recruited here in Manitoba, with many, many more on the way.

We have specific initiatives that are dedicated to Southern Health. I want to thank the front-line health-care workers, all the doctors and the leaders in the Southern Health region, who've been working with our department and with our government to make sure we're recruiting to meet their needs in southern Manitoba.

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

Prairie Mountain Health Midwifery Services Shortage of Services

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Prairie Mountain Health is suspending at-home birthing services in southwestern Manitoba, citing a sudden shortage of midwives. We know that this is not a new issue, as the College of Midwives' stance is that the demand for service consistently exceeds the current supply. Midwives provide pre- and postnatal care, very valuable in the communities that they serve.

Is there anything this government can do immediately for the mothers who are living in southwestern Manitoban who wish to use a midwife?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Absolutely. We are working directly with Prairie Mountain Health and the

midwives in the Prairie Mountain Health region, to make sure that mothers and those who are expecting little ones soon have the supports they need for pre- and postnatal care and to ensure that they have a comprehensive care plan that meets their needs and the needs of their families.

Now, the previous government actually cut the midwifery training program at UCN; closed and cut all of those training seats.

Our government's taken a different approach. We have created jobs for midwives across the province. Our '25-26 budget invests over \$1 million for new midwives in the province, and I'm very proud to say today that we're expecting seven new midwives to join the front lines, including in Prairie Mountain Health, in just a few weeks and months.

So we're going to keep doing that work for mothers, expecting parents and families across Manitoba.

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Grant Funding Announcement

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): This morning, our government announced an exciting new program to protect our economy and protect Manitoba jobs.

We know that members opposite would rather thank Donald Trump for his tariffs and defend Elon Musk, but on this side of the House, we're standing up for team Manitoba.

Can the minister tell us more about how we are protecting Manitoba jobs and businesses?

* (14:40)

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): I thank my colleague for that great question.

I'm so proud to share this news with Manitobans that today, the Premier, Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and I joined the workers on the shop floor of Gerdau steel mill in Selkirk. We announced our plan to fight against Trump's tariffs and protect Manitoba's workers and businesses.

We are partnering with the Canadian manufacturers of exporters to Trump-proof our economy with a new made-in-Manitoba program. It's going to help businesses strengthen their supply chains, find and explore new markets and make sure that we make Manitoba's economy more resilient.

Because on this side of the House, we will always be on team Manitoba.

Premier's Travel on Charter Flight Expense Claim Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, at the—[interjection] Today—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, today at the beginning of question period and during question period, the Premier stood up and said that his private jet trip was a vacation.

So I ask the Premier, then, why would his staff bill Manitoba taxpayers to go on a vacation with their boss?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I actually paid for one of my political staffers to come on that trip.

So this gives me a great opportunity to point out the hypocrisy of the PCs, who try to claim credit for everything our government is doing. We got a new mine in Manitoba for the first time in 15 years. We're building Highway 1 east. We're even building a new health-care facility in his own backyard.

Every single time, they claim to have taken credit for it, but guess what: they didn't build a single thing through two terms in government. Now, miraculously, they're on the opposition benches, and all the good ideas are theirs.

Well, guess what? I guess when you ask them about the great pyramids of Giza, that was them. When you see the people in the cockpit of the UFOs, that was them, too. And I'm sure once we find the lost city of Atlantis, the Manitoba PC fingerprints will be all over that as well. [interjection]

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

The time for question period has expired.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: I have some guests I'd like to introduce.

Draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Chichi Asagwara, who is the guest and sister of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care and the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara).

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

House Business

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

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on House business, please.

Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk). Title of the resolution is: O Canada.

The Speaker: Order, please.

It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Swan River. The title of the resolution is: O Canada.

PETITIONS

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. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'm having a hard time hearing the member that's speaking, so if I could ask the rest of you to either take your conversations to the loge or to remain somewhat quiet while a member is speaking.

Mr. Ewasko: (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—*[interjection]*

Honourable Speaker, the Minister of Health continues to heckle and laugh as I'm reading a very serious petition. I will continue on with the petition, but I am tired of it.

The Speaker: Leader of the Official Opposition will continue to read his petition, not tell the Speaker how to do the Speaker's job.

And I wish all members would sit quietly while people are talking, on both sides of the House. Unfortunately, that doesn't happen.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition will continue with his petition.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for, once again, your guidance to this Chamber.

(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 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 for 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 Heather McLellan, Marlene Sponarski, Kate Doera *[phonetic]* and many other fine Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

Complete New Personal-Care Home in Arborg

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

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

(1) The former provincial government funded the design for a new personal-care home in Arborg to address the critical need for additional care-home spaces in the community and surrounding areas.

Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

(2) Community funding for this project is in place, demonstrating strong local support and readiness to proceed with construction.

(3) Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority is experiencing a critical shortage of personal-care-home beds.

(4) The funding for the project was approved by Treasury Board and Cabinet, ensuring that all necessarily financial and administrative steps had been completed to move forward.

(5) Despite these approvals, construction has yet to commence, leaving many seniors and their families without access to adequate personal-care services in the region.

(6) The delay in commencing construction exacerbates existing challenges in—excuse me—existing challenges in providing timely and appropriate care for aging residents, forcing some to seek services far from their families and community.

* (14:50)

(7) Investing in the timely construction of this personal-care home will provide essential services to a growing population, support the local economy and demonstrate the government's commitment to the well-being of Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as—of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to restore funding and commence construction on the personal-care home in Arborg immediately, to ensure that this essential project proceeds without further delay.

This is signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. deputy Speaker—honourable deputy Speaker.

Provincial Road 227

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you, honourable Speaker, and I wish to present the following of—petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) As part of ongoing strategic infrastructure investments to the provincial highway network, it was announced in August 2022 that almost \$70 million would be spent on upgrades to Provincial Road 227.

(2) Over 72 kilometres of PR 227 were to be paved along with the repair or replacement of three bridges and multiple drainage works.

(3) Reeves, mayors, councillors and residents of the surrounding municipalities, cities, towns and villages were ecstatic and overwhelmingly supportive of this plan.

(4) The planned PR 227 was to connect Highway 16 with Highway 6, thus creating an alternative route to Highway 1.

(5) PR 227 was to be part of Manitoba's trade and commerce grid initiative, an expanded grid of highways that can accommodate heavy commercial loading that will attract new industrial activity, reduce transportation costs and optimize supply chain efficiency, which will benefit all Manitobans.

(6) The 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy is a five-year, \$4.1-billion investment in Manitoba's roads, highways, bridges, airports and flood protection. The paving of 227 was part of this strategy.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has cut the PR 227 project, notwithstanding that the project appears in the multi-year infrastructure investment strategy and listed on the Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure website as an active project.

(8) Additional keystone projects in the 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy were the Winnipeg One Million Perimeter Freeway Initiative, the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba outlet channels and the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway to the Ontario border. The actions of the NDP government now bring into question whether any of these projects will be completed as planned.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to immediately restore funding to the PR 227 paving project.

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure the commitment to Manitobans to carry out all of the projects as outlined in the 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy in their

totality, to the same scope and in accordance with already stated timelines.

This petition has been signed by Karen Hutchinson, Don Campbell and J. Essup [*phonetic*].

Thank you, honourable deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Further petitions? No more petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Fourth Day of Debate)

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): In accordance with our rules, the House will now resume debate on the budget motion moved by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, who has unlimited time remaining.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Again, I stand up to put a few words on the record, honourable deputy Speaker, and—the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will have an opportunity eventually to put some words on the record, but he can't help himself.

This is what happens when arrogance trumps competency, honourable deputy Speaker, and he will have an opportunity to get up.

So just give me some time to speak to this horrendous budget that is not doing anything more than actually increasing taxes—increasing hidden taxes. [*interjection*] And he's still talking, honourable deputy Speaker, but he'll figure it out one of these days.

So the—couple things. And I would remind members who, you know, possibly didn't have the opportunity to hear the first little bit of my speech yesterday, but I did want to talk about a few things, when the NDP government fell in 2016. And this is a reminder to all Manitobans and members on the government benches that history does repeat itself.

And what I mean by that is, we know that back in 2016, the now-MLA for Fort Rouge was the star candidate, and shortly thereafter—or at that time, I remember Premier Selinger actually walked at many different events and had his arm around the member for—the now-member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew). And shortly thereafter, the premier, who was the MLA for St. Boniface, quickly found out that the arm that was—that he was putting around him should have been

blocking the knife that was going in his back from the MLA for Fort Rouge, honourable Speaker.

And then I told the story yesterday as well—it wasn't a story; it was a direct quote from the Premier about how their gas tax holiday—one family going to a hockey rink was able to afford a full supper after a hockey game because of the money that they saved from filling up their vehicle going to the hockey game.

Honourable Speaker, part of it was quite hilarious because the Premier, as he stands here on a day-to-day basis with, you know, that look on his face—and many of my Cree friends out there often have shared with me the fact that you should not trust anyone with a jackfish smile. And I don't have the direct quote that my Cree friends have said to me many times, but I think that depicts the Premier quite truthfully.

And I think today, as well, honourable deputy Speaker, that we've seen evidence, and we continue to see evidence. Members in this Chamber, Manitobans out there, have seen evidence of the Premier not coming forward with factual information and, matter of fact, at times, making up information.

And so that's why when we take a look at this budget this year, honourable deputy Speaker, we see that there's definite division being brought forward by this Premier and his Finance Minister. We're taking a look at some of the things that are being promoted in this budget that should not be.

The Premier went out and he continued to say how him and his teammates on the NDP benches were able to apparently Trump-proof the economy, but the budget does not accomplish this, honourable deputy Speaker.

There's no action on removing interprovincial trade barriers. There's no update on when Washington trade office will open. There's no details on how tariff contingencies will be spent.

We've said multiple times—

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please. Order, please.

I would just caution the member about the language he is using referring to the members opposite that they were not being honest. So please have that caution.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable deputy Speaker, thank you for that guidance. I can't recollect what I exactly said that was unparliamentary. But with that, I'll take your words of advice, and I'll continue to move forward with my speech.

* (15:00)

The Speaker in the Chair

So when we do take a look at the fact that our previous PC government, actually, was the one that signed the New West Partnership to lower those barriers across our great provinces not only to the west, but all the way across this great country of ours and then we see, you know, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) stood today and talked about taking credit for other parties' doings, and we saw evidence earlier this week about the fact this Premier, and I guess, somehow making his staff put false information in news releases, Honourable Speaker. In fact, again, when we talk about mines—and congratulations to Alamos for coming online and going to improve our economy here in the great province of Manitoba—again, mines don't just pop up over 17, 18 months.

What they put in the news release is that they said that there's only been one mine, which is absolutely incorrect. It was our PC government that did the track work for Alamos mine, to then ribbon cut just a few days ago, Honourable Speaker. Also we had Canadian Premium Sand up around the minister of municipal relations' neck of the woods back when I was still representing that area before the boundaries changed in 2019, up around Seymourville and Hollow Water. So Canadian Premium Sand had opened up, and then, of course, we had PADCOM, which opened up for the potash mine.

So once again, Manitobans see on a daily basis, that this Premier just can't help himself. Multiple things that we have seen since 2016, is that he is self-serving and he has a large ego that needs to be constantly fed, honourable deputy Speaker—or Honourable Speaker, sorry about that. Little bit of a switch-up in the Chair. It's all good.

So when we talk about the various different budgetary items, we take a look that overall spending, this year's budget is over \$25 billion. The actual expenditures come in at probably, best-case scenario, roughly about \$800 million in the hole; that means deficit. Probably, due to our financial experts throughout this great country and other places are taking a look and probably saying, worst-case scenario is probably \$1.9 billion because the NDP Kinew government has a problem with a tax-and-spend issue.

They are no different than the former Selinger government, except the Premier that is in their seat now has more of an ego and, again, constantly needs to feed that and will continue to be self-serving as we've

seen many examples in the last couple weeks, which the CBC had broke the story on the fact of his ethics violations. And this is yet one more example that the fact that this Premier cannot be trusted—and especially not be trusted with taxpayer funds, Honourable Speaker.

So again, overall spending's up 7.1 per cent; that's three times the annual rate of inflation compared to last year's budget. This consecutive year of major spending increases is unsustainable and it means one of two things, or if not both: they're either going to cut services to Manitobans or they're going to raise taxes or they're going to do both.

We've already seen the fact that they have cut education funding, which then have put education funding solely on the backs of school divisions to then go to their ratepayers and ask for, in many cases, double-digit increases going back to the taxpayer. That's unbecoming of a new Education Minister. That's unbecoming of a Finance Minister or even this Premier, Honourable Speaker.

And then raising taxes: we see that the tax brackets have been frozen. The basic personal exemption, which under our government was raised by \$6,000, putting \$75 every pay period into each and every Manitoban's pockets, because of the raising of the basic personal exemption.

What did this government do—this Kinew government do? Froze it. That's a hidden tax. We know that food inflation has gone up; we know that housing has gone up; unemployment has gone up. Unemployment's going to get worse under this Kinew government. Why is that? Because we have major companies leaving our province, because he is not making it—making our economy, our province, welcomed—welcoming to those businesses that want to bring their investments and job opportunities here to this great province of ours, Honourable Speaker.

But we will be holding this government to account. We've seen that the NDP have cancelled the payroll tax relief that we had started when we were a PC government; that was in 2023 and 2024, in those budgets. Now it's back on the table. We've been relentlessly advocating on behalf of businesses. The only businesses that this Premier and his Finance Minister and his NDP government continues to advocate for is their own business. And that, once again, similarly to the Selinger government, again, without the ego, is just going to taxpayers and to take more money out of your pockets to feed their spending

addiction, honourable deputy Speaker—or, Honourable Speaker.

What did the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce have to say? Well, I did say—I did read a quote yesterday, but I'll re-read it. I quote: We remain concerned about a lack of concrete measures to provide businesses with the support they need moving forward. End quote. That's our Manitoba Chambers of Commerce saying that.

What else did they say? I quote: Budget 2025 feels cautious, lacking specific details on tariff relief, when businesses, who thrive on certainty, were looking for reassurance, bold action and measurable investments to support their economic future. End quote.

Honourable Speaker, that's a public document. Unlike the things that the Premier picks and chooses out of the universe. But you know what? That's telling. We know that now he's on the downward slide in the whole premiership, the rate-your-premiers across the country. Matter of fact, he's lost his No. 1 position to a premier that doesn't exist as a premier anymore.

Well, what else are some of the stakeholders saying? The Canadian Taxpayers Federation says, and I quote: The Manitoba government will stop indexing income tax brackets and the basic personal exemption by inflation. That's a sneaky way of hiking taxes, known as bracket creep. The bracket creep tax hike will cost taxpayers \$82 million this year. End quote.

This is what they do. They're like the bogeyman, coming in at night. But the nice thing is we're making sure that all Manitobans are aware of this bogeyman NDP government.

What do the Keystone Ag Producers say? This is one of our key economic driver organizations in our province, Honourable Speaker. And I quote—what do they say: We continue calling on the Province to work toward the complete removal of the tax on farm properties and bring in a funding model that does not disproportionately impact Manitoba farmers.

Well, it's unfortunate, Honourable Speaker. The Kinew NDP government has cut funding to education. They're asking school divisions to go back to their rate-payers and do double-digit rate increases.

* (15:10)

Under us, deputy Speaker, for those of you that potentially missed it yesterday, we had gone to an 88-12 rate in the last election, providing real relief to Manitoba taxpayers, homeowners and renters.

Honourable Speaker, 88-12 means that 88 per cent of education funding was coming from the Manitoba government and 12 per cent were coming from local taxation. Now what we're fearful of, and what's reality, is that this NDP government, under this Education Minister, under this Premier, under his direction, they're going to—they're taking us backwards.

And not only in who has to end up paying for education, but also in our services that we are providing to those students. In 2003-2004, when the NDP had taken power back then, there was some testing done and Manitoba was sitting third and fourth in numeracy and literacy. As time had gone on, under the NDP reign—more dark clouds than just a drizzle of rain, Honourable Speaker—but the fact is, is that they had gone from third and fourth in numeracy and literacy—that's what they inherited—to dead last in numeracy, literacy and then science as well.

We took over in 2016 and we had a lot of work to do. We had a lot of work to clean up. We had a lot of things to clean up. Because the NDP, as we've seen already in their short 18 months, are not good managers. They can't even manage themselves, Honourable Speaker. And it's unfortunate that with the new Education Minister, who had pretty big shoes to fill, but so far is not showing evidence of even filling them half full.

When we took over, and in the late—last results, we had seen that we moved from dead last in the country to sixth and seventh in numeracy and literacy and in science, Honourable Speaker. Now, with this Education Minister's direction to post-secondary institutions, to then start to water down the amount of education that our teachers are going to have to do moving forward, I'm worried that the level of education is going to suffer to our students. And more and more families, much like the Premier, will look towards private schools.

Which, I mean, what do you do? What do you do when parents are seeing that what they're expecting out of our public education system is sliding? *[interjection]* Under this Education Minister, who apparently has lots to say right now, and the microphones won't pick it up, but, you know, hopefully she'll get up and—or they will get up and put a few words on the record, Honourable Speaker.

We are going to be watching and we're going to be holding them to account, as parents will be, guardians will be and education partners will be all across this great province of ours, to make sure that

the NDP does not slide us back into dead last in all of Canada.

But in regards to more taxation reduction measures, what does TD Economics have to say? That the net-new tax reduction measures are unlikely to offer any meaningful lift this year, end quote. Again, these are financial experts. Last time I checked—and I'm not going to talk down like the members opposite about anyone's own education, post-secondary training that they have taken. But it would be interesting to see the Finance Minister, or even the Justice Minister, you know, potentially debate some of these actual experts.

We know that they've failed on their listening tours. We've seen evidence of that as most—as recently as yesterday. They're doing—they're going around the province, promoting various different things, but they're actually not taking any action.

We know that in December, we sent a letter when President Trump was President Trump elect, before he was sworn in, and we said: President Trump is threatening to put tariffs onto Canada and onto Manitoba businesses and the economy. Can we have a bipartisan or tripartisan—you know, we could definitely invite the Liberal to the table—conversation about what can we do to battle these Trump tariffs?

But no, in Kinew government form, ego trumps common sense, and the self-serving way of this Premier (Mr. Kinew)—we see no action. We see taxation; we see payroll tax being deferred—taxes being deferred.

What does that mean? That means that later on, some time in the future—well, actually, within three months—they're going to have to hold those taxes to the side and pay the government anyway. Also, on top of that, this is the government that when businesses had to collect the PST and then submit the PST to the government, there was a small pittance that the businesses could hold back as sort of, hey, thank you for collecting our PST and sending it in to do all the paperwork.

Now, what did this government do? Because this is how petty they are. They're petty, Honourable Speaker. I don't have to tell you this; you know this. They're petty, so they took it away. They're still forcing you to do the PST—doing the bookkeeping. They're doing the bookkeeping.

So why do we need a Finance Minister? To stand up on his two sets of books he's got under there to stand on, to try to fake out Manitobans? Little bit of a shell game, Honourable Speaker.

So I've mentioned already—I talked about the New West Partnership. We talked about free trade all across this great country of ours. And, thanks to the former PC government, we have more free trade than we did before because of the signing of the New West Partnership, working with our colleagues to the west and to the east, as opposed—like the Premier, showing up when he can and doing TikTok videos, and doing pictures and posts about how he met Elon Musk, and then a few hours later, he says, no, you know what, I actually didn't meet him. I saw him. And then a few minutes later, it's like, no, I actually had nothing to do with Elon Musk.

That's the Premier. He flip-flops like a pickerel on a dock, or like a jackfish on a dock. I guess I should reference what I said earlier about jackfish who often smiles.

Oh, and I hear, Honourable Speaker, that the Minister for Housing, who, you know, wants to potentially get up. Hopefully, they will get up and put some facts on the record. We've been seeing, you know, when it comes to Oak Tree Towers, there's many things that if this minister would actually get outside the Perimeter and do some of their job and would make—would keep Manitobans safe.

* (15:20)

But that's for her to deal with at this time, Honourable Speaker. There is so much bad news in regards to this budget, I could go on for days and days and days. *[interjection]* And so the Families Minister wants me to call another press conference. I'm not sure if we're going to talk about her Premier's failings to disclose his ethics violations or his potential British Columbia door-knocking trip, or some of his history in regards to—prior to politics and some of his comments there. Or her failings keeping Manitobans safe in Manitoba Housing. Or the total disarray that our Education Minister is having now. Or the Families Minister with another press conference, potentially talking about the—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) will please come to order.

Mr. Ewasko: Once again, I value—I value—your guidance, Honourable Speaker.

And so when we talk about in addition—so the Families Minister wants me to—or the Housing Minister wants me to go out and do another press conference.

So we've already pointed out additionally about the report that the Families Minister had about the toxic environment that is within the Families Department, and then the hidden report—the hidden report—on how toxic that department has become.

People are quitting. People are retiring. Long-standing NDP staff, even under the Selinger government, thought that they would have a secure job, a good place to land under this Kinew government, but what has happened, Honourable Speaker? They, too, have quit. They, too, have quit. These are long-time standing NDP staffers.

I'm not going to go into a big list of names. *[interjection]* Oh, so the Education Minister wants me to name them. I don't think the Education Minister wants me to start naming them, but I will. I will. I can, Honourable Speaker. And when they stand up, they can—again, the Education Minister—they can stand up and defend—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt) will come to order.

Mr. Ewasko: Well, you know, as a teacher myself, sometimes when we talk about students—colleagues within this Legislature—sometimes it takes a while for them to understand some of the rules and to be able to follow some of those rules, Honourable Speaker. So, once again, thank you for your guidance.

So I guess we were talking a little bit about the fact that the Education Minister, when we were talking about this budget, was standing up yesterday and actually defending the Premier (Mr. Kinew) on the fact that he's broken the Ethics Commissioner's laws and rules.

And, again, Honourable Speaker, nobody on this side of the House or anybody out there watching today, the hundreds and thousands of Manitobans watching today, would begrudge the Premier for attending any Grey Cup team, especially not—I mean, he's the Premier. I respect the position. Don't get me wrong; I absolutely don't respect the person, but I respect the position. And that person, the Premier, absolutely—go and support our Winnipeg Blue Bombers in the Grey Cup.

I could not afford the private jet that this Premier had gone on, but even today in question period, Honourable Speaker, the Premier talks about how his private jet trip was an actual vacation. He said that: vacation. Now it's a vacation. So then why would the

staff then claim—and taxpayers—claim the taxpayer-funded trips to go on vacation. *[interjection]*

And I hear that the Justice Minister is eagerly wanting to get up and put some words on the record. I understand the Justice Minister, as he's self-declaring, he is a Riders fan, Honourable Speaker. And it's unfortunate that he would be a Riders fan, but that's typical of that Justice Minister and many members on that side—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will come to order.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for your guidance. And yet, once again, the—I appreciate your guidance.

When we talk about Bombers support, we talk about Miles Gorrell. These are people that I grew up watching, Honourable Speaker. And for days out in rural Manitoba, we would get together with friends and we would play foot—we would play football, of course.

And, you know, back in the day, Tommy Clements was a great quarterback for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and I was a big fan, of course. Hufnagel and Dieter Brock, many others. You know, Joe Pop, and others.

And I know that both now, the Education Minister and the Justice Minister are having almost like an arm-wrestling match, Honourable Speaker, over who should cheer for the Saskatchewan Roughriders as much as they possibly can.

So we also take a look, Honourable Speaker, in regards to this budget, that there are two deficits in this budget that go from bad to worse: \$800 million, and the other one's \$1.9 billion.

Honourable Speaker, we saw last year—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt) will also come to order.

Mr. Ewasko: I wasn't sure if I should just remain standing or have a seat for a bit, but I appreciate you, again, for your guidance. And I know that, you know, since you've been chosen or elected Speaker, this has not been necessarily one of the easiest jobs in the world, so I do thank you for the job that you have been doing.

And much like, you know, myself, not only being a classroom teacher but also guidance counselling,

working with students with emotional and behaviour and social disorders, also with a career, I know that it was—must have been really tough at times going to the NDP caucus and having to sit there and deal with those types of behaviours.

But it sets you up well to do this job as Speaker, Honourable Speaker. So—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I will remind the Leader of the Official Opposition to leave the Speaker out of the debate, to stick to what he's supposed to be talking about.

Mr. Ewasko: I will definitely leave you out of the debate. I apologize, but I do want to reiterate the fact that I do think the Speaker's doing a great job. That, I think, is okay to say.

So NDP making life less affordable. Well, we know already that they've broken the promise to Manitobans. They did \$3 billion in promises over the last election. We know that they've cut education funding; they cut schools; they cut child-care centres; they cut personal-care homes.

That being said, before anybody crows on that side of the aisle, I will say that I am, on behalf of the Lac du Bonnet constituency, I am thrilled to see that the NDP have finally lifted their pause from holding up construction on the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home, which we announced on this side of the House back in 2023, and now it's finally getting built, Honourable Speaker.

We actually went and we promised six personal-care homes, but as the underachievers that they are, they have now, in this budget, included a second personal-care home. Well, you know what, I guess that bar for this NDP government is set so low that even they can hop over that, Honourable Speaker.

I guess another thing that we're seeing, again, going on taxes, going on hidden taxes and those types of things, we know that this government—this NDP government—should be focusing on those that cannot help themselves, Honourable Speaker.

And we know, in the PC government, when we were in government, we knew that they—that people should be paying less and getting more. And so that's why raising the basic personal exemption, indexing the basic personal exemption and those tax brackets to rates of inflation was the right thing to do.

And so that when somebody would get a raise at whatever level of tax bracket they would be in, that it

wouldn't necessarily always bump them into that higher tax bracket, and to then penalize them.

* (15:30)

But no, you know what? This government went and cut that and froze that, and it's actually unfortunate, much like the Selinger government, that did the largest tax hikes in the history of Manitoba. What has the Kinew government done? They have—well, they've done more than nothing. They've done more damage, because what they've done is they've taken the gas tax—which was zero, and done the largest tax increase on the gas tax in the history of Manitoba, Honourable Speaker.

And I know that the members opposite are busy, always taking a look at their friends and giving little side deals of little government contracts and, you know, instead of outright making sure that they're paying the individuals.

You know, they've had to give how much ever severance, Honourable Speaker, to their staff that have quit, that they thought that was going to be loyal after the 2023 election. Instead, what they're doing is they're doing side contracts, without any return on investment, to the Manitoba taxpayer. Unlike when we were in government—we would give contracts to then help encourage businesses to support businesses. We see nothing like that in this budget to make life more affordable.

We've seen that education property taxes are projected to increase by \$182 million. Don't let the NDP fool anybody. They've cut the education; they've cut schools; they've cut child-care centres. You know one thing that the Education Minister—so, I'm glad that she's going to take some notes here. One thing that the Education Minister failed to do—and I think this is something for all of you incredible early childhood educators out there: Thank you for what you do on a day-to-day basis, because without early childhood education—Manitoba works because early childhood education works.

And what this government has failed to do by pausing and cancelling a lot of the projects that we had promised—we also, on top of building new child-care spaces, we made sure that the staff had the opportunity to get educated, to get—to recruit more staff and to retain more staff with higher wages. Was there a way to go yet? Absolutely.

But under the NDP, under 17 years of dark, gloomy storm clouds, the blue skies had appeared and those conversations were had. And that's why many of those

early childhood educators, who under the NDP were jumping ship and leaving for other occupations because they weren't appreciated under this NDP—and we see again, not one mention—not one mention—of early childhood education actually recruiting and retaining staff are in the budget.

And I hear that the Education Minister is desperately wanting to have time to stand up and put a few words on the record. And I know, Honourable Speaker, that I think part of what we see here is that we have a failed Kinew government. The bullies have seen another set of bullies, and that is with the Trump tariffs.

But it's going to be interesting to see that the Kinew government under this Premier (Mr. Kinew)—because this Premier and President Trump have a lot more in common than Manitobans know, and it's going to be our job to make sure that Manitobans are very much aware of how just alike they are. I'm not going to get into a lot of those details today, Honourable Speaker, but we've been waiting for months for this Premier and this NDP Kinew government to come up with some form of plan.

There's been no plans. There's been often many conversations where the Premier has taken a junket or a vacation or a door-knocking trip; we're not quite sure. He keeps changing his plans. He keeps asking really good staffers to take the bullet for this Premier and to do a cover up for the Premier. Which is sad, because you know what? I have a lot of respect for some of their staffers. Not all of them—not all of them—but some of them I do.

But I would caution those NDP staffers to be very wary of the fact that—and I'll—just in case you just tuned in, thousands of Manitobans—about the fact that in 2016, the Premier, the now-MLA for Fort Rouge was the star candidate for Premier Greg Selinger, and Greg Selinger walked around this province with the star candidate, arm around him. And, matter of fact, there was a couple of times—I think we've even got clips of it—where the premier, Greg Selinger, had to put his arm around the star candidate of Fort Rouge to back off so that he didn't show his anger, Honourable Speaker. It was quite hilarious.

But we see it here in question period. Matter of fact, the other day—I'm not talking about the Speaker's job, but I know we saw the anger in the Premier when he was questioned a little bit by our Speaker in the House, and—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Once again, I'll remind the member to leave the Speaker out of your debate. Shouldn't have to remind you. You should know that. I've cautioned you already. Please follow along.

Mr. Ewasko: So on Monday, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans saw evidence of the Premier's anger. That's all I can say. Whether it was challenging somebody of authority or not, that's all I can say. More and more of the history, the past, will revive, and Manitobans will see a lot of those similar traits that we saw in this Premier back in the day.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, we're just all hoping, we're all just waiting: businesses, families, parents, guardians, elected officials at all various different levels, whether that's school board, whether that's municipal, whether that's provincial. Even those that reside here that are federal colleagues, we're waiting for some kind of plan for this—from this NDP party government. I don't know if we're ever going to see one.

I would just like to say: I move, seconded by the MLA for Roblin,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- (a) failing to address the rising costs that Manitobans are facing today by collecting over a billion dollars more in taxes and other fees while Cabinet ministers receive a pay increase; and
- (b) failing to offer a strategy to address the Chinese and American tariffs impacting Manitoba's agriculture producers and businesses; and
- (c) failing to deliver a new education funding model, which in turn has resulted in a historic rise in education property taxes for Manitoban homeowners; and
- (d) failing to commit to lowering the education tax for Manitoba businesses; and
- (e) failing Manitoba parents by cutting child-care funding by hundreds of millions of dollars; and
- (f) failing to address the provincial government's bail reform policy when it comes to violent criminals and repeat offenders; and

* (15:40)

- (g) failing to increase investment in the RCMP in Manitoba and law enforcement as a whole; and
- (h) failing to invest in the protection of Manitobans from violent crime; and
- (i) failing to address the diagnostic and surgical wait-time backlog; and
- (j) failing to produce a meaningful plan to recruit, train and retain health-care workers in Manitoba; and
- (k) failing to support Manitoba's local sports, heritage and creative sectors by eliminating the previous provincial government's Arts, Culture and Sport in Community funding program; and
- (l) failing to justify cuts to the Urban/Hometown Green Team and the Building Sustainable Communities fund, and neglecting to adequately fund local community projects and organizations; and
- (m) failing to provide necessary funding to maintain and repair Manitoba roads; and
- (n) failing to make cost-efficient and timely progress on major infrastructure projects, instead causing unnecessary delays and budget overruns; and
- (o) failing to come forward with a meaningful plan to address the many issues in Manitoba's vulnerable communities; and
- (p) failing to prioritize new school builds, resulting in exponential cost increases on Manitobans; and
- (q) failing to make effective use of government resources by disregarding years of collaborative work already conducted by the previous provincial government on numerous initiatives, such as a new public funding model, a comprehensive critical minerals strategy, an Indigenous excellence in education policy, a strategy to recruit and retain French-speaking educators and consultations on Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin channels projects; and
- (r) failing to provide the necessary investment to recruit and train needed conservation officers in—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

If I could ask members to please remain quiet. I need to be able to hear what the member's saying for his motion, and if everybody else is talking, I can't hear.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, once again for your wisdom and your guidance.

- (r) failing to provide the necessary investment to recruit and train needed conservation officers in Manitoba; and
- (s) failing to prioritize the expansion of Manitoba conservation offices; and
- (t) failing to provide a realistic plan to balance the budget by 2024—I apologize—(t) failing to provide a realistic plan to balance the budget by 2027.

As a consequence, the provincial government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: There was a couple of mistakes made in the wording as read.

Is there leave to have the motion entered into Hansard as written? [Agreed]

The correct language on my part is—it should be considered as written? Is—[Agreed]

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by:

- a) failing to address the rising costs that Manitobans are facing today by collecting over a billion dollars more in taxes and other fees while Cabinet Ministers receive a pay increase; and*
- b) failing to offer a strategy to address the Chinese and American tariffs impacting Manitoba's agriculture producers and businesses; and*
- c) failing to deliver a new education funding model, which in turn has resulted in a historic rise in education property taxes for Manitoban homeowners; and*
- d) failing to commit to lowering the education tax for Manitoba businesses; and*
- e) failing Manitoba parents by cutting childcare funding by hundreds of millions of dollars; and*

- f) *failing to address the Provincial Government's "Bail Reform" policy when it comes to violent criminals and repeat offenders; and*
- g) *failing to increase investment in the RCMP in Manitoba and law enforcement as a whole; and*
- h) *failing to invest in the protection of Manitobans from violent crime; and*
- i) *failing to address the diagnostic and surgical wait time backlog; and*
- j) *failing to produce a meaningful plan to recruit, train, and retain health-care workers in Manitoba; and*
- k) *failing to support Manitoba's local sports, heritage and creative sectors by eliminating the previous Provincial Government's "Arts, Culture and Sport in Community" funding program; and*
- l) *failing to justify cuts to the Urban/Hometown Green Team and the Building Sustainable Communities Fund, and neglecting to adequately fund local community projects and organizations; and*
- m) *failing to provide necessary funding to maintain and repair Manitoba roads; and*
- n) *failing to make cost-efficient and timely progress on major infrastructure projects, instead causing unnecessary delays and budget overruns; and*
- o) *failing to come forward with a meaningful plan to address the many issues in Manitoba's vulnerable communities; and*
- p) *failing to prioritize new school builds, resulting in exponential cost increases on Manitobans, and*
- q) *failing to make effective use of government resources by disregarding years of collaborative work already conducted by the previous Provincial Government on numerous initiatives, such as a new public-school funding model, a comprehensive critical minerals strategy, an Indigenous excellence in education policy, a strategy to recruit and retain French-speaking educators, and consultations on Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin channels projects; and*
- r) *failing to provide the necessary investment to recruit and train needed conservation officers in Manitoba; and*
- s) *failing to prioritize the expansion of Manitoba conservation offices; and*

- t) *failing to provide a realistic plan to balance the budget by 2027.*

As a consequence, the Provincial Government has thereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

The Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko), seconded by the honourable member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House" and substituting:

regrets that this budget neglects the priorities—

So, unfortunately, the member needs to make sure the motion is seconded properly.

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, would you like me to reread it? I can do the motion, and as the, I'm sure, Hansard can see or the video could see that a seconder was there, or do you want me to reread it?

The Speaker: So there are a few options we can pursue. One of them is to make sure the seconder is in her chair, as the member said. The other is to ask for leave to have a different seconder, and the third option would be to do the whole thing all over again.

So—[interjection] Yes, it's up to you, I guess.

Mr. Ewasko: And I actually don't have a problem doing it again, considering that the way the options were presented, and this is not a reflection of the Chair, but the seconder was actually, at the time when I made, was in the chair, and so I will go with option No. 3, Honourable Speaker. So thank you.

So can I just start?

The Speaker: The seconder is in her spot, so we're good. So I will proceed to read the motion back.

So it's been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Speaker: —member for Roblin—I heard dispense.

An Honourable Member: No. Read it, please.

The Speaker: So,

—the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "House", and substituting:

regrets that this budget neglects the priorities of Manitobans by: [interjection]—and the Speaker would like others to be quiet while the Speaker is speaking.

- (a) failing to address the rising costs that Manitobans are facing today by collecting over a billion dollars more in taxes and other fees while Cabinet ministers receive a pay increase; and
- (b) failing to offer a strategy to address the Chinese and American tariffs impacting Manitoba's agriculture producers and businesses; and
- (c) failing to deliver a new education funding model, which in turn has resulted in a historic rise in education property taxes for Manitoban homeowners; and
- (d) failing to commit to lowering the education tax for Manitoba businesses; and
- (e) failing Manitoba parents by cutting child-care funding by hundreds of millions of dollars; and
- (f) failing to address the provincial government's bail reform policy when it comes to violent criminals and repeat offenders; and
- (g) failing to increase investment in the RCMP in Manitoba and law enforcement as a whole; and
- (h) failing to invest in the protection of Manitobans from violent crime; and
- (i) failing to address the diagnostic and surgical wait-time backlog; and
- (j) failing to produce a meaningful plan to recruit, train and retrain—retain health-care workers in Manitoba; and
- (k) failing to support Manitoba's local sports, heritage and creative sectors by eliminating the previous provincial government's Arts, Culture and Sport in Community funding program; and
- (l) failing to justify cuts to the Urban/Hometown Green Team and the Building Sustainable Communities fund, and neglecting to adequately fund local community projects and organizations; and
- (m) failing to provide necessary funding to maintain and repair Manitoba roads; and
- (n) failing to make cost-efficient and timely progress on major infrastructure projects, instead causing unnecessary delays and budget overruns; and
- (o) failing to come forward with a meaningful plan to address the many issues in Manitoba's vulnerable communities; and
- (p) failing to prioritize new school builds, resulting in exponential cost increases on Manitobans; and
- (q) failing to make effective use of government resources by disregarding years of collaborative work already conducted by the previous provincial government on numerous initiatives, such as a new public-school funding model, a comprehensive critical minerals strategy, an Indigenous excellence in education policy, a strategy to recruit and retain French-speaking educators and consultations on Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin channels projects; and
- (r) failing to provide the necessary investment to recruit and train needed consecutive officers—conservation officers in Manitoba; and
- (s) failing to prioritize the 'expansion'—expansion of Manitoba conservation offices; and
- (t) failing to provide a realistic plan to balance the budget by 2027.

As a consequence, the provincial government has hereby lost the confidence of this House and the people of Manitoba.

And the amendment is in order.

The floor is open for debate on the amendment.

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): Wow, I want to congratulate everyone who survived that wicked journey we were just taken on. We're on the other side of it.

Honourable Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand here today and speak to the phenomenal budget our Finance Minister and his team put together to lead our province through these uncertain times. There's so much to be excited about in this budget, but before I get to that I have to thank our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) the Premier (Mr. Kinew), their teams and everyone that contributed to the budget process.

In the leadup to this year's budget, there were extensive consultations and budget town halls. These were great meetings that happened across the province of community members and members of our team. They were great exchanges of ideas, learning from each other and we also learn about the many priorities that people brought forward.

* (15:50)

I went to one in south Winnipeg—probably about 60 folks there. Many members of our team were there. I heard from people who were advocating for recreation and community development. I learned from the Hutterite Manufacturers' Association, whose actually in the gallery with us right now. Thank you for being here.

We heard from academic researchers who were advocating for investments in research, and we heard from folks concerned about the environment. And so we got a really good spread of different priorities. And you know what I heard from my constituents afterwards? I had a constituent actually tell me that she felt proud after leaving that budget town hall.

We, as elected folks, are lucky to get feedback from our constituents. And after a budget town hall, maybe we hear that people feel heard or better informed. And if you're at a PC town hall, maybe disillusioned and frustrated.

But to hear that people actually left feeling proud, Honourable Speaker, that was amazing feedback to receive and speaks to the team from the Finance Department and the thoughtfulness with which constituents came to the meeting. The energy was: keep moving; like, what's next?

Well, Honourable Speaker, there's a lot of good things coming: \$3.7 billion in capital projects, the largest capital investment project our province has ever seen. This will build our province and ensure Manitobans have good-paying jobs that can support families and ensure people are in a position to thrive.

Schools, highways, the Port of Churchill, health-care centres and so much more. Building Manitoba means investing in the projects that make a difference to the communities that we all represent. As people and their families navigate these uncertain times, they deserve to have someone in their corner fighting for them, their jobs and their livelihoods.

In case you haven't noticed, well, everybody's tired and healing from somebody, and that somebody is President Trump. When Manitobans and Canadians stay united, we can face any challenge that may come our way, including Trump's tariffs.

We are prepared for whatever comes our way, so Budget 2025 lays out an alternate fiscal framework to respond to potential 25 per cent tariffs. This alternate plan includes funding to support Manitoba businesses in pivoting to new markets, new investments in post-secondary institutions and additional funding for government services.

I get so excited talking about procurement, Honourable Speaker. What we need to buy and need to run government, and how to go about getting those things is such an important process. You could outsource contracts, look to American corporations—or your buddy's businesses like members opposite have in the past.

Or you could look to buy local: support small organizations closer to home, like our government is working to do. I'm so proud of our Minister of Public Service Delivery (MLA Sandhu) and his work on ensuring we're buying from and contracting with businesses closer to home so we can support workers here in Manitoba and Canada.

Investments in education are some of the best investments a government can make. More research and more educated folks in our province means we're better positioned to navigate headwinds and contribute to the wicked problems of our time. Our government recognizes this fact, unlike the former PC administration that froze education funding and interfered with post-secondary institutions. As Manitobans, we will keep sticking up for ourselves and chart a path to prosperity.

And if you find yourself in a dark situation, just turn on your light and look to the many affordability measures in this budget. Manitobans take pride in living in a province where they can own a home and raise a family. The hydro rate freeze goes hand in hand with our Affordable Energy Plan, which will expand clean energy and keep Manitoba Hydro public. I'm so excited about the growing partnerships with Indigenous governments, growing our public green-energy options through wind and solar projects.

Budget 2025 is building on our efforts to help more people afford a home by increasing the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,600. Renters will also benefit from our government's increase to the renters affordability tax credit for the second year in a row.

You know what Manitobans love, Honourable Speaker? They love our parks. Manitobans will have free park entry for a year as we get out of the terrible contract the former PC government made with a US company.

Manitobans also love affordable child care, and this budget will save families \$2,800 a year by expanding \$10-a-day child care to include non-school days. Just next week, during spring break, families will be saving more money because of the important steps our NDP team has taken to make life more affordable.

An Honourable Member: Amazing.

Mr. Blashko: I agree.

And we can't talk about affordability for families without mentioning the universe nutrition program that the wonderful Nello Altomare championed and launched last year. His leadership laid an important foundation for student success and poverty reduction in the province.

And as our stupendous Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt) continues his work, in this budget we have Nello's Law, which makes permanent the universally accessible school food program. This program is a pivotal part of ensuring we increase school attendance, students' ability to reach their full potential; and everyone is able to successfully contribute to their communities.

I come from a background in education. I worked with students, and food at—food security, nutrition was an important part of the programming we offered students and their families, and I can tell you how central it is to a student's experience and how pivotal it is to keeping students connected to school, in a good spot to learn and also supporting families navigating tough times.

I recently had the opportunity to also tour the René Deleurne Centre at the Louis Riel School Division, and they are doing amazing things, giving older students the opportunity to volunteer and build skills in the culinary arts through this universal nutrition program. Because of this funding our government is putting in place, students are having job opportunities and furthering their careers in the culinary arts, and also meeting the needs of their younger cousins, siblings and classmates.

* (16:00)

This year's budget also removes barriers preventing Manitobans from working and strengthening our EIA support. We're doing this by increasing the earnings exemptions of monthly earnings to \$500.

Your energy is yours and mine is mine, Honourable Speaker. The energy our team is putting out there is one of partnership, unity and intentionality. We've proven that we stand together as one united people. We can take on any challenge that comes our way, investing and building those systems that Manitobans rely on and take pride in.

And Budget 2025 takes a new approach where 11 new schools follow a design standard that's fiscally responsible and built by Manitoba workers.

After seven and a half years of Conservative cuts, our government is continuing our investments in health care. I want to highlight a few particular investments we're making: the building of a new ER at Victoria Hospital and the Mature Women's health centre. I can't underline with enough ink or bold fonts or highlighter how much the Mature Women's health centre speaks to what we collectively value here on this side of the House.

The previous PC administration closed this important public service. Our government, this NDP team, thinks mature women experiencing menopause and perimenopause deserve care. Their well-being matters, and a provincial government shouldn't turn their backs on Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, closing ERs, abandoning personal-care homes, freezing wages and firing health-care workers—members opposite are lucky that props aren't allowed in the Chamber because this is the moment that I pull out the scroll to list the many, many, many ways the previous government failed Manitobans in health care.

Honourable Speaker, are we investing in child care? Yes, and we're looking to procure closer to home. Are we building new affordable rental units? Yes, and we're protecting reproductive rights in Manitoba by making Plan B free. Are we renovating J.H. Bruns Collegiate? Yes, and we're providing contingency funds for possible Trump tariffs. Are we investing in community safety? Yes, and we're ensuring folks on EIA have a pathway to meaningful employment.

Honourable Speaker, our NDP Finance Minister has put forward a budget that meets the moment. I thank him and his team for showing Manitobans that it is possible to build important infrastructure while recognizing the needs for contingencies. This is a thoughtful, loving document that lays out a path for all Manitobans to succeed and contribute.

Thank you.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I appreciate the opportunity to rise today, put some words on record. Never enough time, of course. But I appreciate my colleague, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet and our Opposition Leader, for his comments. I know he could have went on for hours about the deficiencies of this budget.

I notice our members across the—you know, they don't spend their allotted time because there's not a whole lot that they can brag about in this budget. As you could see from our leader's submission of the

amendment, we almost went through the whole alphabet; we're just missing U to Z.

But, yes, I'm pretty happy to stand up and be able to put some words on the record for not only my constituency of Lakeside and the concerns that we have on the budget for my constituency, but mostly for my critic role as—in municipal relations and what this budget is not doing for municipalities and small businesses and the hard-working Manitobans out there that are quite concerned about the times that are upon us here.

So, Honourable Speaker, the 2025 Manitoba NDP budget can be aptly compared to the slogan, reduce, reuse and recycle, but not in a way that benefits municipalities. Instead of introducing bold, substantial funding solutions, this budget reduces the real value of municipal funding by offering a mere 2 per cent increase, an amount that doesn't even keep pace with inflation, forcing municipalities to do more with less.

Essential programs like Building Sustainable Communities and The Green Team, which once provided robust support for local projects and employment—they've been reused in name only, replaced by the inferior One Manitoba Growth Revenue Fund and From the Ground Up. While it may look like an investment, this new fund merely reshuffles existing money under a different 'label'—label, much like rebranding an old product to make it seem new.

Honourable Speaker, this budget recycles flawed ideas, such as tying municipal funding to gas tax revenue, an unstable and declining source as more Manitobans transition to electric vehicles, the goal that this government touts as keystone of its environmental bona fides. This setup raises serious—some serious concerns. If the government decides to cut the gas tax again for political gain or if gas consumption continues to drop, municipal funding will take a direct hit. Instead of creating a forward-thinking, diversified revenue model for our local governments, the Province has chosen to repurpose outdated, unreliable strategies that fail to address the real needs of Manitoba municipalities.

This budget ostensibly presents itself as a commitment to strong, sustainable communities. But upon closer examination, it falls plain—painfully short. What is being sold to municipalities as an improvement is in reality an unstable and insufficient model that shifts the burden onto local governments without giving them the tools to succeed.

A centrepiece of this budget's municipal funding is the new One Manitoba Growth Revenue Fund. Honourable Speaker, with a—\$12.4 million supposedly dedicated to local government needs, but let's be clear: this fund is a poor-quality knockoff of previous initiatives like Building Sustainable Communities and urban Hometown Green Team. These were well-established, effective programs that directly supported municipal projects, community infrastructure, youth employment, the restructured, reliable, responsive to the real needs of local governments. By contrast, the One Manitoba Growth Revenue Fund introduces a volatile uncertain mechanism that jeopardizes municipal sustainability. The government has effectively dismantled proven programs and replaced them with a risk-laden funding structure tied to the gas tax, a decision that defies long-term planning and fiscal prudence.

Tying municipal funding to gas tax revenue is not just misguided; it's reckless. As Manitobans increasingly adopt electric vehicles and fuel efficiency improves, gas tax revenues will inevitably decline. What happens to municipal funding when this revenue source dries up? Will municipalities be left scrambling to fill the gaps? Moreover, this just isn't a theoretical problem.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has already demonstrated a willingness to cut the gas tax as a political maneuver to boost public approval. What assurance do municipalities have that this funding stream will remain intact? What happens the next time as government needs a popularity boost and decides to eliminate or reduce the gas tax again? Local governments deserve a stable, predictable source of revenue, not one that is at the mercy of fluctuating gas consumption and political whims.

So, Honourable Speaker, I worked in the last 15 years in the petroleum industry, selling petroleum to farmers and businesses. And they look for more—they're looking for more efficient ways to run their farms, their businesses. Every day, people driving back and forth to work are looking for better ways to economize their fuel efficiency. So we're looking at a decrease in consumption.

And I've seen it in my reports over the years that, as I said, farmers look for ways to use less fuel in their operations and businesses as well because of the rising prices of fuel and energy. So this is a trend. It's a trend we're going to see that less litres will be used and less gas tax revenue will be there.

* (16:10)

Honourable Speaker, the budget touts a 2 per cent increase in base municipal operating grants. They call it escalator funding, but if costs are also on that same escalator, we're getting nowhere. Let's put that into perspective: inflation in Manitoba has been running 'significantly'—significantly higher than 2 per cent, particularly when it comes to municipal costs like road maintenance, salaries, materials, emergency services and public infrastructure. A 2 per cent increase does not even cover basic inflationary pressures, meaning that in real terms, municipalities are receiving a funding cut. They're being asked to do more with less again.

This is not a sustainable way to fund essential services; it is a recipe for deteriorating infrastructure, reduced public services and increased frustration at our local levels, at our grassroots levels. The government claims that a per capita allocation of funding is fair. On paper, this might seem logical, but in practice it ignores the reality of rural and northern communities, sparsely populated municipalities often of significantly higher per capita expenditures.

They must maintain vast networks, roads, bridges, essential services over large geographic areas with a limited tax base. A per capita funding model might work for a large urban centre with economies of scale, but it places rural and northern communities at a severe disadvantage. Instead of applying a simplistic one-size-fits-all formula, the Province should recognize the unique financial burdens these municipalities face and structure their funding accordingly.

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities has consistently advocated for predictable, sustainable funding. This goes back a long time, when myself and the member from Dauphin sat on the AMM board, when a—the previous NDP government—this is something that municipalities were advocating for then. They made it clear that trying funding to a declining gas tax is not a solution.

They've also called for an annual funding escalator to keep pace with rising costs. Yet this budget ignores those concerns. Moreover, Manitoba municipalities are stuck with an outdated revenue model that relies almost entirely on property taxes. In other provinces, municipalities have been granted more diverse revenue-generating tools.

So we're hearing from municipalities, Honourable Speaker, that this budget we're going to see rising education taxes; we've already seen it in our municipalities. And what municipal councils are hearing is that that amount of school taxes is overriding the amount of property taxes, and they're taking the hit for it. They're

taking the heat for it because people are complaining about their property tax bill when over 50 per cent of it in some municipalities are now education taxes, which has been caused by our NDP government.

In Alberta, municipalities can generate revenue through local fuel taxes and tourism levies. In British Columbia, cities like Vancouver impose a municipal sales tax or a hotel tax. In Ontario, Toronto has the ability to implement a municipal land transfer tax, among many other tools. So why is Manitoba so reluctant to modernize its municipal revenue framework? If this Province refuses to provide adequate funding, then at the very least it should give municipalities the ability to raise revenue in ways other than increasing property taxes. Local governments should have access to fair taxation powers that reflect the economic reality of their regions.

Every region, municipal region in rural Manitoba and in northern Manitoba, have different realities in their regions, and we need to realize that, and per capita funding is not one way that is going to be successful or beneficial to those areas.

Honourable Speaker, this budget includes a \$1-million increase in the From the Ground Up program. This sounds promising until you realize that it's still \$12 million short of where it was in 2023. This means that funding for our community revitalization 'projects'—projects remain woefully inadequate.

Similarly, while The Green Team program is receiving an increase of \$1.3 million, this does not come close to restoring to its previous levels. These cuts harm municipalities, non-profits, youth employment opportunities, undermining the very programs that help build strong communities.

Now, members on the other side have argued in the last budget debates that those were pandemic levels of—for Green Team and Building Sustainable Communities. Yes, communities were in a crisis during the pandemic, and, Honourable Speaker, communities are in a crisis now, with the threat of tariffs and what we have going on to our neighbours south of the border. So I don't really care to hear that argument ever again.

The 2025 Manitoba budget is not a budget for municipalities, Honourable Speaker. It's a budget that leaves them scrambling for financial stability. It's a budget offers short-term optics over long-term solutions. It's a budget that fails to recognize the real challenges facing local governments across our province, our grassroots governing people.

Manitoba needs a new approach, needs a stable, predictable municipal funding model that is not tied to volatile revenue sources like the gas tax. It needs an annual escalator that ensures municipal funding keeps pace with inflation and rising costs. Needs expanded revenue tools for municipalities, allowing them to generate income beyond property taxes. Needs a fairer funding model that recognizes the unique challenges of rural and northern communities.

We need a government that doesn't just shuffle money around in a shell game, but genuinely invests in our municipalities. Our communities deserve better, Honourable Speaker, and it is our responsibility on this side of the House to demand better.

Honourable Speaker, I got a number of small businesses in the constituency of Lakeside that are into manufacturing, one in particular that I was a strong advocate for and supported in my time on council to make sure that these people got the support they needed. It was Arrowquip and, just recently, Yakta manufacturing—70-plus per cent of their manufacturing goes south of the border, and they're quite concerned with the tariffs that are upon us. So it's a huge concern.

CentrePort is in my constituency—a good portion of CentrePort—and a lot of manufacturing, lot of trucking industry in CentrePort. And all these businesses are concerned with this government's budget, of what's going to become of their businesses.

Small companies, especially those relying on exports to the US, they've got a particularly difficult time deciding how to handle additional costs. They've got smaller financial margins than some of the bigger companies, and in the case of sudden increases with these exportation costs, they'll feel the blow of this trade war more harshly than others.

Already some small Manitoba businesses have had delayed shipments and cancelled contracts due to these tariffs, and it's a huge concern. It's a huge concern to us on this side of the House and our constituents.

* (16:20)

Some of the infrastructure announcements in the budget, you know—and I read the petition today, Honourable Speaker, on the project of Provincial Road 227, an economic artery that connects some hubs here in Manitoba that could increase efficiencies of transportation and exporting across our province and into western and eastern Canada.

We never heard them put that back of it. There was a lot of reannouncements of projects that the previous PC government had started, but PR 227 wasn't one of them. And my constituents are more than disappointed.

We're in an affordability crisis here, Honourable Speaker. People are struggling to make ends meet day to day. If we start having people losing our jobs—losing their jobs because of what's going on south of the border, we're going to be in a real situation here. Not much about affordability measures in here for the ones that are really struggling right now.

Personal-care home—happy to hear that we're building some, but the one in Stonewall I'd been advocating for for a number of years was announced by the previous government. No word on our personal-care home in Stonewall. Honourable Speaker, again, some disappointed people that have been raising money for a number of years to have better options in their personal-care home in our area. And, again, a disappointment from Lakeside that we're not hearing anything about that.

So those are some of the things I'm a little concerned about for our municipalities here in Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg. Some of the things in Lakeside that are going on that, that I've been hearing concerns about, Honourable Speaker, and I'm quite pleased that I've had the opportunity to get up here and put some words on the record. And I will certainly sit down now and give some of my other colleagues the opportunity to put their words on the record.

Thank you.

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): It's an honour to rise today, on behalf of the residents of Kildonan-River East, to respond to Budget 2025, which is this year's plan for our province, our communities and our families.

Honourable Speaker, this is a budget that meets the moment. It is one that reflects the conversations I've had at doorsteps in North Kildonan, Fraser's Grove, Riverbend and Rivergrove, on both sides of the river. We have spoken at community gatherings, at Gateway community club, Red River Community Centre and over coffee with parents, educators and seniors, who simply want a Manitoba that supports them in living a good life.

We all know that last year's—the few—last few years haven't been easy; families have faced rising costs, long wait times and systems weakened by cuts and neglect under the previous failed Pallister-Stefanson

PC government. But instead of turning away from those challenges, this NDP government is facing them head-on and this budget is evidence of that.

We're building a Manitoba that puts families first, that invests in people, that believes government should be there not just like now when times are tough, but to help create the conditions where everyone can thrive. Nowhere is that clearer than in our approach to early childhood education and care.

Honourable Speaker, as a working mom, I know what it's like to navigate the child-care system. We loved our daycare, but, at first, we could not find one for our first-born child; we eventually did, at a Kinder Links playgroup here in River East Transcona School Division. I initially found a home daycare from another mom in the class; there was only a part-time spot available for my infant to maintain the ratios required at her home daycare centre. My husband, who is a small-business owner, shifted his work schedule to work Saturday and Sunday, so he could be with our baby two days a week. Fortunately, my mom helped that third day as I went back to work full time with a new baby.

I vividly remember crying at my work desk; post-partum depression is a real thing. Post-partum anxiety is a real thing. You don't always see it when you're in it, but women, you are not alone. I will say it again: Women, you are not alone.

I was back at work for a number of months before we were blessed with our second child. I was on mat leave with our second baby, and our first was 2.25 years old. I remember that vividly—at Superstore pushing them both in cart when I got a call about a child-care centre spot. These amazing early childhood educators helped raise our children. We could both thrive in the economy and our kids were happy, safe and better prepared for kindergarten. I want this for all families here in Kildonan-River East and all across Manitoba.

This year's budget makes historic investments in affordable child care. It is creating thousands of new spaces and extending true \$10-a-day daycare to non-school days. That's a real relief for families who've had to patch things together or go without. For many of them, this means real-life peace of mind.

Parents across Kildonan-River East have told me what this means to them. For some, it's the difference between not going back to work or going back to work and piecemealing things together. For others, it means not having to rely on grandparents or neighbours day in and day out just to make financial ends meet. We owe

it to those families to keep going, and Budget 2025 does just that. It also invests in the people who care for our kids every day, our early childhood educators.

This budget helps us retain and recruit educators by improving wages and workplace supports, because we can't expand spaces without increasing respect and wages for the caring professionals who make those spaces possible and care for our leaders of tomorrow.

Honourable Speaker, this budget also makes long overdue investments in our schools. We're building 11 new schools across Manitoba, and I can't—[interjection] Absolutely, everyone should be clapping about that, but not everyone in this Chamber will. And I can't tell you what a difference that makes for fast-growing communities like ours in Kildonan-River East.

Our NDP government is also lowering class sizes for the youngest learners, something the previous failed Pallister-Stefanson PC government did not prioritize. We are making sure there's food at every school for every kid who needs it.

I saw this in action last year when we launched the universal school food nutrition program at Donwood School, my old elementary school. And I'll never forget the pride on the faces of educators and students that day.

When I worked as an educational assistant, part of my job was making sure kids who needed food got it discretely and with dignity. But it wasn't consistent and sometimes it came with stigma. That should never be the case. The fact that everyone receives access to the universal school nutrition program means nobody feels singled out. Now, thanks to this budget, every child will have what they need to learn, not just pencils and paper, but a full stomach to level the playing field for all Manitoba children.

This is how we break down barriers. This is how we build equity. And this is how we support our educators, who go above and beyond every day to care for our kids.

Honourable Speaker, Budget 2025 also recognizes that a strong education system must support students with diverse needs, whether they're newcomers learning English, children with disabilities or youth reconnecting with their culture through Indigenous language programs such as the amazing Ojibwe Bilingual Program at Riverbend school, here in Kildonan-River East.

I'm proud to see this budget include investments in language—Indigenous language programs, learning

to preserve and promote those languages for future generations.

When I visit schools across Kildonan-River East, I see classrooms that reflect the diversity and richness of our great province. Our education system should reflect that too, and this budget helps make that a reality.

Honourable Speaker, a good life doesn't stop at graduation. This budget invests in young people entering the workforce through more apprenticeship programs, better financial aid for post-secondary students and targeted training and health care and the skilled trades.

We're adding 176 new health-care training seats this year, building on the 90 we added in our first budget. That's how we ensure our health-care system is staffed, not just for now but far into the future. Because let's be honest, we're rebuilding after years of damage from the former failed PC Pallister-Stefanson government cuts and mismanagement.

Under that previous PC government, our health-care workers were overworked and underpaid, emergency rooms were shut down and seniors were left without adequate care.

But we've already added over 1,200 net-new staff and we're putting shovels in the ground on new emergency rooms and clinics, new personal care homes—even one in Lac du Bonnet, which is always fun to comment on because that's in the Leader of the Opposition's area and he was even at the announcement with us—and a dedicated centre for mature women's health care.

Constituents in Kildonan-River East have personally come and expressed their gratitude for that particular announcement and explained how meaningful that is in their lives. Kildonan-River East constituents told me that these priorities are ones that will mean so much for them and their families.

* (16:30)

My children and I have visited Kildonan personal-care manor on Henderson, right here in Kildonan-River East. When a neighbour calls and has a concern and can't get out and about, we show up. The staff there are doing incredible work and care so deeply for our Kildonan-River East neighbours.

Honourable Speaker, our seniors built this province. They raised families, contributed to our economy and now they deserve to age with dignity and security. This budget delivers on that by investing, like I

mentioned, in personal-care homes in Lac du Bonnet and Transcona, expanding home care and launching an independent seniors advocate to ensure their voices and their families' voices are heard loud and clear, all across Manitoba.

In my conversations at places like Good Neighbours Active Living Centre, a huge community hub in north-east Winnipeg, I've heard one consistent message from older adults: they want to stay connected, independent and safe. This budget helps them do exactly that.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to address the global context in which we're delivering this budget. We've all heard that noise coming from south of the border. It's causing concern among Manitobans, and understandably so.

I want to commend our Premier (Mr. Kinew) for standing up, not just for Manitoba, but for Canada. His message has been clear: we are not going to let Manitoba families, workers or businesses pay the price for politics that we did not ask for. He's been vocal about protecting Manitoba's interests and ensuring we're not caught flat-footed again. And he said recently we're going to Trump-proof Manitoba economy by diversifying our markets and investing in homegrown innovation.

That's the kind of steady, principled leadership Manitobans deserve; leadership that doesn't shy away from tough conversations and doesn't wait for others to act.

Honourable Speaker, Budget 2025 is the clearest expression yet of what this government is about. We believe that health care is a public good, not a luxury. We believe education is a right, not a privilege. We believe that raising a family should be supported, not punished. And we believe our seniors deserve more kind—more than just kind words. They deserve to age with dignity and respect.

This is what you get when you elect people who understand the struggles families face, because we have lived them.

It's not lost on me that we have the largest-ever number of parents in our caucus; moms and dads who know what it means to juggle child care and career, who've felt the pressure of grocery bills and daycare bills. We are here because we are—we were working on the front lines in the unbearable conditions under the failed Pallister-Stefanson PC government, and we were called to action to stand up for our neighbours and serve our communities.

So I say to the families of Kildonan-River East and to Manitobans across this province: we hear you, we see you and we are delivering for you. This is a budget that lifts people up, that takes on the real issues and that charts a course for a healthier, more inclusive and more hopeful Manitoba.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It gives me great pride to stand up in the Chamber today and be able to speak about the motions moved by our leader, seconded by the member from Roblin—the amendments to this disastrous budget that was presented a few short days ago.

Like my colleague from Lakeside, you know, I look at the clock and note that the members from the NDP government aren't willing to speak for 20 full minutes on their budget. Disastrous is the only reason why they can't do that, Honourable Speaker, is that there is nothing to do but repeat and recycle stuff that the PC government had put on the table years ago and continue to be advocated for and moved by the NDP.

So that's great news that they keep working forward the processes that this government, on this side of the House, had put forward and continues to live in our legacy of the work that has been done.

So, you know, looking at the amendments that have been put forward, Honourable Speaker, many of them result in the ineffective processes that have been put in place for crime, criminality and justice within our province.

And I say failed because Manitobans are feeling less safe than they did a year and a half ago. We just need to look at surveys that have been done here in Winnipeg, alone, about how unsafe individuals feel walking the streets here since this NDP government has taken over the reins, and it's really concerning—each and every one of them. We have elderly people being attacked while they're going to just simply buy a jug of milk to bring home and maybe bring to their grandkids or their great-grandkids.

You know, the concerns of machete attacks, they have skyrocketed in the last 18 months. And you know what? I still read almost every single day, Honourable Speaker, about machete attacks, even after this failed machete law that has been put forward. Unfortunately the memo didn't get to the criminals that are using these weapons to make absolute gruesome assaults on individuals and increasing the feeling of not being safe that many, many Manitobans are feeling.

Really, we talk about the feeling here in Winnipeg in the surveys that have been done, but on this side of the House, we have a great deal of rural constituents. And the rural constituents are feeling ever, ever-increasing anxiety and stress about public safety.

This budget fails to address even the most basic pieces of rural safety. Not once was it mentioned in this budget speak—speech to bring forward safety in the rural areas. The alarm bells are ringing, Honourable Speaker. There is so many people that are concerned about the increase in rural crime. And it's not just in and around Winnipeg area. We need to remember that there's so much more in Manitoba than just Winnipeg.

When we looked at all of the rural areas, the theft of equipment, the break-ins and the brazen robberies that are happening of the constituents that are there making an honest living, working hard, working the land and they have to suffer these losses at the hands of criminals that should be in jail, not getting bail. And we're seeing this constantly.

And that leads me to the next point that our leader brought forward, and that is making sure that we're ensuring that the bail reform policy about violent and repeat offenders is addressed. And this NDP government has absolutely refused to do that. They have no concern about safety, and they have no concern about bail. We've seen it over and over again. The Minister for Justice and the Premier (Mr. Kiewit) both stated that they didn't need any other levels of government to do this. They could do this alone, they could bring justice all by themselves, and we've seen that colossal failure, Honourable Speaker.

We have seen repeat offenders—and I will, you know, cite the Verwey family and what they had to go through because of this failed NDP policy on safety, the revolving door on offenders that are allowed to become members back in our society and become that revolving door of repeat offenders.

We had this Chamber with—I believe it was around a hundred people from those families that were affected, calling for some meaningful change. And, again, nothing has happened. We're reading every single day in the newspapers, seeing on media, whether it be TV or the radio, how these violent offenders, these chronic repeat prolific offenders are back out on the streets within hours under this NDP's failed system of bail.

Manitobans deserve more, and we've talked about it for 18 months. We've—we have rung the alarm bell, police services have rung the alarm bell, citizens have

rung the alarm bell, but all we have is crickets on the other side of this Chamber, Honourable Speaker.

And it's appalling, because it's costing Manitobans lives. It is costing lives. We talk about safety, and we talk about the ability for Manitobans to feel safe. We can't even feel safe on our roadways under this NDP government.

* (16:40)

I'll give an example—was Bill 5, when amendments were brought forward—and I know it's political and the minister said, you know what, if anything is brought forward by the PC critic, it's not worth it, it's not taking any information forward, we'll disregard 33 years of experience.

And, really, all of the issues that could've been brought forward, but what was appalling, Honourable Speaker, was the fact that the family, the Reimer family, Karen Reimer, at committee, brought forward numerous proposals and amendments to help solidify Bill 5 and help have a real impact on individuals on our roadways; individuals that could be subject—or could be victims to impaired driving and the results that happen because of people that choose to drink, choose to be intoxicated, whether it's by alcohol or drugs, and get behind the wheel.

She brought home real amendments that could have real action. And, you know what, the window dressing was let down, the shutters were slammed and the Reimer family was asked, no, sorry, we can't do anything for you today. We haven't done anything for you in the past, and we're not going to do anything for you in the future. And it's unfortunate, because it's politics over proper policy and good government.

When we looked at the other side, we're talking about failing to address increased investment in the RCMP in Manitoba and law enforcement as a whole. It's no secret; the RCMP are having difficulty with staffing in this province, and it's because the underfunding by this NDP government—their ability to attract people here is lagging behind the rest of the country. And we have rural offices that are starting to collapse because they don't have enough staff. They are taking care—tens of thousands of square kilometres in their districts and not able to take care of this.

And the member from Portage la Prairie brings a good point forward. Under this NDP government, they unilaterally disbanded the Rivers Police Service that took care of Rivers and the RM of Riverdale. Unbelievable how they just, at the stroke of a pen, got rid of a service that had a history of over 100 years

and provided great service to their residents, not only in Rivers but the whole RM of Riverdale.

And I know I had a personal relationship with all of those officers, and they were just dismissed and, really, sent to pasture, so to speak. And it wasn't Crown pasture that they were sent to; it was the pasture land towards that—you know, they were just told that they needed to stay off of the workload. And each of those individuals had to struggle to look for new employment, but, thankfully, many of the other services within Manitoba would surely scoop these individuals up so that they could continue serving Manitobans.

We're failing to invest in the protection of Manitobans from violent crime. If we look at the sheer number of violent crime that is happening within our jurisdictions, for each one of us that have a constituency, I implore you: open up your papers, open up your daily newspapers, your reports and read the crime section, and tell me—tell me—that you think that crime is not worse in the last 18 months than it was—or that it's much worse in the past 18 months than it was in the years before that.

Skyrocketing violent crime right now. We're having brazen open attacks of citizens here within metres of this great building, and this is where people should be safe; it's the people's building. We want people to come here, but they're afraid, Honourable Speaker, because safety is not something that this government guarantees to individuals.

As a matter of fact, I went to a few different presentations, and one where the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) himself was presenting at, to retailers and the retail theft, and, you know, there's been no advancements under this NDP government. They used a document from 2017 that was authored by then-Justice minister Heather Stefason [*phonetic*], who authored the criminal justice modernization strategy. And it was so forward-thinking and so modern that last year, the Justice Minister had to use that as his PowerPoint and as his talking points when presenting to this.

An Honourable Member: Wow.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes. It was—I was proud that, you know, all of the hard work, again, that our government has done over the years is continuing to be used six, seven years later. And that's how advanced it was. And that's how forward-thinking this government is when it comes to crime and safety.

Unfortunately, Manitobans have had to suffer for the past 18 months now. But rest assured, Manitobans:

In the next two, two and a half years, we will be back in power and we will make sure that Manitobans are kept safe, not only here in Winnipeg but all of Manitoba, because we'll make sure that we bring forward a plan that protects all Manitobans.

Let's look at the fact that we have Manitobans that are having failed time at diagnostic and surgical wait times. Now, I say this because I'm going to skip now from justice initiatives that I've spent an easy 14 minutes on, and I know the other members on their side can't talk for 20 minutes on their entire budget. I can talk for 15, 20 minutes just on justice without even wandering.

But let's talk about some of the stuff that happens under the surgical and diagnostic wait times. I would like to publicly commend the MLA from Portage la Prairie for the work and the advocacy that he has done—the tireless advocacy that he has done and we've heard about in this Chamber regarding having an MRI in the new Portage hospital. That would sure help the 24,000 Manitobans that are waiting for diagnostic services.

But instead of taking the \$5 million that's offered by the foundation—again, the window dressing comes down, the shutters are closed and it's kicked to the curb. And, unfortunately, that would save lives of so many Manitobans. It would be preventative medicine, which—preventative services, which really helps moving forward.

We heard the other day from the member from Tyndall Park who talked about how much it costs to have somebody in hospital for a week or a two-week period when they could have had an injection of a disease that could be prevented.

Prime example is \$5 million by the foundation. No cost to this government. It's a no-brainer. They put this MRI machine in and 24,000 people move up on the wait-list and get the diagnostic services that they need. These individuals—we've heard from the Jeffrie [*phonetic*] family, was one that spoke at a Portage meeting that the MLA from Portage la Prairie hosted, and they had to leave our province and go to another province to get any sort of service and diagnostic services, paid out of their own pocket, and they were the ones that end up being the victim of this system.

You know what? A simple ask to do a simple thing: an MRI machine that would help service this area.

But I'll bring it even further, because I represent Brandon. All of the diagnostic services, the hub that Brandon regional health authority serves, could be

served again by not having the additional pressure from the surrounding regions of Portage la Prairie. And I know the member from Agassiz also has many of her constituents that would benefit from this, because it's a much closer region to Portage la Prairie, where they could travel there, spend less time on the road, have more family time, ability to be there.

* (16:50)

But no; many people have to cancel a whole day of their schedule to travel either to Brandon or to Winnipeg to get these diagnostic services. It's an absolute abysmal failure on the part of the NDP government to not look at this, to not consider it. You know, when you look a gift horse in the mouth, you have to say, why can't we take this? Why can't we make this move forward?

Another one was to look at the failing invest—sorry, failing to produce a meaningful plan to recruit, train and retain health-care workers in Manitoba. We've heard a lot of talk about the listening tours, but what we found out, Honourable Speaker, is that the lit-listening tours were tone-deaf; they didn't hear what was being said.

We hear about all of these net-new positions, but everybody that I have talked to, whether it's in my constituency or many other constituencies, they're saying: Where? Where are these net-new positions? Because we certainly are not seeing them.

So unless they're in—you know—scurried away in their own little place that's secret to everybody else, we're not seeing these individuals in our communities. We're not seeing the individuals that are really needing the help from the medical profession.

And, you know, I also have to commend the MLA for Roblin, who has been a tireless advocate for health care within our province, bringing realistic and factual information forward day after day in question period. And that's why we had to bring these failings of the medical—sorry, the Department of Health moved forward that this government is not supporting.

You know, there is so many great workers. There's so many nurses and doctors and health-care providers that do tremendous work within our province. And I know I have direct family members that contribute to that as direct health-care providers, but they're wishing that they felt supported and felt heard. They were at some of the listening tours, and not a thing has been brought forward with the many of the recommendations that they had, Honourable Speaker. They're concerned about their safety in the institutions, but

they're also concerned about patient safety, and they have to make sure that the patients come first.

So with that, Honourable deputy Speaker, I hope that the next NDP speaker can actually use their allotted 20 minutes and talk about their budget—their failed budget—that really, Manitobans are—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): I'm not going to take up my whole 20 minutes because I want to give a chance to the rest of my colleagues to stand up and talk about this budget.

So it is with great pride that I stand up today to talk about our 2025-2026 Budget and the amazing work that our government is doing to build Manitoba.

To be part of a government that listens, takes action, is a point of pride. Together, we are moving forward in uncertain times, with hope and a united sense of identity in the face of external threats. We are stepping up, answering the call for measurable growth and development. This budget has been constructed to meet the needs of our province in any situation.

As an Indigenous leader in the North, I am excited by the work being done to improve the lives of northern communities. Our progress is reflected in Thompson, which now has—now hear this—the shortest emergency-room wait times in the province. Not only that, Honourable Speaker, but we have the shortest wait-list to access a family doctor in the entire province. Last time I checked with the health authority, there was four people on the wait-list to be connected with a family doctor. Only four; that's amazing. And that's thanks to the great work of our Health Minister and our team. I commend them for that.

A mobile MRI machine is coming, bringing care closer to home for our patients and their loved ones, reducing the need to travel large distances to receive diagnostic services. And for those who travel, is necessary to access extended health care, family and resources—they will be travelling in buses that are heated. This was a huge issue under the previous government where, in Thompson, we had buses that didn't have heat, and through the winter people were freezing. They literally had blankets. But thanks to our Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor), she made sure the past legislation—that that is not allowed any longer.

So northerners were forced to endure elements inside a vehicle. Our government is keeping Manitobans

safe. Unexpected—or, unexposed to the winter winds, they can now travel warmly to get their needs met.

The construction of a Thompson regional aquatic centre promises to bring families together. It will give 55,000 people in Thompson and the North a modern, accessible facility for low-cost recreation where they can have fun and get some exercise and make great memories all year long. I was devastated when the Norplex Pool closed under the previous government. We fought tooth and nail to bring this facility back, and I'm so very, very proud of our team for investing in northern Manitoba.

We're making sure that every school in Manitoba has the supports that kids need and that no child will ever go to school—to class on an empty stomach. And you know what? We're going to make sure that no government can take that away, and it's called Nello's Law.

Building in the North moves beyond recreation, as we move forward with a new airport for Wasagamack as part of our \$809-million investment in Manitoba's infrastructure. We are investing \$36.4 million into the Arctic Gateway so we can continue to build northern Manitoba and make sure that Manitoba is the hub of exports to other countries.

We're facing uncertain times and we need to make sure that Manitoba can deliver to other markets and we can import that way as well.

An Honourable Member: Golden Boy points north.

MLA Redhead: That's right.

We are building up both the port and the rail line to strengthen our trade corridor, access tidewater and protect northern sovereignty. Eighty-eight point—eighty—\$881 million in upgrades to Manitoba Hydro infrastructure. They—we had—we have crumbling infrastructure because the failed PC government never invested a dollar in our infrastructure. We're going to build it up. We're going to invest with that. We make sure that lights stay on for everyone in Manitoba. Build, build, build. *[interjection]*

That's right. Thank you. We have broken ground on a gold mine in partnership with northern Indigenous communities.

This government wants to make life more affordable for Manitobans by continuing the gas tax holiday with a permanent 10 per cent cut every day. We're freezing hydro bills for one year to help with monthly costs. We're increasing our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to help with property taxes.

But you know what, Honourable Speaker? I have just under a minute left, but I really want to talk about one very, very important thing that's in this—in our NDP budget, and it's allocating \$300,000 to restore preventative foot-care for northern Manitoba. The previous PC government amputated that program; we're here to restore it for all northerners. This is something that, as MLA, I have fought alongside for a—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hour being 5 o'clock, when this matter's next before the House, the honourable member will have 13 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 27, 2025

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