



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*



Vol. LXXIX No. 37 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, April 7, 2025

ISSN 0542-5492

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
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
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	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 7, 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 we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

Orders of the day?

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Introduction of New Member

The Speaker: And the first order of business for today is: I have a document from Elections Manitoba to table and I will do that.

Pleased to inform the House that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a letter declaring the election of Shannon Corbett as member of this Assembly, representing the constituency of Transcona, and I hereby table the notice of the return of the member elected.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, I have the honour of introducing to you Shannon Corbett, the new member for the constituency of Transcona, who has taken the oath, signed the roll and now claims her right to take her seat.

The Speaker: On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and I wish you well in your parliamentary career.

Routine proceedings. Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: And I have a report to table. It's the—I'll be tabling the annual report from the Manitoba Ombudsman in accordance with section 42 of The Ombudsman Act; subsection 58(1) of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; subsection 37(1) of The Personal Health Information Act; and subsection 29.2(1) of The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. I'm tabling the Ombudsman Annual Report for the reporting period of April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Further tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tanya Sagar

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): It's a rare joy to stand in this Chamber and highlight not only a high-achieving constituent, but someone with whom I've shared the same humble beginnings. Today, we are joined in the gallery by Tanya Sagar.

Tanya and I shared the same small school hallways, the same roundabout street in childhood. We were small kids with big dreams, raised in a neighbourhood where culture lived in our kitchens, danced in our living rooms and echoed in the footsteps that we took to school, Honourable Speaker.

To see Tanya now, standing tall as a business owner, an artist, a cultural force, and a full-circle moment, this is—this is a full-circle moment that I hold with pride. Just over a week ago, she opened Almarhi Collection, a luxury East Indian ethnic-wear boutique that blends tradition with bold, contemporary elegance.

Honourable Speaker, you'll notice that I chose to bring their work into the Chamber today.

Though Almarhi Collection is more than just a business, it's just one part of a love letter to the Sagar family's roots. For Tanya, this began with fabric—or this did not begin with fabric, but with movement. Since 2012, she has poured her soul into dance: performing, choreographing and mentoring at the Indian pavilion during Folklorama.

Every step of hers has told a story, so I am grateful that today we can share hers. With Almarhi Collection, she threads that same storytelling into each garment, inviting Manitobans to wear who they are with pride. Her work uplifts not only South Asian communities but all who have ever searched for themselves in the seams of something beautiful. Tanya is a light for young women of colour, for artists, for changemakers and for every child growing up where we once did, wondering what's possible.

Honourable Speaker, with that I invite my colleagues to join us in congratulating Tanya and her team on Almarhi Collection's successful launch into the north Winnipeg community.

* (13:40)

Dylan Collins

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I rise today to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary achievement of a constituent of Selkirk, Dylan Collins.

Dylan made history as the first Manitoba on Special Olympics Team Canada to win a medal at the world winter games in Turin, Italy. I am pleased to acknowledge Dylan, his mother Rachel Collins and his alpine coach, Ron Struch, who are here in the gallery today.

Dylan earned two gold medals and one silver for alpine skiing, showcasing not only his incredible talent on the slopes, but also his dedication and determination as an athlete. His victory at the world winter games was a proud moment for our province as it serves as an inspiration to all who hear his story.

Dylan spent countless hours training at Springhill sports park. Who could have imagined back then that those early training days would lead to Olympic victory. Very few have the honour of representing Canada at the world games, and not only did Dylan do just that, he came home an Olympic medalist.

From the humble beginnings at Springhill to the world stage at the winter games in Turin, Italy, Dylan has proven time and time again, there is nothing he cannot do. Beyond the medals, Dylan embodies the true spirit of the Special Olympics: inclusivity, perseverance and community. He stands as a shining example of what can be accomplished when we support and encourage each other to reach our full potential.

Today, I'm deeply honoured to stand here and celebrate Dylan Collins for his remarkable achievement, his hard work and the pride he brings to Manitoba.

Let's all join together congratulating Dylan for this historic win.

Thank you.

Théâtre Cercle Molière 100th Anniversary

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Honourable Speaker, the great French playwright Molière once famously said: Je suis le dieu le plus puissant des dieux, Absolu sur la terre, absolu dans les cieux ; Dans les eaux, dans les airs, mon pouvoir est suprême : En un mot, je suis l'Amour même.

Translation

I am the most powerful of the gods, absolute on earth, absolute in the heavens; in the waters, in the air, my power is supreme: in a word, I am love itself.

English

And speaking of l'amour [*love*], Honourable Speaker, we happen to passionately love our theatre in St. Boniface to the point where we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of Le Théâtre du Cercle Molière, which happens to be the oldest theatre company in Canada across all 10 provinces and three territories, both English and French combined. Not bad.

Depuis la fondation du TCM en 1925, le théâtre s'est distingué comme une troupe de théâtre accomplie et talentueuse. Le TCM a performé à travers le pays, entreprenant une tournée dans l'Ouest canadien en 1958 et devenant la première troupe non professionnelle à présenter une pièce au Centre national des Arts en 1970.

Le Théâtre Cercle Molière est incroyablement fier de son patrimoine et, de 1968 à 2012, s'est concentré presque entièrement sur les histoires manitobaines et francophones, comme lorsqu'il a présenté exclusivement des spectacles franco-manitobains en 1986 et 2000.

Sans le TCM et ses productions théâtrales incroyables, Saint-Boniface et la communauté franco-manitobaine ne seraient pas ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui. Dirigé par leur incroyable directrice artistique, Geneviève Pelletier, qui est aussi métisse, j'aimerais saisir cette occasion pour la remercier, ainsi que le personnel, les artistes et les bénévoles du Cercle Molière pour leur dévouement aux arts, à la communauté franco-manitobaine, à la culture à travers notre belle province et ce grand pays que nous appelons le Canada.

Translation

Since its founding in 1925, TCM has distinguished itself as an accomplished and talented theatre company. MCT has performed across the country, touring Western Canada in 1958 and becoming the first non-professional company to present a play at the National Arts Centre in 1970.

Le Théâtre Cercle Molière is incredibly proud of its heritage and, from 1968 to 2012, has focused almost entirely on Manitoba and Francophone stories, as when it presented exclusively Franco-Manitoban shows in 1986 and 2000.

Without the TCM and its incredible theatrical productions, St. Boniface and the Franco-Manitoban community would not be what they are today. The TCM is led by its incredible artistic director, Geneviève Pelletier, who is also Métis, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her, as well as the staff, artists and volunteers of Le Cercle Molière for their dedication to the arts, to the Franco-Manitoban community, and to culture throughout our beautiful province and this great country we call Canada.

English

I wish le TCM another hundred years of continued artistic excellence, and I ask that the House join me in celebrating the accomplishments and the hundredth anniversary of Le Théâtre Cercle Molière. Longue vie au Théâtre Cercle Molière et bonne anniversaire.

Translation:

Long live Le Théâtre Cercle Molière and happy anniversary.

Green Shirt Day

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Today, Canadians come together to recognize Green Shirt Day, a day that honours the legacy of Logan Boulet, a young hockey player who selflessly gave the gift of life through organ donation following the tragic Humboldt Broncos bus crash in 2018.

Logan had spoken with his family about his decision to become an organ donor, and because of that courageous choice, he saved six lives. His story touched hearts across the country and inspired what is now known as the Logan Boulet effect, a surge in Canadians registering as organ donors in his memory.

As news spread of the organ donation by this young hockey player, it is estimated that almost

150,000 people registered to become organ donors in the days and weeks that followed. To date, this is the largest number of Canadians registering to become donors in Canadian history.

Green Shirt Day is about more than just wearing a colour; it's about sparking conversations, raising awareness and encouraging action. In Canada, over 4,000 people are currently waiting for a life-saving transplant. Tragically, many will not receive one in time. But that can change if more of us step up and register.

In Canada, almost 90 per cent of people say they support organ donation, but only 32 per cent have actually registered their intent to donate. Though donation rates have improved over the last 10 years, there is more to be done as approximately 250 Canadians die annually waiting for an organ transplant.

Becoming an organ donor is one of the most meaningful decisions you can make. One donor can save up to eight lives and improve the lives of 75 more through tissue donation.

In Manitoba, it only takes two minutes to register your intent to become an organ donor. Visit signupforlife.ca and enter your name, health number and date of birth and answer a few quick questions—that's it. I'd like to thank Transplant Manitoba, the Transplant Wellness Centre at HSC and all those who have given the gift of life.

And today, I encourage all Manitobans to honour Logan's legacy and that of every other organ donor by having the conversation, making your wishes known and registering as an organ donor.

New Schools for Waverley

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): In Waverley, one of the fastest growing areas in Manitoba, families were looking for real investments in education. And now, in Budget 2025, thanks to our fantastic Minister of Education, our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our team writ large, our government is delivering two brand new schools: one in Bridgwater and one in Prairie Pointe.

And these schools mean kids will be able to learn in their own neighbourhoods, with their friends and classmates, in modern, inclusive environments that really reflect the size and the spirits of the community.

And, you know, I know the members opposite talked a lot about building schools over their time in government. They made announcements, they took some photos, but there was no real plan to follow

through. And it honestly read a little bit like my fantasy baseball group chat, to be honest: lots of talk at the start of the season, full of bold strategies, big proposals; and then by mid-June, you know, half the guys haven't set a lineup and someone's still starting a closer who retired in spring training. But I digress. The point is that there was big energy and there was zero execution.

So while I'm catching up on the slang my kids throw around at the same time, they tell me that the members opposite racked up some serious negative aura points. And I don't know what that fully means, to be honest, but I'm told it's not great.

So our government is stepping up and changing that. You know, these new schools will provide space for diverse programming, real community connection, new child-care spaces for hard-working families and even French language learning.

You know, c'est essentiel. Chaque enfant mérite un endroit moderne et accueillant pour apprendre, dans la langue de leur choix et dans leur propre quartier.

Translation

It is essential. Every child deserves a modern, welcoming place to learn, in the language of their choice and in their own neighbourhood.

English

And this is what building one Manitoba looks like.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Prior to oral questions, the MLA for Waverley, as the special envoy for military affairs, has distributed Vimy Ridge Memorial lapel pins in advance of Vimy Ridge Day, which is on April 9, for members to wear if they so choose.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crime and Public Safety Timeline for Bail Reform

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'd like to congratulate and welcome Dylan and Ms. Sagar into the gallery today, and at this time I'd also like to say thank you and congratulations to Mr. Shawn Nason for—and his family for putting the—his name forward to run in the Transcona by-election. At this time, I'd like to, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative team, welcome the new

MLA for Transcona to the Chamber as well, Honourable Speaker.

So crime's getting worse. Manitobans are absolutely fed up, Honourable Speaker. The Justice Minister's catch-and-release program is failing Manitobans.

* (13:50)

Will the Premier, today, admit that he was wrong and has broken his promise to Manitobans to reform the bail system in the first 100 days, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, negative aura points, for sure, on that side of the House, I would say. The skibidi opposition has no game, and it's the sigma government that's making real change for people right across Manitoba.

I do want to also add my congratulations to Dylan and to say that your achievement's amazing. That hardware looks beautiful. So bravo once again on all your hard work.

And congratulations to our newest colleague, the member for Transcona (MLA Corbett). She set a goal. She wasn't going to let anyone outwork her. And if that campaign was any prediction, she's going to be one of the hardest working members in this Legislative Assembly.

Put simply, we've got the best Justice Minister in the country. He's doing important work, bringing together law enforcement, bringing together community and repairing the damage of years of PC cuts.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, and this is no slight to the new member from Transcona, but to say that she's going to be the hardest working MLA on that side of the bench is not a very tall bar.

Honourable Speaker, we know that bail reform in the 2023 election was top of mind for Manitobans. I quote something that the Premier said: There is no need to wait for other levels of government to take action here; we can implement bail reform at the provincial level. End quote.

Honourable Speaker, did the Premier say this, or did he not?

Mr. Kinew: The front-runner in their leadership contest says the PC MLAs are lazy. We come here every day—half of them never even get up in question period. And they're getting paid six figures for that.

Why don't we ever see a question from Turtle Mountain or Swan River or Riding Mountain?

Again, you want to talk about work ethic? The new member for Transcona (MLA Corbett) will show you the blue-collar work ethic that the PC MLAs need to learn all about.

In the meantime, we're taking action at the provincial level to make our streets safer. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) has brought together law enforcement and community leaders around a five-point plan that the National Police Federation has said is leading the country.

At the same time, I brought the other premiers together to call on the Prime Minister and federal leaders to do their part to make our communities safer.

That's how we'll get it done: by working together.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, as usual, Honourable Speaker, we see no answers coming from this Premier. He actually said it on September 20 of 2023. And now, just the other day, the Justice Minister says, and I quote: that this member is so out of touch, it is unbelievable. This member has no concept of the differentiation between what we can do in this province and what is a responsibility of the federal government. End quote.

For once, Honourable Speaker, I agree with this Justice Minister. I just wish that him and his Premier would get together and actually have a conversation about actually how to do bail reform, because this Premier is absolutely out of touch.

Will the Premier just stand in his place today and apologize to the Manitobans who he misled in the 2023 election, Honourable Speaker?

Mr. Kinew: Member opposite should apologize to the House for that terrible question. Nobody knows what he's talking about. Nobody on his side of the House even knows what he's talking about.

So let's talk a little bit about the work that our government is doing. Again, the Minister of Justice, a leader across the country. That's not according to him. That's not even according to the hardest working member in showbiz here, the member of Transcona. That's according to the National Police Federation, who are encouraging other provinces to follow Manitoba's lead when it comes to doing things, by the way, that the PCs never did during their time in office.

At the same time, I want to table for the House this letter that we convened the other premiers to write on behalf of the family of Kellie Verwey, calling on the Prime Minister and federal leaders to take action.

So again, we're not making excuses here like the PCs did for seven and a half years. We're taking action within our province's borders, and we're taking action at the federal level, too. We're going to make our streets safer by working together with everyone and working hard for you.

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

Winnipeg Transit Safety Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, this Premier will say one thing to get elected and then, once elected, reverse his course. If he would just stand up and actually apologize.

I quote: We'll stop violent crime, end quote.

That was the bold statement made by this NDP government in their Throne Speech. Yet, less than one week ago, a young person using Transit was swarmed, stabbed and robbed using Winnipeg Transit. Union leaders have been describing Transit as the, I quote, Wild West. It has gotten so bad that this Premier won't even take public transportation, Honourable Speaker. This Premier told Manitobans he had all the solutions.

When will this Premier offer more than sound bites and apologize for failing the victim of this heinous crime, Honourable Speaker?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Well, you know what the PCs do at election time: they'll say anything to not get elected, which is actually very, very shameful. And the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan) is doing the same thing right now in their leadership contest. He's saying anything; he's all things to all people. He's one thing in rural Manitoba one day; he's another thing inside the Perimeter the next day; and he's still headed for defeat after all of that.

I'm interested about Wally. He's the one that I haven't dominated in QP yet, so bring him on; let's see what Wallay [*phonetic*] has to bring when it comes to the members opposite.

But when it comes to making Manitoba safer, we know what it takes. It takes working with people. It takes working with law enforcement, different levels of government, including the municipal leaders, and

that's exactly what we're doing. I can tell you that earlier today, the Minister of Justice was meeting with the mayor on some of these very important public safety issues.

At the same time, I'm working with federal leaders on all sides who have a chance to win this upcoming election, and it's through collaboration and working together that we'll make Manitoba safe.

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

Mr. Ewasko: There's nothing new with you-know-who, the MLA for Fort Rouge, Honourable Speaker. More bullying tactics, and he said it himself: he likes to dominate people. He likes to be the tough guy in the room.

We on this side of the House, Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —are highlighting the violence occurring on Winnipeg Transit. The Premier has dismissed the victims. The Premier has dismissed transit leadership. Matter of fact, Honourable Speaker, the union said 24 safety incidents, the most of any month since the union began tracking, occurred this past February. And who's in charge? Who's in charge? The Kinew government is in charge.

To what level of violence must it reach, Honourable Speaker, in Transit, before this Premier wakes up to their failed reality of this hug-a-thug approach and apologize to Manitobans yet again, or at least for the first time.

Mr. Kinew: The members opposite don't want to actually solve crime. They want to run on it. And that's why two times in a row, two terms, seven and a half years in government, they did absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. We lost 55 police officers in the City of Winnipeg because of cuts that they made.

Transit funding was also cut under Brian Pallister; and Heather Stefanson was just a complete disaster during his time—her time in the premier's chair. Everybody in Manitoba knows that.

So, again, they want to come after losing government and criticize us. Meanwhile, go ahead. Haters are going to hate. Do your thing, PCs. We'll be there at the table working with municipal leaders, working with labour leaders, working with federal leaders, working for you. Working together is how we make Manitoba safer.

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

Mr. Ewasko: Honourable Speaker, the Premier doesn't seem to comprehend the fact that a person, an individual riding on Transit, getting stabbed in the upper body and having to get a chest seal applied—a chest seal applied—that this is a serious question that he is not taking seriously. He is turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the problems that his government is taking, or—and has put into place over the last 18 months.

The Premier is unwilling to actually make our community safer whilst he's busy taking private jets and armoured limos instead of actual public transportation, Honourable Speaker.

So today, will he stand in his place and finally apologize for a—misleading Manitobans that crime is going to get better under this Kinew government, which it hasn't; it's only gotten worse, Honourable Speaker? Stand up and apologize today.

* (14:00)

Mr. Kinew: You know, there are blind people in Manitoba who use public transportation. There are deaf people in Manitoba who use public transportation. And on this side of the House, we're working for everybody, including those folks who need accessibility, accommodations in order to use public transportation.

And now, when it comes to making the streets safer, you know what we do while the members opposite chirp and yap and complain and cash six-figure cheques for not even asking a simple question in one entire session of the Legislature? We increase funding for law enforcement. We hired more police officers. We increased funding for the City of Winnipeg, including Winnipeg Transit, after years of cuts and freezes under the members opposite. *[interjection]*

You hear that voice? It's the voice of irrelevant MLAs who failed during two times in office and can't stand the chance to see the Manitoba NDP doing a great job for you, the wonderful people of Manitoba.

University of Winnipeg Funding Challenges

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, in Manitoba there is a financial crisis facing post-secondary institutions. They have been forced to cut millions from their operating budgets, while face millions—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Perchotte: —upon millions in financial losses. This crisis was predictable and preventable.

The University of Winnipeg's president has been sounding the alarm. They may even reach a deficit of \$18 million. I table the article. They need help now.

When is this minister going to address the financial crisis at Manitoba's second largest university?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I'm actually impressed that he can get up and ask that question with a straight face. After the cuts and the absolute destruction that that administration—the former PC government—put upon post-secondaries. I'm impressed, frankly, that he can answer with a straight face. And has he bothered to ask the colleagues on any side around him about what they did for post-secondary when they were in charge?

I can tell you what I know they didn't do. They didn't increase funding. They didn't stay out of the internal operations of institutions. And they sure didn't help students.

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

Mr. Perchotte: The minister is not taking this crisis seriously. The U of W president warns of possible financial 'extendency', a financial crisis so bad the university may need to lay off tenured professors while canceling more programs and services. I table that article.

It is the minister's duty to protect the needs of Manitobans and the 10,000 students enrolled in programs and courses at the U of W.

Is this minister finally going to stand up—step up and ensure students can continue their education in a financially sound institution, or is she content sitting back and watching this financial crisis decimate the second largest university in our province?

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, I'd be happy to walk the member opposite across—walk him through what institutional autonomy means, and who's ultimately responsible for the decisions being made at post-secondary institutions. I know it's complicated, but I can absolutely walk you through it.

Let's look at the PC record on funding to the University of Winnipeg: 2017–twenty-seven–'18: zero, so that's a cut with inflation; 2018–2019: negative 0.9 per cent, so that's a cut any way you slice it; '19–20: 1 per cent—minus 1 per cent, another cut;

'20–21: another minus 1; '21–22: minus 0.8 per cent, another cut; '22–23: 0.1 per cent cut.

So the PCs, in their time—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Perchotte: The University of Winnipeg needs real financial support. Manitoba's future depends on it.

Professor Chris Wiebe from the U of W is begging the government for help. He further states, and I table, quote: With inflation increase of 2.7 per cent, a 2 per cent increase of provincial funding is effectively a cut. Strike one. The loss of international students has led to many universities being millions in debt. Strike two. The Province has decided that K-to-8 teachers do not need math or science. Strike 3. What is clear is that this is not what we voted for, he says.

Will the minister listen to Professor Wiebe, change course and properly fund the U of W and post-secondary institutions today?

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'd just remind members to make sure they direct their comments, questions, answers through the Chair.

MLA Cable: Honourable Speaker, we have increased funding for post-secondaries across the board. We continue to work with all of our partners; we'll continue to work with folks at the University of Winnipeg to ensure that that institution stays strong.

And, once again, I take no lessons from the members on the other side.

Violence at Thompson General Hospital Request for Increased Security Measures

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I will table a deeply troubling email I received last week from a nurse at Thompson General Hospital. In the past year, staff have filed 39 safety concern reports about daily violence, and RCMP have responded to 557 calls at the hospital.

The nurse writes: Fights are breaking out in the waiting room and front door. Nursing staff are being abused physically, verbally, emotionally and sexually on a regular basis. The NRHA is aware of these assaults and, in staff's opinion, is ignoring our pleas to offer safer security options, including increased security on-site and RCMP panic buttons. We need help ASAP.

How many more reports, assaults and RCMP calls does this minister need before taking action to protect front-line health-care workers?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank that front-line health-care worker for reaching out to share their concerns. My office has already been in touch with that member, and I want to reassure them that we're taking their concerns very seriously.

I do think it's important to note that for seven and half years, the previous PC government took less than no action to address the safety and security concerns across sites in our province.

Our government has been listening to front-line health-care workers. We were at Thompson for a listening tour and we've taken real action to make sure that the folks in the front lines there and across the province are safer.

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

Mrs. Cook: MNU president, Darlene Jackson, told the media that this government's current efforts to improve security at Thompson General Hospital, quote, really have no merit on making the facility safer.

On Christmas Eve, a gunman entered the chapel at Thompson General Hospital, armed with a .22-calibre rifle. He pointed the weapon at staff and fired a shot through a window before he was disarmed.

Despite calls from across the province, the NDP refuses to say if weapon-detection systems like those at HSC will be expanded to hospitals outside of Winnipeg.

Will the Minister of Health commit today to installing real security measures, including weapon screening and panic buttons, at Thompson General Hospital?

MLA Asagwara: Our government has taken real action to address the safety and security concerns at Thompson General Hospital and at sites across the province.

It's important to remember that that member opposite and members on that side of the House sat for over two years with legislation that would've enabled them to hire and train institutional safety officers at Thompson, and they did nothing. Our government came into power and realized that, even though the front lines had brought those ideas forward, legislation had been passed, that member opposite sat on her hands and did absolutely nothing.

Our government is making sure that Thompson General Hospital has institutional safety officers on site. They're working in partnership to enhance other safety and security measures.

And I want to thank the front-line staff and those who intervened when incidents had happened to make sure that nobody was harmed. We take these concerns—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Cook: I will quote from the same email again: Will it take someone to be brutally attacked on the job before the government and the NRHA do significant security changes in the hospital?

And, quote: I am, as well as my colleagues, afraid to bring forward these concerns due to repercussions or retaliation by the NRHA management. But I want myself, as well as my co-workers, but most importantly I want my patients to be able to access a safe health-care environment away from violence.

Front-line health-care workers in Thompson are literally begging for protection.

Will the minister step up and take action, or will they wait until there's a tragedy on their hands?

MLA Asagwara: Our government has been taking action from day one; our government responded immediately to that concern, and our government is going to continue to take further steps to make sure that folks are safer at Thompson General Hospital and across sites in this province.

* (14:10)

Now, that member opposite has zero credibility on this issue. That member opposite has yet to apologize to the nurses and the front-line health-care professionals that she turned her back on for seven and a half years. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Ewasko) and the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will quit hollering back and forth.

The Leader of the Official Opposition, the Speaker's still standing and still speaking, so you can quit grinning and laughing.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition heckles me because he knows it's his fault that safety and security was not addressed for

seven and a half years under the previous government. That member sat in his place while they were in office and did nothing to keep people safe. And that's why that member heckles me today.

We're taking real action for the front lines, and that member still doesn't take the safety of health-care workers seriously. He should stand up and apologize for seven and a half years of mistreating health-care workers and making health care less safe.

Violent Inmate at Brandon Correctional Centre Family Inquiry into Deaths

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Honourable Speaker, the death sentence was abolished in 1962, some 63 years ago. In less than one year in office, the NDP reversed the Supreme Court decision and two men have received the death sentence at the Brandon Correctional Centre.

Under this minister's watch, you can stab somebody or mutilate them with a machete, and you're released within hours. But breach a non-communication order and you're sentenced to death. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Balcaen: Does the Minister of Justice think his priorities are proportional?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Honourable Speaker, this is the kind of inflammatory language that doesn't serve Manitobans, certainly doesn't serve those who are serving sentences in our institutions.

What I will say, Honourable Speaker, is that the PCs, of course, left us with huge vacancies across the system and specifically at BCC, at the Brandon Correctional Centre.

Of course, we're working very closely to ensure that we can staff up and we can ensure that inmates have a safe place to be.

But, honestly, Honourable Speaker, it is sickening for the member opposite to bring that kind of language here to this House, to this Chamber. It makes a mockery of a very important issue, and that is the safety of inmates across our system.

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

Mr. Balcaen: This Minister of Justice needs a wake-up call. His disregard for Manitoba families is, quite frankly, disgusting and unbecoming.

Under his watch, one inmate has been charged with murder twice. I want to be clear: an individual serving time in the Brandon Correctional Centre has been charged in two separate assaults where two other inmates have died. The minister has, to date, refused to answer correspondence from at least one of the families.

And I table the letter the minister has so far ignored and ask why he refuses to answer the family's questions, and will he now, today, since I provided a fresh copy of those questions?

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, our department is in contact with the family. And it's important to ensure that victims of crime, in any circumstance, are well taken care of and communicated with. It's an important part of our public safety strategy, and it's something that we're committed to as a government.

With regard to the specific concern around Brandon correctional facility, we've hired 150 new corrections workers. We're staffing up, as I said, not just at Brandon correctionals, but also at facilities across the province, including right here in the city of Winnipeg with our Youth Centre, and ensuring that the right resources are in place to support those youth who need to make good choices, and we want to support them in making those good choices. That's the kind of work our government has committed to.

Members opposite had seven and a half years—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

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

Mr. Balcaen: It gets worse, Honourable Speaker. It took the John Howard Society's intervention to get this minister to comment. And when he did bother to respond, he disregarded the two men that have died under his watch and patted himself on the back. And I table that article.

The minister doesn't have time to answer the questions of a family still struggling to understand how the system failed their loved one. A violent inmate was charged with two separate assaults a couple of months apart. The minister is so quiet on this file, I have to assume that he's in protective custody; otherwise, if he's sentenced, he'll end up in death.

Why is he refusing to reply to these families?

Mr. Wiebe: Once again, member opposite can come up with clever one-liners, but what we're going to do is get to the root causes of crime or root causes of

challenges that folks are facing across our province and address the crime that folks are feeling in community.

Just to be clear, Honourable Speaker, we spoke with the family just on Friday, and we're committed to working with victims of crime; again, not just in this case but for all victims of crime across this province.

And with regards to our correction centres, these are important jobs that our corrections workers do. And they—for quite frankly, they were disrespected under the previous government. We're taking a different approach; we're hiring up, and we're also listening and working with our corrections officers all across this province.

Victoria Beach Cottage Owners Education Property Tax Increase Concerns

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, Victoria Beach residents and cottage owners have been handed a \$3-million school tax increase by this NDP government and the Lord Selkirk School Division. That's a 26.6 per cent increase from 2024.

A municipal councillor said: There is reasonable and then there is unreasonable; such a drastic increase falls into the latter. I table this for the minister.

Can the minister explain why he feels doubling taxes on Victoria Beach residents is necessary, and does he still defend these double-digit tax increases?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans know they can count on our government to lower their costs.

Our last budget brought in 25 new ways for Manitobans to save. Manitobans know that we're doing the important work every day of helping them to reduce their costs. And that's very different than what they experienced for seven and a half years under the members opposite, who worked to make life more expensive, again with creative ways of raising hydro rates, with increased costs for renters. On and on and on, they made life more expensive.

We're bringing forward a significant package of affordability measures to keep costs low, including 10 per cent permanent cut to the gas tax. We're bringing in free park passes for a year, a \$1,600 homeowner affordability rebate—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Perhaps the minister may have forgotten his own budget, because he got rid of the rebate for cottage owners across this province.

Statistics Canada indicates there are around 55 school-aged students in the RM of Victoria Beach. This means residents are paying upwards of \$50,000 per student every year. This is more than triple what has been in the past on the backs of middle-class Manitobans.

This is not sustainable. Manitobans are financially stretched and cannot take these property tax increases that this NDP has created anymore.

What is the minister's plan to ensure that cottage owners are not on the hook for this NDP government's poor fiscal decisions?

MLA Sala: Our plan, Honourable Speaker, is to keep doing the important work of lowering costs for Manitobans.

Our budget made home ownership more affordable. It makes energy more affordable. It makes child care more affordable. It makes rental housing more affordable. It makes home security more affordable. And on and on and on.

We are doing that important work because this team—this government—recognizes the challenges that Manitobans continue to face. And that's why every day we come up with new ways to help reduce their costs. Our last budget was focused on making life more affordable while we invest in better health care, invest in schools. Making life better for Manitobans, that's what Manitobans can count on us to do.

They made life more expensive for seven and a half years; we're going to keep making it cheaper.

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

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, numbers don't lie, so let me give some facts onto the record for this minister.

The municipal data indicates if a seasonal resident paid \$641 in school taxes on an average property last year, their 2025 tax bill will be \$1,621. That is more than double last year's tax bill, Honourable Speaker.

These are middle-class Manitobans that own these cottage properties. The minister is enabling double-digit tax increases. He's failing to properly fund education. The minister is failing to provide meaningful tax relief for property owners across this province.

Does this minister think it's okay to double someone's property taxes this year?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, it's hard to believe that the members opposite would stand up and accuse us of underfunding education after seven and a half years of making cuts to our school system, leaving kids behind, because they weren't willing to make the investments needed to make sure kids had what they need to grow and succeed.

Our government is making investments under the leadership of this incredible Minister of Education and this Premier (Mr. Kinew). Our team is focused on making sure divisions have what they need. And while we're doing that, we're reducing the costs of school taxes with a \$1,600 homeowner affordability rebate, something they never did.

* (14:20)

We're saving money for more Manitobans and Manitobans can count on us to get the job done.

Vaccine for Shingles Dementia Prevention Study

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): One of the largest studies to date suggests that vaccination against the painful, blistering rash caused by shingles virus could significantly reduce the risk of people developing dementia.

Given this new groundbreaking information, who has the government since consulted with to provide Manitobans assurance that they are taking this new information into account?

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

Like that member and many other folks, saw that that study—the summary of that study was released. It's pretty interesting and really important data for us to assess here in Manitoba. I know that other jurisdictions are also taking a look at that research and getting a better understanding of how one treatment may impact the disease pathways of others.

So this is a really important area that our government is taking a look at, and we've got our officials evaluating that research. And we look forward to also seeing what other jurisdictions learn as they do their own investigating into this research as well.

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

MLA Lamoureux: Currently, over 20,000 Manitobans have been diagnosed with dementia and this number is growing rapidly. It's expected to double by 2050.

What this means is the shingles vaccine not only prevents Manitobans from contracting a painful disease, but could also prevent up to 8,000 Manitobans from developing dementia.

Does the government recognize the urgency to roll out these vaccinations sooner rather than later?

MLA Asagwara: Again, really appreciate that important question from the member for Tyndall Park.

Our government is and has directed—I have directed our officials to take a look at this study and this research. Certainly, we recognize that more and more Manitobans are affected by dementia. I think there's probably many of us in this Chamber who have some sort of connection to that disease and understand how it affects families and whole communities.

On this side of the House, we're taking steps to strengthen the services for families and those who rely on that kind of health care and the supports that are available in our province. For seven and a half years the previous PC government did nothing to make sure that Manitobans and their families who need access to these services would have them.

Our government's taking a different approach and our government believes in science, so we'll be taking a look at that data as well.

The Speaker: Time has expired.

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

MLA Lamoureux: Our province does not track the number of people who have obtained the shingles vaccine at their own expense. We do not track the number of people who are hospitalized with shingles and we do not begin the complicated process of diagnosing for dementia until after a person begins to display symptoms.

Will the minister commit to begin tracking these statistics to ensure the best quality of care for Manitobans?

MLA Asagwara: I think that's a really interesting question; I really do, and I think it's something that I can take away from that member and take some looking at. I think it's important.

I will say that, specific to diagnosing dementia, the ways in which folks can get that diagnosis, the

understanding of how symptoms present can be quite complex, can be very nuanced, and so I think that that area in particular might take a bit more digging into to better understand the options there.

But I do want to note that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) started heckling before I even stood up to answer the question. And I think it shows, Honourable Speaker, the lack of seriousness on that side of the House, the lack of seriousness from the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to health-care issues that affect Manitobans.

And it's really disheartening to see that, seven and a half years, that member cut health care and didn't treat families with respect, and he continues to do that even in opposition.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Investment in Tourism Travel Manitoba Funding

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, after years of cuts to our tourism industry, the previous PC government failed to realize Manitoba's potential as an international tourist destination and failed to boost our local economy.

But we know that tourism contributes hundreds of millions of dollars in provincial tax revenues and will help us build one Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism please update the House on how our government is bringing more tourism to Manitoba?

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I thank my colleague from McPhillips for the question.

Tourism in Manitoba has been incredible and seen incredible growth over this past year. Every day, more tourists are visiting Manitoba to enjoy our beautiful province, rich history and world-class hospitality. Now our government is stepping up to invest an additional \$4.5 million to Travel Manitoba to boost our local economy, support local businesses and create good jobs for Manitobans.

Manitobans are proud of our incredible province and our country. This investment will strengthen our economy as we work together to build one Manitoba and invite the world to visit the true north, strong and free.

Armed Robbery Near MacGregor Safety Concerns for Rural Manitoba

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): This Minister of Justice is failing Manitobans on community safety, and his inaction is putting lives at risk.

Over the weekend in MacGregor, an armed gang of criminals stormed rural properties, raiding yards with what appeared to be assault rifles. We know this because homeowners released security footage: footage that exposes the minister's complete failure to protect Manitobans.

So this minister's step one of so-called public safety plan was letting armed thugs terrorize rural families. What's step two—more excuses?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Member's just wrong, Honourable Speaker. Our plan is about public safety and taking that in a holistic approach, and that means partnering with other departments, ensuring that we're getting to the root causes, but also increasing the funding that we have in order to address crime and safety in our communities across the province right now.

That means, in our department, a 9.2 per cent increase of funding across the board, and specifically funding for local law enforcement. That's the partnership that was missing under the previous government.

We're taking a different approach. We're going to continue to work with law enforcement, we're going to continue to work with community partners and we're going to make our province safer.

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

Ms. Byram: Honourable Speaker, I table surveillance photos so the minister can see exactly what his inaction looks like. This is not a hypothetical crisis. This is real. It is happening right now in rural Manitoba.

Armed criminals are running wild, yet the NDP's response has been weak at best. We've heard about cameras. We've heard about more mobile police in Winnipeg. But what about constituents in Agassiz, the people in rural Manitoba who are living in fear every single night?

Minister, will you stop ignoring rural communities and start protecting them?

The Speaker: And I, once again, would remind members to make sure they direct their questions through the Chair.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, as I said, Honourable Speaker, the work has started by going across the province, listening to communities. And not only just listening, but then finding those initiatives that can really make a difference.

For instance, in the community of Swan River, where we identified that a special investigation section could be established in partnership with rural municipalities, in partnership with the RCMP, and we provided the additional funding to ensure that that can be stood up.

But that extends across the province. As I said, we've been consulting with communities across the province and we understand that good ideas come from the grassroots, they come from community. And when they have a provincial government that will step up, not just ignore them like the PCs did for seven and a half years, we can see a safer province.

That's what we're committed to and that's what our government is working on.

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

Ms. Byram: This minister needs to come clean with Manitobans because, right now, he has no plan for rural communities.

A truckload of criminals, armed with what appear to be assault rifles, was sweeping through shops and garages. If this was happening in Concordia, would the minister sit on his hands? Of course not.

So why is he ignoring the fact that this is happening right now in Agassiz? Why is the minister not worried about rural Manitobans and considers them second-class citizens in your public safety plan?

Will this minister act now or are you waiting for a tragedy to happen?

The Speaker: Order, please.

Once again, I must ask the members to direct their questions and answers through the Chair.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, again, Honourable Speaker: a 28 per cent increase in last year's budget; an escalator going forward to support local law enforcement. But we're going a step further, Honourable Speaker.

The documents that were tabled by the member opposite show surveillance footage, and we know that this is an important part of security and safety throughout our province. That's why we've offered a security rebate to Manitobans, to partner with law enforcement, to get

the kind of data that they're looking for to solve these kinds of crimes.

* (14:30)

But, of course, they can't do that work if they're being disrespected like they were under the members opposite. They were disrespected, ignored and underfunded for seven and a half years.

We're taking a different approach, working with community, working with individuals and working with law enforcement to make our province safer.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses magnetic—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

If I could get members to take their conversations to the loge or to the hall so that I can hear what's being said, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

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

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

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

home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Marian San Drego [*phonetic*], Nhoemi Reano, Michelle Bernard and many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Further petitions?

Seeing none, House business? [*interjection*]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Government House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable minister, on House business.

MLA Schmidt: I rise to table the answers to written questions for the House.

The Speaker: Any further—the honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

MLA Schmidt: On House business?

The Speaker: On House business.

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 218, The Climate Action Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), currently standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the member for Riel (MLA Moyes), to the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle).

The Speaker: Is there leave to transfer the sponsorship of Bill 218, The Climate Action Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks, Months Act Amended), currently standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change to the member for St. Boniface.

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: It says Riel.

The Speaker: Just for everyone's information, the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change is the honourable member for Riel. When the bill was first introduced, he wasn't the minister. He is now.

So is there leave? [*Agreed*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Sixth Day of Debate)

The Speaker: In accordance with our rules, the House will now resume debate on the budget motion moved by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for La Vérendrye, who has 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the 2025 provincial budget, the tax-and-spend budget of the NDP.

While the NDP government has presented this as a responsible plan for the future, the reality is that this budget falls short of crucial areas. It fails to provide a realistic solution for economic growth, essential services and long-term fiscal responsibility.

I'm going to quickly go over the areas of importance to look and monitor as we assess this 2025 budget for Manitobans. We'll look at the projected revenue of—that this budget outlines and then move on to the spending, the unrealistic spending expectations that this

government has presented, and then outline the effects that this has on Manitobans and their tax dollars.

Let's talk about the revenue. The government has projected revenue that grows simply outpacing economic trends. They claim that the increased taxation and federal transfers will be enough to cover rising expenses that history tells us otherwise.

The economic growth assumptions that are made in this budget assumes that economic growth—that it's going to be well above the national average, despite recent economic struggles. With inflation still a challenge and businesses facing labour shortages, these expectations are not grounded in reality.

We also notice the reliance on federal transfers. The government is banking on increased federal funding, yet Ottawa has shown no indication that such transfers will continue at the levels assumed in this budget.

Manitobans need to know what is going to happen when those transfers don't arrive. Manitobans will be left with a massive shortfall. Right now, Manitoba is set to be dependent on transfer payments from Ottawa in the amount of \$7.3 billion, which is an increase of \$442 million just from last year.

Next, tax policy issues. Instead of promoting economic growth through tax relief for small business and middle-class families, this budget imposes new burdens which could drive businesses and investment to other provinces more willing to be accepting and encouraging of economic growth.

* (14:40)

Then revenue for funding education. Under our previous PC government, the education model was well on its way to becoming a fair and equitable model, which would allow education to be funded completely through general revenue and not an additional burden imposed through property taxes. This would not only provide tax relief to homeowners, but it would encourage businesses and residential development.

Spending as a result of the increased taxation in the 2025 budget is uncontrolled. While revenue projections are questionable at best, the spending side of the budget is even more concerning.

Health care. Additional spending without any reform. The government has allocated more money to health care, but without any real reforms. We will continue to see longer wait times, overworked health-care staff and patients left without proper care. Right now, in Budget 2025, we are simply throwing money at a

problem that does not have a solution presented by this government. And that's concerning. Manitoba taxpayers are additionally burdened, and they're looking for solutions in areas like health care. This government is not providing them any of those solutions.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Then the debt and deficit growth. The budget proposes an—a continued deficit with no clear path to balance. We are borrowing money today that future generations will need to pay back. And with rising interest rates, that debt becomes even more costly. Right now, we have great uncertainty on the global borrowing market, and the future of interest rates is unknown to Manitobans. But what we do know is the level and the rate of rise of our debt and the dependency on debt in this budget.

Then we see the lack of efficiency in general government operations. Instead of finding savings through efficiency and eliminating wasteful spending, this budget continues to expand government bureaucracy at the expense of front-line services.

This has tremendous impact on all Manitobans. The flaws in this budget will have real consequences on all Manitoba taxpayers. It will result in a higher cost of living. The increased taxes and fees will make life more expensive for families that are already struggling with high grocery bills, gas prices and their cost of housing.

But what's real notable is the strain that this budget—Budget '25—has on small businesses. No real incentives for economic growth; businesses may be forced to cut jobs or relocate to other provinces with more competitive tax policies.

Their answer is—their answer has been a corporate tax deferral, which will provide little to no value to the businesses, but additional liability and tax burden for the future as we need to recover from any impact that a trade war may have.

According to CFIB's latest business barometer, just this last March, small business optimism has plummeted to an all-time low. In Manitoba, the index dropped 24 points, to 30.2, reaching the lowest mark since the pandemic and greater than the 2008 financial crisis or the wake of 9/11.

We see a reduced quality of services, despite increase in spending, without any accountability. Manitobans may not see real improvements in health care, education or infrastructure. And I'd like to highlight, as the critic for Infrastructure, the issues that this

budget has on future growth of the infrastructure of our province.

Despite a \$520-million spending in highways, the NDP have failed to spend what they have budgeted last year.

Our previous government had committed to carry-over budgeting in Infrastructure, which meant that money budgeted was money spent. This government has committed to investing \$520 million into highways and infrastructure this year, when it has been identified that we have an Infrastructure deficit of \$9 billion and growing.

This budget doesn't address the concerns that are outlined by Manitobans and groups representing Manitoba industry. The government has presented a five-year capital investment plan in infrastructure, but they have not provided a budget that presents their plan.

Their current plan at current level of spending in this budget, if every single dollar budgeted in Budget '25 was spent, would take more than 10 years to fulfill their obligations. And we're greatly concerned with how they would come to the completion.

The Rivers Dam project is one of great example. Within four months, the project has increased by \$20 million. That means even less predictability in fulfilling their obligations in the five-year capital investment plan.

What we do see in Budget 2025 is additional administrative spending. So an infrastructure budget that doesn't see any real additional spending on our highways, our roads, our water or infrastructure sustainability. It does show, in certain areas, 192 per cent increase, tripling the expenditures of administration, just in operations alone. That additional spending equals more than \$10 million, when our infrastructure is crumbling and in a \$9-billion deficit position.

So we may ask what we should do instead. We need realistic revenue expectations. Base the budget on conservative economic projections, not overly optimistic ones. We need to control spending and increase efficiency, find savings in the bureaucracy, invest in efficiency measures and ensure money is going to the front-line services rather than administrative overhead.

We need pro-growth policies. We need to lower taxes for small businesses and middle-class families to encourage investment and job creation. We need a clear path forward. The tax-and-spend proposal of this NDP government in Budget 2025 is going to leave

Manitobans in a position of higher obligation to paying for future debt and deficits.

So in conclusion, the 2025 budget is not just a set of numbers; it is a statement about the priorities of our future. And Manitobans need to be mindful of what this NDP government has put forward. Right now, that future is in jeopardy because of unrealistic projections, uncontrolled spending and a lack of accountability. Manitobans deserve better.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, it's just such a privilege to be able to stand up here and talk about our Budget 2025. And I'm so proud of our Finance Minister and the Finance Minister's staff who've worked incredibly hard on these documents. They're on the front lines of our work, and I think it would do us all very well to appreciate those workers.

*(14:50)

And I'm also really proud to be a Canadian, honourable Speaker. And yesterday, we had a fantastic event on the front lawn of the Legislature. We celebrated being Canadian and that you can be really proud to also know that your government has your back here in Manitoba.

I know that—sorry. I was out in the constituency talking to folks in Kirkfield Park: the good people of Kirkfield Park, who work hard. I spoke to front-line workers who worked in health care; I spoke to hydro workers and civil servants and, you know, something about this budget in 2025—whereas the Conservatives took an adversarial approach to front-line workers, we're taking a more partnering approach with front-line workers.

We recognize the value of front-line workers; we respect front-line workers, and I feel that this budget really reflects that. And the people of Kirkfield Park [*phonetic*] can be very proud to know that their government is watching their back.

I was fortunate to be tour—to tour the Grace Hospital. And it was an opportunity to see the front line. I was with the Health Minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) at the time. And we were toured by Jon Einarson and Leah Johnston and Manuel Ortega of the Grace Hospital Foundation. And I just remember seeing the front-line nurse when we walked through the emergency room and in through the triage, and the emergency nurse, just the look in her eyes.

I mean, I worked front lines in corrections, so I understand that shift work, I understand working in a real challenging, sometimes dangerous environment. And you get to recognize the look on people's faces when you—when you're seeing them work in emergency situations. And the look on this nurse's face was of—you know, she looked like she was struggling.

But one thing she said that really struck me, honourable Speaker, was she said thank you. And I was really taken back by that. And she kind of went on and said: Thank you for showing up, thank you for coming, thank you for being here, thank you for coming to the front line and seeing what it is that we do here; because how you know if you haven't been there or seen what's going on?

This community member was a constituent and she said it meant a lot to her staff, and so, you know, our government's budget is fantastic. We're offering fair contracts, but I think beyond that, front-line health-care workers know that we're listening to them. And that's translating into more staff: 1,255 net-new health-care workers across Manitoba, and that's something that we should be really proud of, honourable Speaker.

And when you have a government that listens, it really affects morale as well, and so, you know, there's those intangibles, honourable Speaker, that we must think about as well, like staff morale.

I want to talk a little bit about Justice, and I'm really pleased to see 9.2 per cent increase to funding. And I'm really happy that we're bringing back the electronic monitoring program. Now, in that program, I remember from my time at the Remand Centre, I remember those ankle bracelets being placed on folks. And it was a deterrent for chronic auto theft, and it worked; it was doing its job.

And then, I remember when it was cut, and, you know, it was frustrating. Why would you cut something that was working? Beyond me.

But another thing that was also cut under the previous PC government was the kitchen budget and milk. I remember going into work one day and having my coffee and looking for milk, and they said, we don't have milk here anymore; we have powdered milk. Which, I don't know if you've ever tried powdered milk, but it's pretty gross, in my opinion.

They cut programming and they left kids twiddling their thumbs in—basically in gangster university, when you're in jail. You're in the worst place in the world. And just to take awake basic things like, you know,

good food, a decent meal, milk. You know, these folks have everything taken away from them in their life, and you've got to go and take one enjoyment, which could be a good meal.

And staff also ate the meals; they eat the meals in the facilities too, so that also goes into morale. And so I'm pleased to see in our budget that we've increased funding and whereas, you know, PCs froze funding for police. And I remember the lineups outside the Remand Centre getting longer and longer and—under their failed government—and it was very frustrating.

But speaking of food: in our budget, we're feeding young people. And that's thanks to the hard work of our dear friend and previous Education minister Nello Altomare. And we're making the universal school food program permanent. It will be called Nello's Law which is really special. Because when children have food in their bellies they can focus on other things like education.

Honourable Speaker, I just want to wrap up with a—*[interjection]* Okay.

Honourable Speaker, I want to talk about investing in health care. We're making record investments where the PCs cut. And I began my journey—transition in 2015, and gender-affirming care was life-saving and life-changing. And I accessed that care through Klinik, with a K. And like I said it was life-life-saving.

And then in 2016, I will never forget, the freezing to health funding to the Trans Health Klinik. And how desperate folks became as the wait-list to see a practitioner who was gender affirming kept getting longer and longer and longer, to the point where it became over a year to see a gender-affirming care practitioner.

Now, that came with a lot of privilege, being able to, you know, have that gender-affirming care—have that access to gender-affirming care. See, I have a mom—I'm lucky—I have a mom that loves me, I have a partner who loves me, and I'm lucky to have a—had reproductive health care. As a result, you know, I have a beautiful kid.

And all these things, you know, after knowing just how much my family cares about me, I still had that doubt and I was still terrified to come out. And I have to give thanks to spaces like Klinik, the Trans Health Klinik at Rainbow Resource Centre—and Rainbow Resource Centre, sorry, and Place of Pride. And just the exciting work that's happening there, honourable Speaker.

Rainbow Resource Centre, Place of Pride: I have a friend who just moved into that building and he is so happy. He lived in precarious housing for many, many years. He lost his partner, who passed away suddenly, and Place of Pride had a space available to him.

And I saw him a couple weeks ago: I was getting my hair cut at the barber shop just down the road and I came outside and I saw him and he looked so happy. He looked so comfortable. And that place is just, again, another place, another way that we're investing in all Manitobans and all people.

Our government is investing in health care for two-spirit and trans Manitobans. So we just had the first official Two-Spirit and Transgender Day of Visibility in the province. And the Manitoba government is investing \$1.6 million in supports for two-spirit and transgender Manitobans, which is an incredible investment and it's life-saving. This work is life-saving.

The Province is investing \$150,000 to support 2Spirit Manitoba Incorporated through the Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation Secretariat and the Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag provincial strategy. Manitoba government will also continue to provide \$473,000 in ongoing funding to Shared Health GDAAY clinic—the Gender Diversity and Affirming Action for Youth program—and \$1.03 million to the Trans Health Clinic.

I received the care I so desperately needed which was affirming and life-saving in 2020—in 2015, and 10 years later, I'm so proud to know that our government is investing in this very important care, this life-saving work.

* (15:00)

Our budget invests in children's health care, and that health care includes gender-affirming care. And providing safe spaces in schools is also gender affirming, and it provides mental health care and some peace of—it gives you some peace of mind knowing your school and teachers have your back. And as a young queer kid, that is something that's really important, especially when, you know, bullying and suicide ideation rates can be high.

Imagine being fed in schools and having your gender respected at the same time. You know, that means that kids can thrive and not just survive. And I think that's really important, that we don't want people in this province just to survive; we want folks to thrive here.

And speaking of survive, that's what we did for seven and a half years, after a hate-induced campaign we all endured. Manitoba is now a beacon, honourable Speaker.

You know, we've—we have physicians from around the world, and one connected with me from the United States. And she's—she called me up from Wisconsin and we had a conversation on the phone, and she was really excited about Manitoba, specifically, and our government. And she's in another country, and, you know, with our budget we're able to do great things in health care.

And so this person from Wisconsin is a physician, and she just was so excited to talk about Manitoba and our work on health care and specifically gender-affirming care. And she's looking to practise gender-affirming care. But, as we know, it's not safe for folks to be doing that right now in the United States.

So folks are looking to come here, honourable Speaker, and it's because of investments that we make, like we did in our 2025 budget here.

Honourable Speaker, our government's progress in public health care is only possible thanks to front-line staff, like I said before. And after seven and a half years of cuts and chaos, the workers who take care of us finally have a government that will take care of them.

Honourable Speaker, we're making record investments where the previous failed PC governments made deep cuts, and I just spoke about the investments into the trans health care and 2Spirit Manitoba Incorporated, and I'm just so excited to see what they're going to do with that funding. I'm so excited to talk to folks who are going through that program at the Trans Health Clinic, and they're excited because they're being seen sooner, which is fantastic, and—but they also have hope, and that hope is truly—it's contagious, it's infectious and it's something that I'm really proud of. It's something that we've provided for these folks.

As part of our plan to lower wait times in Manitoba we added 233 fully staffed beds. But we know, honourable Speaker, that there is more work to do. We're going to put shovels in the ground this year on the new ER and mature women's clinic at the Victoria Hospital and the new ER in Eriksdale, and a new Health Care Centre of Excellence at the redeveloped Portage Place in downtown Winnipeg. I'm so excited for that redevelopment. I'm excited for—you know, just to be part of a team that really takes

health care seriously and that understands the importance of universal public health care.

We know that visits to the ER are stressful enough, especially when it comes to kids. And, honourable Speaker, I had the unfortunate—I won't say opportunity but incident, where my own little one needed to go to children's emergency and, again, watching the front-line staff and folks who work and provide that care—those folks are heroes, and they really do make families feel, you know, more comfortable and more certain with the care that they're going to get.

And I'm really proud—I mentioned our Finance Minister and how proud I am of him and how he's making life more affordable for Manitobans, and, you know, we can take pride in living in a province where we can own a home and raise a family. That's something that I'm so proud of to be a Manitoban.

And, you know, in my previous life as an artist and a musician, moving to Manitoba meant that I could actually afford to buy a house and move from Alberta where housing was significantly more expensive. And that was almost 25 years ago, honourable Speaker. But we see the same today and we can look to Manitoba for affordable housing, and it gives people a little bit more money to put in their pocket to do things like travelling or to buy a new guitar or take their family out for dinner.

Our government understands that rising prices and economic uncertainty are a challenge for Manitoba families, so we're here to help them, and, you know, I believe Manitobans are listening; they understand they have the government that's here for them. And we started with a permanent gas tax relief, keeping Manitoba prices lower than the average, which I loved seeing the prices going down at the pumps, especially after buying a newer vehicle; it helps take the edge off a little bit there with payments.

But, you know, our Finance Minister's done a tremendous job keeping Manitobans in mind and putting Manitobans first, making hydro rates frozen for a year so energy rates remain low in Manitoba. The hydro rate freeze goes hand in hand with our affordable energy plan.

It's just fantastic how we're making life more affordable, and we'll also save Manitobans on home security. We're helping more people save money on equipment like cameras, motion detectors and reinforced doors. And, unfortunately, you know, we live in a world where we need those things now, honourable Speaker, and so I'm really proud that our government

is offering assistance in helping families obtain that security for themselves.

We're also taking on rising prices at the grocery store. We've introduced legislation that will break up the grocery monopolies, the first of its kind in Canada, which is really important legislation. I think it will set a good example for the rest of the country and make grocers more accountable to the people they serve.

We're going to—we're not going to be clawing back—that kept EI 'recipients' in poverty. We're going to improve their ability to find a stable job.

And, honourable Speaker, I'm so proud to work with a team that understands that we're as strong as we are; you know, if we all come together and work together, we can do a lot of really amazing things here in Manitoba, and we are doing those great things. Our budget is bringing people together. Our budget is giving people hope.

And I'm excited for all the new correctional staff that are starting their new careers, going to the various correctional facilities. I know that those folks—it's a really tough job; I lived it, I worked it myself. And to those staff who are working the front lines in the correction facilities, you know, we see you and we thank you for the hard work that you do.

Honourable Speaker, you know, Manitobans, when we work together, we can do really exceptional things, and we see that happening right now, and, yes, Kirkfield Park constituents can rest easy knowing that their government's working hard for them and delivering on what we said we would.

So thank you, honourable Speaker. Thanks for your time.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Very proud to get up today and speak about the amendments to Budget 2025. Newly elected becomes a little bit of a learning curve for me every time I walk in here, and I'm very happy to represent the constituency of Selkirk and all the people there that not only put their trust in me but the citizens of Selkirk that allow me this privilege every day.

*(15:10)

And with my background, my marketing degree and my private ownership in business, I look forward to the budget to see what it's going to do, not only for my constituents in their daily lives—how it's going to impact them in education and health—but also what it's going to do to foster new business in our province

to help create a have province instead of a have-not province.

And one of the things that I'd noticed, newly elected in 2024, when the budget was coming out, it was going to be good. And I mean, we heard words—can't wait to show the budget—weeks out in advance. It was like, just wait for Budget 2024. Just wait.

But marketing has taught me something: that if you oversell your product, you fall flat. And what happened in 2024 is that the budget fell flat.

So, I guess the NDP learned that. So this year, they were very quiet about this budget. There was no fanfare about it. There was nothing going on. If you didn't look at a calendar and—you would not even know the budget was coming. And then the budget was presented, and there was no gallery passes in the stands where—and the gallery was virtually empty. So that indicated that they were—probably weren't very happy with this budget, to me.

And I look at the budget and I think that we really have a responsibility. The only thing we're supposed to do here is to represent the people who elect us. We need to move forward and make sure that we are spending their money—because government has no money. We need to spend people's money. We need to collect taxes and we need to spend money on programs and infrastructure. And we need to make sure that the institutions that we hold value in our province are properly funded. We need to make sure that people are protected and that our judicial system represents that.

When I look at this budget, I have an issue. I have a great issue. We've seen—when I've said previously—when—last year, when the school boards were allowed to raise their own taxes, I said it's only going to be a matter of time. When they say a couple of boards ago, we'll take 3 per cent or 4 per cent, they're going to come back and say, wow, that was dumb. We had an opportunity to grab some cash here. The NDP government has given us the ability to raise taxes for ourselves—whatever you want.

And if you would tell people who work for you, who are employed, and say, you know what, you can raise your income any amount you want, at first some people might be responsible and raise it 2, 3, 4 per cent to be in line with inflation. But you would have some greedy people that go out and grab money.

And I'm not saying that the school boards are being greedy, but they're grabbing an opportunity to really stick it to the people. They're—they have an

opportunity here to grab as much money as they want without any consequences. And what we're having now, we're seeing double-digit percentage increases on property school tax facing Manitobans.

We're in a financial crisis in our province. We have our schools, our post-secondary education schools in a tremendous cash burden. They're facing losses in the millions and millions of dollars. And we have an opportunity—you could see it clearly. It's like watching a train go off a cliff.

The federal government comes out and says: Listen, we're cutting the number of international students. And we had an opportunity to go back and say: unacceptable. We need those people. We've got jobs to fill in our province. We've got roles to fill. This is an opportunity for people to become citizens in our province. We lose more people than we gain. We need these positions.

But we didn't get that argument across. And in marketing, if you don't have product available, people are going to go elsewhere. So what happens is, the people that were looking are hoping that they were going to send their children to Manitoba—the students that they were looking to come to Manitoba as an opportunity for education are told: No spots available for you.

Now, imagine you want to buy a product and you go to a store and they keep telling you: No, no products available. And you come back again, you go: No products available. Well, after a while, you're going to go to another store.

And that's what's happening. The students are going to other provinces or other countries and they're getting their education there. That starts a very slippery slope that we'll never get back. These institutions have worked very hard to build a relationship with families and communities and deliver education for the students.

And now we have it that they're not coming. And the possibility is other family members will not come here. Once family members start going to another country, they'll continue to go to that country and not give Manitoba a second thought.

That seriously declined the revenues that these schools were depending on. They did nothing wrong—nothing at all. They marketed to a group of students who want to come here. There was a tremendous revenue stream. They were bringing people into our province that most likely would stay in our province. And education is one of the things that, once you

invest in it, it'll pay back itself 20, 40, 100 times over the course of the lifetime of that student.

We have universities facing multimillion-dollar losses. And universities and other education systems have three revenues—three avenues to generate revenue. They're going to get funding from the government; they're going to have it on tuition; and then they're going to do external fundraising through donations and other fundraising events that they could put on.

Well, the government have said, no, thank you. We're going to give you a 2 per cent increase. Inflation's at 2 per cent—2.7 per cent—so essentially they got a loss. They're starting off in a deficit. They looked at the tuition rates. On the tuition rates, you cut out the international students. They're—the—losing tens of millions of dollars in revenue from that.

What are your other options? Well, you can go back to past alumni and have fundraisers all you want, but you're not going to generate that back. So you have a—only a couple of options: beg the government, which we've seen. Chris Wiebe literally says, I'm begging—I am begging—for someone to do something from the government. Begging.

I've been saying this for months; you could see it. I asked the minister, can they please make sure Budget 2025 keeps the post-secondary institutions whole. It doesn't. They're scrambling all over the province, cutting, cutting, cutting. Now they're looking at possibly laying off tenured professors. That is ridiculous. We're looking at cutting programs; there's already been programs cut at the U of W. There—we know there's going to have to be more cuts for them to be financially viable.

So what are the options that they have? Beg the government for more money or raise tuition. If you raise tuition, you're going to alienate the people who want to go there. They're going to say, no, sorry, too much money; I need to go somewhere else. So that's not an option.

So now we're back to, will the government step in and do the right thing and keep these institutions whole? There's nothing like an education in this province to bring you from your current position to anything you want to be. In here, we've got teachers, lawyers, medical professions, business owners, farmers, people from varying degrees of industry around our province. And they got there through hard work and education.

We need to make sure that the institutions are kept whole. We need to make sure that we are responsible

on the amount of money we tax the citizens of the province. You can't keep taxing somebody; they're going to leave. And we're seeing that right now; we lose too many people to out-of-province opportunities. We need to create opportunities to bring people here.

We need to make sure that when we create a budget, that we're not going further financially in debt. In private industry, you can't just keep losing money and losing money and losing money and go, well, we'll get it right in four years. We'll get it right in the end of the second mandate. You can't do that; the bank calls the loan.

* (15:20)

But somehow, governments think it's okay to continually spend ourselves into debt. Private citizens don't think that is correct. It's their money. Quit putting the burden on them to pay for generations to come.

I hope I will see something in the future that has clear and tangible direction to get us out of the situation that we're in. I hope that the Minister of Advanced Education will step up for the education system that she represents and says, we will find some money; we know the importance of these schools being financially viable; we are here for you; that is our job.

I've got lots more to say, but I do want to give some of my time to other colleagues to get up and say a few words.

So on that note, thank you very much for allowing me to speak here.

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): It's my pleasure to rise today to talk about our fantastic budget.

And I want to just begin by just saluting our phenomenal Finance Minister. The Finance Minister has been just diligently working day after day, along with his team, his department, to ensure that our budget meets the moment. And that's exactly what our budget does.

Our budget is designed to address the issues that are facing our province, that are facing our country. There are so many different variables taking place right now that's incredibly difficult for governments of all stripes, governments of all different areas, whether we're talking municipal, provincial, federal, to address these needs. But that is exactly what our budget does.

Our budget works to address the different scenarios that could unfold, whether we're talking about best case scenario where we can unroll our plan and the different areas of focus, whether we're talking about health care or addressing homelessness or the affordability pieces or whether we're having to address the terrible things like the tariff.

And I understand that these are troubling times and maybe confusing times for Manitobans and for Canadians at large. But I do find it deeply troubling that members opposite are not on board, that they're not there for Manitobans, but instead they've kind of parsed out their words about whether this was a good thing that these tariffs came in or whether it was, you know, maybe Trump is doing us a favour. Like, this is all troubling to me in that we're not coming together as we should, unlike what we saw yesterday.

Yesterday there was a phenomenal rally where people came out of all different backgrounds and came together as one. And that's what this budget is designed to do. It's designed to build one Manitoba. And the people that came out yesterday, you know, and they—it didn't matter whether you were on one side or the other, you were here as Canadians.

And it's unfortunate when we've heard time and time again from members opposite that have suggested perhaps that these tariffs are a good thing or that, you know, perhaps there's people that support this 51st state shenanigan, this whole idea. And I know that, on our side, we will always stand up for Manitobans, we will always stand up for Canadians and we will always be the true north, strong and free.

Now, before I dive to—into a few different areas I want to discuss some things about environment and climate change, obviously something very near and dear to my heart and my work. And so there's so many different things where this is really meeting the moment. And one of the many areas that we're working to meet the moment is about keeping people right here in our beautiful province of Manitoba.

And such a significant part of our province is our beautiful parks. We have some of the most gorgeous parks anywhere in the world. It is absolutely phenomenal that we have these places that we can go to to relax, to enjoy, whether that is with hiking or fishing or hunting or anything else. It is just phenomenal that we have this opportunity here, and I think sometimes we take that for granted. We don't realize the beautiful spaces that we can see so close to home.

And so one of the things that we did and wanted to really emphasize is our free parks. What a great opportunity when we want people to stay here in Manitoba, to support the local economy, to support our local businesses, to support fellow Manitobans and our fellow Canadians, than to say, hey, let's incentivize this a little bit by making our parks free. And so that's exactly what we did. We said, for the entire year, let's have free parks, and I hope that people take us up on this offer.

I hope that Manitobans and people from our—across the country come to Manitoba. I hope that Manitobans go and see their favourite park. I hope that they go and explore other parks that maybe they haven't seen. We have so many beautiful spaces, and I'm looking forward to, both as a minister and just as a Manitoban, to go out into our own backyard with family, with friends and to really get outside and see some of these beautiful spaces.

Additionally, one of the things that we're trying to do, because we don't want to just make our parks assessable, although that's incredibly important, we also want to invest in our parks and that's also what we're doing. We are ensuring that we're putting an incredible amount of money into capital in our parks. We want to invest in our parks so not only is it that people can go and see these beautiful spaces, but that there's amenities there, that there's places for people to enjoy and that includes these upgrades that are taking place.

And just some of the places that are being upgraded, places like Asessippi, Birds Hill, Paint Lake, Hecla, Spirit Sands, West Hawk, Manipogo, Big Whiteshell, Mantario, Grand Beach, Winnipeg Beach. There's so many places, and what you'll notice about this is that it is across the province because we are building one Manitoba. We are looking across our province to ensure that we're not just looking in one area, whether that's in the Westman or Eastman or south or the—we're looking right across our province because that's what we do. We are looking to build one Manitoba.

The Speaker in the Chair

Additionally, in addition to our beautiful parks, we are looking to address climate change, unlike members opposite which are still not sure if that's actual science. They don't want to listen to experts. They don't want to listen to scientists. Instead, they want to shut it down.

And so I know there's heckling going on right now because they don't believe in climate change and I know that's shocking to most folks—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Moyes: —and I know that's shocking to most folks because Manitobans believe in the science.

Manitobans want to do their part for the environment, our beautiful Manitoba environment, and so we want to ensure that we're working with Manitobans.

So some of the things that we're doing to address climate change is, No. 1, we put more budget into the department to do the good work, the fantastic work that's happening within the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

We additionally have allocated \$14.8 million to the continuation of our EV rebate, that incentive that is going to help Manitobans move towards electrifying their transportation—such an important piece of reducing emissions. It's been widely accepted by Manitobans; the increase in EVs has skyrocketed since we've put in our EV rebate, and so that is continuing.

We're putting \$12.5 million into the Low Carbon Economy Fund to ensure that we continue to be a leader as opposed to an environmental laggard, as was demonstrated by the previous PC administration.

We're also allocating \$7.3 million towards the output-based pricing system, which is going to work with industry to make sure that they're addressing their climate goals, as well, because they are a part of our plan as well; \$1.3 million for the Oil to Heat Pump Affordability plan.

And so the list just goes on and on, Honourable Speaker, on what we're trying to do in terms of addressing climate change and in terms of addressing the environment, and we are doing that good work. Now—

* (15:30)

An Honourable Member: You've got lots of time.

MLA Moyes: I've got lots? Oh, I'm—I appreciate that. *[interjection]* Okay.

So additionally, let me continue on with the \$6.5 million for environmental stewardship. What this is going towards is ensuring that we are remediating orphaned and abandoned mines, something that the members opposite did an incredibly poor job on. We recognize the economic opportunity there. We

recognize the environmental opportunity there, to repurpose nature and get back to nature.

I'm not really sure why the PCs are so against nature, but they appear to be. They wouldn't do any of the work necessary in order to conserve nature, and actually only moved the needle less than 0.1 per cent. Less than 0.1 per cent in two terms. That is shocking. It's a shocking statistic on how poorly—and how much they just didn't care about nature.

On this side of the House, we care about nature. We care about protecting our environment, and that's why we're working across our province with all different stakeholders, all different groups, Manitobans from one corner to the other, in order to preserve nature, in order to protect nature so that it can be there for generations and generations to come.

Those all are things that I've been told, both as minister but also just as a Manitoban, are important. People are often discussing how beautiful Manitoba is, and why aren't we doing more to protect nature; and I'm very proud to be a part of a government that is doing that good work.

Additionally, we're committed in a increase of \$450,000 to ensure that aquatic invasive species are contained in our province. That is incredibly important in terms of ensuring that our waterways and other—are free and clear of things like zebra mussels. And so we're working with municipalities, working with different communities, to ensure that aquatic invasive species are controlled and, if possible, eradicated. We want to make sure that we are working with the good people of Manitoba to ensure that they're doing—or have the ability to control our AIS.

And so what we're going to be doing for AIS—in terms of AIS, we want to remind Manitobans to always clean, drain and dry your watercraft. It is incredibly important that we all take steps to do our part in preventing aquatic invasive species. And so it is something that we take very seriously on this side of the House, and something that I'm very proud, as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to invest in. Now—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order please.

Members will stop hollering back and forth across. We may disagree with people from time to time, but we will not—I will not allow people to just holler back and forth.

There's a member that has the floor. Everybody show him the respect that he deserves so that people can hear what he has to say.

MLA Moyes: So another point that is very important, both in terms of myself, our—my department, but also Manitobans writ large, is our water. And one of the things that the failed PC administration never got done was about the North End treatment plant. They never got NEWPCC done. They talked and talked and talked and talked but never got it done.

And so what we are doing is we're investing in our water infrastructure. We recognize that, after two terms in office, that there is a deficit when it comes to our water infrastructure. And so we are working with different municipalities: we're working with the City of Winnipeg, we're working with the federal government to catch up on that.

And I know members opposite, the member from Turtle Mountain wants to heckle, because he didn't get the job done. I know that he's probably feeling embarrassed that he didn't invest properly and couldn't build NEWPCC. I understand that he wants to heckle and that's unfortunate.

But instead, what we're doing is we're investing more money into the North End water treatment plant to ensure that we can do everything we can to protect Lake Winnipeg, something that never happened under the previous PC administration.

They failed miserably. They failed miserably in terms of protecting; instead they just greenwashed. They would say this or that but it was never about actually getting things done. We're about actually moving the needle, whether we're talking about nature or whether we're talking about water; whether we're talking about any different type of program; whether we're talking about climate change. We want to move the needle.

But instead, the members opposite just want to chirp, chirp on the sideline because they're feeling frustrated that they couldn't get it done in seven and a half years and, you know, two terms in office: 0.1 per cent increase in conservation. I know, that's embarrassing. I'd be embarrassed, too. If that's the mark that you leave, then I would be embarrassed because what are you going to tell your kids and what are you going to tell your grandkids when you say: What did you accomplish in office? And apparently, what they're, instead, going to say is that we didn't do it. We couldn't get it done. We were ineffective; that

we were incompetent. I don't know. I don't know what they're going to mention.

And so we're looking to build the North End water treatment—the water treatment pollution control centre. We're getting that done.

We're enhancing beach safety. We're making sure that those areas that are incredibly popular when the sun comes out and the heat hits Manitoba, that we're going to try our very best to keep Manitobans safe through those supports. We're increasing the investment there.

We're also working to enhance our recycling supports for municipalities. We know that municipalities do a lot of the good work on this file and we want to be there for them, to ensure that they're able to continue to do that.

Additionally, one of the areas that members opposite did an abysmal job on is on Efficiency Manitoba. And I'm happy to say that we've increased their budget. We've increased their staffing and we've tasked them with incredible work to be done, as opposed to what members opposite did. Instead, they left Efficiency Manitoba asking, begging for an increased mandate, saying: Hey, we can do more. And instead, they just kind of—instead, they forgot about them and just kind of left them there, you know. And that's sad. It's sad.

And so I'm happy that they have an increased mandate. I'm happy that they've been tasked, alongside other Crown corporations like Manitoba Hydro, to build up our heat pumps, to build up this energy that we have in Manitoba—untapped resources. And so they're going to be doing the good work to ensure that we meet our commitments. They're going to be doing the good work to—along with—or, along with Manitoba Hydro, to get district geothermal off the ground. And these are all things that should have been done previously. This isn't new technology. But instead, the PCs were laggards. They were environmental laggards. They decided to greenwash; they decided to just kind of say enough to get by.

But instead, we want to move the needle. We want to move the needle when it comes to nature. We want to move the needle when it comes to addressing climate change. We want to move the needle when it comes to water infrastructure. We want to do all of these good things. We want to move the needle when it comes to geothermal. And all of that is so very important and it's important to Manitobans.

Now, in terms of just our budget writ large, like, we know that Manitobans care about our health-care system. And it's so unfortunate that, similar to the environment and similar to so many other things like justice and whatnot, that the Conservatives just put us at such a deficit that we have to start over and rebuild our systems.

And this budget does just that. It builds on the budget of 2024, where we were able to surpass our target for how many net-new health-care workers we could hit. We, you know, over the last year, 1,255 net-new health-care workers, which is an incredible number, absolutely.

* (15:40)

And that's exactly what our plan said. When we were campaigning, we said the first step in rebuilding health care was ensuring that we had the staff to do that good work. We can't—when we say that we need more beds in hospitals, we're not talking about furniture. We're not talking about—we're talking about people that can deliver health care at the bedside. And that's what we're doing. We're staffing it up.

And I know members opposite are saying, well, it's not there yet, and that you should do better and you should move faster. And what we're telling you is, yes, we told people when we were campaigning, we told people during this whole past year and a half that we need to get the staffing up first, and that's what we're doing.

Instead, members opposite did the—didn't do any of that work. Instead, they said, you know what, what we should do is we should fly people to the United States. We should fly people out of jurisdiction. We should fly people all over the place, not recognizing that we need to invest in Manitoba. They wouldn't do that work. They would not do that work at all.

And it's sad that we have to come in after their failed two terms in government to rebuild this, to start over. And so, we're doing that good work on the health-care front. We're doing that good work in the area near and dear to my heart of environment. We're doing that good work in terms of cleaning up the mess on crime that the PC administration left us.

And instead, we are going to be building. And I know it takes time. I know it takes time and that's, you know, we all want to move faster. But that good work is ongoing, and I'm so proud of our Finance Minister and I'm so proud of this budget because it meets the moment and it moves Manitoba forward.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Well, and following that member and his speech, we probably need an extra 20 minutes just to do some of the fact-checking with—from all the misinformation that was put on the record.

And I'd like to point out, he glowingly spoke about Efficiency Manitoba, which every one of those NDPers on the bench—led by the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine)—every one of them voted against Efficiency Manitoba.

In fact, when we became government back in 2016, we had to take the Efficiency Manitoba report off of the cabinet and blow all the dust off. It was sitting and was collecting dust because they couldn't get it done. Fact. And I won't name the civil servant who came to me and said there was such a conflict between the minister's office and then former premier Greg Selinger at that time.

So Greg Selinger was not for it going forward, so he would say, yes—no, we're not going to proceed with this. Minister's office would come and say, no, no, no, we're going to proceed with Efficiency Manitoba. And then they would proceed with it and the premier's office would say, no, no, no, we're not going to proceed with it.

Anyway, eventually the civil servants just put it on the cabinet and let it collect dust, because not one member on the NDP benches, starting with the member for St. Johns, who always has a lot to say, has a lot to chirp about, all of a sudden is silent because she led the opposition to Efficiency Manitoba, which the former Speaker just got up and heralded and talked about the greatness of Efficiency Manitoba, which the previous Progressive Conservative government got done, got passed, voted against by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

He led the charge voting against Efficiency Manitoba. Every one of them got up and voted against it and now they talk about how great it is. Well, we knew it was great. That's why we put the legislation forward and we had it passed.

Another great thing about the previous government was the fact that we left this NDP government a surplus—a \$373-million surplus. And what was the first thing that came out of the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) mouth, the leader of the Kinew government? What was the first thing he said? He called it—and I wish to make sure I quote his words—he called that surplus a disaster.

Because you see, for a socialist, leaving a surplus, that is a disaster. The worst thing you can do is leave money on the table. What you have to do is spend every penny and then some. And they showed Manitobans what a non-disaster looks like for a socialist. They went from a \$373-million surplus which was given to them as a gift, their first year, a \$1.9-billion deficit. That is a more than \$2-billion turnaround.

But it only got better. The next year they run a \$1.3-billion deficit, and that is truly the life of a lazy socialist, because all is what they do is tax and spend and tax and spend and borrow. We have to remember to always put borrow in there, because it's not just tax and spend: borrow, tax, spend; borrow, tax, spend. And that's what they're doing with Manitobans.

So it brings us to this speech that was presented last month. And what a disaster, that speech. You know what? They actually had not much to say. So it wasn't really that bad to suffer through it, because it really was short, but it really was a speech that was devoid of much hope. It didn't present a lot of information for the future. And I would like to point out to the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), he misnamed the speech. Because what it should be, the speech should be termed, economic weakness is our strength, instead of what they call it, because that's what this budget basically says. It basically says economic weakness is our strength.

And they do mention once in a while Donald Trump and his tariffs, but they did not prepare Manitoba to go up against one of the—the strongest economy in the world while they were deficit spending, raising taxes, borrowing money, getting us further in debt. In fact, Manitoba is sitting on a deficit of \$36.5 billion. In fact, out of the Minister of Finance's own documents—*[interjection]* Wow, the members seem to be very, very excited. They should've shown this passion when Efficiency Manitoba was being voted on; instead of voting against it, they should've showed that passion.

Fact, if the Premier (Mr. Kinew), the leader of the government, he led the vote against Efficiency Manitoba. He voted against balanced budgets, and he was the one who said it was a disaster to run a surplus. But, boy, he showed Manitoba.

And I would point out that the provincial deficit is \$36.5 billion, but there's a worse number that the total liability for Manitoba, right out of the minister's documents, is \$76 billion. It's a cumulative liability for the Province of Manitoba.

And, again, the model of this Kinew government is economic weakness is our strength. They feel that with a \$76-billion cumulative deficit that's provincially wide, that somehow we're going to go up against the United States and all their tariffs. They have put us in such a weak spot to take on the tariffs and what's coming at us.

And we spoke earlier on about—that the book written by Donald Trump was also missed—*[interjection]* The Premier heckles and he has to wait. You know, he's going to have to wait his turn like everybody else. You know, he's going to have to wait; those are the rules. I know rules aren't a really big strength over there, but the rules are he's going to have to wait. His time will come.

And I would point out to him that we have economic weakness and that is not a strength, though that's actually what lazy socialists would believe. They would believe that when you are economically weak, that's where your strength comes from, and that is actually not the case.

And I would like to point out to members that their BFFs out of British Columbia are also into this economic weakness is our strength, and they're the ones also borrow, tax increase, spend, more taxes, borrow. And it was just yesterday that their—they got their downgrade for their credit rating in British Columbia. And the BC NDP are now getting a downgrade, and I would suggest to our NDP Premier he better be careful because he might just be the next one to get a downgrade.

* (15:50)

The constant debt and deficits that he's running, adding onto the debt, is a problem for Manitoba and it is a problem for taxpayers because we're sitting at about 1.4 million people. If you divide that into the \$76-billion cumulative debt that we carry as a province, so that would include stuff like Manitoba Hydro, that would include the debt of the Province of Manitoba, that would include all the other debt that's being carried by taxpayers. You divide that, that is an awful lot of weight to be carried.

Then if you add on Donald Trump's—and initially now he was a good friend of this Premier, our TikTok Premier, who just loves all levels of politicians and can't help himself but take pictures with them all. Now all of a sudden it's become his great enemy. It's—surprisingly enough—but those tariffs and the damage that they can do, and I would point out to this Premier,

it's not just the Donald Trump tariffs; it's also China and the tariffs that they've put on.

And the tariffs that they've put onto our agriculture and our wonderful Agriculture critic from Portage la Prairie, who gets up and, with great authority and great credibility, has asked serious questions about the damage being done by the Chinese tariffs on our agriculture, and that's going to hurt us. We have a tsunami coming at us that, at this rate, that could harm the projections in the financial document, in the budget, that was just recently presented.

And the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) put some pretty rosy numbers into the budget, and the projections of what kind of retail sales tax might be coming, and other taxes, are very, very optimistic. In fact, several of the banks, their economists said that they felt that it was a little bit too optimistic, the numbers that they had put in, and what might actually be realized.

So the Minister of Finance was, I believe, approached by media and asked about what kind of deficit we might be running in the province of Manitoba, and then he was not quite so clear with his answer. You know, it could be go up or it could go down. Well, under a lazy socialist government like we have, the deficit is never going to go down. We know it's only going to go up.

We could be breaking the billion-dollar-plus mark again, and that's going to harm us even further when we're trying to take on the kind of tariffs put on by China and by the Trump administration in the United States. And I hear the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) keeps heckling me, and I understand. I understand why the member—I understand why the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Schuler: Aww, wow. Well, we're hitting a nerve here now.

I understand why many of the members, including the member for St. Johns, why she's so sensitive about all of this, is because she's now had New York cut from under her, and all her trips to New York. But we have—in fact, I would suggest to all members, the focus should be China and then it should be the United States and trying to get the tariffs down on Manitoba, on our agriculture and on our businesses.

In fact our great critic, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte), you know he got up and he started to list all the steel manufacturers that are being impacted

by the tariffs that have been put on by the United States. And he listed the companies. In fact, the minister responsible, the minister who was going to respond, couldn't even name the steel factory in Selkirk.

And I had the opportunity to tour Gerdau Steel as minister at that time, and it's a fascinating factory. I'd recommend that members maybe get out of their cushy offices and the Premier take his armoured limousine and drive out there and put on some steel boots and—we had to put on all the PPE, and we actually got to walk through the plant and watch them melting the various metals and they were forming and they were pouring it. It was very, very interesting, and we had a really good tour.

And, you know, I'd like to thank my colleague from Selkirk for standing up for the steel industry in Manitoba. They employ a lot of Manitobans. He does a wonderful job. And we have a minister responsible who didn't even know the name of the steel factory in Selkirk. That's how weak this government is. But when it comes to running deficits, that seems to be one of their strengths. Their strength isn't to go out and see the various industries.

And I would suggest to members opposite: Go back to that question where the member for Selkirk got up and he listed various companies, and he listed a whole series of them, and it's hundreds, it's into the thousands of jobs that are now at risk with the kind of tariffs that have been put on by Donald Trump and the United States.

And we have a lazy socialist government that then has run deficit after deficit after deficit that somehow they believe financial weakness is our strength. How are you going to stand up for the steel industry in Manitoba when you've put us into such a weak position with this irresponsible and tax-and-spend-and-borrow regime that we have from the Kinew government?

And again I point out, you know, it started off good, they were handed an amazing gift by the previous Conservative government, hundreds of millions of dollars of a surplus. What a great place to start with. And instead, that was—*[interjection]*

Well, you know, they're all nattering about what they did with all those hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars surpluses. They did well. There is never a happier person on earth than a socialist spending other people's money. And that surplus, which was given to them as a gift from the previous

government—taxpayers' money; every penny of it was from the Manitoba taxpayer. But they certainly blew through that money very quickly. And we are now in an economic weak state. It's not a strength, I'd like to point out to the members opposite. It is a weakness.

So what we are going to see, and we had questions raised today about the kinds of tax increases that people are going to be facing.

Fact, it was Gary Doer who opened up a lot of those cottages that now this current Premier (Mr. Kinew) is taxing them, basically doubling their taxes. And with very good questions from our colleague from Winkler, I believe, was the—where the questions came from. And she was standing up for the cottage owners and the cottages that were put there and developed and built by Gary Doer, you know, the mentor to this Premier. And now, this Premier wants to tax all those various people out of their cottages, because it seems to be what every Gary Doer built, this Premier wants to tear down.

And we've raised before that some of the school taxes going up 25 per cent. And I would like to suggest to the member from River East, the member for Rossmere (MLA Schmidt), member for Transcona (MLA Corbett), the kind of tax increases that are coming forward, 25—[interjection] Well, finally we hear the voice of the member for River East. Finally she's—action. They won't let her up on the question. In fact, surprisingly enough, not one minister on the government—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I—[interjection] Order, please.

Realize it's getting late in the day, but we still have to have some kind of decorum in this place, so if you could keep it down so that I can hear the member speaking.

Mr. Schuler: Fact, shamefully enough, not one minister, not one of them—look at them all—not one of them has ever gotten up since they've been elected and asked one question in this House. How shameful is that? Not one of them.

Finally the member, finally the member from River East lets her voice be heard. They won't let her up otherwise; they won't let her speak on anything. But finally she gets up; finally she gets up and wants to advocate for the people for River East, who's taxes are going up exponentially because of all of her government's cutbacks.

And the school board divisions have no idea what's going on, but we know that school divisions are raising taxes far more than anybody else.

And I would point out to this Premier, the—our lazy socialist government here—it was Gary Doer, Greg Selinger, Brian Pallister, member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) when he was premier, Heather Stefanson, who all controlled how high taxes could go up in school divisions. And it's only under this Premier that he's allowing 25 per cent and 50 per cent tax increases.

* (16:00)

It is this Premier who is—because he's a borrow, tax and spend premier. That's basically what we have here in this Chamber right now. And this lazy socialist tax, borrow and spend is why we have now economic weakness that evidently they feel that it's a strength, which is not a strength, and then we're going to go up against one of the biggest, the strongest economy in the world and somehow think that we're going to win in a tariff war with the United States.

And we won't because this government and the Kinew government and its Premier and every one of the ministers and every one of the members has made us economically weak. That's why we're going to struggle fighting the United States. If—least if we had economic strength, if we were running balanced budgets, we'd still have some room within to maneuver, and we don't because they've made us economically weak, and now we're going to go and try to fight a trade war, and that's not going to be good for us.

This budget, no wonder it was so weak, now wonder it was so short, because it has very little detail and has very little for Manitobans, and it's unfortunate for the people in the end who are going to have to pay all the taxes to pay this debt.

The Speaker: Order, please.

The last time we went through this exercise, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) was absent, which I shouldn't say, but today the member has been present and has given up his spot in the rotation, which I might add, the rotation is agreed upon by the House leaders. If it was left entirely up to me, the honourable member for Fort Garry would remain seated. I'm told that a previous Speaker made a ruling saying that the independent member had an opportunity to speak. Personally, I disagree with that ruling.

After this took place last time, I wanted to have a rule that's very clear, but House leaders haven't got

together to talk about changing any rules, so I'm stuck in the position of having to go with what a previous Speaker ruled.

The honourable member for Fort Garry. Oh, by the way, one second. This will be the last time that I, as the Speaker, get put in this position, because the Rules committee can meet and change a rule, or with forewarning the Speaker will change the rule. So you've been forewarned now. This is the last time I will be part of this childish game that's taking place.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I wanted to address my friend from Springfield-Ritchot that, as a lazy socialist, I find this budget particularly disappointing. So there is no vision here. There's been no attempt to address Manitobans' problems. This is an issues-management budget by an issues-management government. This is one that goes down the list and all the criticisms it's received last year and gives little bits of money to each and every one of those critics to try to silence them from pointing out that this government is measurably failing.

So there's no strategy. There's no money to actually get any of these challenges done. And the key flaws of this budget, it accepts the PC fiscal policies, including the tax cuts for the rich. It also accepts PC austerity, meaning that social services, education, health care continue to be underfunded. This is more of a public relations document than a serious plan for the future.

So it is true that Manitoba needs to invest in 'infrastructure.' The provincial deficit for infrastructure is about \$11 billion. City of Winnipeg is about \$6 billion. The school boards is another billion. So, yes, we do need to build. However, this budget, essentially, it responds to criticisms by the opposition for the lack of building of schools where we have children literally going to school in hallways, but there's not actually much new here. It's repackaged, old promises and made into a theme this year.

What is really telling about this government: If you are serious about having the economic horse drive our economy, then why cut research and development? Research and development creates new companies, new innovations, new jobs.

This government has slashed research by 48 per cent—48 per cent. That's \$15 million that it's taken out of its research budget. And this year, it only put back—wait for it—\$100,000. That doesn't even cover inflation, right? We're not feeding the economic horse; we're, in fact, starving it.

But one of the biggest challenges that we're facing in Manitoba is affordability. Manitoba leads the country with the fastest growing rents. Manitoba, again, leads the country with the fastest growing grocery store prices. And middle- and low-income Manitobans have seen their wages stagnate. There are over 56,000 people on EIA and a shocking 170,000 Manitobans who earn less than a living wage—that's one in four workers; 60 per cent of them are female; 20 per cent are newcomer and BIPOC.

Most of these women have children under the age of 18, and of course, it's no surprise we've become the child poverty capital of Canada once again. And if we wanted to be serious about building our economy, you start with the 56,000 people on EIA; you start with the 170,000 people not making a living wage. You make sure that they're doing okay; the rest of the province will be booming.

But there is no response to this. There is no urgency. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) doesn't even seem to think that this is a crisis in Manitoba. And we have instead empty, performative politics on affordability.

Exhibit A is the gas tax holiday gets cancelled. It's now reimposed, but the catch is, the Premier is making it 1.5 cents cheaper than it was before, right? And the reason for it is he wants to own the PCs and say, well, you never cut gas taxes but we did.

Well, the problem with that is is that nobody is actually going to benefit or see that change. It's not going to change any lives. In fact, 60 per cent of that is going to corporations. Many low-income people do not own cars. They cannot pay for their own transportation.

At the same time we're doing this, transit funding has stopped from this government. They are not putting more money into transit. They're not making it cheaper. And transit rates are going through the roof and the people that need it the most are paying more for transportation.

And I think it—what is—\$32 million is going to cost the Manitoba Treasury for the reduction in the 1.5 cents of gas. That's \$32 million not going to emergency rooms, not going to classrooms and not going to child-care spaces. And it's money we don't have. It is being borrowed. This money is being borrowed and we are going to have to pay it back. Well, it's not we. Our grandchildren are going to have to pay it back, with interest, and they're going to have to pay for it at some time. So working families are getting hit hard.

Then, we have the hydro freeze. Again, another performative stunt where Hydro is deeply in debt—Hydro is deeply in debt. They are going to have to borrow this money, and they've already said in the next three years, they're going to jack up 'hydro' rates year after year after year, hurting working families.

We also have a shortage of affordable housing in Manitoba, and that's defined by paying no more than 30 per cent of your income for housing. The Right to Housing Coalition says that we need to build a thousand affordable housing units every year for the next 10 years. This government is not even trying to meet that target. Winnipeg has grown by 45,000 people in the last two years and we are not keeping up with housing needs.

So, what has this government done? Well, they've raised educational property tax rates for homeowners: \$1,600 per home. Everybody gets it. Doesn't matter if you're living in a multi-million dollar mansion.

* (16:10)

Now compare how this government treats renters: 40 per cent of Manitobans rent, and in Fort Garry that number is high as 50 per cent. They get \$50 extra this year. So \$1,600 for homeowners, \$675 for renters. That's almost three times the amount of tax credit, which basically is a transfer from working people up to very wealthy homeowners. But it gets worse.

In the last year, because we've had the fastest growing rents in the country, the average renter has seen their rent go up a thousand dollars in the last year. So they are getting further and further behind with the Kinew government.

So it gets worse. We have Rent Assist to help people out who can't make ends meet. Problem is, it's a federal government program, so when money runs out, so does this government's commitment to low-income renters, and they cut them off. And we saw that happen twice now, where the federal government run out and the Province is refusing to step up and actually fund the program properly so every family that needs a home in an affordable way can actually get supported by this government.

And then that brings us to the above-guideline rent increases. People may be wondering: well, listen, we're a rent control province. How on earth can we lead the country in the fastest growing rents?

Well, as we know in this Chamber, there's a loophole. The law allows a landlord to apply to the Province to get around the rental cap, and they've been

using it. And so people are seeing 10 to 30 per cent increases in one year. We're hearing from constituents who say that some landlords apply year after year after year, and they are getting 'renovicted' from their places. They cannot afford to remain.

So what has this government done? They promised to close the loophole and then didn't. Last year, they brought forward some legislation. They didn't bring it to debate. They let it die on the Order Paper. This year, they didn't even bother on that pretext, and they didn't even bring a legislation forward.

So Manitobans will, next year, probably have the fastest growing rents again in the country. So this is definitely a promise that this government has broken.

So then we have EIA rates—have been frozen. Honourable Speaker, 56,000 of the most vulnerable Manitobans had their incomes frozen in this year's budget. Now, by freezing, with inflation, that's a cut. And given how expensive groceries are, they have received no extra funding for the increasing grocery bills. And EIA is still clawing back money for EIA recipients who are working, creating a poverty trap.

So not only is this government ignoring the cost-of-living crisis, they're taking steps to make life less affordable. They have raised taxes on working families in this budget.

So because of high inflation, many families have received cost-of-living increases on their paycheque. Those increases bump them up to a higher income tax bracket, and they pay higher taxing. Well, the law in Manitoba is that the brackets are supposed to rise with the cost of inflation. This year, this Premier (Mr. Kinew) has frozen that, basically making sure that middle and working people are paying more taxes—in fact, \$82 million more, affecting working families.

Contrast that with a Premier who has brought more corporate welfare in and more cuts to the very rich. This Premier has cut the health and education levy for 800 of the largest, most profitable corporations in Manitoba, who are paying less now to contribute to health care and to education, which they rely upon public investments in order to make a profit. This, on top of Manitoba having one of the lowest corporate tax rates in the country. And basically what that does is shift the tax burdens away from very wealthy corporations onto working families.

And, of course, they don't actually have the money, so they've had to borrow it and they have to pay it back, or, again, our grandchildren have to pay it back with interest. So this will mean less services in the

future and more payments on interest, which now stands at \$2 billion a year this province pays on interest that is not going to our schools, to rebuild our infrastructure or to education. That money, basically, is going to bond traders in New York and London, England. So when I was first elected in 2019, it was \$900 million in interest. It has now over doubled in five years.

So we're also seeing indirect tax increases. Municipalities and school boards continue to be underfunded. The Province has increased funding to municipalities by 2 per cent while their costs have gone up way higher than that. So they can't run a deficit, unlike the Province. They have to jack up property taxes, and they've done that. We've seen generationally high tax increases from municipalities.

School boards, same thing. They have been underfunded by this government and so, what do they have to do in order to survive? They have to jack up education property taxes, so now they're in double digits between 10 and 25 per cent. As a former school trustee, I have never seen numbers like that. That is shocking, and when you combine them with municipal taxation, that is a heavy burden on Manitoba working families.

So—and of course, our universities have been underfunded. We're now seeing program cuts. We're also seeing tuition increases; so this government is trying to pay off their deficit on the backs of students. And, in fact, they've raised their tuition by \$6 million this year, making tuition much less affordable for working families, making students take on more debt and making that hill even higher to climb. So it also means that this government isn't addressing the challenges this province is facing.

So, health care: we're hearing from doctors, nurses. Allied health professionals have said that health care has gotten worse under this Premier (Mr. Kinew), that he hasn't been listening to front-line workers. The Health Sciences Centre is the worst performing emergency room in Canada. Let that sink in.

But I'll give another stat, which is equally disturbing. The next four worst ERs performing in Canada are all in Manitoba. Four of the worst performing ERs are in Manitoba and this Premier doesn't care. There's no reaction, no urgency, no plan. That's real lives. In fact, three people have died, since this Premier took office, in a Manitoba ER, waiting to see a doctor. Our ER wait times are double what they are in—nationally. I remember speaking to a former senior MLA. She said wasn't—there was a period of time in Manitoba that

you would wait two hours for an ER. Now, you're lucky if you're waiting eight.

We had a budget last year that promised to hire more front-line health-care workers. Well, how did that go? The budget last year wanted 90 rural paramedics. This government was only able to hire 14. We are pulling further and further behind. We need 100 paramedics every year for the next five years and this government is not keeping pace.

In 2015 Manitoba spent the third most per capita in health care in the country. In 2024 the projection is we will be the second lowest jurisdiction to spend on health care per capita. That is a shame that this Premier wears.

Child care: 23,000 new spaces by next year; that was the goal. We've only had several thousand; we're not going to make that goal and, in fact, one in five children have a child-care spot and the only new child-care spots right now are in the two new schools we build a year in suburban Manitoba. Where they're not building new spots are in established urban neighbourhoods like Fort Rouge, where I met with the Premier's constituents yesterday because they can't get an audience with their own MLA in complaining about the lack of child-care spaces in Fort Rouge. This government is not funding the 40 per cent that's needed with the federal government funding model to actually open up and build more spaces.

On the environment—and this should be the shame of every Progressive in this Chamber—this government is actually worse than Brian Pallister. Brian Pallister had more of a robust environmental agenda than this government. We've actually gone backwards. The signature environmental policy of this Premier was \$340-million gas tax holiday so we could pollute more and drive more. And he has made a legacy of making it cheaper to drive gasoline-powered cars.

*(16:20)

And shockingly, out of one of the only departments—one of the only departments that didn't spend their budget last year, you guessed it: the Environment. Honourable Speaker, \$16 million they under-spent the Environment, which went to other departments. So how do you consider yourself committed to environmental stewardship when you don't even use the money that you budgeted for? And, of course, we're hearing this government musing about spending billions of dollars building gas plants in Manitoba.

And, of course, that leaves public safety, which has been a nightmare in Manitoba. And, of course, the

government says it's going to be tough on the causes of crime; unfortunately, hasn't actually done anything about that. Honourable Speaker, 82 per cent of our jails are—house Indigenous inmates who make up 18 per cent of the population.

The Auditor General reported that, of that population, 91 per cent have issues with substance abuse; another six per cent have mental health issues. So when we talk about systemic racism in our justice system, that's what we're talking about.

We also lead the nation incarcerating children.

So when this Premier (Mr. Kinew) says he's getting tough on crime, what he's really saying is he's getting tough on BIPOC Manitobans. He's getting tough on people suffering from mental health issues. He's getting tough on people with addictions issues.

This government has punched down from the moment it took office, and vulnerable Manitobans, watch out, because they do not have your back.

In fact, the only unit of the Justice Department that was cut was Legal Aid. Legal Aid funding was frozen, and with inflation, it was cut. Every other aspect of the Justice portfolio received a bonus and increased funding, but not Legal Aid, the one area of the justice system that actually represents vulnerable Manitobans. That's a shame.

So we don't have a 'sprendigging' problem in Manitoba; we very much have a revenue problem. As a percentage of GDP this year, it's 25.4 per cent. That's lower than the last three years of the Pallister-Stefanson government.

So budgets are about values, Honourable Speaker. And it tells you what this Premier values and what he doesn't, who this Premier sees and who he continues to ignore.

And when Manitobans learn about this budget, they're disappointed, to say the least, and they realize that this isn't the budget that they wanted, this is not the budget that they needed and, of course, this isn't the change they voted for.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I want to say you're welcome to that member for allowing him to be elected under my name two times.

And so, I also want to say to everybody in the Chamber, and I just want to say to all the people across Manitoba, it's a new day. You have a positive,

hard-working, humble government working on your behalf.

And thank God it's a new day. On a day across North America where seniors and retirees and people trying to plan for their financial futures are watching a stock market sell-off turn into a bear market, you have a coalition of the losers of the last election working together to gum up the system.

That's not politics. That's not democracy. That's not working for the people.

Again, the members opposite really need to think hard about why they came here, about why people sent them to this Chamber. I can tell you each and every single one of the NDP MLAs in this Chamber—well, the NDP MLAs who were strong enough to stay a part of this team—know exactly why they came to this Chamber.

And so again, we're Trump-proofing our economy. We brought in a remarkable budget that brings people together across every geographic and cultural community in Manitoba to build one province, to build one Manitoba.

And, again, it's a great honour and a privilege not only to serve you, the people of Manitoba, but also to work with this amazing team of high performers, of people who know how to work together, of people who know how to build a consensus and seek common ground in order to put what matters first, which is you, and the well-being and health and safety of all of our communities across this great province.

So rather than talking about myself or stories that I have been privileged to witness, I wanted to say that I'm going to talk about the team here. And because we're talking about the budget speech, I want to begin by talking about the Finance Minister. You've got the best Finance Minister in the entire country right here, in Manitoba.

He's somebody with an encyclopedic knowledge of every single government program, who does a remarkable job stewarding the Treasury Board process and is an active participant when we're working on these issues. And, again, if you just reflect on what putting together this year's budget was like, again, one day the tariffs are on, the next day the tariffs are off. One day they're back on, the next hour they're off, and then the hour subject to that, well, again, they're going to be removed.

And this Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) was running into my office at every turn, doing check-ins

and making sure that all of the finances and programs and policy expenditures to keep you healthy and keep you safe are going to be on track. And so I wanted to say, shout-out, amazing job.

We talk about the member for Assiniboia (MLA Kennedy) who just today announced 4 and a half million dollars for the tourism industry. We talk about the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) who announced new money for the Park Community Centre; the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar) who brought in new funding for gurdwaras renovations in the city; the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) who has launched a public-safety strategy with actual resources to back it up, not just like the press releases the PCs liked to do in the past.

You got the member for Dauphin (Mr. Kostyshyn) who not only advocated for \$100 million in ag supports in this year's budget, but, you guessed it: a second consecutive year of freezing what? Ag Crown lands. Fort Richmond's MLA is hard at work at the Treasury Board; the MLA for Keewatinook is building the airport in Wasagamack; the Kildonan-River East MLA is always banging the table for support for seniors, that's why we got the renters tax credit and a bunch of PCHs in this budget.

The member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) on Treasury Board is put their mark on every single program that this budget entails, as well as making history this past Monday, with the Trans Day of Visibility. Want to give a shout-out to Lagimodière's MLA for their work on child-care centres in southeast Winnipeg; McPhillips, who advocated stringently for the new school in West St. Paul; the member for Notre Dame (MLA Marcelino) who is single-handedly rebuilding a department that was destroyed by Jon Reyes in the past.

The member for Point Douglas (Ms. Smith) whose Your Way Home program is making a real difference for real people in our communities each and every day. The member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) getting a new school for northeast Winnipeg. The member for Riel (MLA Moyes) installing a wonderful new group at the Clean Environment Commission. The member for River Heights (MLA Moroz) with the child-care centre and facilities at Sharey Zedek Temple.

Rossmere—what hasn't she done in the Education Department? When we're talking about Seine River, new investments in the Perimeter Highway. Southdale—

prepping more use for the future; St. Boniface—des services pour la francophonie dans le Manitoba [*Francophone services in Manitoba*]; St. James—we know that there's—well, I've already talked at length about him; the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine)—again, hard-working, \$20 million for the MMIWG2S+ initiatives; St. Vital—supporting BIZ in the face of the Trump tariff tax; Maples, the Buy Canadian program in government; The Pas-Kameesak with the new clinic for her community; Thompson—the foot-care services return that were cut under the PCs.

Transcona's newest MLA—a new personal-care home she's bringing to there; and in the city Tuxedo has a heart for nurses; Union Station—1,255 health-care workers and a new emergency room for the Victoria general hospital; Waverley—not one, but two new schools in that constituency; and, of course, Wolseley—we're going to build, build, build, with \$3.7 billion in capital investments.

So to the PC MLAs, this is what a real team looks like. Each one of them can bring their ideas forward and we build it together. We're working for you each and every day. Please keep in mind that our team is going to rebuild the health care and make your life more affordable. And to the members opposite: Don't you wish that you could have run 'youth' government the way that we are today?

That's my time. Honourable Speaker, I really want to thank the people across the province who continue to work with us, participating in the prebudget consultations, weighing in on social media, approaching us at the rally for Canada, even the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) coming up to me at the lac du [*lake of the*]—at the rally for Canada yesterday and just, you know, talking about how excited he was, like a kid in the candy shop.

* (16:30)

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 35(7), I'm interrupting the proceedings to put the question necessary to dispose of the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government and all amendments to that motion.

First, the question before the House now is the proposed amendment by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Do members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I heard a yes.

So

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all 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 the historic rise of education property taxes for Manitoba homeowners; and
- (d) failing to commit to lowering the education tax for Manitoba business; and
- (e) failing Manitoban to—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 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 Teams 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-effective and timely progress on the infrastructure projects instead of causing unnecessary delays and budget overruns; and
- (o) failing to come forward with a meaningful plan to address the many issues—Manitoba—in Manitoba's vulnerable communities; and
- (p) failing to prioritize new schools, 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 mineral 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; and
- (r) failing to provide the necessary investments to recruit and train needed conservation officers in Manitoba; and
- (s) failing to prioritize the expansion of Manitoba conservation officers; 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.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in the House in favour of adopting the amendment, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On division, please.

The Speaker: The motion is passed on—the motion is defeated on division.

* * *

The Speaker: So now we will move on to the main motion.

The question before the House is the proposed motion—[interjection]

Order, please.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that this House approves in general the budgetary policies of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

The Speaker: All those in the House in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): I would like to request a recorded vote.

The Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested, call in the members.

* (16:40)

Order, please.

The time has expired, so the question before the House is the—and I've lost the question.

The question before the House is the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Ayes

Asagwara, Blashko, Brar, Bushie, Cable, Chen, Compton, Corbett, Cross, Dela Cruz, Devgan, Fontaine, Kennedy, Kinew, Kostyshyn, Lathlin, Loiselle, Maloway, Marcelino, Moroz, Moses, Moyes, Naylor, Oxenham, Pankratz, Redhead, Sala, Sandhu, Schmidt, Schott, Simard, Smith, Wiebe.

Nays

Balcaen, Bereza, Byram, Cook, Ewasko, Goertzen, Guenter, Hiebert, Johnson, Khan, King, Lagassé, Lamoureux, Narth, Nesbitt, Perchotte, Piwniuk, Schuler, Stone, Wasyliv, Wharton, Wowchuk.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Ayes 33, Nays 22.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

The Speaker: What is the will of the House?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Is it the will of the House to call it 5?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? [Agreed]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 7, 2025

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