



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
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COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
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DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
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KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
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LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
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MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
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OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
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PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
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SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
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WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline 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****PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Can you please—good morning, Honourable Speaker. Can you please resume debate on Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act.

**Speaker's Statement**

**The Speaker:** Prior to—orders of the day, private members' business. And before recognizing the minister, I have a statement advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader and the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux) indicating that the member for Tyndall Park has identified Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities), as their selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each independent member to select one private member's bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote,

and requires the Government House Leader and the member to provide written notice as to the date and time of the debate and vote.

I have therefore been advised that Bill 225 will be debated at second reading on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, starting at 10 a.m., with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m. Note that, in accordance with rule 24(7), any recorded vote requested would be deferred to Thursday, April 17, 2025, at 11:55 a.m.

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—  
PUBLIC BILLS****Bill 208—The Manitoba Small Business  
Month Act (Commemoration of Days,  
Weeks and Months Act Amended)**

**The Speaker:** Now, as previously announced, we will be resuming debate on Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Standing in the name of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain, who has three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I'm just so proud to stand up here about the small business Bill 208, put some few more words on the record.

I know on our side of this House, I have—you know, I have such great colleagues here that are part of small businesses of their own. I—actually, we are able to relate to what small business people out there have to be challenged with, especially with tariffs that are coming ahead. Again, when you're a small business and you're—especially if you're starting out and you're making—try to make payroll, and I don't think there's been any members on the other side that actually had to worry about making their payroll for staff that they're almost like family.

And, Honourable Speaker, I remember times where we made sure that our employees were paid and making sure that we went out—without, making sure that we had to do more business to make sure that our businesses were successful, and I'm sure memory—members on this side remember all that that and the challenges that we had to face.

And like I said, it's so important that we establish the month when it comes to small business. I know the

member for Seine River (MLA Cross) has brought this forward. I think she's one of the only few that are on that side that had any experience in small business; know what people are going through. So, again, I'm so honoured that we have colleagues here on this side that can relate.

Some of my biggest connections I have is in the business community, not only in the town of Virden and the area of western Manitoba and the Turtle Mountain's area, but also in Winnipeg. I started my career in small business in Winnipeg and had an opportunity to move out west to the Westman, which is kind of where I grew up and it's my—I feel that it's home for me, is in the western part of this province.

And many business owners that I've actually worked with, as clients of mine—I specialized in small businesses' clients when it came to financial planning. I can relate to them, I knew their challenges, their goals, their aspirations. And some of the challenges that they had to face were living on the western side when we actually compete with Saskatchewan when it comes to policy, taxation. The issue there is it's more attractive to be on the Saskatchewan side because of their tax treatments, and here in Manitoba with another NDP government, we're going to see in the future taxes going up, and we're already seeing that with education property taxes are going up, big time.

And this is going to be a really impact, especially with the same time that the same business people are worrying about when it comes to tariffs that Donald Trump has put forward, and making it very uncertain of where their business is going and if they're going to be around in the next number of years, if this war continues—with the tariff war.

So I'm so honoured to put some words on the record, Honourable Speaker, and I'm going to pass it on to one of my other colleagues.

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Appreciate the opportunity to rise today to talk about small businesses in Manitoba.

From a perspective in Lakeside, we have a number of small businesses that employ a number of people. Know our robust agricultural sector in Lakeside, they're still considered small businesses that contribute largely to the economy of the province. We've got some of the largest dairy and beef producers, poultry and hog operations throughout the constituency of Lakeside, and even though some of them have become corporations, they still—we still consider them small businesses and we appreciate

their contribution as they employ many people, many young people in our constituency.

There's currently an aquaculture facility being built in Lakeside, Sapphire Springs, which is going to—\$200-million facility that will be employing close to 350 people that we still consider it a small business because it employs our—a lot of our local residents and contributing to their—bringing up their families and settling in the constituency of Lakeside.

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

\* (10:10)

Also in Lakeside, we've got 26 Hutterite colonies, and they all have some sort of manufacturing, or not just the agriculture sector, but many are manufacturing all kinds of things, from cabinets to cattle-handling equipment to garbage bins—I could go on and on, but all—just about each and every one of those 26 Hutterite colonies in the constituency of Lakeside are manufacturing something in their colonies, as well as producing crops and livestock. Many of them actually do hire people outside of the colony. They bring them in because they don't have enough expertise or enough manpower of their own in these manufacturing sectors to produce the products that they make. So many of our local people are getting jobs on our Hutterite colonies.

Now, small businesses in Manitoba are a huge part of our GDP, a large percentage, and maybe just slightly below the average in Canada. So the importance of small businesses in our province is something that our government needs to take seriously going forward and especially with the threat of tariffs in sight here. They definitely need to be supported.

I remember growing up on the farm, I would have my own little enterprises of small business just for some extra cash and eventually taking over the farm. So yes, I was—we would have meat chickens we used to raise and we'd sell them to the neighbours, and we had laying hens with eggs we would sell off to the neighbours and the friends. So that's what we considered a small business or how many of us started out our own little enterprises on the farm when we were younger.

And, in fact, just recently, my eldest son started up the layer operation again. He purchased 26 laying hens for his daughter, for my granddaughter, to go out and pick the eggs every day and sell them off again to the neighbours and the friends. So these are all ways that people maybe learn some entrepreneurial skills and start their small businesses from scratch and build

them into bigger ones which eventually can employ people throughout our province.

There's many small-business owners such as electricians, carpenters, plumbers that have started businesses out there that have hired people, and also many I know that they own a small business and they still have a job on the side just to subsidize their businesses to keep them afloat and keep them successful. Even growing up on the farm, I know my dad always had a job off the farm just to support it. So we see that quite often where a lot of small businesses are subsidizing their income with a full- or part-time job other than their business, or vice versa; they'll have a full-time job and have a small business on the side to supplement their income. So that just goes to show how active small business is in our province.

When I was on council in the RM of Woodlands, I was a huge proponent of a small business that started in just north of Woodlands on a farm called Arrowquip. They built cattle-handling equipment and my time on council, they proposed to expand. This is a Plymouth Brethren operation and I really truly supported what they were doing.

Now, in Woodlands, they've expanded that operation to employ close to 200 people in the town of Woodlands. They've grown that operation three times since I was on council 10 years ago. And, not only that, but they started a new business right beside it and built a brand-new building that just opened up here the first of this year. And they manufacture zero-turn lawnmowers.

**An Honourable Member:** Yakta.

**Mr. King:** They're the—Yakta. They're the only zero-turn manufacturer in Canada and 75 per cent of their exports go to the US.

Now, what do we build lawnmowers with? An awful lot of steel. What do we build cattle-handling equipment with? Awful lot of steel. So they're facing some pretty serious consequences here, with the tariffs on steel and everything else, so it's quite concerning for them. And definitely show my support for them any way I can as they are, probably, with those two businesses now, we're looking at 350 to 400 people that they employ within our community.

So, again, the example there was they started with something real small on an acreage, on a farm, just north of Woodlands, to a huge manufacturing facility for both the cattle-handling equipment now their zero-turn lawnmowers. So when there's opportunity and entrepreneurship like that throughout our

province, it's definitely something that we should support, in any way we can to recognize not just the fact that they're contributing to our GDP, but they're contributing to employing a huge number of our local people. And, of course, that we know, can't hire all local people; there's not maybe enough or the expertise isn't there. So they actually are bringing people in from other countries to work in their facilities because of their expertise and their knowledge on not just manufacturing, but the marketing and all kinds of aspects of how they run their operation.

#### *The Speaker in the Chair*

So some key manufacturers and businesses in our Manitoba that are creating employment, and my hats go out to these people for—and these businesses for doing what they do to contribute to our local economy. And along with that, those jobs, of course, creates people building houses, people needing to take their kids to school, their kids to daycare. We need those facilities, as well, that we need to support. As we grow older, we need personal-care homes.

And all these things contribute to the growth of business in our community because, you know, if we have these things that we can provide for our residents, it gives the businesses an opportunity to thrive as well.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I thank thee for the opportunity to stand today and talk about small business in Manitoba.

Thank you.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act, commemoration of days, weeks, months act amended.

This is something that I'm very passionate about. I've grown up in small business, I come from a long line of entrepreneurs, generations of my family have been independent business owners and I'm proud to carry on that legacy.

I've—I don't know if I should say that I'm proud of it, but I've never had a pay cheque from an employer in my life. So, already from going through high school into university, through university and into business ownership as my primary source of income, I've been an independent business owner and I'm proud of that. I'm proud to look back at my time growing up as having employees. My family has employed people; these are our neighbours and our friends and people

that we interact with in the community. So it's great to see that we're recognizing small businesses and the contribution that they have to Manitoba and to our communities.

\* (10:20)

Many people don't realize that almost 98 per cent of business in Manitoba is small business, and this aligns with the statistic nationwide: 98 per cent of businesses across Canada are small business. It's significant. Nearly all business is a small business.

What really makes a difference is the impact that small businesses have on the local community. These are the neighbourhoods. It's small businesses that you see the advertisements up in arenas, baseball diamonds, sponsoring school field trips. It generally isn't the large corporations that are contributing to your son or daughter participating in community sports. It's the corner store that appreciates the support of their friends and neighbours, and these are the people that are making the economy go round in our province.

What I hope we can also realize here—and I'm hoping that this NDP government is being mindful of the importance of small business, because in the past, as a business owner, I haven't seen that recognition for generations, if we look back in the history of Manitoba and governments that have led this province. Entrepreneurs have felt neglected and abandoned by NDP governments. So it's great that a member of the NDP caucus has brought forward Bill 208 because it may be a signal that some members of this current government are recognizing the importance of small business.

Honourable Speaker, 71 per cent of private sector employment is done by small businesses and entrepreneurs—small-business entrepreneurs—just across our province. Many times, people don't understand the burden that is on the shoulders of entrepreneurs and small-business owners. As my colleague from Lakeside had touched on just earlier, these people take on the risk to employ their neighbours, their friends, build their local economy.

And they take tremendous risk, as he had stated. Some people, as they pursue their passion and their dream of business ownership and providing a service to their community or a unique product, as he had stated with Arrowquip in his constituency, these individuals take tremendous risk. Sometimes that means that they take on other employment, they leverage other assets in order to take that risk.

So business owners, as we see threats on our economy right now with a looming—an ongoing looming trade war, these individuals, they're not looking at their employees as a number. When they look at their employee each day on the shop floor, they see the young children, they see their wives at home, the wives of those employees or husbands of those employees at home raising a family and being dependent on that employment that both, you know, fulfills a passion for the entrepreneur and provides sustainable employment for the employees.

Unfortunately, what we're seeing under this NDP government is ever-growing dissatisfaction by entrepreneurs. Just this past month, CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in Manitoba, had surveyed its membership, and small business optimism had plummeted to an all-time low. In Manitoba, the index dropped to 24.1—dropped 24.1 points to 30.2, reaching the lowest—a lower mark than during the 2020 pandemic; and also, the 2008 financial crisis and the wake of 9/11. It's greatly concerning to see the lack of optimism of small-business owners and entrepreneurs across our province.

I represent a southern Manitoba constituency that is deeply rooted in entrepreneurship, manufacturing, agriculture production, and I hear from my constituents daily their frustration with the lack of optimism that them and their fellow business owners have within the marketplace.

The reason for this is some of the recent legislation that the NDP government has brought forward or repealed. One of those things is the ban of replacement workers. Private business owners see this as a slippery slope, when their employees, depending on if it's a unionized workplace or not, may not have the say in whether or not they can go to work and work for the employer that they feel has treated them well. It muzzles their voice and limits their ability to work and create an income for their family.

The second one is the reintroduction of the project labour agreements. This, again, is bringing us back in time to a time where private business didn't feel that they were welcomed in Manitoba and eager entrepreneurs were leaving our province for greener pastures.

It can be something as simple—these are all signals that small-business owners are taking from the operations of this current NDP government, and something simple that I think this NDP government has not given much thought to but really resonates with businesses is the repeal of PST commissions

for businesses. These individual entrepreneurs are creating wealth for our province and income for families, and they're being completely disrespected in their contribution to the PST generation of our province.

So, with that, I hope that the NDP government, with Bill 208, is increasing its awareness of small business in Manitoba.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** It's always a great day when we're having the opportunity to discuss small business.

I started my career in business as a entrepreneur. I had the joy and the thrill of opening four different concepts, and it was quite the path to go down. A partner and I, we opened up Espresso Junction at The Forks, and Christmas Traditions at The Forks. In fact, when we started the process, the Johnston Terminal was on the cusp of being torn down. It was literally occupied by pigeons and by all kinds of vermin.

The Marwest Group of Companies decided to take on the building. They had a lot of vision; it was in very derelict shape, and with a lot of patience, they rehabbed the Johnston Terminal and we became the tenants on the main floor.

\* (10:30)

And it was a very interesting process of negotiating leases. And it's interesting hearing our socialist friends across the way talking about leases and restricting leases, and most of them wouldn't know what a lease is if it ended up on their dinner plate. And to negotiate a lease takes a lot of effort. There are exclusive clauses in there. Our nemesis was, at that time, Kricklewood, who are also an anchor tenant in the Johnston Terminal and we had quite a tussle about what we were allowed to sell and they weren't.

The third business that I started on my own was called Amelia Arndt Presents and that was quite the experience. It was probably the best concept business I ever opened up. It was everything personalized. I went to Canadian Gift & Tableware Association trade show in Toronto and suppliers were very excited about it. And we opened up at The Forks in spring of 1997. And for those of you who remember spring of 1997, it was the year of the great flood.

And I still believe Amelia Arndt Presents was my most brilliant concept and timing just wasn't on our side, and we eventually had to pull the plug, because

Highway 75 was destroyed. Because of flood of the century, no tourists were coming that year. It was very, very grim. Tourism was dead because of the flood, those of you who remember living through it.

And the fourth one was Gingerbread World Inc., which is the one that had the most staying power. It still exists today and the current owner is just a dynamic individual. Tamara Roehr runs it; it's a catalogue sale business and brings in product from Europe and sells it in Canada, and she's done just amazing job with it.

And to listen to the NDP—and it's great to talk, but I would suggest to colleagues, one of the things we have to be careful about in the Chamber, and that I would suggest to you: NDP talk is cheap. In fact, there was one businessman in the city, and I don't want to steal his slogan, but he keeps talking about: It's cheaper than free. And I would suggest to you that NDP talk is often cheaper than free. To talk about small business is one thing, but to do something about it—and I want to use a case in point.

It was under the Filmon government, and it had to do about workers' compensation fees. At the time, when the Filmon government was in, in the beginning of their administration, Christmas traditions with ornaments would pay the same compensation fee as a construction company. So envision this: that you might break an ornament and have a paper cut on your finger was compared to heavy, heavy construction projects. And we paid the same fee.

Well, it was the Conservative government, and I don't remember who the minister was anymore, but they actually spoke to me as a small-business owner and consult and asked what I thought. And, of course, it made sense. Because then they've made us into categories—they made categories for us. So I got into a retail category which in real terms—I'm talking real terms—in those days—you have to remember that this is back many, many years ago. We went from paying approximately \$1,500 a year in workers' comp fees down to \$300 a year, because you were in a certain category, and it was based on how many injuries you had, is what your category then, your fees were set at.

It was a huge savings for small business. And I would say to the NDP and the individual who moved this motion forward, a entrepreneur family, I take it, and you know what, great to do the talk. But now what are you going to do about it? Like, now you have to talk to small business and say: How can we make things better?

All of us will know that the chances of us getting a BMW, a Mercedes-Benz or a Kia manufacturing here in Winnipeg are probably not that great. But what we can do is grow small business into medium business and medium businesses into big business. That's the place where we can help small business grow in Manitoba. And so the talk is good. It's good to honour small businesses. But more importantly, we have to do things that help them.

And I would suggest, for instance, we have a very good, burgeoning small coffee and small restaurant, and we're just a climate—you have to sit indoors. In the winter at -20°, -30°—even the last few days, although it's warming up, it is still very cold. The breeze goes through and it's too cold to sit outside. It's not like a European café in Paris. But for the spring and summer and fall months where you can be outside, you can actually double your space. You put tables and chairs outside and you can do really good business, and you actually hedge against the winter months where you're restricted how much seating you have.

But then all the rules and regulations come in because you need so and so many bathroom stalls for some and so many seats in your restaurant. Well, we have to allow businesses, for those few months, to override those rules so, that way, they can at least expand out into the sidewalks. And frankly, that's what people want. People want to be able to sit outside in our beautiful summers, which are second to none. Our summers are just glorious and beautiful, and of course we want businesses to be using outside.

I would suggest that, rather than just talk—and again, talk is cheaper than free—to do some concrete things to help small businesses, especially now when people are reluctant to go travel to the United States, when people are reluctant to be travelling internationally because of all the upheaval. I would suggest China is the other place that's not particularly a favourable place to be travelling. But then they can travel here and utilize the good things that we have here.

And we should be looking at how can we encourage small business to grow and develop. I know we don't want to pick winners and losers, so I hesitate to use names, but I see various coffee companies and various coffee shops and individuals who are designing, artists who are doing incredibly well. And as long as we help them, and we should help them get in to trade shows, help them getting into different markets. That's what we should be doing for Manitobans.

So talk is one thing, and I would caution the NDP: they tend to be a tax and spend. Careful on the tax side, because you will chase away small business, because small business, usually the first five years, it's like 80 per cent of them fail. So don't chase them away. Let's encourage them to grow and let's celebrate small business. As a former entrepreneur and small-business owner, I think that's the place to be.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Good morning, Honourable Speaker. It is a pleasure to be able to speak following my colleague from Springfield, who I know has much small-business experience. And I want to speak a little bit about my experience, not running small business but working in what became a medium-sized business in Manitoba, but what started off as a small-size business.

And for long-time members of the Chamber, and I know there are less of those now than there have been in the past, but those who've been in the Chamber for a long time will remember my predecessor, Jim Penner, who didn't start but followed in the footsteps of his father—store, which ultimately became Penner Foods. And that began in Steinbach, on Main Street.

Those who are familiar with Steinbach—I know the NDP don't visit Steinbach often. I would encourage them to visit it more often, but when they do, if they were driving down Main Street, there's a coffee shop now called Main Bread and Butter. It's owned by the former mayor of the City of Steinbach. And on that location was the original Penner Foods; it was called Penner Tomboy at that time. And that's where Jim Penner's father started up that small business on Main Street in Steinbach.

\* (10:40)

Ultimately, he became ill. Jim took over the store and built a new store right beside it, quite a bit larger. Jim was seeing that there was a need for parking. People were becoming more mobile in terms of driving their vehicles, and so he wanted to have that frontal parking lot. And it became the first store on Main Street in Steinbach that had a large parking surface on the front of it; the store didn't go right up against Main Street.

That building, unfortunately, burnt down about three or four years ago, and so a new building is going up in its place, but it served, I think, Jim Penner and Penner Foods well for a number of years.



And then, again, progress came along and the store was growing, and Jim decided that they needed even more parking. There was a reason why they called him—Parking Penner [*phonetic*] was his nickname, because he was fixated with parking and the need for parking, but he saw where society was going. And so him, along with Ernie Penner of EG Penner, they built a mall now on the outside—it was then on the outside of the city of Steinbach. There was nothing between Steinbach and where that mall was built; essentially, now, it's entirely filled up over the years. But in the 1980s, they built this mall, and Jim Penner's Penner Foods was an anchor store. EG Penner's was another anchor store.

Now, what happened, of course, and those who are old enough will remember that in the early 1980s, interest rates went through the roof and interest rates were 20 and 30 per cent—or, up to 30 per cent, but largely around 20 to 25 per cent. So businesses were struggling; individuals were struggling.

And I remember Jim telling me the story—I ultimately worked at Penner Foods in the mid-1980s, and so this was before that—but Jim was telling me the story about how he got his family together in the early 1980s, in that time of high interest rates, and he said to the kids and to his wife: we might very well not survive this. If the banks decide that they want to foreclose on us, we're done. You're each going to have to sort of get your own jobs and find your own careers and find your own way. You've been very tied to the family business, as I have through my father, and now you through me, but I'm preparing you that you might have to find a different path in life than the one of our family business.

Which, by then, had become, I would say, a medium-sized business in Manitoba, having stores in Altona, and having stores in Winkler and in Winnipeg in Transcona and Henderson Highway, and they ultimately would build one in south Winnipeg.

And Jim would tell me that the only reason that they survived that is that the bank didn't want a rural mall. They wouldn't have known what to do with a rural mall if they had foreclosed on the company at that time, and so that essentially saved the business—not the fact that they economically were doing well, but that the bank saw no value in foreclosing and taking over this rural mall and trying to run it themselves.

Well, history would show that the company went on to be very successful getting through that turmoil. Built another location, as I mentioned, in south

Winnipeg. Ultimately, I think, employed well over three- to four-hundred employees. Many young people had a good start in their career, including myself, and I credit my fortunate ability to work at Penner Foods as helping me get into university and be able to fund university, ultimately, which helped to change my life and the direction of my life. But that company did very well at that point.

And when you look back at what small business, generally—and I'm using this as an example, Honourable Speaker—does for our communities, Penner Foods invested in the Manitoba Marathon very significantly, invested in the Variety Club of Manitoba—in fact, Jim was honoured by them at one point later in his life. Because small business and medium-sized business in Manitoba is connected to the community, is connected to the fabric of the community and, more so than large corporations, which might be centred somewhere else or headquartered somewhere else, they understand the values of those communities and they tend to give back to those communities. So they not only provide local jobs and support local products, but they reinvest in those communities.

And it's hard to put a value on that, other than we know it's invaluable. We know that when individuals or small businesses give back into the community, it has a huge ripple impact, it has a huge ripple effect, that continues to benefit those communities in the long run.

So I think that all of us look at a resolution like this and go, well, this is good, this is valuable to speak well of the things that we know are important, that small businesses is an example.

But as my friend and colleague said, from Springfield, just previous to me, talk is one thing and talk is not without value—it's a large part of what we do as politicians—but talk isn't valuable in and of itself. And that is the challenge here that I think Manitoba businesses are looking at with the NDP.

So of course, today, the dominant issue is tariffs and what impact that's going to have on the economy, the stock market. One hopes that the issue of tariffs will be resolved and that there'll be some common sense, and better thought process happening in the United States and that the tariff walls will come down and we'll get much closer to the situation we were before, in a free-trade environment which benefit both Canada and the United States and many other parts of the world.

But even if we return to that quickly, which we all hope that we will, that doesn't take away many of the challenges that currently exist in Manitoba. Long before the tariffs were happening, just in the last couple of months, we saw many restaurants, as one example, that were closing down in Manitoba. In fact, I remember news stories—reading news stories about well-known, long-established restaurants in Manitoba that were shutting down, and many of them talked about the high cost of taxes, talked about input costs, talked about labour costs—things that they couldn't sustain. And that it just wasn't profitable for them to remain open.

They also talked about crime, for an example, and the costs that the crime was costing to their business. So all of those challenges existed prior to the tariffs and even if the tariffs go away tomorrow, which we all hope that they do, those challenges still remain for businesses to deal with: the issues of crime, the issues of high input costs, the issues of labour, or even finding labour that is consistent and sustainable. All of those issues were small businesses were dealing with before in the restaurant industry—but beyond the restaurant industry, because there were other small businesses that were closing down, as well, and continue to close down—are still there at that moment.

And that is where I think the NDP haven't addressed the issue fully enough. Bring in a resolution, praise small business—I think we all think that's a good idea, for some of the reasons that I suggested, for some of the reasons that others suggested: yes, they're employers; they bring value to the community; they invest in the community; they're part of the cultural fabric, in many ways, of our community. But then you have to demonstrate that support in a more tangible and meaningful way.

A resolution in the Legislature isn't going to reduce taxes for those small businesses. It's not going to help them find employees. It's not going to reduce crime. It's not going to fundamentally change any of the challenges that those small businesses were dealing with prior to tariffs and prior to this resolution being brought forward.

So, with the few remaining seconds that I have left on these comments, I would encourage the NDP to go back and look at substantive ways that they can help small businesses and to help them flourish, because just like Penner Foods might not have existed past the 1980s, we wouldn't have had all those benefits

if it didn't. And we need to keep those small businesses in business.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** It brings me pleasure to be able to speak about small businesses in Manitoba. It's the backbone—it's the backbone—of our province and what a better place to be in a small business than in the centre of the country.

The one thing about being in small business in Manitoba, too, is all the possibilities that are out there. But we also have to remember to stop taking those barriers down. We must stop—we must take barriers down so that small businesses can thrive and can continue to move along.

Small businesses, like I said, is the backbone of our province when we think of things like skilled labour that's out there. You know, we were in meetings in the past where we've met with companies like small plumbing companies, small electrical companies that maybe started out as somebody working for another company, but decided to start their own company.

Again, those companies grow into little bigger companies and then again, they shoot off again into smaller companies, but it's those entrepreneurs that take that opportunity to go out on their own. But going out on their own doesn't come without hardships as well, too.

\* (10:50)

And we must make it easier for small businesses in Manitoba. We must help them for things like remitting sales tax. We must help them when it comes to training employees. We must help them when it comes to bringing down provincial barriers. And we have to look at—with small businesses, there are certain skills that are involved with those businesses, too. And when we talk about small businesses such as the paving companies that we deal with—*[interjection]*—the small businesses that we deal with with paving, you know, road construction and other things like that.

We look at grocery store businesses, you know, and again, when it's so important that we are dealing with made in Manitoba, buy Canadian, buy local. And we look what these companies do, as well, too, these small businesses, not only are they contributing to the economy, but they're giving back. They're giving back so much to our communities that we'll never be able to thank them for that. In ways such as foundations to

help things out—like we've talked about in Portage with the small businesses giving back into things like our, you know, proposed MRI for the Portage hospital. That money that's coming there, that the foundation is talking about, is coming from many small businesses within Portage la Prairie.

We also have a small business that started in Portage la Prairie, and I just want to recite their motto because I think it's so important, and I'm going to have the opportunity to recognize them today. And their motto is to succeed by helping others succeed. And that's a small business that started out of Portage la Prairie called Shindico.

And the Shindleman brothers, Robert and Sandy, I can still remember one of the stories they talked about. They started in the agriculture business and they started in the grocery business. And Eddie Shindleman sent his son Sandy out to buy some cattle south of Portage. And in doing that, he'd come back, big smile on his face, said: Dad, I did it, I bought some cattle, and you told me to spend no more than a dollar and a half a pound. And, he said, I got that cattle for—I got that cow for \$1.20. His dad taught him a very valuable lesson that day, and sent him back to that farmer and told him to pay him what his cattle was worth, and that was the \$1.50.

You know, again, so, our small businesses really do provide a lot for our communities.

I also want to talk about a couple other small businesses in Portage la Prairie that are critical, again, to our economy there. Cobbe's Plumbing & Heating. Cobbe's Plumbing and Heating started out with two brothers, Garry and Gerry Cobbe, who are passed away now, but, again, provided employment, gave the opportunity for different companies to move forward from working with Cobbe's, and not with, you know, looking at, oh, these guys are going to be in competition to me, but looking at another opportunity for a small business to get started out.

Myself, I'd started out in the agriculture career as I talked about, and had the opportunity to work for many small businesses. But one small business in particular was a seed company, and they gave me the opportunity to come on with them and be with this company. And again, when you're in small business, people sometimes think that you're crazy for what you're doing.

There was never any soybeans grown in Manitoba, we were less than 20,000 acres of

soybeans, and these guys convinced me to join them because of what they brought to the marketplace.

And again, that soybean business grew to over 3 million acres in Manitoba. But it was also other small businesses that continued to grow with that business as well, too. And again, the agriculture business is one of those businesses that continues to give back, and we must give these small businesses the opportunity to operate, to do business, to do business easily and be able to move their business forward.

But it doesn't just have to be large businesses like that. I look at businesses—I can remember my mom selling Avon. You know, we run into other people out there, too, that, you know, around Portage la Prairie and around my constituency, there's a lot of hunting and fishing that goes on. But particularly the Métis people around St. Ambrose that are so heavily involved in the guiding business, when it comes to ducks and geese.

We also, you know, again, from businesses like that, we have the trapping business, which again, trapping business, to trap furs. Furs are turned into coats, maybe turned into a nice, small hat or that, but again, it gives them the opportunity to have their own business, to grow their own business, to be their own boss and to give back.

We're—we also see a number of immigrants that are coming to Canada as well now, too, and I look at the number of immigrants that are starting small businesses in our community, like the Ukrainian immigrants that are doing dance now, nail businesses, providing food like there's nothing else out there. It gives them the opportunity to feel a want and a need in the community.

So small businesses are very important to our economy. But also, when we continue to look at small businesses as well, too, is we look at things like car dealerships and that. That the car dealerships, again, they—you know, they started off maybe as a small operation and then some of them have grown to 70, 80, 90 people. But again, they're still small, independent businesses that buy locally, sell locally and provide for the economic benefit of our communities.

We—again, the—it takes the middle man out a lot of times, because when you are dealing with a small business, typically what it is, is you're dealing with an owner, and you're dealing with the owner that is purchasing material from a supplier, and then he can go on and move that product along.

But when we look at, you know, some of these grocery stores that have now spawned into bakery shops as well, too, that are making cinnamon buns to cakes to anything out there that's consumable. And again, I have to, in the last few seconds that I have here, as well, too, is, you know, to all of the small businesses out there: I salute you, keep doing the great work that you are doing.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I just want to talk a little bit and a real hats off to all those small businesses out there that work so hard.

And I know in the Swan Valley area, we have a lot of small businesses, and a lot of them are innovative. They started small, they're getting big and, you know, a lot—especially a lot of the places with foods, you know, you've got Benito Meats. I can't drive through Benito without stopping in there and picking up some pepperoni sticks or—sorry, okay, I just had the paper over top of the speaker.

You can't drive through there without stopping in to get some of their great innovative inventions that they've made for meats or Old West jerky in Swan River.

Can't keep up to those honey garlic sticks and pepperoni and their garlic sausage. And, you know, a lot of times now, you go to a lot of the places—we'll go to Qwik Stop and people like Julie—Julie's perogies, and you know, everybody that passes through Swan.

So Swan—or small business is actually the backbone—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have nine minutes remaining.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 6—Homelessness

**The Speaker:** The hour is now 11 a.m. and the time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the one brought forward by the honourable member for Radisson.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (MLA Corbett),

*WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government continued to fail vulnerable Manitobans by leaving those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity without the supports they needed; and*

*WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government hurt low-income Manitobans by selling off more housing units than they created during their seven and a half years in government, causing more Manitobans to experience homelessness; and*

*WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government cut funding to the maintenance portion of the budget for Manitoba Housing, leaving buildings to deteriorate by ignoring necessary repair jobs, causing residents to suffer due to poor living conditions; and*

*WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government hurt Manitobans by raising taxes on renters by cutting the Renter's Tax Credit; and*

*WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government didn't care when it cut almost 70 frontline staff positions at Manitoba Housing, leaving renters unsafe in their units; and*

*WHEREAS the current Provincial Government is looking out for Manitobans living in encampments through the Your Way Home strategy, which moves people into housing with wraparound supports to end chronic homelessness; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government made good on its promise to create more houses by housing 1,200 Manitobans within its first year in government; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government's first Budget in 2024 allocated \$116 million to help build 350 social and affordable housing units and repair over 3,000 more, supporting thousands of Manitobans and getting them into the housing units they need.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba commend the provincial government for housing over 1,200 Manitobans in its first year, starting with the development of over 560 units of social and affordable housing, restoring and rebuilding Manitoba Housing and for continuing to move people out of encampments into supportive housing through the Your Way Home strategy, Manitoba's plan to end chronic homelessness by 2031.

**Motion presented.**

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Today it is an honour to rise on this resolution—to present this resolution in order to facilitate a dialogue in this Chamber that, frankly, doesn't get talked about enough because members opposite hardly ever ask a question about housing, about homelessness, in this Chamber.

Honourable Speaker, it's an honour to lift up the work of our incredible minister of housing, homelessness and addictions. She is courageous, she is brave, she is compassionate and she is tough. Her plan for our province and for our ambitious goal of eradicating homelessness by 2031 comes from her brilliant mind itself. And so there is some great work that we ought to highlight today.

And like I mentioned earlier, members opposite hardly ask questions about this in question period, so this resolution gives us the opportunity to finally put some words on the record about the great work being done by our minister and our NDP government.

Honourable Speaker, our team wants the same thing that Manitobans want: getting people out of tents and into housing; housing that is safe, that is secure and where they can live with dignity.

For seven and a half years, the PCs failed to take action, Honourable Speaker. They sold off social housing while cutting funding to services. They forced Manitobans out onto the street and into bus shelters. They left Manitobans in a bad situation.

Our NDP government has made significant progress in helping Manitobans experiencing homelessness find a safe place to live with the supports that they need. We have connected over 1,200 Manitobans with housing within our first year of government. And since writing this resolution, Honourable Speaker, that has increased to over 1,900 Manitobans.

Within our first few months in government, we started the development on hundreds of units of social and affordable housing, with many hundreds more on the way. We are restoring and rebuilding Manitoba Housing, Honourable Speaker. We are continuing to move people out of encampments and into supportive housing through the Your Way Home strategy. By working together, we are one step closer to helping every Manitoban find their way home and helping end chronic homelessness in our province.

Honourable Speaker, just to remind the House, as well as the rest of the province at what—the situation that we were dealing with upon winning government. Just one example of how the PCs attacked our right to housing in this province: in 2023, the PC government

authorized the sale of the Lions Place on Portage Avenue. A report into the sale said that it should constitute elder abuse. People living in the building were concerned about the potential rent increases following the sale to a private firm. The report stated: The case of the sale of Lions Place represents both a major net loss of affordable housing and an example of the targeted dismantling of the community for older adults in Winnipeg.

Honourable Speaker, this sale was a failure to protect seniors, many of whom lived on fixed incomes, and has pushed them out of their communities, for profit. The PCs failed to protect seniors in Manitoba by allowing this sale to happen. Failing Manitobans is a pattern for the PCs, and they sold off hundreds of public-housing units, leaving Manitobans outside, frankly.

And so, Honourable Speaker, when we talk about homelessness, we often hear numbers. How many people are housed, how many shelters are available—shelter beds are available—how much funding is needed, and, yes, the role of government is to ensure that these numbers are heading in the right direction, though it's also our role as government to ensure dignity and encourage community safety. From birth or from migration, Canadians have been taught that this is a land of opportunity. We've been taught that this is a land where we can celebrate our differences, invest in our talents and move our communities into the future together.

Honourable Speaker, I have immense gratitude for this land, for the Indigenous peoples who have taken care of it for time immemorial, and for the armed troops who've given of themselves to serve in its protection. It's because of the love that these folks have shown for our nation that we have the potential that we do.

In 2023, when we started knocking doors for—during the general election, I visited the Plessis family—or the Plessis housing complex for maybe the fourth or fifth time at that stage, and I was talking to some of the kids that I'd met now, many, many times, at different community barbecues or events. But one of them this time had the courage to approach me, and ask, you know, once you're MLA, will I have a doorknob? Will the hole in my door be replaced with a lock?

Because that individual, who was maybe about 12 or 13 years at the time, maybe now 14, 15 now, they remember being on the street, Honourable Speaker. They remember their door, their—in their

doorknob, in place of that, being a zipper. On behalf of my constituents in Radisson, it is our responsibility, it is my responsibility as their MLA to ensure that we are moving in the right direction as a province, and I have full confidence that our government is doing just that.

And in a country as rich as Canada, in a province as great as Manitoba, homelessness has no place, Honourable Speaker. The failed PC government we recently unseated would rather have exacerbated the tragedy on our streets, run on division and make enemies out of the most vulnerable Manitobans as opposed to supporting them. There is more to our unhoused relatives than members opposite want us to be talking about. Behind every mischaracterization and number they've reduced them to is a story, a person, and most of all, a reminder that this could be any of us.

Many of us were brought up to believe that homelessness is something that happens to, quote unquote, other people. But the truth is that most of us are much closer to homelessness than we are to the likes of Elon Musk or to Galen Weston, people that the former government would have rather propped up. One layoff, one medical crisis, one rent increase too many, and suddenly the ground beneath us shifts, Honourable Speaker.

That's not just the reality for those living in deep poverty. That's the reality in Radisson, for my generation, for seniors living on a fixed income and across the country for the average renter, the single parent, the student and the seniors.

We live in a system where billionaires profit off of housing as an investment, Honourable Speaker, while ordinary people sleep in tented encampments or bounce between couches trying to survive. And that kind of system, homelessness isn't a failure of individuals; it's a failure of policy, of compassion and of political will. So let me be clear: homelessness is not an issue of housing; it's an issue of human rights. And the solution isn't just about offering people shelter for the night; it's about restoring dignity and opening opportunities at a good life.

A person needs more than just a bed and a roof. They need doors that lock, Honourable Speaker; a space to cook a meal; a bathroom that isn't shared with dozens of strangers; a place where they can rest, recover and rebuild. However, this isn't just a moral imperative. Frankly, it's common sense. Members opposite say that it's too expensive to house everyone, but the truth is we already pay for homelessness in

hospital stays and emergency services and law enforcement and in lost potential in our communities.

For too long in Manitoba, we have paid for homelessness in the most expensive and the least effective way possible. Homelessness is not an inevitable feature of our societies; it's a policy choice, Honourable Speaker. A choice between division and belonging. In Manitoba, gone are the days where governments criminalize poverty. Gone are the days where governments talk about, quote unquote, managing homelessness.

\* (11:10)

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans can count on the fact that our government is focused on ending it. At the end of the day, the real measure of a society is how it treats those with the least. And if we believe that everyone deserves a warm bed, a place to call home and a fair shot at life, then we have built systems that reflect that belief.

This isn't just about them. This is about all of us: our neighbours, our loved ones, our future. And we are all safer, healthier and stronger when no one is left outside.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

If there are no questions—the honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** One thing we can agree on is that homelessness does not get enough—talked enough in this Chamber, and that's why I ask many questions about that concern as my job as the critic for the Conservatives.

My question would be, can the member for Radisson explain which organizations did the NDP consult with to come up with this homeless strategy? Can she name them for me, please?

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** Honourable Speaker, again, it is an honour to rise to lift up the great work that our minister of housing, homelessness

and addictions is doing within our Cabinet and in our government for the benefit of all of Manitoba. She has worked since—predating her time as an elected official in community with many folks that have advanced the availability, the access to housing and not only that but wrap-around supports.

And so, Honourable Speaker, I look forward to the next question, though the members opposite don't have a leg to stand on when it comes to ending chronic homelessness in our province. To figure that out, all we have to do is look at their record on public housing, and I am looking forward to the next question where I can highlight that.

**MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona):** Our government is a listening government. It's been our promise to Manitobans since day one that we'll always listen to them and create a Manitoba that uplifts everyone. Our plan is to end chronic homelessness to support every Manitoban.

My question for my colleague is, how will our government end chronic homelessness?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Honourable Speaker, what a great honour it is to receive the question that the member for Transcona has asked, because it is her first time rising in this Chamber.

Honourable Speaker, good things happen when we elect New Democrats to government. In our shared community alone, we have the Veterans' Village going up, we have the Habitat for Humanity development on Pandora; the Plessis complex is receiving more maintenance funding than ever before.

And—member for Transcona, this is one for—that is close to your heart, I know—we're bringing in the Park Manor Personal Care Home expansion that the members opposite cancelled. And, Honourable Speaker, there's more good work happening in our Your Way Home strategy, our affordability measures and our efforts to improve social and affordable housing across this province, something that—

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

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** In case the member from Radisson missed the first question, I'll ask it again. Which organizations did the NDP consult with to come up with its homelessness strategy?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Honourable Speaker, the answer that—to that question is all of them.

Honourable Speaker, as shown by their record, the PCs didn't care about making sure that every

Manitoban was able to find the social housing that they needed. For the first time since 2016, Manitoba has a government that is actively moving people into housing with wrap-around supports. We're pulling the boards off of hundreds of units that the PCs boarded up. We are ready to usher Manitobans who have been unhoused for far too long into dignified housing.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Corbett:** Our NDP government has made significant progress in helping Manitobans experiencing homelessness find a safe place to live with the supports that they need.

Can the member tell me how many families have been connected with housing since we formed government?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** I thank the member for Transcona for her incredible question.

Now, our side of the House understands that one individual on the streets or unhoused is one too many, Honourable Speaker. And so not only have been moved 12 individuals out of encampments and into housing, but we have also connected over 1,200 Manitobans with housing in our first year of government and since then, over 1,900 Manitobans. Great work being done by our minister and I look forward the next question where I can elaborate even further.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, we heard in November from a West Broadway resident who saw a—children from CFS playing near a homeless encampment, the addition of—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** —having public drug use around that. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** So can the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz)—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stone:** —please explain which homeless—*[interjection]*

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

The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will come to order.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can the member for Radisson please explain which homelessness encampments have been cleared and remediated?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** This is a clear example of—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) will come to order.

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Once again, this is a clear example of why members opposite wound up on that side of the House. Manitobans chose belonging over division. Manitobans chose an approach where we understand that we are far closer to being homeless and we share far more in common that—with our unhoused relatives than we do with Elon Musk, with Galen Weston, the very folks that they shipped cheques to.

**MLA Corbett:** The previous PC government sold off more public housing to the private sector than they created in the—during their seven and a half years in government.

My question for my colleague is, what is our government doing to build and renovate more social and affordable housing units and maintain the existing stock?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** A well-researched, eloquent question from my colleague, the member for Transcona (MLA Corbett).

The previous PC government sold off people's homes out of—out from underneath them, Honourable Speaker. They kicked people out onto the street and into encampments in order to sell their buildings.

But under our government, we brought in a historic increase of \$116 million into social and affordable housing, just last year. We are so proud to expand our efforts to help Manitobans even more. Budget 2025 invests \$78 million to build and renovate more social and affordable housing units and works to maintain the existing stock through an additional \$44-million investment.

We stopped the former PC government from selling people's homes out from—

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

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** The member opposite says that the NDP consulted with quote, all the organizations, but St. Boniface Street Links called the homelessness plan very top down with no detail. The west central women's resource network is saying retroactive consultation is only beginning now, and the Right to Housing Coalition is criticizing the lack of consultation with—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:** —front-line service providers on its homelessness plan.

Can the member opposite explain the discrepancy—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:** —between what she's saying today and what front-line housing advocates are telling people?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** The member opposite and her team had over seven and a half years to take action on this, Honourable Speaker. Did they pick up the phone with any—when any of those organizations made the call? No, they did not.

While we're working to end homelessness in our province and make sure that everyone has access to quality and affordable housing, the PCs continually failed to help Manitobans while they were in their failed government, Honourable Speaker.

But that will continue no more. It is a new day in Manitoba. Housing is a human right, and they deserve dignity.

**MLA Corbett:** Under the previous, failed PC government Manitobans suffered. They raised prizes—prices, cut health care and reduced affordability, leading Manitobans to struggle in their daily lives. When it comes to housing, this was no different.

\* (11:20)

Can the member remind the House of all the actions the members opposite took to take away homes from Manitobans who need them?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** I thank the member for Transcona for the question.

I understand her career predating her time in elected office was as an educator, and I can only guess what grade she would have assessed members opposite with when they were in government—maybe an F-, Honourable Speaker.

The members kept hurting Manitobans through the cuts and sales of Manitoba housing units. In fact, the members opposite sold far more housing units than they created, cut the budget to repair Manitoba housing units, resulting in the child that I was talking about earlier, having a hole in their door where a lock should be. And they also cut essential affordability measures that helped Manitobans keep a roof over their head.



We're building housing, something that they never did.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone)

**An Honourable Member:** In my critic portfolio, I've had opportunity to meet with many organizations in our community that work with the homeless communities. One of them specifically, Main Street Project, said that they are way beyond needing more help. They need more help with mental health supports; they don't have enough as it is.

How many social workers, mental health and addictions workers will be needed to hire—will need to be hired to provide intensive wrap-around support services promised by the NDPs' homelessness plan? How does this—a plan to get—how do you plan to take care of those people?

**MLA Dela Cruz:** Once again, seven and a half years. Since 2016, we are the first government that is providing wrap-around supports. It takes seconds to sell off housing, Honourable Speaker; it takes years to build it back.

They failed to provide supports; we're providing wrap-around supports. They sold off housing and we're building. They boarded up housing complexes; we're taking those boards off, Honourable Speaker. Manitobans deserve to live in dignity.

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

And before I move on to debate, I must correct an error that I misidentified the honourable member for Morden-Winkler, and I apologize for that.

### Debate

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

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Today, I stand to discuss a critical issue that affects the lives of thousands of individuals in our province and across the country: homelessness.

Resolution 6, put forward by the NDP government, should be bringing this urgent issue to the forefront, urging us all to take meaningful action to address and alleviate the crisis of homelessness in Manitoba. We should all be on the same page here, because we all have the same goal in mind, rather than attacking each other in Chambers.

All Manitobans deserve a safe and secure home. Homelessness is not just a matter of lacking a roof over one's head. It's a profound social challenge that

touches on issues much deeper. It's mental health, addictions, poverty and safety. The individuals affected by homelessness are often marginalized and vulnerable, with many facing a lack of access to basic needs, such as food, shelter and health care.

We need to talk about that. We need to talk about how we need to get those services to the people that need them. This not only affects their physical and mental well-being, but also limits their ability to contribute to society and achieve a stable, fulfilling life, one that everyone deserves.

Honourable Speaker, I have to say, I'm disappointed that our current government would use homelessness as something deeply troubling and affecting so many of our communities, as a means of attacking colleagues in this room. I believe we should all be on the same page here. But yet, I fear and I hear across the aisle, them taking advantage of this time to attack, rather than advocating for homelessness.

We need to work together. We all have the same goal in mind. Homelessness is something that nobody should have to experience. We need to put those people first, before our own issues that we have. We need to put those living in homelessness first. We should all want the same goal. Our main priority should be taking care of those on the street that are in desperate need of help.

As I read this resolution brought forward by the NDP government, it was disappointing for me, because I think we should be taking care of those that need our help. My job here in this Chamber as opposition critic is to continually bring before the current government, the needs of our homeless, to push for more housing, for more financial support for communities and organizations providing housing and offering programs to help those that are in homeless—are experiencing homelessness and 'andictions' and mental health issues.

We must also increase wrap-around services to those living with mental health struggles so that they can be supported, so that when they move into the—into stable housing out of encampments, they can have hope and a chance of a future. That should be our No. 1 goal. We must focus and continue to work on ending homelessness.

What—I want to take this opportunity to thank every non-profit organization working with our most vulnerable in Manitoba. I've had the opportunity to serve alongside many front-line workers, to talk to some of you and spend time with you as you see the—

and I see the amazing, invaluable work that you do with our—those in our community that need you. We all need to continue to put people first. Thank you for your commitment to caring for those most vulnerable in our communities.

This resolution should call on all of us to focus on comprehensive solutions that extend beyond short-term fixes. It should advocate for more accessible, affordable housing, better supports for mental health and addictions services—that's what we should be talking about constantly—and a stronger social safety net for those who find themselves at risk of homelessness.

Affordability is the top of mind for everybody, because many, like the colleague across the aisle said, are at the brink of having to find a way to stay in their homes.

It is a call to recognize the root causes of homelessness and address them with compassion, innovation and dedication. We need a real plan.

I've had the opportunity to volunteer with organizations over the last 20 years of my life, serving meals, collecting garbage, sorting through donations and even leading a devotional and prayer time with people when they ask me to do that.

I had the opportunity to participate in the CEO Sleepout event, bringing awareness and understanding about what it is like to be homeless on the streets for the night. We spent time on the streets of Winnipeg, walking and spending the night with homeless in the Winnipeg—city of Winnipeg, and it was a very, very good experience. It's a good experience for everybody who takes part in that.

Homelessness is a complex issue, and no one solution will fit all, but we must start by recognizing that it is not a problem of individual failure. It is a societal issue that requires collective action. By providing support and resources, we can help those facing homelessness rebuild their lives and rejoin the community in a meaningful way.

Resolution 6 should demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that every Manitoban has a chance at a stable, secure and dignified life. Let us come together to create a province where no one is left out in the—out of a home or in the cold and where compassion and support guide our efforts to address this pressing issue.

The Manitoba NDP government efforts to house just 12 people amid an ongoing housing crisis raises

serious concerns about the effectiveness and scale of their approach. While we all want every single person to save—have a safe and warm home, the reality is that this number falls too short of the growing demand of affordable housing across the province. There's over 700 to 1,200 people that are homeless currently that we know of, and this does not even talk about the hidden homelessness that we are experiencing everywhere that—the people that nobody knows about or have even counted.

We need to do better. The housing crisis is a complex issue involving not just a shortage of housing, but also barriers such as affordability and mental health supports. By housing only a handful of individuals, the government has failed to make meaningful progress needed to address these interconnected challenges.

I would like to see a plan from the NDP government; not just seeing them throwing money at homelessness—the homeless crisis, but an actual plan.

\* (11:30)

The PCs brought in a full homeless strategy when they were in power, and I'm newly elected so I wasn't here when that happened, but I've had many amazing tours of the non-profit shelters and organizations in the last year.

One of those organizations, just a few weeks ago, told me about some of the things that he was really happy about what the PCs did, and it was good to hear positives, because we need to always be moving forward. We need to make sure we show and continually work towards our goal. One of the big things that we did as a PC government was built—or brought the homeless shelter bed from \$13 to over \$36 per bed, and they said that is—that was a monumental, huge change for them that was done by the PC government.

We need to take these wins and we need to acknowledge that these things happened, that good things happened and we need to continue to build on those good things and do more. I haven't seen that.

Twelve people is not enough. It's time for the Manitoba NDP government to step up and implement the solutions necessary to tackle these issues head on. It's time for them to do what they say they will do. It's time they start to take care of housing units that are currently in need of desperate repairs and improvements, because they were left alone for many, many years by the Selinger government. This is something

that has got to be fixed, and we've started the work and now you need to continue working on that.

There are so many people emailing constantly about issues and needing help with their buildings that they're living in. We need to acknowledge those and we need to fix those so that those people can stay in their homes, not end up homeless as well. We need to ensure that they don't cause more people to be on the streets. We need to continually work together. We need to continually work towards homelessness and alleviating homelessness in our communities.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** It's always an honour and a privilege to stand up in this House and put a few words on the record on behalf of my constituents of Kildonan-River East.

When I was first door knocking, trying to connect with more neighbours in Kildonan-River East, there were a lot of folks in suburbia that were treating the homelessness crisis that was created under the failed Pallister-Stefanson government when it was a culture, a normalcy, to see folks struggling in bus shelters right outside of this Legislature, actually. All of the people that are on that side of the House now that were previously on this side of the House would drive home every day outside this building and think that was totally acceptable to have folks unhoused, in bus shelters. That's something that our government absolutely doesn't think is acceptable, and we're working hard every day under the leadership of our amazing minister of housing and leadership of our Premier (Mr. Kinew).

And so in these opportunities to connect with neighbours in Kildonan-River East, you know, folks were treating it like—almost like a situation of othering of folks, and, you know, saying how, after the pandemic, there were more people in bus shelters, you know, in our suburban neighbourhood. And we had very challenging, you know, respectful conversations where people, you know, said they wanted to help but they weren't sure how, but they also wanted their communities to be safe.

And so, you know, we discussed how it's important for us to go to church on Sunday and make sure that we're praying for all people and not just people in our suburban community, but to pray for all of the people in Manitoba that are struggling, and to really understand that, if someone is, you know, dealing with a period of homelessness or unhoused situation, that it's no fault of their own.

There's a variety of times in people's lives where they struggle, and making sure that people in areas like Kildonan-River East and all throughout Manitoba, that neighbours really understand the need for empathy and making sure that they're aware of all of the different struggles that all Manitobans go through at different periods of their lives.

One amazing story that I want to highlight from a neighbour in Kildonan-River East whom I met with our team about one of her staff members, actually, who she saw leaving work one day at her autobody shop, and he was walking, at first, what she thought was to the bus stop. Turns out he was walking almost halfway across town because he couldn't even afford a bus pass.

And her and her family in Kildonan-River East had, you know, connected this employee and—with the supports that they need from our local MLA office and then, in turn, with the amazing minister of housing's office and our whole government team, under the leadership of Premier Wab Kinew.

And so, this is just one of the examples—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Just to remind the member that we can't use somebody's name. You have to use either their constituency or their title.

**Mrs. Schott:** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for that reminder.

So under the leadership of our amazing minister of housing and Premier Kinew. This is just one example—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Just the Honourable Premier, not the name.

**Mrs. Schott:** So under the leadership of our minister of housing and the First Minister? Okay; a.k.a. Premier, for people not in this Chamber.

So this is just one example of how folks are connecting with their local MLAs and getting access for wrap-around supports from the minister's office, and able to help make real-life change for folks in our community.

So just the other day, this family connected with our office and their employee is now—accessed housing and access to a treatment program and is thriving compared to when they first started working at their small, local business in Kildonan-River East.

So this is just one example of how, when we truly open our hearts and minds with an empathetic lens to unhoused folks, and try to imagine what someone who we see is struggling is—could be going through instead of just driving by and placing judgment on others, that's truly what Manitobans—especially now when we're seeing what's going on south of the border, we really need to be a unified Manitoba perspective and all come together, for our team wants the same thing that all Manitobans want. You know, getting out of tents and into housing that is safe and secure, and where they can live with dignity. That's the basic thing, is to live with dignity, and that's what every Manitoban wants.

For seven and a half years, mentioned before how, you know, this failed Pallister-Stefanson government, all of the folks over there would drive out of here and they thought that was totally acceptable to see folks living in the bus shelters and not doing anything about it. They failed to take action. They sold off social housing while cutting funds for services. They forced Manitobans out onto the street and into those bus shelters. They left Manitobans in a bad situation.

And, like I mentioned, they created this culture of judgment and normalcy where other neighbours would turn on neighbours and impose judgment rather than lending a helping hand and trying to do what this amazing family in Kildonan-River East is doing, where they're opening their hearts and trying to reach out to their local offices to find resources for other community members.

Our NDP government has made significant progress in helping Manitobans experiencing homelessness find a safe place to live with the supports they need. We have connected over 1,200 Manitobans with housing within our first year of government, and have since increased that number to 1,908 Manitobans. Let's hear that again for the failed Pallister-Stefanson folks: we have since increased that number to 1,908 Manitobans. That's real humans that have experienced assistance and had life-changing opportunities through our amazing NDP government.

Within our first few months of government, we started development on hundreds of units of social and affordable housing; social and affordable housing, that's life-changing opportunities for folks, with many more hundreds on the way. We are restoring and rebuilding Manitoba Housing. We are continuing to move people out of encampments into supportive housing through our Your Way Home strategy. And

by working together, we are one step closer to helping every Manitoban find their way home and ending chronic homelessness in our province.

Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker, for this opportunity.

\* (11:40)

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I am very pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record with respect to this resolution, another resolution where the NDP want their gold stars. They want to be commended, they want to be applauded. They're patting themselves on the back. They want their kudos; they're hanging the mission-accomplished banner a year and a half into their mandate yet again, Honourable Speaker. The hubris of this government never ceases to amaze me. Week after week, they put forward a resolution, calling on this House to applaud the government for something that they've done.

Ask any person who's out there right now who's dealing with homelessness, ask any of the advocates and the people who are working in the organizations actually doing the work to end homelessness, if this government deserves kudos for its work. I don't think you're going to find anybody out there who's actually experiencing homelessness or working on the issue that thinks that, yes, we should pass this resolution today and commend this government for its efforts.

The member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) says that we on our side of the House don't ask questions about this issue. Well, I'd encourage her to check Hansard. We've asked many questions about this issue. I asked questions of this issue of the Premier (Mr. Kinew) the Friday before constituency week. So I'll just remind members opposite what those questions were.

To recap: I talked about how the NDP promised to clear entire encampments within 30 days, but have only housed 12 people since announcing their strategy. I asked if they had any plan at all to prevent encampments from growing this spring. And I talked about the total lack of consultation on this plan. And I asked why they put forward such a rushed and half-baked plan. I asked why they failed to consult with the organizations who are expected to do the work.

Did I get any answers to those questions, Honourable Speaker? No, no, I did not. Here's what I got: The Premier tabled a photo of me and made a body-shaming comment about donuts, which somebody on that side of the House should enlighten

the Premier: It's 2025; we don't do diet culture anymore. We don't shame women for eating donuts. So he needs to get a grip. So there was a personal attack. And then he talked about the PC leadership race. Did he mention homelessness once? No. Did he answer the question? No. In fact, then he sat down and had the Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) answer questions about homelessness.

So we ask questions. We just don't get answers.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the other things the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz) said in her speech. She said that homelessness is not about housing, which is an interesting comment. Certainly it's a multi-faceted issue.

**An Honourable Member:** Not just about housing.

**Mrs. Cook:** No, she said it's not about housing.

There's a lot of things that go into homelessness, but housing is definitely one of them, Honourable Speaker, and it's evident that the NDP approach doesn't factor in housing, because there's nothing in their homelessness strategy to stand up the housing that's going to be required to solve homelessness by 2031, which is what they have committed to do.

They've got a real problem, Honourable Speaker. Government can have all of the good intentions it wants, but without a plan to actually put roofs over people's heads, it's not going to work. In fact, some of the things the government is doing right now are going to actively decrease the housing supply in Manitoba, and particularly in the city of Winnipeg.

Let's talk about property tax increases for a second, and the NDP government's decision to dramatically increase property taxes in the city of Winnipeg. That's going to do two things: it's going to decrease the number of rental units that are available and rents are going to go up. And that's been confirmed by landlords and property owners who will now no longer be receiving a property tax rebate. They're going to see their costs go up. And you know what they're going to do? They're going to apply for above-guideline rent increases, which they can do, because their costs have increased dramatically under this NDP government. So the rents are going to go up across Manitoba, making housing less affordable and driving more people into homelessness.

One property manager told the media: If the rent's not high enough to be able to cover your mortgage, property tax, insurance, they're just going to sell, which is going to remove rental stock from the city,

which is what we don't want in the first place. What we're seeing is people telling us they're getting out because they can't afford it.

So the NDP ideologically might want to own and operate all of the housing themselves, but the reality is that they are going to need the private sector to come to the table here and offer affordable housing units to Manitobans. But they're pushing them away. They're pushing them out of Manitoba by driving up their property taxes. It's going to decrease the rental supply in Winnipeg, particularly, and it's going to exacerbate the problem.

So the NDP are actively making homelessness worse, Honourable Speaker.

One of the major criticisms of the NDP's homelessness plan was the lack of consultation with advocates, the lack of consultation with the organizations that are actually on the ground, doing the work. And I want to put some of their comments on the record here, because the NDP's not listening to them. So I'm going to put their comments on the record and then maybe they can go and read Hansard later and see what advocates actually think about their plan.

So the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs was not consulted in the homelessness plan which is certainly concerning. The Right to Housing Coalition—which I know there's some of the NDP's friends in that group, so they should really listen to this one—is criticizing the lack of consultation with front-line service providers. The Right to Housing Coalition is saying the right kind of housing is not being provided for people experiencing homelessness. The Right to Housing Coalition is saying there are not enough wrap-around supports being offered to people experiencing homelessness. In fact, the Right to Housing Coalition is calling the NDP homelessness strategy more of a PR strategy. Interesting, yet not surprising. If it can't be made into a TikTok, the NDP aren't going to do it.

So who else is criticizing the NDP's homelessness plan? Let's see. The West Central Women's Resource Centre: they're saying that retroactive consultation is only beginning now well after the plan was announced. They're saying that the 30-day timeline is unrealistic and they're saying the 300 housing units promised in the NDP plan is nowhere near what is needed to move people out of encampments.

St. Boniface Street Links, another organization, is critical of the NDP homelessness plan, calling it very top down with no detail.

Resource Assistance for Youth, RaY, is criticizing the NDP's homelessness strategy, saying it's unclear on how it plans to provide people experiencing homelessness with safe, affordable and appropriate housing. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, again, is worried that the NDP homelessness plan will undermine or displace First Nations-led initiatives already underway on- and off-reserve.

That's a whole lot of concerns from a lot of important people who know what they're talking about and it really makes one wonder why the NDP felt it necessary to rush ahead with a half-baked plan that frankly, has very little chance of success, and we're seeing that borne out. They've housed 12 people. I'm very happy for those 12 people, but it's not enough; it's nowhere near enough. We know that, at minimum, there are 700 unhoused people, but it's likely far higher than that, Honourable Speaker.

Before I close, I would be remiss if I didn't, in addition to putting their comments and criticisms on the record, spend a moment talking about some of those organizations who are doing this good work and thanking them for all of their efforts, whether it's shelters who are operating in communities across the province, or organizations who are working to provide the supports that unhoused people need to exit homelessness.

Siloam Mission is now in my community in Charleswood. They operate a residence there in the old Odd Fellows building for seniors who are exiting homelessness. And it's been such a wonderful addition to our community, everyone's been very welcoming, it's a great facility for seniors and I think that's probably an overlooked part of the homeless community. They're—I hope they're enjoying their time in Charleswood. We love having them there and I just want to thank Siloam Mission for all of the work that they do across Winnipeg, but particularly at the Roblin.

And all of the other organizations who are working to provide mental health supports, addictions treatment, we know that all of these things are things that need to happen in order for people to exit homelessness. All Manitobans deserve to live safely and with dignity and that's going to require government to come to the table with an actual, feasible, workable plan—not a PR strategy—a plan that's going to stand up housing and get them off the streets and

into housing with the wrap-around supports they need to succeed.

And that includes things like addictions treatment, mental health support. So it's going to require a whole-of-government approach. So you can't just throw together a press conference without consulting any of the organizations on the ground, hand them a strategy and say, execute this, implement this. But that's what the NDP are doing, Honourable Speaker. It's a disservice to people experiencing homelessness, it's a disservice to our communities across the province and I think Manitobans expect them to do better.

Thank you.

\* (11:50)

**Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** I'm happy to get up and talk about such an important issue, something facing too many Manitobans and something that, on this side of the House, we want to actually move the needle. We want to actually do something about that.

And I just want to take a moment to first of all thank the MLA for Radisson for bringing forward this resolution. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) for all of the good work that she is doing.

As well, I want to really lift up Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud, who's been leading our strategy, our whole-of-government strategy, for Your Way Home. The members opposite just referenced Siloam Mission. That was who was heading up Siloam Mission.

So when she criticizes the plan, I guess she actually doesn't believe in Siloam Mission, doesn't believe in that leadership, in that good work that's taking place. And that's regrettable. That's, you know, that's—it's too bad that she can't get on board with actually doing something about homelessness.

And it's no—what's the word, shall I say, it's—I guess it's just the audacity, the sheer audacity to stand up and say, you know what, you're not moving fast enough; this great idea that you have, of ending homelessness, all the supports that you're putting in place, it's not happening fast enough.

Because they had two terms in government, and for two terms in government, they sold off our public housing. They sold it off. There was more public housing sold off to the private sector than they created. That's net loss. And that is absolutely

shocking that they could stand up now and discuss homelessness strategies and what should be happening. Two terms in government, seven and a half years, lost hundred of units at a time. There was the selling off in 2018 of 185 Smith St.—sold it off, hundreds gone. There was Lions Place on Portage. They decided to allow that sell-off to happen.

And I know that, you know, they might suggest, like, oh, well, we put these different measures in place so that they wouldn't be immediately evicted. But two years later, that's exactly what happened. So instead of investing in strategies that would help Manitobans either remain in affordable housing or leave affordable housing into the market or preventing people from going homeless or getting people out of bus shelters, they did nothing. They sat on their hands.

And so that is—that's actually shameful that they can get up now and suggest that the job, the good work that is happening throughout our government, the whole-of-government approach that we're taking, is not going quick enough. Well, don't worry. That work is going to continue. There's no mission accomplished. We are going to do that good work under the leadership of the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith), under the leadership of Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud. And we're going to get it done. We're going to end chronic homelessness within two terms of government. And just like every other promise that we make, we get things done.

They like to make promises. They like to—you know, when we're talking about the environment they like to greenwash. When we're talking about homelessness, they like to say all the nice, cute things. But then they don't actually get anything done. In fact, they put us further behind. And that is an absolute shame.

Let's go through some of their other records in two terms of government. They cut the renters tax credit; slashed supports for Manitobans on EIA; made it harder in 2017 to qualify for Rent Assist; again, did the same thing, increased the threshold in 2018 to make it harder to qualify for Rent Assist; froze Rent Assist in 2019. So there's a three-peat for you for the failed PC government.

And so it's sheer audacity for them to discuss our homelessness plan and all of the good work that is taking place. And I know that we're in early days. I know that it's been 18 months and members opposite think that all of the problems across our province can

be solved in 18 days—or, sorry, in 18 months. But we know there's more work to do.

After two terms in government, where they actually put us behind the eight ball, not even just maintained what we had but actually made it harder, I think that they need to take some responsibility. And so all of that criticism that they want to throw out, they should actually maybe look in the mirror.

So we're doing that good work. We are continuing to build our public housing, our social housing. We are—we've connected 1,200 people in one year. Since that time, another—we've have 1,908 different people that have been connected to housing. We're building those wrap-around supports for people, getting them out of encampments, getting them out of bus shelters so that more Manitobans can live with dignity.

And just—I want to highlight a couple of things that, before I cede my time, but—we are investing, in Budget 2025, almost 73 and a half million dollars in that Your Way Home strategy. That builds on last year where we invested \$116 million into social housing, in one year; another \$78 million to ensure that we are renovating that housing and getting it on board.

So the members opposite can chirp and say all that they want; they did nothing in two terms of government. We're getting that job done, we're going to continue to build housing and we are going to ensure that all Manitobans can live with dignity. And we're going to end homelessness.

Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record to what is a very complex and challenging situation that is facing Manitobans today.

And, you know, I have to say that after just 18 months of the NDP government, Manitobans are struggling more than ever before and feeling more and more hopeless about the future. The housing crisis is a complex issue, as my colleagues before have alluded to in their remarks, and I heard the member for Riel (MLA Moyes) stand up and say that they can't accomplish things in just 18 months.

Well, then, why has the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and members of the Cabinet gone out saying that they can solve these issues in 30 days? This is exactly what my colleagues have said is a PR stunt with lack of implementation. And we've seen over the past 18 months food inflation, cost of living and unaffordable housing

are all contributing to Manitoba's escalating homelessness issue.

Now, I do want to throw a couple stats out there, just to show where the thoughts of Canadians are at as it relates to cost of living and affordable housing.

The Salvation Army's annual Canadian poverty report for 2024 showed concerns around housing costs, crime and disorder. In March of '24, 35 per cent of Canadians were worried about homelessness and housing insecurity. By September, that number had skyrocketed to 44 per cent. In March of 2024, 19 per cent of Canadians were concerned about crime; that, again, skyrocketed to 25 per cent in September. And, according to Stats Canada in a report from November, Manitoba had an alarming food insecurity rate of 19.6 per cent. That is 63,450 Manitobans struggling just to buy food.

Communities in northern Manitoba face an even higher food insecurity rate, exceeding over 60 per cent, driven by factors such as inflation and cost of living. And the reality is—and this is where the NDP's homelessness plan has completely failed—is to recognize the housing shortage and housing crisis that Manitoba is in.

There is a lack of housing supply, and this is one of the biggest issues facing an entire generation of Manitobans, and the NDP is ignoring this critical aspect in any of their homelessness plans.

We need a plan with tangible solutions for ending homelessness and building up our capacity and supply for affordable housing, and this is where this NDP plan significantly falls short. They failed to properly consult, as is evident by comments made by my colleagues, but also by the Right to Housing Coalition who called this strategy a, quote, PR strategy, which seems to be no surprise with this NDP government and seems to be a pattern for this government—lack of consultation while only caring about PR and a good news story.

And it's not just the Right to Housing Coalition that has stated significant concerns with this strategy that they brought forward, but also the west central women's resource network. They've cited a lack of consultation, and consultation only beginning now after the NDP already got criticized for their lack of consultation.

Like I've said many, many times in this House, we have PR and we have implementation, and this NDP government is failing on implementation and to put their words into action. The NDP promised to clear entire encampments—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have six minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 o'clock, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, April 8, 2025**

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