



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

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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



**Vol. LXXIX No. 51A - 10 a.m., Thursday, May 8, 2025**

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 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****House Business**

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon West. The title of the resolution is Justice for Jordyn.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon West. The title of the resolution is Justice for Jordyn.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Johnson:** Can you please call Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act.

**The Speaker:** It has been announced that we will now proceed to second reading of Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

**SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS**

**Bill 232—The Victims of Impaired Drivers  
Commemoration Day Act  
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks  
and Months Act Amended)**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

**The Speaker:** And I apologize, I missed who seconded—oh, there it is right there.

It's been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie, that Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

**Mr. Balcaen:** I'm privileged to rise today and speak to Bill 232. Sorry, just one second. I'm privileged today to rise and speak to Bill 232.

This bill was brought forward to ensure that victims of impaired driving were recognized for what they go through, what the families go through, what the community goes through and collectively what all society goes through based on a completely preventable act.

Oftentimes, Honourable Speaker, people have a plan to go out—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

If I could get the member to just pause for a second. We're having some technical difficulties.

**Mr. Balcaen:** Technology, I guess, is getting in our way, here.

So again, going back, this bill is put into motion to honour the victims of impaired driving. And as I mentioned earlier, it extends to not only the people that are involved in the actual incident, but it extends to families, friends, communities and all Manitobans—anybody who uses our roads and anybody who enters Manitoba and expects safe roadways and the ability to operate on those roadways without harm.

I must say that this bill was inspired by conversations that I have had and personal experiences that I had over a career in law enforcement, but the bill is inspired by the Reimer family, who join us here today, but also in memory of their daughter Jordyn who was killed by an impaired driver while acting as a designated driver on May 1 of 2022.

I bring this forward because May 1 is the day that we have chosen to recognize the victims of impaired drivers. There's several reasons for this: not only is that the day that Jordyn lost her life and the families ended up in an unimaginable situation that will be with them for the rest of their lives, but we also must have to honour all other victims of impaired driving.

So I like to think of this as a way to give back for something we can never, ever replace in the hearts of the families and of the victims that are the extended people who have the consequences of this selfish act. This is a way that we can take a day to commemorate the fact that there are victims, and that there is much hurt and pain and suffering because of this act.

And although Jordyn was the inspiration, and the relentless advocacy by the Reimer family, I must also acknowledge many other families that are here today and representatives of MADD that support this bill and look forward to it being passed today unanimously in this House and moved on to committee and become law within our province. This would mark the first province that has a commemoration day for victims of impaired driving.

\* (10:10)

From a personal note, I know that I have been to hundreds of impaired driving incidents throughout my career, and the worst part of those is having to deliver the news that nobody ever, ever wants to hear. It's extremely difficult.

So I'd also like to note that by extension, this will also involve first responders that are there to serve the public and be at the scenes of some of the worst days in individuals' lives.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and I do look forward to this bill passing today.

Thank you.

### Questions

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

The floor is open for questions.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** I appreciate the member opposite had shared some of who he's consulted with in the creation of this bill and we know that impaired driving impacts so many people. I'm curious if he could share everyone that he consulted with in the creation of this bill.

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** I thank my colleague across the aisle for this important question.

Consultation took place extensively on this bill, and a lot of it also came from personal experience and knowing that there is a need for recognizing the families and the victims of this bill. Not only have I consulted with families that have lost a loved one, I have consulted with the various MADD organizations, including MADD Canada, MADD Winnipeg, and have reached out to MADD Brandon.

I've also consulted with police services and educators, because they see this as an opportunity also to not only have it as a day of commemoration, but a day to educate the public on the perils of impaired driving and the cost of lives to Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** I'd first of all like to thank the member for Brandon West for bringing this forward. He has a lot of capital on this issue. And I'd like to thank the Reimer family and friends for being so relentless on this issue. Great to see you here today.

My question is that, as a former police officer, can the MLA for Brandon West share how impaired driving affects more than just the offender and the victim?

**Mr. Balcaen:** I would like to thank my colleague from Springfield-Ritchot for the question. And yes, it's well-known I spent 33 years in policing, and victims of crime are more than just the immediate family. The family and—than the immediate victim, I'm sorry.

The family and friends have to mourn the loss of the victims. They don't have the ability to engage in what everybody else has that opportunity, whether it be with their child, if a child is lost, or a parent or an aunt or an uncle, the celebrations that happen, the time spent with family is removed—

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

**MLA Compton:** My aunt, Patsy Curry, died when she was 15 or 16 years old in an impaired driving accident, years before I was born. So I grew up in a household where awareness around the impacts of impaired driving were very present.

With this bill on the table, what can we all do to continue to raise awareness about the dangers and harms of impaired driving?

**Mr. Balcaen:** I thank the member from Tuxedo for that question, because it is very important.

And a part of this legislation will be education, as I mentioned earlier, and making sure that people can be educated on the perils of impaired driving and what happens, not only at the time, but extends over years and years.

And I know from some of the consultation I've had with police—this is a great time of the year, it's the spring, it's graduation session after May 1—and this is an opportunity for educators, whether it be in the school, school resource officers from the police, to go into the schools and talk to individuals. It will also give—

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

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** I'd like to thank my colleague for bringing this very important resolution forth and also to the Reimer family and all of their friends who are here today for this very important passing of this bill.

Besides passage of this PMR, what other steps could the government undertake to address impaired driving?

**Mr. Balcaen:** I would like to thank my colleague from Swan River for this important question.

I believe the government needs to implement different avenues to help victims and survivors in gaining the peace that they deserve during the painful journey of losing their loved one, their family members or somebody who is close to them; provide funding to do research and educational opportunities to educate the public, and that's to continue on from the previous question, giving the opportunity for groups such as MADD or TADD to recognize May 1 and deliver a strong message to individuals.

**MLA Compton:** My second year university, I got a phone call that my high school graduation date Lindsey was killed on his way home from his night shift one block from home by an impaired driver.

With this bill on the table, what can we do to continue to support families and friends of victims of impaired driving?

**Mr. Balcaen:** I thank the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton), and my condolences to you and the family of Lindsey.

This is all too common when we hear about people being killed by impaired drivers. If we look at the averages, approximately four people a day across Canada suffer from impaired driving and the deaths that happen there.

What can we do to support them? One, we could pass this bill so that it's put on our books that May 1 of every year we could make sure that we take a moment to pause. And it's not just one day, we should be doing this every day, but it really allows us a special day to commemorate the lives that are lost and make sure that we have the opportunity—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

**Mr. Schuler:** I would also like to thank the family of Kellie Verwey who are also in the gallery today. You are also very tenacious and you honour your loved ones that you lost by not letting go of this issue.

My question to the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) is, could he tell us a little bit about his journey with the Reimer and Verwey families to get to this point of this act being in front of the Legislature today?

**Mr. Balcaen:** Thank you to the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) for that question.

My journey with the Reimer family started when I was elected to this Legislative Assembly, and the family reached out to me and we had some discussions regarding advocacy for the loss of their daughter and

through the courts. But during that conversation, I learned so much about Jordyn, and recently, the loss of Kellie as well for the Verwey family.

\* (10:20)

And I would like to extend, on behalf of all of us in this Chamber, our sincere condolences—

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

**MLA Compton:** As I've probably lifted up, this is a bill that's actually near and dear to my heart. I believe very much in awareness and education and absolutely decreasing the number of impaired deaths happening each year.

And so if this bill passes, what would this day mean to Manitobans impacted by impaired driving?

**Mr. Balcaen:** I'd like to thank the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton) for that very impactful question.

I think what this will mean to the families is that they are recognized for the grief that they have gone through. It gives a day of reflection, of remembrance and knowing that each and every one of these individuals will never be forgotten.

I think it also allows us as legislators and as Manitobans to increase the awareness of the impacts of impaired driving on individuals and their families and allows us to get the message out even stronger. And I'm proud to say, if this passes, this will be the first province to have this legislation.

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

**Mr. Wowchuk:** This resolution also talks about how impaired driving due to cannabis has increased.

Do you feel that drivers, especially young drivers, understand the effects of cannabis on driving?

**Mr. Balcaen:** That is a significant question right now when we look at impaired driving by drug, and recently—yesterday—the Winnipeg Police Service authored their statistical report and it shows that impaired operation by drug has increased by 785.7 per cent.

That speaks volumes of the number of impaired-driving-by-drug cases. This is not just about alcohol. This involves, whether it's cannabis or whether it's other illicit drugs, people need to be reminded that it is not okay to be impaired at all—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

And the time for question period is also expired.

## Debate

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

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** Honourable Speaker, today, I rise in this House with a deep sense of sorrow, because far too often in communities all across our province Manitobans are waking up to devastating news; news that someone they love, someone with a bright future, caring heart, a place in this world, has been taken from them—not by accident, not by chance, but by a reckless, irreversible decision: someone choosing to drive while impaired. This is not just a statistic. This is a heartbreak that echoes for a lifetime.

### *French spoken*

Nous ne parlons pas seulement des chiffres : nous parlons de vies, de familles brisées, d'enfants, de parents, d'amis qui ne rentreront jamais chez eux. Aujourd'hui, nous disons que c'est assez.

### *Translation*

*We are not just talking about numbers; we are talking about lives and families that are shattered, about children, parents and friends who will never return home. Today, we are saying that enough is enough.*

### *English*

We are here to honour the lives that have been lost.

I want to begin by sharing my heartfelt sorrow with the family of Jordyn Reimer. As a father to two young men not much younger than Jordyn, her tragic story resonates with me.

A young woman full of promise, joy and spirit, Jordyn was just 24 years old when her life was stolen by a drunk driver. She was doing something so simple, so normal: driving to pick up a friend. I think of the number of times that my boys head out for a night on the town with friends and come home at the end of the night. But Jordyn's night ended in tragedy because someone made a fatal choice to get behind the wheel while impaired.

Jordyn had just graduated from university. She was beginning her career. She was deeply connected to her community, passionate about hockey and described as being the buzz and energy of any event, the light in the lives of everyone who knew her.

### *French spoken*

Jordyn représentait l'avenir – un avenir brillant, rempli d'amour et de détermination. Son décès nous

rappelle cruellement que l'imprudence d'un seul individu peut dévaster toute une communauté.

#### **Translation**

*Jordyn represented the future, a bright future filled with love and determination. Her death is a cruel reminder that the recklessness of a single individual can devastate an entire community.*

#### **English**

Now her family carries the grief that no one should ever have to endure, and sadly, they are not alone. My thoughts are also with the family of Kellie Verwey, a young woman at the beginning of her life, who lost the opportunity to have a family, who lost the opportunity to continue to contribute to her community.

Honourable Speaker, every year, thousands of Manitobans are hurt, devastated or killed because of impaired driving. This not a rare occurrence; it's a persistent, preventable crisis.

#### **French spoken**

Chaque année, des milliers de Manitobains sont blessés ou perdent la vie à cause de la conduite avec facultés affaiblies. Ce n'est pas une tragédie isolée : c'est une crise évitable, qui exige une action immédiate.

#### **Translation**

*Every year thousands of Manitobans are injured or lose their lives because of impaired driving. This is not an isolated tragedy: it is a preventable crisis that demands immediate action.*

#### **English**

In 2023 alone, nearly 10 per cent of all fatal collisions in Manitoba were caused by impaired driving.

And in the holiday Check Stop campaign conducted by the WPS and supported by MADD Canada, nearly 4,000 vehicles were pulled over. Of those, 124 drivers were found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Most alarmingly, eight impaired drivers were involved in collisions, and four were found unconscious behind the wheel.

#### **French spoken**

Ce sont des chiffres alarmants. Ils ne sont pas acceptables. Ils montrent l'ampleur du problème et la nécessité d'intervenir maintenant, avec des mesures fermes et efficaces.

#### **Translation**

*These are alarming figures. They are not acceptable. They show the scale of the problem and the need to intervene now, with firm and effective measures.*

#### **English**

Honourable Speaker, all of this—is this not a failure of personal responsibility? It's a systemic failure of enforcement, education and legislation.

That's why our government is stepping up. Our NDP government is introducing Bill 5, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving Measures). This legislation is one of the strongest crackdowns on impaired driving Manitoba has ever seen. It includes new lifetime licence suspensions for individuals convicted of two impaired driving offences within 10 years.

Our government is committed to continuing to empower police forces, justice systems to be able to have stronger measures.

#### **French spoken**

Nous envoyons un message clair : si vous conduisez en état d' 'inébrité', vous mettez non seulement votre vie en danger, mais aussi de celle des autres. Et si vous recommencez, vous perdez votre droit de conduire — pour toujours.

#### **Translation**

*We are sending out a clear message: if you are driving while intoxicated, you are not only putting your life at risk, but also the lives of others. And if you do it again, you lose your right to drive—forever.*

#### **English**

We are also closing the loophole that allowed impaired drivers to appeal their licence suspensions without installing ignition interlock devices. That loophole was ignored, and we've closed it.

But Honourable Speaker, our actions don't stop with legislation. We are working hand-in-hand with organizations like MADD Canada, whose tireless advocacy has moved mountains and saved lives.

National president Tanya Hansen Pratt said it best: There is no one single piece of legislation that will solve impaired driving, but we will welcome steps that deal with those who cause the most serious harm.

Trevor Ens, president of MADD Winnipeg, added: It's a great move for Manitoba. For too long,

criminal courts have not treated impaired driving as a violent crime that it is. And he's right. It's not a minor mistake; it's a choice that can ruin lives. We are making it clear in Manitoba that choice comes with real consequences.

### ***French spoken***

Nous saluons le travail extraordinaire de MADD Canada et de ses bénévoles. Leur courage, leur compassion et leur engagement ont permis de changer les lois et de sauver des vies.

### ***Translation***

*We salute the extraordinary work of MADD Canada and its volunteers. Their courage, compassion and commitment have changed laws and saved lives.*

\* (10:30)

### ***English***

We're also increasing investment in enforcement. Through the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund, we've allocated \$76,000 to the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police for new roadside screening devices; \$34,000 to the RCMP for drug-impaired driving equipment; and \$35,000 to the Winnipeg Police Service for public education campaigns.

### ***French spoken***

Ces investissements dans la prévention et l'application de la loi sont essentiels, parce que chaque conducteur arrêté avant qu'il ne cause un accident est une vie potentiellement sauvée.

### ***Translation***

*These investments in prevention and enforcement are essential, because every driver stopped before causing an accident is a life potentially saved.*

### ***English***

These investments are already making a difference. Our increased enforcement is catching more impaired drivers, and not just because more people are not—not because more people are driving impaired but because our government is finally giving law enforcement the tools they need to do their job.

And we're taking a proactive approach too. We're working closely with Manitoba Public Insurance, which delivers high-impact awareness campaigns and educational programs across the province. From the Friends for Life speaker series in schools to public ad campaigns, to the Don't Drive High initiative, MPI is

helping shape a new culture of responsibility and awareness.

Honourable Speaker, while we are cracking down, we are also addressing the root causes. Our Safer Neighbourhoods, Safer Downtowns Public Safety Strategy is investing in more community policing, more mental health supports alongside first responders, more culturally appropriate justice services for Indigenous and northern communities, and more education and prevention for young people. We know the road to safer communities is long but we're on it, and we will not let up.

### ***French spoken***

Nous construisons une province plus juste, plus sûre, plus humaine. Une province où la mémoire des victimes nous guide vers un avenir sans violence routière.

### ***Translation***

*We are building a fairer, safer, more humane province. A province where the memory of victims guides us towards a future without road violence.*

### ***English***

Honourable Speaker, no one should ever have to receive that call that their daughter, their son, their spouse, their best friend won't be coming home. That someone else's reckless decision ended a life that was just beginning. To the families who have lived that nightmare, we see you. We are standing beside you. We are acting for you.

To the Reimer family: Your strength, your advocacy and your grace have moved this province. Jordyn's legacy will not be forgotten. Her story will help save lives.

I'll end with this: We know that one impaired driver is one too many. Even one life lost is one too many, and as long as impaired driving continues to claim lives in this province, our work is not done.

### ***French spoken***

Nous continuerons à lutter, à légiférer, à éduquer—pour Jordyn, pour chaque nom, chaque histoire, chaque vie. Pour que plus jamais une vie ne soit volée par une conduite irresponsable.

### ***Translation***

*We will continue to fight, to legislate, to educate—for Jordyn, for every name, for every story, for every life. So that never again will a life be stolen by irresponsible driving.*



**English**

We are building a province where roads are safer, laws are stronger and the memory of those that we've lost becomes the reason no more are taken. That is our promise; that is our purpose—

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

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** I would first of all like to thank the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen) for his work on this act. It's important that it be brought forward.

And to the Reimer and Verwey families, as mentioned already, your tenacity and your willingness to put yourself out there and make yourself public and be advocating the way you do is remarkable. And you do honour your loved ones when you do these kinds of things, and I'd like to thank them for being here this morning.

I would like to point out to the Legislature, some 40 years ago, I was a university student. There was a professor of mine, Professor Rod Yellen. He was involved with MADD—at that time Mothers Against Drunk Driving—and we had a meeting with then newly elected MP George Minaker from St. James-Assiniboia. And at that time, we met in his personal house in River Heights. It was a very cold Winnipeg morning. At that point in time, it was just in its infancy; it was starting, and MADD Canada and the other groups have certainly grown and taken on far more prominence and advocacy in the province and in the country.

And because of that advocacy, in the '90s, then-minister Vic Toews brought in the toughest drinking and driving laws in the country—now, of course, Justice Vic Toews. And then that was continued in the twenties—in the 2000s by then-NDP Justice minister Gord Mackintosh, who also then strengthened the legislation.

Since then, we've added distracted driving and other parts to the legislation, and as was mentioned just now by one of the ministers, the NDP, there is going to be a further strengthening.

But you have to ask yourself—and I did as a former minister responsible for The Highway Traffic Act—after all of this, after all the fines, after the 60 days of the cars being impounded, after all of that, how is it that we still have individuals thinking it's okay to go out and be stone drunk and be driving?

Just within the last 10 days, there's somebody in the community that I happen to live in who was caught

by a bylaw enforcement officer, and the individual was stone drunk. And, thankfully, the bylaw enforcement officer called the RCMP right away, they did a Breathalyzer test and the individual was arrested—amongst other things, drinking and driving being one.

And we've seen it over and over again. We see the reports. We hear the personal accounts of the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton). And we hear it all over the place how individuals have been impacted by this terrible, terrible lapse in judgment, to get yourself so drunk, to be so intoxicated you go out and you injure and you kill people.

So perhaps—all of that being very important—perhaps this is a new attack. Perhaps we should be putting signs up in bars and showing the hurt, the void, what families go through because their loved one was torn away from them. Maybe those are the posters that should be up. Maybe we should be commemorating what's left behind after one of these tragic events.

And this legislation is important. I think it takes a different attack. I think it takes a different approach. It shows individuals, before you get in your vehicle and you turn the vehicle on, think about what you leave behind, not just in the individual who you've maimed or that you've killed, but also the families, the loved ones, the void that you've left behind, the hurt and all of that.

So I would like to say to the Reimer, Verwey families: Again, thank you for being advocates on this; it's important. We do listen, and you've seen in this Chamber—and you always see on the news all the disharmony and the fighting and all the rest of that—we do get together on issues and we lay our partisanship aside, because this is a non-partisan issue. This is one that everybody has been impacted by.

So thank you to the families, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Balcaen). I'd like to see perhaps other colleagues speak to it, and then let's pass this and move it on to committee.

Thank you.

**MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson):** I am grateful for the opportunity to put some words on the record. I am grateful to the member for the work that he's done on this bill. I'm proud to say that I will be voting in support of this bill, and I am doubly proud to be the constituent of a family, of Jordyn Reimer, who have—or who—so proud to be the MLA of constituents who are the family of Jordyn Reimer that have channelled their grief and their heartache into research, into

advocacy, into really setting the agenda for legislators here in Manitoba and those across Canada.

Kellie, Jordyn, Lindsey—these are names of individuals, Honourable Speaker, who are gone far too soon.

Honourable Speaker, when I last rose in the House to speak about Jordyn Reimer and to honour her and her story, the impact she's had on the community, I mentioned then and I'll mention again that if she were still here, her and I would be the same age; if she were still here, I have friends and family who would still be, you know, just in awe of the energy that she brings into the room and into the community that she—that we all proudly call home in Transcona.

\* (10:40)

Honourable Speaker, I'd like to take a bit of time talking directly to young people. I really appreciate the timing of this commemoration day in that, as legislators presently, we are gearing up for many celebrations. You know, graduation season is upon us. Though, as legislators, we have no right to share in the joy of our communities if we are not also sharing in the grief in the tragedy and acting to do better.

And so, Honourable Speaker, I think that this—that Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act, brought forward by the member opposite, is a great opportunity to bring young people into the conversation long before they're even able to legally drink, legally use cannabis. This conversation needs to start with a very human face to it, and, frankly, as young people, we have lost members of our generation far too soon to many things: to addictions, to homicide, to mental health struggles, to homelessness, to trauma.

And as young people, we ought to not be one of those reasons that we say goodbye to another young person. And so I look forward to the passage of this bill. I look forward to seeing what further we're able to do working with families directly. As a government, you know, we've got a Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) who has done a lot of heavy lifting on cracking down on impaired driving, but this heavy lifting is informed and propelled by real stories and real heartache in our community.

Again, like I mentioned earlier, the agenda has been set for us as legislators, by community members, many in this room, many who are in the gallery, many who watch us today who have had the rug pulled from under them and have lived that waking nightmare of

receiving news about a loved one being murdered by impaired drivers.

So, Honourable Speaker, I do want to share a little bit about MADD Canada, because I do think that their work deserves to be highlighted. MADD Canada is a network of victims, survivors and concerned citizens regarding impaired driving. They have had a significant impact on anti-impaired driving, and even only recently, I remember the workshops they've held when I was in high school, at university, the many things that they've done to prevent folks who were, you know, wanting to celebrate, to remind them that there are real risks to their irresponsibility.

Honourable Speaker, MADD also has a really close relationship—a working relationship—with MPI, and they work together to take necessary steps to prevent impaired driving. Our government actually partnered with MADD Canada to draft a bill that supports law enforcement in running a Check Stop program during the holidays to keep Manitobans safe from impaired drivers. This bill was supported by the national president Tanya Pratt, who stood with us as we introduced it.

Bill 5 amends The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Impaired Driving Measures), further cracking down on those who decide to drink and drive. Anyone who is convicted of two impaired driving suspensions within 10 years will have their licence suspended for life. Honourable Speaker, this is one meaningful step, but you and I both know, many folks in this House both know, that one impaired driving, one decision to drive while impaired is one too many.

And so that's why our government is working tirelessly to strengthen legislation in order to prevent tragedies from occurring any further in our province. While we're working incredibly hard, Honourable Speaker, again, there is a lot that we have yet to do, and a lot of this good work is driven, again, by real heartache.

Every year, we lose thousands of Manitobans who are hurt by reckless decisions. Impaired driving is the cause of nearly 10 per cent of all fatal collisions in Manitoba in 2023 and disproportionately at the wheel, a lot of those impaired drivers are young people under the age of 27.

Not only does this affect people involved in the accident, as members across the Chamber have said, but the families and friends that the victim knew, but the reintroduction of unhealed trauma in those who have lost people in the past. And our government is

committed and are recommitting to preventing the deaths on our roads from the actions of impaired drivers, Honourable Speaker.

Again, as elected officials, we can't be there for the joy of our community, if we're not also there for the heartache and for the very real tragedies as well. Far too often, we're hearing stories of Manitobans who have been killed because of impaired driving. Every year, MADD supports law enforcement in running a Check Stop program, as I mentioned earlier, and in 2024 alone, the results from their program were alarming and showed just how many people were driving under the influence.

Police stopped 3,933 vehicles, and 124 of those drivers were found under the influence of drugs and alcohol—or alcohol, which included 18 people charged with criminal impaired driving, four suspected drug-impaired drivers, 106 immediate roadside prohibitions, including 12 people who failed drug screening tests, 11 positive for cannabis and one positive for cocaine—93 traffic offence tickets, as well.

Eight impaired drivers were involved in collisions; four drivers were intoxicated to the point that they were found unconscious behind the wheel, Honourable Speaker.

This is unacceptable. This has no place in our communities, which is why we're still working to protect you and your family by creating stronger legislation that introduces harsher penalties for impaired driving.

But again, Honourable Speaker, a lot of this work is reactive. You know, we're catching folks after the fact that they've already been impaired, that they've already chosen to do the irresponsible thing.

That's why I am really grateful for Bill 232, for the Reimer family's advocacy on this bill, for an opportunity where we can channel our grief, our heartache into educating folks long before they even get behind a wheel. And educating folks in a way that they're able to be real stewards for healthy community celebration, for community celebration that also appreciates individual life in each and every one of us and knows just how fragile life is.

So, Honourable Speaker, once more I will reiterate my support for this bill, lift up the good work of our Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and his heavy lifting, but wholeheartedly send my appreciation again to those—

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

**Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism):** It's an honour to stand up and put some words on the record today.

First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt, deepest condolences to Kellie Verwey's family and Jordyn Reimer's family and all that love them.

As a mother to two children, I can't imagine what—the grief and heartache that this has caused for them, losing their loved ones. It is truly devastating, and to turn such an incredible tragedy into a moment of advocacy and to, you know, not let their loved ones lives be in vain—the death of their loved ones—it's truly remarkable and I commend them on their advocacy to ensure that, you know, folks who are choosing to drive impaired that there is the strongest penalties for them.

I want to speak about impaired driving as it relates to me as a mother of a son who's going to be 16 next month. And so he will be taking his learner's driving test, and we chat a lot about the responsibilities of operating a motor vehicle.

\* (10:50)

I, first of all, can't believe that my son is going to be old enough to drive, but there it is, and so here we are having to deal with, you know, that very adult responsibility. And so his father and I speak to him a lot about the choices that you make when you're going to be operating a vehicle, whether it be not texting and being distracted by a phone or music, but also—hopefully he's not drinking, he's not of age—but the real harms of impaired driving and how your choices have very real consequences, and to always choose, obviously, not to drink and drive, but if he's out with his friends at a party or they're out, to be able to make that choice to know that he can call his father or I anytime to come and pick him up, to encourage his friends to be sober while they're operating a vehicle.

I think, you know, people just—they don't think that these things are going to happen. And, of course, when you're under the influence, you're not thinking clearly and you think, oh, I've just had one drink and I can do this. And it's just—there's no acceptable amount of alcohol that should be in your system to operate a vehicle. There should be zero alcohol, zero drugs in your system because it's not just as simple as driving yourself home. You, when you're in a motor vehicle, are operating it—it's not just your safety, it's the safety of other drivers on the road and your choice makes real—will have real consequences for other people.

Certainly, you know, when I was in high school, I grew up in a small town and my cousin's best friend, they were graduating, and just before graduation, this heartbreak of his friend I know being killed by a drunk driver. It ripped our town apart. The aftermath of this promising young man where his life was taken and, you know, to see his family suffer the devastation of losing him and my cousin just having to experience his very best friend being lost, it was a devastating time.

And so, you know, like I said, we try and have those conversations with our teenage son, with his friends that are over, to ensure that—this is something that's entirely preventable, it is entirely preventable—that the choices that we make, that we make good choices so that there isn't this death that people have to live with, losing their family member and the devastation of the choice that someone makes, because it really is a choice to get behind the wheel and drive while you're impaired.

I want to speak a bit about first responders. I have a cousin who is a first responder, a police officer, and, you know, the devastation that he witnesses from the choices that people make as a first responder is—it's really difficult having to deliver the news of losing a loved one to family members because of the choices someone has made, for something that's entirely preventable, as I said.

Our NDP government has introduced legislation that's going to be putting harsher penalties on those who make the decision to get behind the wheel while they're impaired. Like, we really are, certainly, our government is committed to make our roads safer for all Manitobans so that no Manitoban is ever killed by a drunk driver again and that no family ever has to feel the grief that accompanies it.

It's the reality of choosing to drive drunk, and we want to make it clear that this is not an acceptable choice to make, and this choice is—if you make this choice, you are going to face very grave consequences.

We want to ensure that we are working with our partners; of course, MADD Canada is an incredible organization and their network of victims and survivors, concerned citizens about impaired driving, and our government partnered with MADD Canada to draft this bill that we have with, you know, our incredible Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) who is working so hard to ensure that there are stricter penalties for people who choose to drive impaired.

And the national president, Tanya Pratt, stood with us when he introduced the bill. She had quoted being saying: We recognize there is no one single piece of legislation that's going to solve impaired driving and that we welcome the government taking steps to deal with those offenders who cause the most serious harm. And that was from Tanya Hansen Pratt, who's the national president of MADD Canada.

So as we were speaking about impaired driving, every year there are thousands of Manitobans who are hurt by the impacts of impaired driving, and we want to prevent these deaths on our roads and we want to ensure that we are working to keep Manitobans safe. Like I'd said, we've introduced legislation that is going to put harsher penalties on those who make the decision to get behind the wheel when they're impaired.

In 2024, as my previous colleague had stated, you know, the results from the program were alarming and really showed how many people drive while under the influence, which is completely unacceptable. Police stopped 3,933 vehicles and there were 124 drivers that were found to be under the influence, and that is just many too many—many too many impaired drivers on the road.

And we want to make sure that we're cracking down on impaired drivers. We want to ensure that we continue to be one of the toughest jurisdictions when it comes to impaired driving penalties because people should face the full consequence of the law if they choose to drive while they are impaired.

I'm going to leave my comments here, Honourable Speaker.

But again, I just want to extend my heartfelt condolences to Jordyn Reimer and Kellie Verwey's families. I just truly commend you on turning such an incredible tragedy into advocacy and working together with our government to ensure that impaired drivers are held to account if they choose to drive while under the influence.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Seeing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

I declare the motion carried.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Is there will of the House to call the vote unanimous?

**The Speaker:** Is there will of the House to call the vote unanimous? *[Agreed]*

The vote is therefore declared carried unanimous.

**Mr. Johnson:** Is there leave to call Bill 232, The Victims of Impaired Drivers Commemoration Day Act, commemoration of days, weeks, months act amended, to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development on May 13, 2025 at 6 p.m.?

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to call Bill 232 to the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development for next Tuesday, May 13 at 6 p.m.? Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** No. I hear a no. *[interjection]* Order.

**Mr. Johnson:** Please resume 'bate on Bill 222.

**The Speaker:** It has been called Bill 222 to resume debate, standing in the name of the honourable member for—*[interjection]*—oh, the time for debate on private members' bills has come to an end.

\* (11:00)

## RESOLUTIONS

### Res. 13—School Tax and Education Property Tax Increases

**The Speaker:** The hour being 11 o'clock, we will now move to private members' resolutions—*[interjection]* And I will remind people that the Speaker is standing and you will remain seated and quiet while the Speaker is speaking.

The hour being 11 o'clock, we'll now move to resolution No. 13, school tax, education property tax increases.

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** I move, seconded by the member from Midland,

*WHEREAS the current Provincial Government has allowed out-of-control, double-digit school tax increases across Winnipeg and Manitoba, pushing property tax bills to unsustainable levels for homeowners, seniors, workers, and families; and*

*WHEREAS the City of Winnipeg has called the Provincial Government's property tax grab "historic", as residents across Winnipeg are opening property tax bills this week showing hundreds of dollars more coming out of their pockets; and*

*WHEREAS according to City of Winnipeg data, residents are facing school tax increases of 14% in Pembina Trails, 17% in Louis Riel, 14% in River East Transcona, and 15% in Winnipeg School Division; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government plans to collect \$182 million more in education property taxes in Budget 2025 through tax increases and the elimination of the 50% school tax rebate; and*

*WHEREAS this amount is on top of the \$150 million more collected from Manitobans through education property tax increases in Budget 2024; and*

*WHEREAS the previous, PC Provincial Government began eliminating education property taxes by introducing a 50% rebate for all homeowners, seniors, and farmers, and reduced education property taxes on businesses by 10%; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to introduce a new education funding formula as promised and has instead increased education property taxes on homeowners, small businesses and cottage owners; and*

*WHEREAS this is a direct result of the Provincial Government eliminating the PCs' universal 50% school tax rebate and replacing it with a limited tax credit that applies only to primary residences—leaving cottagers, small businesses, and others having to pay more; and*

*WHEREAS Manitoba seniors on fixed incomes should not be taxed out of their homes due to reckless decisions made by the Finance Minister; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government must stop punishing working families with exorbitant school tax hikes, especially when Manitobans are already struggling with a cost-of-living crisis; and*

*WHEREAS families and businesses are facing double-digit education property tax increases across the province.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to stop these harmful tax heights—hikes and eliminate school taxes from properties in Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable member for Roblin, seconded by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), that

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to stop these harmful tax hikes and eliminate school taxes from properties in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Cook:** This is an issue that's very important to all Manitobans and certainly to my constituents, who are already feeling the impact of this NDP government's assault on affordability.

All homeowners in Manitoba are going to get a property tax bill this year, but here in the city of Winnipeg, property tax bills are hitting mailboxes as we speak and, boy, are folks in for a shock.

It's important to note that the previous Progressive Conservative government was on a path to eliminate education property taxes entirely. It's something that ratepayers have been calling for, for years. It's something that advocacy groups, something that realtors have been advocating for, for decades.

And I just want to put a few words on the record from Winnipeg realtors. This is from their website, an article that they published not too long ago. And they note that 20 years ago, realtors began championing this issue because it's not fair to property owners, the education portion of property taxes.

In a civic and legislative affairs committee position paper that the Winnipeg Regional Real Estate Board published in 2001, almost 25 years ago, there is an entire section dedicated to property taxes.

The recommendation was to remove the school tax portion of our property tax bill. That year, they wrote to Drew Caldwell, who was then Manitoba's Education minister, as well as Greg Selinger, then the Finance minister, I believe.

The letter went on to talk about the inequities and having various school divisions throughout the province and in Winnipeg at a disadvantage in their ability to raise the needed funding to educate children because some divisions did not have an adequate industrial tax base to offset the tax burden property owners incur.

And they said, quote: Imagine a system where we funded education like we do health care, through provincial general revenues. In that way, all of us pay for education and take equal responsibility for caring for the achievements of the next generation. It

becomes the care and responsibility of all of us, not just people who own a home. Unquote.

They go on to note that the 2021 Manitoba budget contained welcome news: starting that year, the Province began lowering education property taxes by 50 per cent over two years for residential and farm properties, and 10 per cent for other types of property, in the form of tax rebates. They note that that announcement marked a victory in a decades-long advocacy effort.

They said, quote: Phasing out education property taxes is welcome news for homeowners and real estate professionals, alike. Unquote. They say reducing the taxes will help to ease the occupancy cost burden associated with owning a home in Manitoba at a time when pressures on home ownership affordability are rising. So things were looking up.

But then the NDP came into power, and first, they did away with education property tax rebates. That's what Manitobans are dealing with this year. They raised education property taxes by \$182 million this year, on top of the \$150 million that they raised it last year. That's over \$330 million more in taxes that the NDP are taking out of Manitobans' pockets every year.

Homeowners, seniors, workers, farmers and businesses are all paying more school tax across the province, and here in Winnipeg, in particular, under this NDP government.

Right now, over 50 per cent of Manitobans are struggling paycheck to paycheck. Affordability is the No. 1 concern Manitobans have right now. And that's when members opposite choose to not only do away with the education property tax rebate, they also force school divisions to hike property taxes because this government failed to fund education properly.

The NDP are raising property taxes on Manitobans, and that's not all they're doing to worsen the affordability crisis.

They just instituted the biggest fuel tax increase in the history of the province by 12.5 cents. That's an even bigger increase than Greg Selinger did in 2012, when he took the fuel tax from 12 cents to 14 cents. They've hiked Pharmacare deductibles this year. They're ending the indexation of the basic personal amount and income tax brackets. That's going to hit working Manitobans hard and take more of their paycheques away every year going forward.

And these education property tax hikes are a sneaky way to raise taxes on Manitobans. And the NDP likes to do it this way, and I'll tell you why. Because who collects property taxes on behalf of the Province? Municipalities. And who has to raise their mill rates in order to pay for education when the Province fails to fund it properly? School divisions.

So the NDP are clearly hoping to dodge responsibility on this. But Manitobans won't be fooled. This is an NDP tax hike.

Municipalities and the City of Winnipeg are fed up with the Finance Minister's school tax increases because they leave less tax room and they burden ratepayers. Municipalities know, and you only have to ask AMM, that property owners only have so much they can bear in taxes.

Municipalities have been warning their residents to expect sticker shock on their property tax bills. Winnipeggers will be receiving their property tax bills in the next week and they're mindful of the words of Winnipeg's finance chair who told media: I've been on council a fairly long time at this point. These are, by far, the highest education tax increases we've seen.

The RM of East St. Paul's CAO said: In the past 20 years, we have never seen an increase of this magnitude, and such a sharp rise places an undue burden on our municipality and its ratepayers.

And that's the bottom line here. But the NDP, Winnipeggers and Manitobans are paying more and getting less. We're paying more in education taxes, but every day I hear from frustrated parents and teachers. Their classrooms are overcrowded, as the NDP continues to cancel school expansion and renovation projects. There aren't enough EAs to support the growing complexity of needs in classrooms.

I spoke recently to the mother of a student in a huge school in Charleswood. The student is struggling to meet grade level expectations in reading. But there is no support available to her, as the EAs in the school are so busy putting out fires and dealing with complex behavioural issues that there is no support left to meet basic literacy needs. Basically, in this situation, only the most serious and urgent needs are being met. Everyone else is on their own.

Educational outcomes in literacy and numeracy are suffering across the board. And school divisions are forced to make impossible decisions. We heard yesterday from my colleague, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) that 40 educational assistants in the Swan Valley School Division have been fired. We

heard that in the same school division they had to eliminate music programming for schools at two elementary—for students at two elementary schools.

The NDP isn't properly funding education and they have forced school divisions into this position. Students are paying the price, teachers are paying the price and now property owners are paying the price too. And I haven't even touched on the NDP's appalling failure to properly fund needed capital projects in Manitoba's schools, for example, Phoenix School in my own constituency of Headingley.

Students, parents and teachers can't afford this. They can't afford this NDP government. Homeowners can't afford the NDP either. Everyone's paycheque is going to be worth a little less this year under this Finance Minister, and every year after that with bracket creep that comes by cancelling the indexation of tax brackets. Workers can't afford the NDP. Homeowners and seniors in my constituency of Roblin can't afford the NDP.

I got an email just last week from a gentleman, a senior on a fixed income who's facing a 10 per cent hike in his Pharmacare deductible this year under the NDP; this in the middle of an affordability crisis.

\* (11:10)

Homeowners in Brandon, homeowners in Assiniboia, in Kirkfield Park can't afford the NDP. In Dauphin they can't afford the NDP.

Manitobans should not have to bear the brunt of these NDP school tax increases. Homeowners were already paying \$150 million more last year, and another \$182 million this year according to the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) budget. In the middle of an affordability crisis, in the middle of a trade war and on the brink of a recession.

These are going to force families to make some really tough decisions. Some of these tax increases are going to amount to hundreds of dollars more on an average property; that's the difference between being able to pay for your child's soccer registration. That's a couple tanks of gas for most of us. For some families, that's a two-week trip to the grocery store.

And business owners are going to feel the hit, too, because first the NDP eliminated the rebate the commercial property owners were receiving under the previous PC government, and now businesses are not eligible at all for the homeowners' affordability tax credit, so they'll be getting no tax relief at all. Cottages aren't eligible for the homeowners' affordability tax

credit, so they're facing a huge jump in their property taxes this year. And it's really a shame because cottage life is one of the things that draws people to Manitoba.

The NDP should reverse course and support this resolution to eliminate education property taxes in Manitoba. They should use their billion-dollar windfalls from the federal government to properly fund our education system here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Prior to proceeding, there are some guests in the gallery. We have seated in the public gallery, from the YAH club, 20 seniors under the direction of Michelle Houssin. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses).

And we welcome you all here today.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** And now, a question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. And the questions may be addressed 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.

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** The previous PC government severely—severely—underfunded school divisions, and for years interfered in divisions' ability to increase revenue to support children's learning.

Can the member explain why, during her party's seven and a half years in government, they severely underfunded education despite rising inflation and costs for school divisions?

**Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin):** Thank you to the minister for the question. Gives me an opportunity to talk about some of the many successes of the previous PC government, including the astronomical funding increase to education that occurred under my colleague, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), when he was the minister of Education.

And it lets me talk, too, about some of the record of previous PC Finance ministers. In 2022, for example, they introduced a renter's tax credit at a rate of \$525 per renter annually while also cutting educa-

tion property taxes by 50 per cent and freezing rent for two years during the pandemic.

These are just some of the many successes on this file that the previous PC government had.

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Thank you to my colleague from Roblin for bringing forward this resolution.

Honourable Speaker, last year, the Finance Minister promised the business community relief would come through a new funding formula for education, but so far all they've gotten is higher school taxes from this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and Finance Minister.

Can the member explain why the Premier should just admit today that school taxes are going up under his watch and this failure of a Finance Minister that he employs?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague from Lakeside for that thoughtful question.

I think it's clear that the Finance Minister and the Premier should have known that, if you fail to properly fund education, school divisions will have no choice but to raise property taxes.

Where are all of the federal transfers going? That's what homeowners and school divisions who are facing record high property tax increases in this year, that's what they want to know.

This Premier and this Finance Minister received a large windfall in equalization and social and health transfers, and instead of using that money for education, they're increasing taxes on seniors, workers, homeowners, cottagers and businesses.

**MLA Naylor:** I know this member was busy dismantling the health-care system, so may not be aware that when the PC government came into power in 2016 they immediately cancelled caps on classroom sizes that the NDP had introduced.

And that is one of the things that has led to the challenges that she spoke about today about overcrowding in classrooms. So during the previous failed PC government, Manitobans were let down in so many ways in schools.

Can the member opposite explain why they underfunded Manitoba schools when the Winnipeg School Division had to cut 130 vacant teaching positions due to that chronic underfunding?



**Mrs. Cook:** In 2016, I was home with two newborns and two toddlers. I appreciate the member's question.

I just want to let her know what her constituents are paying in increased property taxes this year. I believe the member's constituency falls within the Winnipeg School Division.

So a sample home worth \$339,000 in the Winnipeg School Division this year will be facing a \$319 tax increase, thanks to her government's—where she sits at the Cabinet table—her government's failure to properly fund education and to put it on school divisions to raise their mill rates.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I want to thank my colleague, the member from Roblin, for bringing forward this important resolution here today.

I know this is something that impacts many, many people across the province and not just here in Winnipeg, so I just want to ask the member, are you hearing from other homeowners the effects that this tax hike is having on them? And where else other than Winnipeg have you heard from constituents?

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague from Agassiz for that important question, because it isn't just Winnipeg.

Out in, I believe it's East St. Paul—and I'm going to find the exact numbers here, because I think it's important to put them on the record—a property owner in East St. Paul, where there—there it is—data from the RM of East St. Paul suggests a homeowner with a property of \$750,000, which is not uncommon in that neighbourhood, would have paid \$1,680 in school taxes after the previous PC government's rebate.

This year, following reassessment, that same homeowner will pay \$3,606, a 115 per cent increase under this NDP government, because of their failure to properly fund education, because they feel it's fair to put the onus on—

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

**MLA Naylor:** You know, this entire PMR is really about the desire to underfund and perhaps lead to privatization of education in the same way that this government wants to do for health care.

Affordability is something that every Manitoban is struggling with, and costs rose under the members opposite. They were—Manitobans were never able to get relief that they needed, and we are introducing 25 new ways to save in 2025.

The members opposite chose to prioritize wealthy landowners and underfund children in schools. Can the member opposite explain why they chose to send cheques to millionaires instead of supporting children in our school divisions?

**Mrs. Cook:** I think the member knows that that's a stretch. This PMR is in fact about encouraging the provincial government to properly fund education so that homeowners aren't stuck with these increasing tax bills every year because the NDP refuses to fund education properly.

She also talks about wealthy landowners, but the fact is, her government's tax increases are going to hit everybody—everybody. The average price of a home in Pembina Trails is \$450,000. The City of Winnipeg put out numbers using a sample home of \$339,000, so well below average, and a property owner in my constituency, in Pembina Trails, is going to be facing a property tax increase of over \$200—two hundred and—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

**Mr. King:** I'm just wondering, can the MLA for Roblin advise if the NDP campaigned on real education funding reform here in Manitoba?

\* (11:20)

**Mrs. Cook:** What an interesting and important question.

The NDP campaigned on a lot of things that they've failed to deliver. And they did, in fact, campaign on many things that we're now discovering were never intended to be actioned. They said whatever they needed to say to get elected.

Their changes to the funding formula amount to nothing more than a tweak. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Cook:** So it's no surprise that trustees and homeowners are now opening their education property tax bills over the next few days with shock and dismay.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram)—oh, sorry—the honourable Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor). We have to follow the proper rotation.

**MLA Naylor:** Let's think back a little bit to a couple of years ago under the previous government with bill 64, one of the worst bills that the members opposite ever introduced.

Intense protest from educators and everyday Manitobans led to the abandonment of that bill. But in the meantime, the PCs spent \$1.5 million on advertising and consultation to try to promote this bill, 1.5 million of taxpayer dollars.

Can the member opposite explain why they chose to waste \$1.5 million of taxpayer money in that—this way?

**Mrs. Cook:** Allow me to help the minister return to relevance.

I think it's important that we talk about the impact that the NDP's tax hikes are going to have on small businesses in Manitoba at a time of great economic uncertainty, in the middle of a trade war, on the brink of a recession, and some of these businesses that actually have not yet recovered from COVID.

First, the NDP eliminated the rebate the commercial property owners—small-business owners—were receiving under the previous PC government, and now they've made them ineligible for their homeowners affordability tax credit, paltry though it is, so they'll be getting no tax relief at all.

On top of income tax increases, minimum wage increases, fuel tax increases, the NDP choose to hit businesses with—

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

**Ms. Byram:** I was wanting to ask the member from Roblin if she can elaborate a little bit on the effects this tax hike is going to have on our seniors here in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Cook:** Thank you to my colleague from Agassiz, because that's such an important question.

As we all know, many seniors are on a fixed income. That means they don't have the ability to raise their income to pay for the NDP's tax increases. And many of them write to us as legislators saying, where am I supposed to get this money?

We've seen it with Pharmacare deductibles going up, with the failure to index tax brackets—now every dollar they earn is worth even less. And now they're going to be opening a property tax bill and perhaps having to choose between something like, do I get the shingles vaccine this year? Or do I pay my property tax bill? That's a completely unfair position that the NDP is putting them in.

**The Speaker:** The time for question period has expired.

## Debate

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

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Not quite too sure where to begin on this one. I think a lot of Manitobans and a lot of Canadians know right now that, you know, affordability is a challenge. We hear it all the time, right? Rising costs of living impact a lot of folks. That dollar is not going as far as it used to go. And a lot of the focus that our government has, or a lot of our focus on this side of the House has been on tackling affordability, making life more affordable for Manitobans.

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

Spending the last little bit here listening to the member across the way talk, honestly, it felt like a lot of their remarks were just suspended from any grasp of reality, right; and a lot of the things that we see happening in this Chamber these days is almost like a whitewashing of history, right, like the PCs want to invent a past that did not exist, that they were heroes in the past. And I want to be careful about how I say this, so that it's parliamentary, but if I'm reading the wording of the PMR here, it's farcical.

None of this stuff is actually grounded in any reality, right? If we're talking about who's actually working for Manitobans, it's the NDP government that cut the gas tax. It's the NDP government that froze hydro rates for a year. It's the NDP government that, guess what, cut the payroll tax, something that they love to talk about.

It's the NDP government that's been focused on making life more affordable for Manitobans, but here we are today, the opposition trying to turn education into a political issue.

And I've found it a little bit ironic that the member talked about campaigning and bringing attention back to the 2023 campaign, which is not something I'm sure that the member opposite wants to do. But I think a lot of folks here remember what the previous government tried to do with education; the severe and deep cuts. We know what they did on health care; education wasn't all that much different.

And let's, if I can, honourable Speaker, let's go through some of the highlights here of what they had done in their time in government. They cut core operating funding for education by \$36 million over three years. In 2016, the Province paid for 62 per cent of the operating costs; by '21-22 that fell to 56 per cent.

They wasted a million and a half dollars on consultants and advertising to promote their failed bill 64. And for 28 of the 37 school divisions in Manitoba, funding was cut from where it was three years before the PCs took office. Funding was cut by 15 to 20 per cent for 15 school divisions.

School classroom sizes grew. The amount of resources that teachers had to teach shrunk and if we look at the school divisions, by division, cuts and the result, the Winnipeg School Division cut—they got a cut close to \$5 million, including a cut to their nutrition program.

Seven Oaks School Division cut 28 educators thanks to the Progressive Conservatives. Brandon cut 11 educators thanks to the PC government. River East Transcona eliminated 13 librarian positions thanks to the PCs. Pembina Trails cut \$6.6 billion in '21–2021 and cut teacher librarian hours, English additional language specialists and EA staff. Continuing on, St. James-Assiniboia cut 12 full-time teaching positions thanks to the Progressive Conservatives.

With a \$900,000 deficit, the Seven Oaks School Division had to consider eliminating the Learn to Swim program and start charging for field trips and skating and all sorts of things that a lot of students benefit from. And with a \$2.7-million deficit the Hanover School Division had to make cuts for necessary school bus replacements.

So this is an abysmal record and to get up today and have the gall to point at this government and say, oh, you're not funding education adequately. And that's baloney, right? And so if we now switch and start looking at the things that our government's doing—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I appreciate that the member earlier considered how parliamentary his language was, but baloney would fall on the other end of—or the other side of that line. So I'd ask that the member rephrase his comments.

**MLA Devgan:** I will try to come up with another replacement, maybe farcical. I'm hearing some suggestions from my colleagues but, anyway, the point still stands, honourable Speaker, that it is detached from reality, from what are hearing this morning.

And if you'll indulge me, honourable Speaker, I'd—let's talk about some of the things that our government is actually been doing to help Manitobans with affordability. We've raised the homeowners affordability tax credit to \$1,600. That's a \$100 top-up this year,

which the opposition laughed at—laughed at when we had announced it in our budget.

So you know, \$100 may not mean very much to the business tycoons on the other side of the House but it means a lot to the average Manitoba families. We made a 10 per cent permanent reduction to the gas tax, cutting it for an entire year last year. That's an NDP government that did that.

We're encouraging Manitobans to get outside by making admission to provincial parks free for an entire year. Manitoba has some beautiful provincial parks. So to all Manitobans watching, get out and enjoy with some of the natural beauty we have in our own province. I would encourage the opposition to take advantage of that as well; maybe cut down on the trips down to the States to thank Trump and whatnot.

But we expanded our universal birth control program, providing Manitoban families with affordable child care by extending the \$10-a-day child care to being a true \$10-a-day child care program. And like I said, we cut the payroll tax, which I know members opposite love to hear of that—about, and we actually did it, right?

\* (11:30)

So these are concrete steps that we've taken on this side of the House, and what we're hearing on the other side is what amounts to hyperbole—again, trying to think of words here that don't cross the line of parliamentary standards and rules, but honourable Speaker, we've got a lot of educators on this side of the House who could speak to the devastation and the impact of the previous government's cuts to the education system.

I remember door-knocking in 2023 and meeting so many teachers in my constituency who had to tell—who told me that they had to go out of their own pocket to purchase pencils and paper and supplies for their students and how disrespected they felt by the previous government.

And a lot of those same folks are now excited to have a government that sincerely cares about the education system. And they're also excited to see that our government is taking concrete steps to make life more affordable for Manitobans, and look, we all understand what's—what the Canadian economy, the Manitoban economy is facing today with the Trump threats.

We understand that the uncertainty this presents to Manitoban businesses, to the average Manitoba

family, and so we are taking concrete steps to ensure that our relationship with the United States remains healthy, but at the same time, that we are investing in Manitoba, right? Build, build, build. Or, I guess, to paraphrase the Prime Minister: Build, baby, build.

Right, it's investing in our own economy to protect Manitoban jobs, to protect Manitobans and ensure that they're not feeling the brunt of Trump's tariffs, Trump's attack on Canada, on our economy. You don't get that same sort of rhetoric from members opposite.

In fact, the other day, the Leader of the Opposition stood up and tried to explain away his thanking of Donald Trump and say, no, no, no, no. I only thanked Donald Trump because he got rid of Justin Trudeau. They let their partisanship blind them so far to thank Trump for getting rid of Trudeau, which in of itself is nonsense.

This is the sort of rhetoric that we're hearing from the other side of the House, and they don't like hearing this that the—at the end of the day, there's only one party in this Chamber that is actually on the side of Manitobans and that is the NDP.

The Progressive Conservatives want to hop between two different lines and say: We're Canadian, but thank you, Trump. We did all this damage to health care and education but we want you guys to do all the work, right? I mean, we heard some of this at committee last night with the member opposite, you know, saying that, oh, we'll talk about anything when it comes to women's health care and all sorts of things that they campaigned on, sitting next to the member who was the poster boy for a lot of that disgusting, grotesque content that we saw during the campaign.

So honourable Speaker, please forgive the emotion that I'm bringing to this Chamber but it's tough to sit here every day and hear this nonsense. You can't whitewash and erase the last seven years. And we're going to get up every single day and remind those members opposite exactly why they're sitting on those benches.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I thank you for the opportunity to stand here today in this Chamber and put a few words on record. And I want to thank the member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) for bringing forward this very self-explanatory resolution that's been put in front of us with a lot of facts of what's been going on in here, in this province with affordability.

And this NDP government seems to just keep pulling out of the shallow pockets that Manitobans have left here. We're certainly in an affordability crisis and they just continue to—taxes on education, which adds to our property taxes.

As the member from Roblin had mentioned earlier, honourable Speaker, that municipalities are really seeing a concern with this. They're the ones that take the brunt, that take the heat of these education property taxes because it goes on to the municipal tax bills.

And those municipal tax bills—and I went back, a few years back when I was in municipal government, they were reaching very close to, you know, 40, 45 per cent of the tax bill that our taxpayers receive in the mail coming from the rural municipalities and the urban municipalities. They're the ones that are billing for these education taxes, as well.

So now we're seeing in our municipal tax bills that education property taxes are becoming very close to 50 per cent or above our tax bill—

**An Honourable Member:** It's more. It's 60 per cent.

**Mr. King:** —closer to 60 per cent in some cases, that the municipalities are sending out.

That bill is more than 50 per cent education taxes, which is something that the previous government, which is—we're probably going to hear the other side speaking about all afternoon—what good things we did. But yet they try to go in the past and make it sound otherwise, of removing that education tax from the property tax bill.

Now we're forcing homeowners to sell, downsize, move into smaller homes because they can't afford these outrageous tax bills, which a portion of it, a major portion of it, is education taxes.

Farmland, huge, huge portion of my constituency, that's what it takes in, a lot of agricultural land. And can you imagine 50 per cent, with the—especially with the value of what farmland is nowadays compared to, say, 10 years ago.

What our producers are paying now in education taxes and the PC government was well on their way to removing that from the tax bills altogether. So this is forcing people that are holding on to farmland, maybe retired from farming, want to hold on to it for their—maybe for their next generation, their grandkids to do whatever they need to do with it. It's forcing them into selling the land because they can't afford the tax bill on it.

So cottage owners, we hear from cottage owners, and the Manitoba's a huge, huge area with cottage owners around our beautiful lakes, no longer receive that rebate because of what the NDP government have done. They've taken that away. It's only on our principal residences and as my colleague had mentioned earlier, we're talking 300-plus-dollar increases on our property tax bill just on our principal residences, now going forward with what the NDP have done.

So imagine what some of those cottages are going to cost with those extra education taxes on top of it. We're seeing—we're going to see a lot of cottages for sale I think, too, just because people will not be able to afford the tax bill.

I have a young family, I have two more boys left at home and they often question me: Dad, how will we ever—how are we ever going to afford to own a home with the way taxes are and affordability now, with the Liberal government that's just been elected back in?

And question how about that, and they question: Dad, with the collapse of the federal NDP, are we going to see that here in Manitoba? And I said, well, absolutely we're going to see the collapse of the provincial NDP here in Manitoba for the simple reasons of the tax burden that they are putting on Manitobans. Our younger generation is never going to be able to own a home, own a new car, simply for these reasons; because they're not making life more affordable for Manitobans whatsoever by just adding taxes after taxes.

So, honourable Speaker, I just want to say, this resolution that my colleague from Roblin has brought forward is thoughtful of making life more affordable for all Manitobans. So it's time to stand up for Manitobans to help make life more affordable, not taking more of their paycheques and suffering from these results of higher taxes.

So I would encourage the members opposite here to take a good read of this resolution because it makes a lot of sense. There's a lot of facts there of what's going on and I really encourage maybe to pass it with the members on this side. It would certainly be the best interest for people of Manitoba.

\* (11:40)

Having said that, honourable Speaker, I will give the opportunity to some other members to put some words on record.

Thank you.

**MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona):** As a former educator, it always gives me great privilege to stand up here in the House to speak about education.

As an educator, it's always a joy to be able to support students on their journey throughout their school career. We, on this side of the House, understand how important our youth are and how important our education system is. I was fortunate enough to work in schools from kindergarten all the way to grade 12, and it's an incredible experience watching students come into school for the first time to start kindergarten. They are full of wonder and are not sure what to expect. It's exciting to see them learn about what it means to be a student, and they start to understand how they fit into this world.

Then they progress through the grades and start to understand and learn about what is important to them and who they want to be. Do they want to be someone who stands up for everyone, or do they want to be someone who stands up for just a few?

On this side of the House, we stand up for everyone. It's one of the ultimate experiences to be able to see children grow into wonderful young adults and to be a part of their learning and development. As educators, our job is to support youth during their most vulnerable and formative years. And I, along with many of the other educators on this side of the House, are always proud to stand here and tell Manitobans just how much we support them.

For seven and a half years, our public education system was chronically underfunded. As a result, teachers were left to do more with fewer resources for more students. And I experienced this first-hand, walking into a school with teachers, unaware of what they were going to do with school supplies, going out and buying their own supplies, buying their own food for kids, buying their own everything for their classroom to ensure that the students that they had were cared for.

Our government has heard from educators across Manitoba about how the members opposite's cuts have damaged the system. They took important programs away from students. They sent teachers looking for jobs out of province. And if that wasn't already bad enough, they undermined school divisions' autonomy and tried to eradicate the democratic process from school boards.

Unlike the PCs, we don't want our kids to just get by; we want them to thrive. We want them to live the good life. We want to provide them with the oppor-

tunities to explore the good life and what the good life means to them. Which is why we are investing in our education system with stable, predictable funding. Our government increased school funding by 3.4 per cent from last year for a total of \$67 million, because we want to assure families and educators that we value public education, and that we can be a predictable partner in providing kids with the education and support they need to thrive.

School divisions have had a lot of catching up to do after the seven and a half years of PC cuts and mismanagement to our public education system, on top of the freezes to school division property taxes. The previous failed PC government's education property tax model did not have working Manitobans' interests at heart. Instead, their education property tax system benefitted the most affluent property owners in Manitoba. The PC government handed over a cheque in 2022 for over \$1 million to Cadillac Fairview.

With this affordability crisis, how can we do that? How can members opposite justify what they've done? Our government knows that there—that was not a fair tax system for working families, worried about whether they will be able to afford to pay their mortgage that month.

This year, as part of our 25 new ways to save with Budget 2025, we are proud to be raising the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,600, helping Manitobans save even more on their school taxes. Manitobans don't want to stress about how to pay their bills. They want to be out enjoying life with family and friends, which is why our government is proud to bring Manitobans 25 new ways to save through Budget 2025.

The members opposite decided to hurt young Manitobans during their time in government. Their endless cuts, freezes and firings meant our schools didn't have the resources they needed to keep up with rising costs and needs for students.

When it comes to education, the PCs don't have a leg to stand on. During their seven and a half years of failed government, members opposite made endless cuts to education, which impacted schools and families and students on a day-to-day basis.

It also hurt the future of our province. On this side of the House, we understand that cutting education funding hurts the youngest minds in Manitoba, something the members opposite clearly failed to understand. They cut core operating funding for education by \$36 million over three years. In 2016, the

Province paid for 62.4 per cent of operating costs; in '21-22 that fell to 56.4.

They wasted \$1.5 million on consulting—consultants and advertising to promote their failed bill 64. And how did that work out? For 28 of the 37 school divisions in Manitoba, funding was cut from where it was three years before the PCs took office. Funding was cut by 15 to 20 per cent for 15 school divisions.

Every student deserves to have the support they need in the classroom to thrive, but the PCs took valuable support away from our children when they cut the classroom size cap of 20 students for students in kindergarten to grade 3 classes. That meant there were upwards of 25 students in some—in our younger years classrooms. And research shows that we know a smaller class size in that age group is critical.

Our government knows that we must respond to and support the unique needs of all our children so that they can be best—the best that they can be. School division cuts and results: Winnipeg School Division cut close to \$5 million, including the nutrition programs and subsidies, therapy subsidies and day kindergarten.

And what did we do? We introduced Nello's Law to ensure that all students across the province will be able to learn on a full stomach. Our government knows that we must respond to and support the unique needs of all our children.

Seven Oaks cut 28 educators due to the lack of funding from the PCs on the other side. River East Transcona eliminated a number of teaching positions. Pembina Trails cut teaching positions. St. James-Assiniboia had to cut teaching positions. Provincial funding did not keep pace with inflation. So to avoid cuts, the Louis Riel School Division had to use surplus funds for the first time towards a nearly \$2.5-million deficit. River East Transcona School Division's reserve funds were nearly tapped out due to a \$3.6-million deficit during the 2023 school year. So they deferred maintenance costs and took out a \$650,000 loan from the bank to cover the cost of new transportation and student records systems.

I was there at that time. It was a very scary time in River East Transcona School Division. We didn't know where the cuts were going to come from next and we didn't know what was going to happen. Interlake School Division had to cut their addiction support workers and 5.6 full-time teaching positions.

The PCs' proposed funding model made massive cuts to multiple school divisions: \$11 million from Seven Oaks; \$8.5 million from St. James-Assiniboia; \$2 million from Winnipeg School Division; \$10 million from Louis Riel; \$7.5 million from Lord Selkirk; and the list goes on and on and on.

The PCs made cut after cut to education in Manitoba, leaving students, parents, families, caregivers and educators to bear the brunt of their policies and poor cost-saving measures.

The Winnipeg School Division was severely affected by the lack of funding under the previous failed PC government. They had to cut 130 vacant teaching positions and didn't have the funds to restore them due to chronic underfunding.

\* (11:50)

Our NDP government is going to build up education in Manitoba in making sure that our public school system feels supported with the necessarily—necessary tools to help our kids reach their full potential and be able to thrive and live the good life.

Thank you.

**Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology):** It's my great privilege to rise in the Chamber today as a former teacher to speak a little bit about this resolution that appears to be attempting to do two things at the same time: first, talk about affordability, which is something we're all certainly very concerned about, something that our government has spent a great deal of time working on, as well as talking about strengthening the school system.

And it's one of the great miracles, sometimes, of Conservative math that somehow you can do two things at exactly the same time. You can reduce taxes and you can improve services. Seems to be a pretty consistent Conservative campaign pledge. It's a lot harder to accomplish once you're actually in government.

So let's begin then with the affordability piece, shall we? Let's look at a couple of the ways in which we've made a move. We've recognized the need to do a bit more on affordability. Let's look at a few of the things that our Finance Minister and our government has done in order to do that.

For example, there is, in fact, raising the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,600, helping Manitoba families with their school taxes. We've made permanent a 10 per cent reduction in the

gas tax, something that the opposition party didn't do in any of the years that they were in office.

We're saving Manitobans money on their utility bills by bringing in a one-year hydro rate freeze. We're encouraging Manitobans to get outside by making admission to all of our parks free for the coming year.

We're providing Manitoba families with affordable child care by extending \$10-a-day child care to non-school days for school-aged children. We've expanded our universal birth control program to include Plan B to help Manitobans take control of reproductive rights. When Manitobans called out for help, we answered.

One of the things that I quite like about this Chamber—it's really a very remarkable place to get to come to work every day—is that it seems to have what I think are almost miraculous powers. And on a day like today when we're electing a new Pope, or someone's electing a new Pope at the moment—recognizing those miracles in life is really something I'm keen to do.

And one of the great miracles of this Chamber is the astonishing memory-cleansing power that the long walk of shame from the government side of the House over to the opposition benches has on the memory of people who used to sit on the government side of the House. They seem to forget all of the things that they did while on this side of the House, which is, again, today of all days, miraculous in nature, okay?

So let's review some of the things that my friends across the way managed to accomplish while they were on this side of the House.

At no point in their time over on this side of the House did their educational spending actually match the rate of inflation; not once, not ever. In contrast, since coming into office, 18 or so months ago, we've increased educational spending by \$170 million.

I do want to touch as well, because it's been raised by a couple of the members as they've spoken, again, coming back a bit to affordability and concerns about people's capacity to be able to own a home at some point in their life. If you think school taxes has an impact on your capacity to own a home one day, wait until you discover the impact of a reduced or a diminished educational system. Wait until you see the impact that has on your capacity to own a home one day. It's important to maintain a strong and vibrant education system that works for all students. That's something that we're very much doing.

But again, let's review some of the things that have seemed to have slipped from the memory of the members opposite as they made that walk of shame over to the opposition benches.

During the seven and a half years of government, they made endless cuts to education, and these cuts hurt Manitobans from one end of the province to the other. They cut core operating funding for education by \$36 million over three years. In 2016, the Province paid for 62.4 per cent of operating costs; by '21-22, that had fallen to 56.4 per cent.

Again, as my member for—my colleague from Transcona had mentioned, \$1.5 million was wasted on consultants and advertising to promote bill 64. I actually should probably thank the members opposite for their hard work on bill 64. In many respects, I probably wouldn't be here today in this Chamber if it wasn't for that particular piece of legislation. That's the point at which I decided as a teacher I needed to step up and take some responsibility to bring that bill to an end. I needed to step up and fight against it. If it wasn't for bill 64, I may still be teaching high-school theatre, so thank you for that.

For 28 of the 37 school divisions in Manitoba, funding was cut from where it was three years before the government took office—PCs took office. Every student deserves to have the support they need in the classroom to thrive. But the PCs took valuable support away from our children when they cut classroom size cap of 20 students for K-to-3 classes.

Our government knows that we must respond to and support the unique needs of all of our students so that they can be the best they can possibly be.

Here's the impact of some of the school division cuts from the former government: Winnipeg School Division, cut close to \$5 million including its nutrition program and subsidies, therapy subsidies and kindergarten. Seven Oaks cut 28 educators. Brandon cut 11 educators. River East Transcona eliminated 13 librarian positions. Pembina Trails cut \$6.6 million in 2021, which meant cuts to teacher-librarian hours, English additional language services and EA support.

St. James-Assiniboia cut 12 full-time teaching positions, with a \$900,000 deficit; Seven Oaks division had to consider eliminating the Learn to Swim program; charge for band field trips; cut after-school and summer programs; cut skating, swimming and bicycle-riding programs; cut school bus transportation for students in grades 7 to 12 and reduce 25 to 30 teaching staff.

With a \$2.7-million deficit, honourable Deputy Speaker, Hanover School Division had to make cuts to necessary school bus replacements, the school maintenance budget, the Grade 2 swim and summer reading programs and \$235,000 worth of programs and 25 teaching positions.

Provincial funding simply did not keep pace with inflation. So to avoid cuts, the Louis Riel—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have one minute remaining.

The hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, May 8, 2025**

**CONTENTS**

<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>		<b>Resolutions</b>	
<b>PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS</b>		Res. 13—School Tax and Education Property Tax	
<b>Second Readings—Public Bills</b>		Increases	
Bill 232—The Victims of Impaired Drivers		Cook	1831
Commemoration Day Act (Commemoration of		Questions	
Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)		Naylor	1834
Balcaen	1821	Cook	1834
Questions		King	1834
Compton	1822	Byram	1835
Balcaen	1822	Debate	
Schuler	1822	Devgan	1836
Wowchuk	1823	King	1838
Debate		Corbett	1839
Simard	1824	Moroz	1841
Schuler	1827		
Dela Cruz	1827		
Kennedy	1829		

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**