



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 26, 2025

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

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

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

The honourable Government House Leader, on House Business.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Could you please canvass the House for leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), have been completed including second reading, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading.

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47 have been completed including second reading, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**The Speaker:** I hear a no.

Leave has been denied.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Wildfire Update

**Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures):** The status of wildfires across Manitoba is evolving. Fire crews, emergency services and local authorities are working around the clock across the province to ensure all Manitobans remain safe.

A lot of good work is being done in places like Cross Lake and Lynn Lake where fire guards are being put in place.

In our parks, the fires in the areas of Bird River, Nopiming and the Whiteshell remain out of control.

Significant threats remain, so we would like to remind everyone that park closures and evacuations are a protective measure to safeguard lives and reduce harm when a wildfire poses a real threat.

Reopening of provincial parks will depend on daily analysis of fire behaviour, suppression efforts, environmental and weather conditions, expert judgment and real-time conditions.

We are relieved to hear that Pointe du Bois area has reopened and we hope that conditions improve to allow for more good news soon.

Priority evacuations have begun in Cross Lake and Pimicikamak Cree Nation, and a full evacuation order has been put in place in the community of Sherridon. In Bissett, planning has begun for a possible evacuation in the coming days.

With so many areas of the province on high alert, this is evidently an exceptional situation.

Whether it's in parks or anywhere in our province, we urge all Manitobans to heed the advice of officials and local authorities.

I would like to thank the RCMP, local police departments and emergency crews for your tireless efforts.

We also appreciate the efforts of organizations like the MMF and MKO, who are making resources available during this time of need.

Let's continue to be vigilant. Let's do our part to stay informed and be prepared. Let's continue to look after each other.

Thank you.

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** Today, I want to start by expressing my appreciation for the ongoing updates by the minister. I know many Manitobans whose lives remain affected by the wildfires burning across our province are anxiously awaiting information. While fires continue to burn, progress is being made thanks to the tireless efforts of firefighters, emergency responders and, of course, improved weather.

While we welcome the positive steps forward, the state of local emergency remains in place and the risk is still very real. All Manitobans, especially those in these areas, need to have a bag ready and to-be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Even with the reopening of some areas by Manitoba Parks, in close co-ordination with the Manitoba Wildfire Service, the Conservation Officer Service and other key partners, safety remains everyone's priority.

To our firefighters, RCMP officers, Manitoba Hydro workers, EMS teams, municipal leaders and volunteers: thank you for your efforts in making a crisis more manageable.

It is also important to highlight the necessity of a seamless 911 emergency service. Municipalities and Manitobans have shared stories during this wildfire season of being unable to connect with the Brandon emergency centre. Seconds matter and I urge the government to ensure that these gaps are addressed immediately.

To our first responders: Thank you. To our residents: Stay strong. And to everyone impacted: You are not alone.

Together, we will get through this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Further ministerial statements?

#### **Manitoba Access Awareness Week**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility):** I am pleased to rise today to mark Manitoba Access Awareness Week.

Manitoba Access Awareness Week affirms our government's ongoing commitment to creating a fully inclusive and accessible province. It also honours the many individuals and organizations dedicated to removing barriers and advancing accessibility in Manitoba.

In 2013 our government created the Manitoba accessibility act. While some provinces are just beginning to adopt accessibility legislation, Manitoba continues to stay ahead of the curve.

We are continuing to implement the many thoughtful recommendations from our second review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act to further strengthen accessibility across Manitoba.

Our government also continues to make critical investments through the Manitoba Accessibility Fund, which offers grants up to \$50,000 to make our municipalities, post-secondary institutions, non-profit organizations, businesses and communities more accessible. I am excited to report the fund received close to 200 applications from organizations planning to implement innovative accessibility projects.

This year's theme, accessibility in Manitoba: past, present and future, invites us to reflect on progress made, celebrate achievements and renew our commitment to building a barrier-free Manitoba.

In celebration of this year's Manitoba Access Awareness Week, the Manitoba Accessibility Office has organized a number of activities to raise awareness about accessibility in Manitoba, including a webinar and panel discussion on May 28; a special edition of Accessibility News, an accessibly focused newsletter reaching over 2,000 subscribers across Manitoba; a social media campaign focused on how Accessibility for Manitobans Act and standards are removing day-to-day barriers; and a new accessibility poster campaign which was launched featuring a diverse community of Manitobans with disabilities, of which I am particularly proud.

\* (13:40)

The dedicated staff of the Manitoba Accessibility Office and the Accessibility Compliance Secretariat are raising awareness and assisting Manitoba organizations and businesses to comply with the standards through free resources, training and events. Our government recognizes and appreciates the work they do and I would like to lift them up and say a profound miigwech for all of the amazing work that they do.

I would also like to thank the Accessibility Advisory Council for their ongoing work on standard development, which are informed by their own experiences and expertise.

Let's continue to break down barriers, challenge stigma and build a future where inclusion and accessibility are not only aspirations, but realities for every Manitoban.

Miigwech.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** Our province has made major progress since Manitoba Access Awareness Week began over four decades ago. However, as this week-long campaign is meant to show us, there is much more we can do to improve accessibility, remove barriers and promote inclusion in our communities.

While many Manitobans have been impacted by disability in some way, either themselves, their loved ones or colleagues, the public can often be unaware of the various barriers and stigmas faced by individuals with disabilities.

Disabilities can be visible or invisible, temporary or permanent. Moreover, something that needs to be stressed is that no one is immune to experiencing disability in their life.

For that reason, the need for accessibility is not simply an issue that affects a few. In the long term, accessibility affects all—accessibility benefits all Manitobans. But even if that was not the case, reducing barriers is a worthy endeavour for all those who seek to foster a society that values freedom and dignity for all.

Many of life's basic pleasures and activities that we take for granted are limited or out of reach for Manitobans with disabilities due to physical, social and technological barriers.

Nearly 175,000 people in Manitoba have a disability—that's almost one in six people. And as our population ages, that number is expected to rise to one in five Manitobans. These figures underscore just how important it is that we build a province that is inclusive and accessible for everyone.

It is clear that accessibility is an issue that directly impacts the lives of so many Manitobans and visitors to our province. We, as legislators, must work together to identify and remove barriers that prevent full participation in society.

I urge all Manitobans to reach out to their local MLAs and share their experiences, insights and ideas

on how we can collaborate to make our communities more accessible and inclusive.

Manitoba is a place of opportunity, and let us ensure that that opportunity is available and accessible to all Manitobans.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Naomi Lundgren

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Today I rise to honour a truly remarkable Manitoban. Naomi Lundgren, who joins us in the gallery today, is a pillar of our St. James community.

Working as a senior resource co-ordinator at the St. James 55+ centre, Naomi connects seniors in the St. James-Assiniboia area with everyday services and resources to make life easier.

Whether it's arranging transportation, co-ordinating yard and lawn care or supporting housekeeping and meal prep, Naomi is committed to empowering seniors to live with confidence and independence, and I want to thank her for doing this important heart-work for folks in our community.

Wherever there's a need, Naomi shows up with compassion and determination. She regularly hosts pop-ups at the Westwood and St. James libraries, as well as at community expos, to ensure seniors know what services are available to them.

For those who may be feeling isolated or without a strong support system, Naomi is a constant source of connection and care, always working to make sure they have what they need to lead full and dignified lives.

Naomi, we are so lucky to have you in St. James. Your heart and deep care of people is a refreshing example of compassion in action and speaks further to the positive difference one person can make. I know you've said before that my heart lives in the community, and anyone that's crossed paths with you would agree. It shines through in everything you do.

Thank you for being an exemplary community member in St. James and for the meaningful difference you continue to make in the lives of so many.

At this time, I ask that the House stands to join me in acknowledging Naomi Lundgren.

I also ask for leave to enter the names of her guests into Hansard.

*Adeola Asenuga, Sarah Buchan, Carl Lungren, Kylie Lundgren, Naomi Lundgren, Connie Newman, Janice Pound, Paula Roeder.*

### **Filipino-Canadian Association Neepawa**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** It is a great honour to recognize and acknowledge the rich heritage of the Filipino community and to celebrate the remarkable contributions of the Filipino-Canadian Association Neepawa, commonly known as FIL-CAN. Joining us here today in the gallery is founder of the association, Van Afuang.

The FIL-CAN organization is made up of seven regions in the Philippines and was founded to provide a voice and representation for Filipinos in the area. It unites members from across the Philippines, bringing together regional groups such as BISDAK, BIBAK, CALABARZON, Ilocano, Oragon and the National Capital Region and the historically significant Waray region. Each group reflects the deep cultural pride and traditions that Filipinos carry with them.

FIL-CAN has become instrumental in delivering projects and activities that foster and support the unity within the region. Their efforts extend beyond the Filipino population, benefiting all residents of Neepawa. From health care to educational initiatives and cultural events, FIL-CAN truly serves as a bridge between our traditions and the broader community.

In recent years we have witnessed FIL-CAN evolve, providing meaningful change. Their festivals, parades, gatherings all showcase cultural dance, singing, cuisine, sports, volunteerism, which contribute to the unity of Neepawa's diverse culture.

The members of FIL-CAN are driven by a profound love for both their homeland and their new home here in Canada. They inspire us all as leaders, educators, friends, and they all work tirelessly to build unity and enhance our shared community.

Let us recognize FIL-CAN's contributions and celebrate their unwavering commitment to cultural preservation and community service. I look forward to the energy and the exciting events that are planned in Neepawa as we celebrate Filipino Heritage Month in June.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I ask that all—ask for leave to have the names of FIL-CAN officers and co-ordinators printed in Hansard.

Thank you.

*FIL-CAN of Neepawa and Area Officers—President: Van Afuang; Vice-Presidents: Rafael Flores, Jr., Zaldy Paguidopon; Secretary: Lyane Cypres-Zepik; Treasurer: Maria Cynthia Garcia; PRO: George Arios, Ashlie Gonzales.*

*Regional Coordinators—BISDAK: Karen Bunda; BIBAK: Rosie Comila; CALABARZON: Merycel Morales; Ilocano: George Arios; Cabalen: Cezar Lopez; Oragon: Ariel Eusebio; NCR: Jamie Rabago.*

### **Rendez-Vous Rivyayr Seine**

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** Honourable Speaker, with days getting warmer; now is the time for all of us to get outside to enjoy the natural beauty Manitoba has to offer.

In my home of St. Boniface, we're so lucky to have the beautiful Seine River right in our backyards, providing a peaceful escape from the busy lives many of us lead.

That's why I wanted to share with every Manitoban that Rendez-Vous Rivyayr Seine is back for the 2025 season.

Whether you've got years of experience or are new to canoeing or kayaking, the Rendez-Vous is an event for all Manitobans to come out and enjoy a day on the peaceful Seine River.

Participants can paddle down the river for as long as they want, with five different launch locations allowing you to paddle five to 17 kilometres. At the event, everyone gets to enjoy some great food and good times, as well as a raffle for a new canoe, which is included in the registration.

This is also a great way to connect with the land and learn more about Métis history right here in Winnipeg.

During last year's event, La Société historique métisse created a day filled with fun, and this year will be no different.

As a proud Métis francophone, I'm so proud to see community events that share our unique history with every Manitoban, all while providing a fun and educational event for all to enjoy.

### ***French spoken***

En tant que fier Franco-manitobain, je suis très heureux de voir les événements communautaires qui partagent notre histoire unique avec tous les Manitobains, tout en offrant une expérience à la fois unique et éducative.

Le Rendez-Vous de cette année aura lieu samedi le 7 juin, et les inscriptions sont déjà ouvertes. J'encourage tout le monde à s'inscrire au Rendez-Vous Rivyayr Seine cette année pour venir profiter de toute la beauté naturelle que notre province a à offrir.

**Translation**

*As a proud Franco-Manitoban, I'm thrilled to see community events that share our unique history with all Manitobans, while providing a unique and educational experience.*

*This year's Rendez-Vous will take place on Saturday, June 7, and registration is already open. I encourage everyone to register for this year's Rendez-Vous Ryvyayr Seine and come enjoy all the natural beauty our province has to offer.*

\* (13:50)

**English**

This year's Rendez-Vous will take place Saturday, June 7, and registration for this event has already opened.

I encourage all the registers for this year's—pardon me. I encourage all to register for this year's Rendez-Vous.

Thank you, miigwech, maarsii.

**Dawson Cowan**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize an exceptional young athlete from Warren, Manitoba: Dawson Cowan, a rising star in the hockey world and an inspiring example of perseverance, hard work and community values.

Dawson grew up playing minor hockey as a junior merc, always as a goaltender. Supported by dedicated local coaches and a close-knit community, he developed not only his athletic skills but also a deep appreciation for teamwork and resilience. A true multi-sport athlete, Dawson also played baseball and basketball, but his passion always been for hockey.

His path to the Western Hockey League wasn't easy. Dawson went undrafted in the WHL Prospects Draft, but he refused to let that define him. He played AAA U15 and U18 with the Interlake Lightning, where he earned the hardest worker award.

He was later drafted by the Winnipeg Blues in the MJHL and signed by the Winnipeg ICE in 2021. He made his WHL debut with a win and a shutout, an early sign of the potential he would soon fulfill.

In November 2021, Dawson was traded to the Spokane Chiefs, where he emerged as their starting goaltender. In the '24-25 season, he led the league in regular season wins, backstopped Spokane to a Western Conference championship, defeating Vancouver, Victoria and Portland, and played an astounding 70 games en route to the WHL championship final.

He was named the Spokane Chiefs' Co-Player of the Year and was nominated for WHL Goaltender of the Year.

His talent earned national attention, ranked among the top five North American goaltenders ahead of the 2024 NHL draft, competing in the NHL prospects game and attending both the Toronto Maple Leafs' development camp and the San Jose Sharks' main camp.

Off the ice, Dawson is just as remarkable. Known for arriving at the rink three hours early, working summer jobs to pay for equipment and training and mentoring young goalies, he is described by those who know him as a humble, hard working—and genuine.

Honourable Speaker, Dawson Cowan represents the very best of Manitoba. We are proud of all he has achieved and all that is yet to come.

Colleagues, please join me congratulating Dawson on his accomplishments, as he joins us in the gallery today with his sister Alexis and his grandmother Bev Stewart.

**Paramedic Services Week**

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** It's my honour to rise today in recognition of Paramedic Services Week in Manitoba. From May 18 to 24, we take time to celebrate the paramedics, dispatchers and emergency medical responders who serve our communities with courage and compassion and commitment every single day.

And this year's theme—We Care. For Everyone—reflects the heart of the profession but also the reality of the work they do: providing care in moments of crisis, supporting patients with dignity and adapting to the ever-changing needs of our health-care system.

Paramedics in Manitoba serve in a wide range of roles, from primary care, advanced care, flight medics, firefighter-paramedics, community paramedics. Whether it's keeping a patient company on a long stable transfer or providing expert care during a life-threatening emergency, paramedics are there, rain, snow or shine.

You know, I had the chance to speak with Ryan Woiden recently, president of MGEU Local 911, who emphasized how much the role of a paramedic has evolved over the years. From new models of care to increasing demands in both urban and rural settings, the landscape is changing, and Manitoba's paramedics continue to rise to meet the moment with professionalism and care.

And when I think back on my own time in the field, what stands out isn't just the calls, it's those people that I got to serve alongside; their steadiness under pressure, their dedication to the job and to each other, their compassion for complete strangers. That's what defines this profession.

So to every paramedic, dispatcher and EMS professional across Manitoba: Thank you. Your work is valued. Your presence makes a difference. And your service will always be appreciated by the people you care for.

And I know you don't ask for this recognition. You just show up. Quietly, skillfully, relentlessly, every single day.

But I'll say it one more time: Thank you for everything you do, every single day. Manitoba is a better place because of you.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, there are some guests in the gallery I would like a moment to introduce.

First, I would draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have today the 2025-2026 legislative pages, and they are accompanied by our new senior page, Mai-Anh Huynh.

We welcome you here today.

Further, we are joined by Oscar Lavitt who is a page from the 2022-2023 season, and he is observing the proceedings, and we welcome you back today.

And I draw all honourable members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Carlos Gameiro who is the city clerk for Winnipeg, Andrew Poitras who is deputy city clerk, and they are here as guests of our Clerk, Rick Yarish.

We welcome you here today.

Also seated in the public gallery, I draw all honourable members' attention to the civil servants from the Early Learning and Child Care department, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long Term Care (MLA Asagwara).

Behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

And we have seated in the public gallery, from Omega School, 30 students under the direction of Sylvia Evenson, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. King).

We welcome you all here today.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** And now, on a sadder note, we have another page last day. Christian Olson is—his last day as a legislative page.

As the school year comes to a close, Christian, a proud student of Miles Macdonell Collegiate, prepares to embrace his final year of high school in 2026. Yet, due to the page program, Christian's junior year has been enriched in a unique manner which he is grateful for. His time at the Legislature gave him both insight into the workings of our provincial government and the opportunity to grow his knowledge of politics.

Alongside this, he is thankful for everyone who he's had the honour to work with. The experiences they have given Christian will follow him throughout his life, inspiring him to pursue his aspirations, though he admits that none of this would be possible without his history teacher and mentor, Gordon Fritzsche. Gordon inspired Christian's love of politics and the workings of government as well as the man who introduced Christian to the page program. Without his teacher, Christian wouldn't have had the chance to work in the Legislature, an opportunity for which he's grateful. With the knowledge he gained while working, he strives to lead a life of positivity for himself and for those around him.

Congratulations, and you will be missed here.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### 911 Emergency Services—Death of a Constituent Request to Call Public Inquiry

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) has brought up numerous times in this House the tragic passing of Dean Switzer. When pressed, this NDP government seems to be okay with TELUS investigating themselves regarding the failure that led to this tragical fatality.

This TELUS report was three pages long and had minimal details. It did nothing to reassure the public that the emergency network is stable and working when they need it.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) call a public inquiry into this today so the Switzer family and Manitobans can get some answers?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Our Minister of Innovation is working very, very hard on this file.



Our condolences have been expressed many times in this House to this particular family who's experienced this unacceptable tragedy. We're going to work with partners who were involved to deliver the service to make sure that Manitobans don't see that happen again.

I think it's interesting the member opposite mentions the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson). And we're, on this side of the House, still waiting for and have questions about accountability on that side of the House. The member for Interlake-Gimli was mentioned over 40 times in the report brought forward by the Ethics Commissioner where that side of the House made decisions to try to violate our democratic process in this province, in our country.

Will the member opposite—the Leader of the Opposition—stand up and explain why his House leader still has his job—

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

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

**Mr. Khan:** Manitobans, you can see it for yourself right there: I'm asking about a tragic fatality, and this Deputy Premier wants to cast blame across the way.

We're talking about the public's faith in our emergency system. We're talking about someone dying, and this Deputy Premier wants to focus on the Commissioner's 100-page report where the member has apologized, where he agrees to pay the fine and he agrees with the reports.

Yet this Deputy Premier does not want to talk about—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —a three-page report where a Manitoban died.

This—

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

Apparently, the member's time is not expired. Sorry.

**Mr. Khan:** Like I said, this could sadly be your loved one.

Will the Deputy Premier stop playing political games and call a public inquiry to restore the public's faith in our emergency systems?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our minister has been in contact with the family. Our minister is

working very hard, our government is working very hard, to not only hold TELUS accountable, but to make sure that the federal government is doing their job and establishing their role with private providers in this space, making sure that we are moving in the right direction to prevent tragedies from ever happening again anywhere, not just in Manitoba.

But I do think it's interesting, Honourable Speaker. The member opposite seems to want to avoid a very serious issue that is top of mind for Manitobans. A member in his caucus—the House leader for his caucus—lied—lied. That is explicitly outlined—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would remind the member that suggesting that someone has lied is considered unparliamentary. *[interjection]*

Order.

The honourable member will need to withdraw the comment and apologize.

**MLA Asagwara:** I withdraw the comment that the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), very clearly outlined in the Ethics Commissioner's report, was dishonest in the report.

Now that is something that he has to be accountable to. Manitobans are asking the question. Who in this House stands on the side of democracy? They know that this side—

**The Speaker:** Honourable member's time is expired.

And just before we move on, I would remind honourable members that even if something is said in a report, we can't just quote using unparliamentary language, for future reference.

The honourable leader of the official—and just on a further note: I did ask the honourable member to apologize, so I would appreciate if they did that.

**MLA Asagwara:** Thank you for your guidance on this, Honourable Speaker. I do heed your wisdom and I take it very seriously.

So I do apologize to you, Honourable Speaker, for making that misstep and I intend, moving forward, to make sure that we honour that process.

**Mr. Khan:** This isn't about playing games. The family and Manitobans deserve an answer as to why the emergency system wasn't working when they needed it most.

Work has to be done to ensure that this doesn't happen in the future.

Why does the Deputy Premier care more about scoring political points instead of working to save Manitobans' lives? How many more Manitobans need to die before this NDP government, before this Premier (Mr. Kinew), before this Deputy Premier, stand up and do the right thing and call a—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:**—inquiry so no one else needs to die?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our government has met with the family. We've expressed our condolences to the family directly. We've expressed them time and time again and will continue to.

We take very real steps—we've taken very real steps to hold not only TELUS but the federal government and all providers of these services accountable to make sure they're doing the work necessary to prevent this from happening as we move forward. And we will continue to update Manitobans on that progress. The Minister for innovation is actively doing work to make sure that all parties are bringing that information forward to our province.

On that side of the House, Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to avoid accountability for himself and his team. That leader was in Cabinet when they violated the Constitution, when they tossed aside Canadian democracy. Is he going to hold his member accountable for that or not? Or does he not believe in accountability—

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

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

#### **Children in CFS Care Inquiry into Hotel Placement**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Honourable Speaker, this Deputy Premier wants accountability? Well, we'll give it to them today. Why don't they bring the reports to the House today so we can vote on it? If they want accountability, we are ready to do it, yet they are playing political games. You can see it for yourself right here. We are ready to vote on it today.

Now, sadly, it's been almost two weeks since the media revealed that the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) is failing. Back to the dark days of the NDP. Family members say that a 15-year-old was

left in charge of their three siblings for two weeks in a hotel and told to delouse them themselves.

When asked by the media, the minister became confrontational, as she always does, and refused to give an answer. We're not asking for specifics that the minister can't disclose; we are simply asking the minister if the family of four was left in the hotel for two weeks, unsupervised, and told to delouse themselves.

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Our Minister of Families is doing a tremendous job. Our Minister of Families is doing more work on her file in a year and a half than was done in seven and a half years under the previous government, who legislated the rights of children in care away.

Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to run away from accountability right now. That's what we're seeing in this House. The Leader of the Opposition was a Cabinet minister when, on that side of the House, those members try to avoid, dance around, step aside from Canadian democracy. It is disgusting, Honourable Speaker.

And that is why that leader said to the media that it was in a grey area. Maybe he doesn't understand what Canadian democracy is, or how it should be upheld—

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

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

**Mr. Khan:** Honourable Speaker, it's no surprise that the Minister of Health, who scored a D-, thinks that the Minister of Families is doing a great job when she left four kids in a hotel for two weeks, unsupervised and told to delouse themselves. Not a surprise coming from a D- Health Minister.

Either the family was in the hotel for two weeks, or they weren't. The family has posted pictures as proof, so you tell me who is telling the truth.

Will the Premier or Deputy Premier or Minister of Families stand up and finally tell Manitobans the truth? Was the family of four left in the hotel for two weeks, unsupervised, and told to delouse themselves?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our Minister of Families has been crystal clear in terms of the policy that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to, and she's doing a great job standing up for families each and every day, and we know she'll continue to do just that.

Honourable Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition's right is a House leader he's keeping in that role who has been outlined in the report over 40 times of being dishonest to Manitoba—to the Ethics Commissioner and to Manitobans. And to his left, he has someone who claims to stand on the side of right, but time and time again, Honourable Speaker, is on the wrong side of history. She was the adviser to Heather Stefanson.

So will the Leader of the Opposition hold people in his caucus accountable for their role in undermining our Canadian democracy?

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would just remind the Leader of the Official Opposition to be very careful with his language. To suggest that a minister is not telling the truth is close to crossing that unparliamentary language line, so please be more careful in the future.

**Mr. Khan:** Now, when it comes to accountability, we on this side of the House are ready to vote on the report today. They want accountability, Manitobans want accountability, we want accountability. Let's vote today. Why aren't they doing it? Because they're playing political games with Manitobans.

\* (14:10)

Now, when it comes to the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), we're not asking for specifics. We're not asking for anything that would jeopardize the family of the minors. We're asking simply: Did this occur or did it not occur? It's a simple answer. Manitobans have the right to know.

Now, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) can stand up and let Manitobans know what he thinks—or they think: Was the minister too busy filming TikToks or did the minister leave the family of four unattended in the hotel for two weeks and told to delouse themselves? It's a very simple question, Honourable Speaker; Manitobans deserve an answer.

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition resorts to pathetic personal attacks because he lacks character; whereas on this side of the House we have a Families Minister with the highest quality of character, and that is why she is leading the way on decolonizing child welfare in this province.

The Leader of the Opposition is surrounded by people who broke the law. He is surrounded by people who advised Heather Stefanson to break the law. He is surrounded by people who he keeps in important roles in his caucus, who the Ethics Commissioner has

spelled out in a hundred pages that they were wrong, that they undermined our democracy, that they cast Manitobans' decision to the side and said, we don't care.

The Leader of the Opposition is in a role right now today despite having not got the most number of votes in his own party. It's embarrassing.

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

### **Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority Physician Recruitment and Retention**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Honourable Speaker, those answers are unbecoming of an MLA in this House.

Honourable Speaker, a few weeks ago, in Health Estimates, I had asked the Health Minister a few questions, and they had no answers when it comes to recruitment and retention in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority's doctor-physicians recruitment and retention.

So I specifically ask questions in regards to the Pine Falls, Beausejour and Pinawa hospitals: Can the Health Minister update the House today?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** The member for Lac du Bonnet knows that our government is doing more for the Interlake, and specifically in his community, in a year and a half than he did for seven and a half years when he was in government.

Honestly, Honourable Speaker, where was his voice for seven and a half years? He didn't get a single thing done in Lac du Bonnet for his community. Our government is building the Lac du Bonnet personal-care home that he ran on and never built. Like, come on.

We're hiring, we're retaining, we're training; we're doing the work he should've done for seven and a half years.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Shameful, shameful, shameful, Deputy Speaker. In fact, deputy—or, Honourable Speaker, the Health Minister fails to put on the record that under their watch we have lost five doctors in the last two months to the Beausejour Hospital.

Can the minister explain today why they cut five doctors in the last two months to the Beausejour Hospital, and where is their plan?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, the only thing shameful in this House is the member for Lac du Bonnet continues to stand up and pretend that he cares about health care in the Interlake when he had seven and a half years to make investments, and all he chose to do was celebrate and clap for Heather Stefanson and Brian Pallister when they cut ERs, closed emergency services, fired health-care workers and cut health care across rural Manitoba.

So we'll continue to fix the damage that he did. We'll continue to train, retain and hire folks, net-new numbers in the Interlake. We are talking directly with those particular sites. I'm happy to report there's four new physicians who have been hired and more on the way.

We're doing the work he should've done for seven and a half years. Honourable Speaker, he should get up and apologize.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, on a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Honourable Speaker, what the Health Minister should stand up and apologize for is not knowing the name of the regional health authority. It's the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority. It is simple.

But the fact remains, Honourable Speaker: five doctors in the last two months this Health Minister has cut from the Beausejour Hospital and has decimated the health care in eastern Manitoba, on the east side of the lake.

Just asking on behalf of constituents: What is their plan for recruitment and retention in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, he's wrong, full stop. The member for Lac du Bonnet is, like, wildly out of touch with what's going on in the Interlake.

We are building two personal-care homes—not just the one in Lac du Bonnet; we're building one in Arborg, too. We have a net-new over 1,600 health-care workers on the front lines. Many of those folks are working in the Interlake.

We've added 15 transitional-care-unit beds to Selkirk. We've added 30 medicine beds to Selkirk as well. We've added beds to the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, which is in the Interlake. We are adding doctors to the Interlake. We have some more internationally educated doctors actually on their way.

I want to give a huge congratulations to the two primary physicians of the year who've come out of the Interlake. I'm not sure if he sent them a note saying congratulations.

Honourable Speaker, we're doing the work he should have done for seven and a half years. That member should get up and say sorry to his constituents and the entirety of the Interlake—

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

### **Critical Infrastructure Upgrades Municipal Budget for Capital Projects**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Honourable Speaker, we hear almost daily from residents and municipalities unhappy with being ignored by this NDP government. Critical intersection improvements are not being updated or, if they are, they're ignoring local concerns.

Can the minister confirm that her unwillingness to work with local governments is a result of her 15 per cent cut to capital projects?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** I am so happy to stand up in this Legislature and talk about the relationship building that has taken place between our government and municipalities.

In fact, just this morning in a briefing with EMO, I—it was remarkable to hear about how the relationships that have been built with municipalities, cities like Thompson or with First Nations, have led to such a spectacular response in terms of evacuation and communities stepping up in our current fire situations.

Things that could not—

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

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

### **Condition of Manitoba Roads Impact on Interprovincial Trade**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** The minister clearly isn't speaking to the same municipalities as I am who are refused meetings with the minister.

Not only is the NDP government refusing to make—  
[interjection]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Narth:** —critical improvements to our roads, they have lowered the standards for measuring the condition of our roads and lowered the amount of roads

expected to be in good condition—hardly the approach to creating an interprovincial trade corridor.

How does reducing the amount of pavement being considered as good condition benefit our economy?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** As I was saying in my last question, the—so much of the good work that's happening in the province—like the fire response, but also like the infrastructure projects—are directly attributable to the relationship building that our government has done.

And I think the member's confused when he talks about meetings being denied. I take every meeting request with a municipality. What I don't do is take the meetings that he wants me to take. And so he doesn't understand that those meetings are taking place and that the work is being done. I think he's also forgotten that the reason the roads are in disrepair is seven and a half years of neglect under the previous government—

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

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

**Mr. Narth:** Well, Honourable Speaker, unfortunately for my constituency municipalities, they heard it first-hand from the minister here today. She doesn't care about meeting with them.

Only an NDP minister cuts capital projects, reduces the quality of our roads and still claims a success. The minister's mandate is to support the economy through infrastructure investment; investments that should make our roads safer.

Why is the NDP refusing to listen to residents and make the investments that will save lives?

\* (14:20)

**MLA Naylor:** Honourable Speaker, I'm sad I only have 45 seconds to share all of the good news of the investments that are being made by our department.

Not only are we investing \$595 million overall in our capital budget this year, which is millions and millions more than was invested by the previous government in any of their seven and a half years; we've also increased our maintenance budget. We're investing in all kinds of projects, like CentrePort and Arctic Gateway. We're building a new airport.

Infrastructure is the priority of our government, and when it comes to government—such as road safety, we've introduced a network screening program, a review of all fatal collisions in order to plan

accordingly, a road safety action plan, our provincial road safety committee—

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

### **Intersection of Highways 8 and 67 Requests for Safety Upgrades**

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** Honourable Speaker, for almost 20 months I stood in this House asking over and over and over for safety improvements at the intersection of No. 8 and 67 highways. Those requests were ignored by this minister.

Last week, an accident claimed the life of an 18-year-old.

What does this minister have to say for her, and her only, inaction?

**Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure):** Any fatality on our highway is heartbreaking. I extend my deepest sympathies to those who've loved the young person who was killed in this highway collision. We don't yet know the cause of the collision. This is under review of an RCMP investigation, and I certainly will await the outcome of that investigation before making any assumptions.

But perhaps in my next question I can speak to some of the improvements that we are making at this intersection.

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

**Mr. Perchotte:** A little over a week and a half ago, I warned of a possible death happening very soon, and it happened under this minister's watch. I was ignored. The RM pleas were ignored. Pleas from the emergency responders were ignored. Now another life has been lost.

What does this minister say to the family and to all these people who were begging for action?

**MLA Naylor:** Honourable Speaker, again, to the family, I offer my most sincere condolences. And I hate that, at a time of their loss, that a question is so politicized like this, but I am going to be very clear that the reasons that these improvements have not—done because those requests fell on the ears of a previous government who did nothing about these intersection improvements.

So, in fact, contrary to what the member is suggesting, we are working very closely with the RM of St. Andrews, a municipality that we work closely with, to develop the intersection improvements.

We are also adding passing lanes on Highway 8. That work begins this summer and as part—

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

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

**Mr. Perchotte:** Early in 2024, the RM of St. Andrews, as well as emergency response teams, sent a letter direct to this minister's office and were ignored. Another life lost, and the minister needs to explain why she failed to protect Manitobans.

Why did this minister fail to act on these requests?

**MLA Naylor:** Honourable Speaker, I know it's a challenge for members opposite to pivot from their notes.

But I think I was very clear that, in fact, our department is working very closely with the RM of St. Andrews, that the intersection improvement designs are being made in discussion with them, that the tender is going out so that the work on the passing lanes on Highway 8 can begin this year and that the intersection improvements will be made as a part of the work that's being done there.

#### **Main Street Project Encampment Set-Up Inquiry Government Emergency Housing Plan**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, the minister promised that once encampments were cleared, they wouldn't come back. But now Main Street Project is helping set up new encampments.

Why were they dropped off at the riverbank, and why is the minister funding encampments and going against her own promise?

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** Well, we're working collaboratively with the City and partners, and I'm happy to say, this weekend, that all of those folks have been housed; they're stably housed.

And we're going to continue to work collaboratively with partners. We're going to continue to house people with the wrap-around supports. Unlike members opposite, who constantly sold off housing, didn't maintain housing, didn't worry about those folks who were unhoused and, in fact, made them homeless. So we'll take no lessons from members opposite.

We'll continue to work collaboratively and support Manitobans like Manitobans sent us here to do.

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, I have heard from people in Point Douglas and across Winnipeg who are worried.

Why doesn't the minister have emergency housing in place, and when did she give up on her promise to keep encampments clear?

**Ms. Smith:** Unlike members opposite, we've never given up on Manitobans. In fact, we've housed over 1,500 Manitobans. We housed over 33 people from encampments; they are stably housed. We announced 67 new units; we're going to continue to bring more units online.

We're going to continue to wrap services around Manitobans, unlike members opposite who turned a blind eye, didn't care about these Manitobans now. Now they stand up, pretend to care about them. We, on this side, care about them. We'll continue to support them; we'll continue to work collaboratively.

We want to take—thank the City partners and those on the front lines that are doing this work. We are a government that you sent us here to work and make sure that those folks get the supports—

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

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

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, communities are frustrated. The government is using public money to transport the homeless to encampments rather than providing them with a safe home.

What has the minister done to make sure no more tax dollars are used for encampments, and why does—she's—why—what does she say to local communities who feel this breaks the promise that she has made to clear encampments?

**Ms. Smith:** You know what Manitobans were frustrated with? The former government. That's why they are on that side. We were sent here with a mandate to end chronic homelessness in two terms, and that's exactly we're doing.

We're doing it one person at a time. We've housed 33 people. We put 67 more units online. We're going to continue to wrap services around those folks, take them out of encampments, ensure that they have success in their lives.

Unlike members opposite, we'll continue to do the work, support Manitobans, give them hope and not turn a blind eye.

### **Hospital Admissions for Heart Failure Establishment of Community-Based Program**

**MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Honourable Speaker, Manitoba has some of the highest rates of hospital admissions for heart failure in Canada.

A recent Winnipeg Free Press article emphasized that early diagnosis and preventative care through community-based models can significantly reduce hospitalizations.

Can the Minister of Health share with the House if there are intentions of creating a community-based heart failure program that would focus on early detection and preventative treatment?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I love that question from the member for Tyndall Park. On this side of the House, we believe in strengthening cardiac services, not dismantling it like the previous PC government did for seven and a half years, which is why our government is making huge investments into cardiac care.

We started with \$175,000 for the FAST campaign with Heart and Stroke, and we've subsequently added \$25,000 for them to do the work of women's heart health education, awareness and improvements right here in Manitoba. We're doing that in partnership with Heart and Stroke, with St. Boniface and all of our experts and partners right here in the province.

More work to do.

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

### **Request to Address Social Determinants**

**MLA Lamoureux:** Poor nutrition, inadequate housing and lack of education can all factor into heart failure, particularly for seniors and low-income Manitobans. Preventing heart failure isn't just about medicine, but it's about addressing the root social causes that impact heart health.

How is this government working across departments to specifically address the social determinants that increase Manitobans' risk of heart failure?

\* (14:30)

**MLA Asagwara:** Our government believes in an all-of-government, a whole-of-government approach to addressing health-care concerns, whereas the previous government cut health care year over year and cut the services Manitobans count on to have good outcomes. We're taking a different approach.

Heart failure is a condition that is exacerbated by childhood experiences often, and folks aren't even aware that those experiences are contributing to heart issues later in life.

Our government's investment to establish the first-ever universal food program for kids in schools is going to improve heart health outcomes for Manitobans. It's a generational investment, why we're investing in housing, supports for seniors. All of this is to make sure that Manitobans have the best heart health outcomes possible.

There's much more work to do, not only to fix the damage of the previous government but to make sure we're moving Manitoba in a historically better direction.

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

### **Gender-Inclusive Heart Health Strategy**

**MLA Lamoureux:** In follow-up to the minister's first answer, the article that I mentioned stresses that women, especially old women, are disproportionately affected by heart failure and often go undiagnosed due to atypical symptoms. Health equity needs to be considered when creating a care model.

How is the government ensuring that women are being listened to and that Manitoba's heart health strategies are gender responsive and inclusive?

**MLA Asagwara:** Such an important question, which is why our government is working with one of the leads. The lead of St. Boniface Hospital is a doctor named Dr. Soni, a woman who has a great team of women researchers in the area of heart health. We are working with them directly to not only improve cardiac health services in community for women by investing like we did with \$25,000 for education and awareness, but to invest in the research side of women's heart health.

We want Manitoba to be a leader in this space. Women's heart health research—women's health-care research in general has been underfunded.

The previous government took disgusting steps and cut women's health care in Manitoba in all areas possible. We're not only fixing that damage, we're setting a new chapter in our province.

Women's health matters; we're investing in it. We're investing in research because we stand with women in their health care.

### **Early Learning and Child-Care Sector Wage Increase Announcement**

**MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond):** Honourable Speaker, we know in addition to breaching conflict of interest rules, skirting the Constitution and lacking ethical judgment, the failed Stefanson PC government also neglected child care and early learning across the province.

Our government was elected in part to fix this mess. And as a mother of two young children, I know how important having accessible and affordable child care means to families.

We have collaborated with our federal partners, and last week we made an exciting and historic announcement regarding early learning and child care.

Can the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning please inform the House of the details of this historic announcement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Honourable Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague for the excellent question and also thank the incredible public servants that have joined us here in the gallery today.

Our NDP government knows the important role that early childhood educators play in children's development and the functioning of our economy. That's why our government is proud to partner with the federal government to provide an additional \$60 million to support a wage increase of up to \$5 an hour for these amazing workers.

This historic announcement is key to our Early Learning and Child Care workforce strategy to recognize and support the important work of child-care professionals. After seven and a half years of neglect, folks working in early childhood learning know they have a provincial government that is committed to supporting and investing in them so that all Manitobans can benefit.

To Manitoba child-care professionals: We hear you, we value you and we are here to invest in you.

### **Oak Tree Towers Resident Security Concerns**

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Last Friday was just like any other Friday. I spent it at Oak Tree Towers, listening to the problems that those poor people are having.

Honourable Speaker, they have been terrorized by individuals the minister's department moved into that

building over the past 18 months. Now the seniors feel it's either them or the drug dealers.

Will the minister choose today: Is this housing facility for Manitoba seniors or drug dealers?

**Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness):** That member ought to apologize to those folks at Oak Tree Towers. They're—these are human beings. These are folks that are accessing essential housing. These are folks that are Manitobans, that deserve to be seen as Manitobans.

You know, for that member to—I'm not even going to repeat what they said. They need to know that they have a government that sees them, that values them and that is here for them.

We—since we learned of their needs, we've been there doing what they need. Since 2021, they've been knocking on that former failed government's door asking for security upgrades. We've invested over \$5 million since—

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

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

**MLA Bereza:** Honourable Speaker, one of the residents who is at his wits' end says he's scared for his life, and he's contacted me another twice today. Between dozens of people coming and going at all hours of the night, this resident feels that he has two choices: live in fear or move into his car.

Can the minister give the Manitoban a real choice and commit to enforcing the law and removing the drug dealers from the seniors' complex Oak Tree Towers?

**The Speaker:** The honourable minister of seniors—the honourable Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

**Ms. Smith:** Safety and security is No. 1 priority for our government. That's why we invested in more security.

Unlike members opposite, who cut security. In fact, they cut tenant services, they cut maintenance. They sold off housing—deeply affordable housing—housing that would make a difference for Manitobans. Did they care? No, they didn't.

Our government cares. That's why we've increased the maintenance budget. That's why we're not selling off but we're investing. We're actually investing in wrap-around supports to support Manitobans.

Unlike members opposite who turned a blind eye—would walk out of this building every day and was



okay with folks living in bus shelters. We're not okay with that approach.

We're going to continue to support Manitobans, including those at Oak Tree Towers—

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

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

**MLA Bereza:** Honourable Speaker, under this minister's watch, it seems that the criminals are in charge at Oak Tree Towers.

In one evening, a single tenant had 28 visitors—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Bereza:** —between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. Residents are forced to bear witness to criminals performing illegal activities, including smoking crack or prostitution.

Will the minister prioritize the rights of law-abiding—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

The government bench needs to come to order, please.

**MLA Bereza:** Will this minister prioritize the rights of law-abiding seniors over drug dealers, yes or no?

**Ms. Smith:** Again, what I will say is we are taking a safety and security approach on this side of the House.

On that side, they cut 55 police officers; we are investing in policing services. We'll take no lessons from members opposite.

We've invested \$5 million—over \$5 million at Oak Tree. We've put in security cameras. We've put in key card access. We've put in ROCKGLASS door at the front. We have security in there and we're going to continue to collaborate and work with policing, with the mayor and reeve there, and we're also going to continue to work with the tenants.

Unlike members opposite, we're not going to take a divisive approach; we're going to work collaboratively. That member needs to get on board and start working together—

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

### **Spruce Woods Community Co-op Property Tax Increase Concerns**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Honourable Speaker, as municipalities are cleaning up this NDP's 'slopperty'—sloppy property tax mess, other groups are wondering why they have been left out of the rebate altogether.

As I tabled last week, the Spruce Woods community co-op provides affordable housing in Brandon and is paying over \$17,000 as an increase in property taxes. There are dozens of housing co-ops across the province and this minister has a choice: agree to provide them with a rebate or agree with a rent increase.

Which one does this minister choose?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Honourable Speaker, our government is doing what it said it would do: we're making life more affordable. We brought in a \$1,500 education property tax rebate. We cut income taxes. We cut the fuel tax. Manitobans know they can trust this team.

\* (14:40)

Unfortunately, what we saw last week is Manitobans learned they cannot trust members opposite. They were caught breaking the law, breaking the caretaker convention, and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Khan), again, went out to media, and what did he say? That it fell into a grey area.

What do we know? This did not fall in a grey area. The Leader of the Official Opposition should stand in the House today and tell all Manitobans what he's going to do to account for the failures of his team.

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

### **PETITIONS**

#### **Death of Jordyn Reimer—Judicial Review Request**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On May 1, 2022, Jordyn Reimer, 24 years of age, was killed by an impaired driver while she was acting as a designated driver.

(2) There are two people legally culpable for her death: the impaired driver and the accomplice. The driver was charged, but the second criminal, the accomplice, has not been held accountable.

(3) A concerned citizen took the keys from the impaired driver earlier in the evening to ensure he could not drive impaired. The accomplice retrieved the keys from this citizen under false pretenses and knowingly provided the impaired driver with access to the vehicle.

(4) The Winnipeg Police Service's, WPS, investigation provided adequate evidence to meet the charging

standards and recommended charges be laid against the accomplice. The Crown prosecutors declined to prosecute the accomplice.

(5) The family of Jordyn Reimer has called for the prosecution of the accomplice and that the decision to not prosecute be reviewed independently.

(6) As recently as 2022, there is precedent to refer criminal files of decisions to not prosecute—with prosecutions to extra-provincial departments of justice for review. This was done with the Peter Nygård file, which ultimately led to a reversal in the decision to not prosecute, and charges were laid.

(7) An out-of-province review is supported by MADD Canada, MADD Winnipeg, and by Manitobans.

(8) The family has exhausted every avenue within the existing system, and, in the absence of a prescribed process when a disagreement exists on charging standards, the only option is to request an independent out-of-province review.

(9) In December 2024, the WPS reported an alarming number of impaired drivers in the holiday Check Stop program. Extending criminal culpability beyond the driver to those who engage in overt actions to facilitate impaired driving will save lives.

(10) Manitobans deserve to have confidence in the provincial government and justice systems to make decisions that achieve true justice for victims and their families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to order an out-of-province review of the prosecutor's decision to not prosecute the accomplice in the death of Jordyn Reimer.

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by Dallas Barber, Sandra Cullen, Sharran Cabok [*phonetic*] and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **Elm Creek School Gymnasium**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) All Manitoba students deserve access to appropriate physical education facilities, not only as parts of their education, but as a part of living an active and healthy life.

(2) The current gymnasium at the Elm Creek School is insufficient for the needs of the student population. Physical education classes are overcrowded, and there's insufficient space for whole school assemblies and events.

(3) The current gym structure is aging and shows the impact of years of usage. Parents have significant safety concerns of the physical space and the aging electrical systems.

(4) Uneven and heaving floors pose a safety risk for students participating in physical education classes or sports.

(5) The existing ventilation system was designed to meet old standards for a smaller student population and poses serious risks for students.

(6) The current facility is the only option available to students and should it become inoperable students at Elm Creek School would be deprived of physical education spaces.

(7) The government has a responsibility to make funds available to replace this aging infrastructure and provide appropriate activity and recreation activities to students in Elm Creek.

We urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the government of Manitoba to immediately work with the Prairie Rose School Division to begin the process of replacing the gymnasium facilities at the Elm Creek School in consultation with parents and the community.

This has been signed by Andrea Ladouceur, Aden Zouhou [*phonetic*], Bailey Ladouceur and many, many more Manitobans.

#### **Death of Jordyn Reimer—Judicial Review Request**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On May 1, 2022, Jordyn Reimer, 24 years of age, was killed by an impaired driver while she was acting as a designated driver.

(2) There are two people legally culpable for their deaths: the impaired driver and the accomplice. The driver was charged, but the second criminal, the accomplice, has not been held accountable.

(3) A concerned citizen took the keys from the impaired driver earlier in the evening to ensure he

could not drive impaired. The accomplice retrieved the keys from this citizen under false pretenses and knowingly provided the impaired driver with access to the vehicle.

(4) The Winnipeg Police Service's, WPS, investigation provided adequate evidence to meet the charging standard and recommended charges be laid against the accomplice. The Crown prosecutors declined to prosecute the accomplice.

(5) The family of Jordyn Reimer has called for the prosecution of the accomplice and that the decision to not prosecute be reviewed independently.

(6) As recently as 2022, there is precedent to refer criminal files of decisions to not proceed with prosecution to extra-provincial departments of justice for review. This was done with the Peter Nygård file, with ultimately led to a reversal in the decision to not prosecute, and charges were laid.

(7) An out-of-province review is supported by MADD Canada, MADD Manitoba and by Manitobans.

(8) The family has exhausted every avenue within the existing system, and, in the absence of a prescribed process when a disagreement exists on charging standards, the only option is to request an independent out-of-province review.

(9) In December 2024, the WPS reported an alarming number of impaired drivers in the holiday Check Stop program. Extending criminal culpability beyond the driver to those who engage in overt actions to facilitate impaired driving will save lives.

\* (14:50)

(10) Manitobans deserve to have confidence in the provincial government and justice systems to make decisions that achieve true justice for victims and their families.

We petition this Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to order an out-of-province review of the prosecutor's decision to not prosecute the accomplice in the death of Jordyn Reimer.

This petition, Honourable Speaker, is signed by Pat Duke, Katherine Schmautz, Dana Gottfried and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Trunk Highway 45**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Upgrading Provincial Trunk Highway 45 will accelerate economic development as it will enhance connectivity, facilitate efficient transportation and promote economic growth in the region.

(2) Economic development will be further enhanced as improved road infrastructure attracts businesses, encourages investment and creates job opportunities.

(3) Roads meeting the Roads and Transportation Association of Canada, RTAC, standards improve both safety and efficiencies as they can handle heavier loads, reducing the number of trips required for goods transportation.

(4) Safer roads further benefit both commuters and commercial vehicles, minimizing accidents and damage.

(5) Upgrading to RTAC standards ensures resilience to challenges caused by climate change, such as thawing and flooding, which negatively impact road conditions.

(6) Efficient transportation networks contribute to Manitoba's economic competitiveness as upgraded roads support interprovincial and international goods movement, benefiting both trade and commerce.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to take the necessary steps to upgrade Provincial Trunk Highway 45 from Russell to Provincial Trunk Highway 10 to meet RTAC standards.

Honourable Speaker, this petition has been signed by Murray Cochrane, Randy Rubeniuk, Hailey Rubeniuk and many more fine Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Selkirk.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** No, sorry.

**The Speaker:** No further members wishing to read petitions? Grievances? No grievances?

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, can you canvass the House for leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), have been completed, including second reading, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading?

**The Speaker:** Is there leave to waive rule 91(8) and to not see the clock today until all stages of Bill 47 have been completed, including second reading, Committee of the Whole and concurrence and third reading?

Is there leave?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**MLA Fontaine:** Honourable Speaker, can you please call second reading of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day); followed by third readings of Bill 14, The Insurance Amendment Act; followed by Bill 15, The Real Estate Services Amendment Act; followed by Bill 27, The Income Tax Amendment Act; followed by Bill 28, the Manitoba Hydro amendment; followed by Bill 37, The Manitoba Financial Services Authority Act and Amendments to Various Other Acts; followed by Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act.

**The Speaker:** So it has been announced that we will now proceed to second reading of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), followed by concurrence and third reading on Bill 14, Bill 15, Bill 27, Bill 28, Bill 37 and Bill 6.

## SECOND READINGS

### **Bill 47—The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day)**

**The Speaker:** So now we will proceed to second reading of Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act, buy Manitoba, buy Canadian.

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** I move, seconded by Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation.

**Mr. Moses:** Thank you again, Honourable Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada (Internal Trade Mutual Recognition) Act and Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act (Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian Day), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

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

**Mr. Moses:** You know, right now we're in a moment where Canada faces a tariff war on two fronts. This legislation, Bill 47, will provide Manitoba with the opportunity to grow and power our economy into the future.

This bill will promote economic resilience, reduce our dependence on US markets and strengthen our domestic economy. Manitoba has always been a leader in dismantling internal trade barriers. With this legislation, we are continuing to lead from the front and establish new tools to trade within Canada. This bill will further allow the government to remove barriers to trade of goods and services between Manitoba and other jurisdictions within Canada while boosting our economic activity and prosperity.

Through mutual recognition of standards between our jurisdiction and others, the goods and services in other parts of Canada will also be accepted for Manitobans. Establishing this legislation will also boost support for Manitoba businesses in accessing new markets while also attracting trade and investments.

This bill, to be clear, does not include labour mobility and its—does include and complements our other existing legislation: The Labour Mobility Act and The Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act.

Now those two acts that we already have here in Manitoba speak to the labour mobility, and so Bill 47 very clearly complements those other two bills without duplicating any other regulations or legislation.

Manitoba is also advancing—improving labour mobility opportunities right across Canada through other means, including our ongoing collaboration with our federal, provincial and territorial partners at the labour market ministers meeting and the internal trade ministers meeting as well as, of course, the First Ministers' table.

\* (15:00)

The aim is to establish this legislation—also establishing June 1 as Buy Manitoba, Buy Canadian day to celebrate local businesses and bring Manitobans together.

Now it's important to note and go back to talk about the parts of the bill that are really essential about moving this forward, given the comprehensive amount of work that has been done to frame this legislation out in the context of Manitoba.

And so it's important for us to recognize that, in Canada, that if another jurisdiction—and spell it out very clearly—that another province or territory, they have a legislation or a system that is similar to Manitoba for removing barriers to trade in goods and services, then this bill will enable the government of Manitoba to designate that jurisdiction as being reciprocal. That enables us to mutually recognize their regulations for our goods and services. This allows Manitoba companies, exporters, to access those markets with fewer barriers because we have recognized their goods and they have recognized ours. Under these mutual recognition rules, the goods and services of those reciprocal jurisdictions that meet the standards and approvals are recognized as meeting the comparable standards and approvals here in Manitoba.

The mutual recognition rules do not apply to Crown corporations, the goods and services of a—provided by a Crown corporation, or that are exempted by the regulated professions or occupations. And the reason for that is that we're very intentional about making sure that this is a comprehensive, well-regarded bill that encapsulates the specificities of Manitoba, and primarily and chief among those are our ability for our Crown corporations to continue operating as they are, providing the good and affordable services to Manitobans; particularly Manitoba Hydro and MPI are services that I think are—many Manitobans consider our Crown jewels. And this bill not only opens up trade opportunities, breaks down those trade barriers, but also has real and meaningful protections for Crown corporations in Manitoba like Manitoba Hydro and like MPI.

And so it's important for us to also look at how we can move forward this initiative. It's going to make sure that not only do we break down those trade barriers, but that through regulation, by deeming other jurisdictions as reciprocal, we then take the step to make sure that our regulations across jurisdictions can be mutually recognized and that we can move forward with our—with growing our economy and increasing our opportunities for trade within Canada.

This bill, I will say, Honourable Speaker, also makes sure that it clearly spells out the differences in the types of goods that are included and the types of services that can be provided as well. And, as well, it also ensures that we're not duplicating with other acts.

And I also want to point out, deputy Speaker, that we also make sure that we're aware of insurance services that are provided for agricultural producers in Manitoba as well, and there's this—make or ensure that this bill includes provisions to ensure that those good agricultural insurance services will continue to be provided in accordance with this bill and with other legislation that has already passed.

Honourable Speaker, I also want to just flag for the House, when it comes to Bill 47, that in this moment of us being in the trade war with US and with the People's Republic of China, I've heard more than any other topic the need for us to boost our economy, reducing our dependence on the United States and finding ways to diversify and strengthen our own economy here in Canada, and starting first with what we can do as Manitobans. To that end, we're excited to be bringing forward this Bill 47.

And so I ask all members of the House to think about when they're going to go back to their constituents this summer, that when they ask, What are the important pieces of work that I worked on in the Legislative Building, in the face of the threat of tariffs from Donald Trump and The White House, what did they do to act to make that different?

In the face of agriculture producers, facing steep tariffs from China, what did they do to make sure that there is free flow of goods and services across the country? And what did they do to make sure we strengthen our own economy here in Manitoba?

Well, I want all members of the House to be able to say that we supported Bill 47, break down some of those interprovincial trade barriers and move our economy forward. This is the chance. This is the win that you have, a chance to tell people right across Manitoba, from all jurisdictions, what you did to support our economy.

That's why I'm urging all members in this House to support this bill, to make sure that we put our partisan colours aside—stripes aside to support a bill that's going to grow our economy from every jurisdiction and every riding in our province.

And so, when I go out and I visit places in southern Manitoba or east—or Pembina Valley, Interlake-Gimli, when I'm visiting manufacturers here in Winnipeg or

whether it's in Rosser, when I go up to see activity happening in northern Manitoba: Churchill, The Pas, Lynn Lake, Thompson, all those regions stand to benefit economically from passing Bill 47 and breaking down our interprovincial trade barriers.

This is why we're doing this. And so I ask all members once again to ensure that they're looking at this bill in a real way and asking: Will this bill help my constituents? And undoubtedly, I think it will. And so we want their support on this bill, but more so, we want their support so that they can tell Manitobans from every region of this country that we, as a legislative body, saw a challenge in front of us, in the face of those tariff threats. We took decisive action; we were leaders on internal trade, and we took the necessary steps to move our economy forward in face of the tariff threats that we are facing.

So with that, Honourable Speaker, I will sit down and make sure that we have enough time to pass Bill 47 and make sure that we move our economy forward into the future.

Thank you.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** My question to the minister is: In November when Trump was elected, he indicated his intention to place tariffs on Canada. We then saw even further tariffs placed from China onto our Canadian economy. At that time, many Canadian provinces started to talk about their intent to bring forward legislation to remove interprovincial trade barriers. Here we are many months later, and this minister is trying to rush through this bill within the final days of session.

So I have to ask the minister: Why did he take so long to bring forward legislation like this?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** I appreciate the question from members opposite, and here is the thing, is that

we want to bring forward a piece of bill that is comprehensive, and is—can be supported.

Now I think it's very good that this bill not only takes on the approach of mutual recognition as other jurisdictions have, but also has the Manitoba context on it. And knowing the bills that have been brought forward in other jurisdictions and how they had to be amended before they could go through their legislative process, we've learned how to make sure we have a bill that can be well-rounded, supported, comprehensive and make sure it goes to benefit our economy right across Manitoba.

**Mrs. Stone:** Another bill was before these Chambers numerous weeks ago—six weeks ago now—that dealt with reciprocity with other provincial jurisdictions on free trade, yet this NDP government voted it down.

\* (15:10)

I ask the minister: Why did they vote down that piece of legislation just to bring forward very, very similar legislation this week?

**Mr. Moses:** I want to be very clear with Manitobans that there is a significant difference between the bill that was previously brought forward, and that is around the protection around Crown corporations. I want to make sure that Manitobans trust our government to make sure that we keep Manitoba Hydro public and that we do that important work.

This bill clearly spells out that Crown corporations will be excluded and exempt from this regulation so we can maintain that good work that Manitoba Hydro does and MPI and other Crown corporations. And so that's a significant difference between the bills, which is why we're pushing this forward so that supports internal trade, growing our economy and does so in the context of our Manitoba economy and the way we do business with our Crown corporations.

**Mrs. Stone:** Honourable Speaker, one thing that this bill does is it leaves many things out such as regulated professions, Crown corporations and giving this government the power to exempt goods and services through regulation, which defeats the whole purpose of free trade and embracing labour mobility within Canada.

So why not just embrace free trade and labour mobility within Canada? After all, we are one country, and after all, that is the point of free trade to begin with.

**Mr. Moses:** Honourable Speaker, let me state very clearly: we support free trade in Canada, and that's why we're bringing forward this bill. The reason that

we have excluded labour mobility is because our legislation already speaks to that. We already have two pieces of legislation that speak to labour mobility. There's no need to duplicate that in this internal trade, free trade bill.

And to—as to the point of why there's reasons for exemptions, we know that's because there's—Canada is a broad country. And there needs to be in some cases different rules for perhaps things that go in the mountains of BC to the Atlantic fisheries that are—might not be applicable to us here in Manitoba in the prairies.

And so that's where there's those room for us to make those individual regulated exceptions.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, can the minister please explain for the record if Manitoba has to change its regulations if another provincial jurisdiction changes their regulations if we're comparable with reciprocal designated jurisdictions?

**Mr. Moses:** So, as I was saying, it's—the goal of this is to have a broad piece of legislation that allows us to go and advance more free trade, more opportunities with other jurisdictions. And so we're so glad to do this.

When it comes to regulations in other jurisdictions versus ours, the goal isn't to harmonize but to mutually recognize the regulations of other jurisdictions. If a product or a good or service has passed the test of meeting the regulations in one jurisdiction, we will recognize those here. Instead of having the exact same regulations, we understand that if they're similar, if they're alike, then we can recognize them here in our jurisdiction in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Stone:** I thank the minister for clarifying that for the record.

Since this minister through this bill has exempted Crown corporations, I'm wondering if a Crown corporation like MPI and MBLL can still sell to other provinces that are reciprocal jurisdiction and if this impacts other provinces selling into Manitoba.

**Mr. Moses:** Thank you for the question to the member opposite. And as we discussed this during our bill briefing, and I briefed her on the topic and on the details of the bill, this doesn't change anything for our Crown corporations.

So a Crown corporation wants to enter into a contract to provide service—for example, electricity—to another jurisdiction, they're still free and able to do this. Allows them to go and enter into those contracts

as it would be appropriate. And that work—good work will continue as it always has.

**Mrs. Stone:** One of the things that Ontario Premier Doug Ford made a commitment on was to remove all of Ontario's exceptions within the CFTA. This bill fails to do that, with Manitoba a singular exception.

So is the minister committed to harmonizing LPNs across the country through CFTA negotiations?

**Mr. Moses:** Yes, I'm very happy to be working alongside the variety of departments here, in particular Health, to make sure that we work hand in hand with the really critical health-care workers in Manitoba to make sure that Manitobans are supported through their health-care journey with the excellence that—and we know health-care workers do, particularly LPNs.

And the same time, I'm happy to have those conversations with folks around the country to make sure that all jurisdictions have the ability to have strong health-care teams and also allow that free flow of labour across our country. We'll continue to do that work on our federal, provincial and territorial tables to make sure that all Canadians and all Manitobans see the benefits.

**Mrs. Stone:** Just for the record, if the minister can please walk us through and explain how the other acts that operate and govern these regulated professions and why they do not need to be included in this piece of legislation specifically that we're here to discuss today.

**Mr. Moses:** Well, I don't think, you know, I have the—I will say, the time in the remaining seven minutes to walk through the entire Labour Mobility Act and—for the member opposite, but I'd say that those bills are comprehensive. They stand on their own; they are passed in this House and there are laws in here in Manitoba.

The goal of this bill, Bill 47, is very clearly to promote free trade in the goods and services across our country, and it does that. And so I want and urge members opposite to get on board with supporting this.

We've got support from the business community. We know Manitobans want this. We know other jurisdictions are uniting around supporting free trade. And so I urge members opposite to get on board and support this bill.

**The Speaker:** Time has expired.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Honourable Speaker, why did we not pass the member from Midland's bill that come out much earlier, in the beginning of April, I believe it was? Since then, we have seen some business go away from the province, and I'm wondering what we're doing or if there's any chance of recovery of that business back with this agreement.

**Mr. Moses:** Well, I can sense from the member opposite's question the urgency with which he wants to see free trade come to Manitoba and to the rest of the country, and that's why I'm urging him to pass the bill today.

We want to go through all stages of it today if we can. We want to make sure that, as soon as possible, we can ensure Manitoba businesses have opportunities in Ontario, in Quebec, in BC, and that's what we're trying to do with this bill today.

So if he's worried about the urgency of having Manitoba businesses have opportunities, pass the bill today.

**MLA Bereza:** So I'll ask the question again, because we've lost millions of dollars' worth of business since the beginning of April, when my colleague from Midland proposed this bill.

And I'll ask again: How do we, or can we get this business back, or is it gone forever?

**Mr. Moses:** I'm excited about the passion the member opposite has, because it goes to show exactly what I've been hearing from Manitobans, that they want to have free trade. They want to have the ability of sell their product, sell their goods and services right across the country.

That's why we introduced Bill 47. That's why I brought it in last week; that's why we're here debating it today. And so I say get on board. Get on board with the people in Interlake-Gimli; get on board with the people in southman; get on board with the people in Portage la Prairie; get on board with northern Manitoba. And even get on board with Premier Ford in Ontario, who's supporting free trade.

So let's get on board. Let's pass the bill. Let's move this forward and ensure businesses can continue to grow right across this country.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** Does the minister—don't you think that Manitoba professionals in regulated professions across the country are essentially equivalent and doing the same job whether they're in Ontario, Nova Scotia or PEI? Why don't we

just immediately recognize these credentials immediately through legislation?

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would just remind the honourable member to make sure he always directs his questions through the Chair and not directly to another member.

\* (15:20)

**Mr. Moses:** So we, first of all, take very serious and, you know, very grateful for the great work that health-care workers do across our province and our country, and so I'm grateful to those people.

And, at the same time, we want to provide 'apernues' for people to move freely across the country. And so we're taking steps, you know, within the acts that have already passed, including the regulated professions act and The Labour Mobility Act to actually reduce the amount of time that workers across the country have to have their credentials recognized in Manitoba.

The 30-day standard is something that we've been working on here in Manitoba and jurisdictions across the country, and actually I'm very happy to be a leader on that table of ministers to—

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

**Mrs. Stone:** As I've mentioned many times in the House, both during bill debate of the free trade bill that was brought forward, 227, as well as in question period, many other provinces are well ahead within their legislation, as reciprocating jurisdictions or could be designated as reciprocating jurisdictions.

So can the minister please just tell the House what other provinces—where other provinces in Canada are at on their pieces of legislation for free trade and provincial trade mobility?

**Mr. Moses:** We know that other jurisdictions have brought in similar pieces of legislation, which is why we also know that there'll be other jurisdictions who will—we'll be able to put into this regulation once it gets passed.

But to the member for Portage la Prairie's (MLA Bereza) question about the urgency for it is and what the potential impact might have been, also what will the impact be if we don't pass this until October? Think about the opportunities lost if we wait until October to pass this bill. We have an opportunity today to get this done for our economy, get this done for businesses in his community and ones right across the province.



So let's get to work; let's move our economy forward and let's pass this bill today.

**Mrs. Stone:** I think it's very clear that our team, on this side of the House, supports free trade, which is why we brought forward a bill to remove interprovincial trade barriers and embrace labour mobility across this country, which was brought forward months ago now. The NDP is a little late to the game on this.

So I have to ask the minister why he didn't vote for the bill to begin with, and is he just bringing forth this legislation now, is because he's embarrassed and because of mounting pressure from Doug Ford?

**Mr. Moses:** Honourable Speaker, I'm going to just very clearly say that I think that characterization from the member opposite is false and, quite frankly, inappropriate for this Chamber and for the type of questions we're having today. We're trying to bring Manitobans and Canadians together.

But let me clearly state that the bill that was previously brought forward didn't have exclusions or exceptions for Crown corporations. That is a massive difference in our bill and make sure that in our immediate—or Manitoban context of free trade, that we do this right. That's why we're bringing this forward.

And let me also put on the record that if we don't pass this in this session this bill might not pass until the following year, and think about all the lost opportunities of this not passing until June of 2026. We can do this today. We can do this for Manitobans. We can do this for Canadians. So I ask you to get on board and support this bill today.

**The Speaker:** Minister's time is expired, and the time for questions has expired.

### Debate

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

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** First and foremost, Honourable Speaker, I want to say that our team, our PC team, fully supports and embraces free trade and labour mobility across the country. This is exactly why a number of weeks ago—months ago, now—we brought forward our own legislation when the NDP failed to take action and failed to do just that. This is what our previous bill intended to do.

This bill that we're talking about today is very similar to the previous legislation that was brought forward. Had the minister had some amendments to Bill 227, I would have been more than happy to talk

with him and our team would have been more than happy to speak with him on what those amendments were.

But instead, as we've seen over the past number of months, they're playing political games on important issues, taking all the glory without doing the work.

So, like I said, Honourable Speaker, our team supports free trade. We've been very clear about that from the beginning. We've stood up in question period and asked this NDP government if they were going to bring forward legislation comparable to other provincial jurisdictions, legislation that would recognize reciprocal jurisdictions on free trade and labour mobility, and in question period they refused. We gave them numerous chances to do so.

We then, again, brought forward a bill when the NDP failed to do so, and again, they refuse and voting it down.

And now what we're seeing, Honourable Speaker, is in the mere last days of session, they're rushing through a bill because of mounting political pressure from across the country when they have finally realized that they are behind and other provinces are ahead.

This is exactly why Manitoba was left out of signing the MOU in the beginning with Premier Ford and eastern Canada provinces, and Manitoba was not there. Those other eastern Canada provinces had reciprocal free trade legislation in place, Ontario was already well in debate of theirs and Manitoba had absolutely nothing to bring to the table. And it's only just now that this NDP has finally woken up to where the rest of Canada is and bringing forward a bill.

Now I want to be very clear, Honourable Speaker. As I have said, we support the intention of this bill. We support free trade and embracing labour mobility in Canada, and it's great to be speaking to legislation on free trade and removing interprovincial trade barriers across our country.

As we know, this is something that has been an issue for decades. Many premiers, many prime ministers, industries, businesses across the country have talked about the challenges associated with interprovincial trade barriers, where it is often easier to ship or truck product—goods and services—down to the US or across to foreign entities and foreign countries than it is to do business right here within our own country.

This has been a challenge for many, many years, and unfortunately, you know, there have been a lot of strides that have been moved within Canada; in particular, the good work that former premier Brian

Pallister did with signing on to the New West Partnership and removing barriers and liberalizing things such as alcohol here in the province. And we know there is more work to do, you know.

But, unfortunately, this has been a challenge and a predicament for Canada for a number of decades. And, you know, almost two months ago, we were in this exact Chamber discussing interprovincial trade barriers and the importance of free trade through the PCs' Bill 227, which was a bill with similar intention: to break down those interprovincial trade barriers with reciprocating jurisdictions.

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

As I've already mentioned, the NDP has had ample time over the past number of months to bring forward meaningful legislation to make a meaningful commitment to the rest of the country, but they failed to do so.

We asked in question period the NDP's intent, and they refused. We brought forward a bill when they failed to do so, which they voted down. And it wasn't until mounting pressure and other provinces moving well ahead of Manitoba that this NDP has finally woken up to bring forward important legislation like this forward.

However, it is unfortunate that we're having to rush through this bill to get it passed by the July 1 deadline that Mark Carney has set out. Prime Minister Carney has committed to removing federal trade barriers. Other provinces are now well on their way, having already received royal assent for their reciprocal jurisdiction of free trade, such as Nova Scotia's already received their royal assent.

There's a few others that have had their legislation already brought forward to their legislatures across the country. BC has one; Ontario is in the midst of theirs; Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. And yet, now in Manitoba, we are—the NDP have just brought forward this within the mere last days of session, which is very disappointing because this could have been passed.

This could have been passed months ago when we initially asked about it. We gave the NDP an opportunity to bring forward legislation. We asked about it in question period. It wasn't until when they refused that we thought the need and felt the need to take that action and make that commitment when the NDP failed to do so.

We have known that industry, business leaders and Manitobans across our province have been calling

for this for decades, but certainly, as we know, in response to tariffs that we have seen that have impacted many of our industries and, you know, for those of us who represent and live in rural Manitoba, industries that are heavily reliant on trade with China and heavily reliant on trade with the United States.

So, certainly, in response to the current global trade environment that we are currently in and what our communities continue to face, interprovincial trade barriers and removing interprovincial trade barriers have come to the forefront. And there is this renewed commitment which is great to see.

\* (15:30)

It's great to see that premiers across this country are finally standing up and willing to work together to start tearing down these barriers that have weakened Canada's economic independence and have also limited our ability to do business within our own country.

We know that interprovincial trade barriers have impeded market access on goods and services while also limiting workers' abilities to easily cross provincial borders for employment purposes. And so, you know, oftentimes people wonder what are interprovincial trade barriers and why so many of these barriers exist when we are one country within Canada and do so much business across provincial borders.

Well, a big part of that is the differing provincial regulations on goods and services. And all these different regulations and exceptions across provinces make it increasingly difficult for businesses to export their goods across the country. As I said, sometimes it's more efficient and simpler to trade south of the border than it is to go east or west.

In addition, you know, another significant barrier that we've seen is differing certifications and licensing requirements across the provinces do limit the mobility of workers to be able to cross provincial borders. We know in Manitoba that we have a shortage of skilled workers, and so this is an area that Manitoba could benefit from as we look to attract doctors, nurses, engineers, veterinarians, Red Seal workers, welders and tradespeople. And so, you know, this is a where a bill with reciprocation is really critical, and focusing on the labour mobility piece could actually have a significant benefit to a small province like Manitoba.

You know, so I appreciate the minister's comments during the question period set regarding the harmonization of credentials to 30 days and look forward to certainly seeing that happen across the entire country.

So, you know, as I've mentioned, honourable Speaker, we are at a critical time in Manitoba to enshrine Manitoba's commitment to removing inter-provincial trade barriers and embracing labour mobility with any reciprocating jurisdiction in Canada. And so, you know, although this has been a long-standing issue for decades and decades, this bill is timely as there is that renewed political commitment from political leaders across the country to eliminate these barriers. And I think that's really a key thing to point out, is that component of reciprocal, because free trade cannot be accomplished by one jurisdiction alone. It has to be agreed upon by all the provinces.

And, you know, that's exactly why Canada has been in the position it's in. Certain provinces, Manitoba in the past, included and currently they add exceptions in. You know, they want to protect their own provincial interests at the detriment of trade, and then another province sees that and says, well, if they're protecting their own province, then we have to protect theirs. And then you start to get a layering effect. And that's what defeats the purpose of free trade and mobility in general, and that's why I encourage the provinces and the political leaders and the minister who is at the table to be a strong voice to ensure that we don't end up being in the exact same position in five or 10 years from now that we're in today.

As mentioned, honourable Speaker, several provinces have already begun this process of implementing legislation and even passing legislation already. Manitoba is behind some of those other provinces, and so, now that we do have another free trade bill before us today, as we already did have one a couple months ago, I do want to speak to some of the key differences. As I've mentioned, the intent is the same; however, this bill that the minister has brought forward does appear to be a watered-down version of the bill that was previously brought forward.

First and foremost, they've changed the title from fair trade to free trade. That was likely because there was already a bill at the floor of the House and on the Order Paper, so they had to make some changes and some differences. They're not allowing any services to be provided that are currently provided by Crown corporations.

So there are many questions that I continue to have, specifically as it relates to MPI and MBLL's ability to sell into other provincial jurisdictions, which they do currently, and also other providers to sell into Manitoba, which is also currently the case. Want to make sure that any bill that's passed and legislation

that's brought forward does not inhibit the free trade and liberalization that we already do have, as there is a significant amount of work that went into this in the past in order to open up free trade for Manitoba.

And then lastly, honourable Speaker, it exempts all Labour Mobility Act from the reciprocity rules. So I just want to put on the record that I recognize specifically health-care professionals and LPNs that are exempt under CFTA, that that is a complex issue, and the minister and I have had some conversations about that earlier today. But the needs for harmonization are still incredibly critical.

And so although this legislation doesn't automatically make that the case, I do encourage the government—this current government and the minister and all governments across the country—to work towards some harmonization nationally.

And I would like to see Manitoba, along with all the other provinces in the country, remove their exceptions, because as I had mentioned before, once a province adds an exception, then another province adds theirs and it becomes this layering effect of restrictions and limits and regulations and red tape, and then we're in the exact same predicament that we are nationally, and this is exactly why we have the barriers that we have today.

The NDP had a great example of a free trade through reciprocity bill in 227, the free trade and labour mobility within Canada act, that addressed some of those things, yet the NDP chose to defeat that bill in the Assembly so they could bring forward their own watered-down version for purely partisan, political grandstanding by the Premier (Mr. Kinew).

However, with that said, honourable Speaker, we do have important legislation in front of us, and again—and I can't reiterate it enough—our team, our PC team, supports free trade and embracing labour mobility in Canada.

We know that the US and China tariffs have brought our need to reduce our reliance on foreign markets and to support the goods, services and people that make our province and our country so great. Many studies have been out over the years and come out on the importance of removing interprovincial trade barriers. One was an RBC analysis that showed internal trade barrier costs are greater for small provinces like Manitoba, for example, and provinces like ours can experience larger gains in GDP per capita and employment with the removal of non-geographic trade barriers.

And so I just have to—I have to call out and commend Premier Tim Houston from Nova Scotia for truly paving the way for this type of legislation, very similar legislation that's in front of us today and that was in front of this House a number of weeks ago through Bill 227. You know, he was the individual that started down this path, recognizing reciprocal jurisdictions. And so I think it's important to recognize and commend him for his efforts.

And certainly what we've seen over the past number of months is many provinces following suit: PEI introduced similar legislation to eliminate unnecessary barriers to trade and labour mobility with reciprocating jurisdictions; British Columbia introduced their free trade and mobility within Canada act in February, and then in April, Premier Ford tabled their legislation that would dismantle Ontario's barriers to trade with reciprocating provinces.

And then what Premier Ford also did is he made an incredibly strong statement and strong commitment to eliminating all of Ontario's exceptions. So, certainly, Premier Ford has now paved the way for other provinces to follow suit to begin removing their exceptions and truly work towards harmonization and therefore truly work towards free trade across Canada.

\* (15:40)

Now I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the last time that Canada was in a similar predicament that we are in now with Trump's tariffs. I believe it was in 2017 when Trump was first elected and he announced tariffs specifically in the steel sectors, on Canada, and we went into a very long and lengthy negotiation of NAFTA, and there was a commitment at that time for provinces to tear down internal trade barriers.

However, as has been the case time and time again, the internal trade agreement became peppered with exceptions as each province tried to protect themselves from another province's competition. Thus this interference ended up defeating the whole purpose and intent on removing interprovincial trade barriers to begin with.

And I also have to commend the work that former premier Brian Pallister did during this time because he was one of the premiers attempting to lead the charge on this, and a lot of good work was done by Premier Pallister and the PCs during that time. He signed on to the New West Partnership, joining Saskatchewan and Alberta, and he also started to liberalize alcohol.

Manitoba made significant progress 'liberizing' alcohol and relaxing some of those restrictions. You

know, again, the NDP voted against Manitoba joining the New West Partnership, criticized it heavily. They voted against Manitoba liberalizing alcohol; likely their ideology got in the way of really important critical commitments and work that was being done by the PCs.

In addition, Manitoba opened up shelf space to other provincial brewers. However, as I've mentioned, and we've seen time and time again, other provinces did not follow suit, and this is where reciprocity is so critical for the success of free trade altogether.

Free trade is only accomplished when other jurisdictions also accept and commit to free trade. Once exceptions and added restrictions and added regulations are added on for provincial-specific industries, this is exactly why Canada is in the predicament it is in with having so many interprovincial trade barriers and why it is often easy to trade south of the border or overseas than among our own provinces.

Free trade with exceptions is not free trade, and unless provinces, including Manitoba and this NDP government, resist the urge to go down that path of adding exceptions and restrictions, then Canada will continue to have these barriers and will continue to be more reliant on international and other foreign markets. But in—despite the work that was done by the PCs, there is still more work to do.

As I've mentioned, we still have a number of restrictions across Canada; we still have a number of exemptions, including Manitoba. So experts have said that Manitoba is one of the provinces with the most to gain from removing barriers to labour mobility, but it will take Manitoba to make a commitment.

Beyond a commitment like this legislation, this legislation is a really good step and really important and something that needs to be done, but it's also going to take Manitoba and the NDP to put their ideology aside and work with other provinces to remove those exceptions and also to make some harmonization, specifically as it relates to labour mobility and as it relates to the free flow of goods and services.

So, you know, as I've mentioned, this—free trade is critical, it's important. Our PC team have been clear that we support it and we want to see free trade and the removal of interprovincial trade barriers to progress across the country. We don't want Manitoba or the rest of the country to have to wait any longer.

They have waited for Manitoba long enough. They've waited long enough for Manitoba to make a legislative commitment. July 1 and Prime Minister

Carney's commitment to remove federal trade barriers, is coming up fast. Other provinces are also well on their way or have already passed their legislation designating reciprocal free trade and labour mobility. And so it's time that Manitoba steps up and makes that legislative commitment as well. We need to be at the table, and this is that first step to getting Manitoba at the table.

Just before my final minutes conclude here, honourable Speaker, I just want to make it very clear that reciprocation is a key step to making that national commitment and to work with other provinces who also commit to reciprocal free trade with Manitoba.

You know, unfortunately, this bill has been watered down, but this bill is better than nothing, so we do support its passing, but it could have been so much better. And I urge the minister—despite the areas that he has added exceptions into or restrictions in this bill—does make a commitment to work with the other leaders across the country, other premiers across the country and stepping up. I hope that this NDP government does put their ideology aside.

We have a huge opportunity in Canada, with this renewed commitment from premiers and leaders across this country, to remove interprovincial trade barriers and embrace labour mobility. And, as I've mentioned, I certainly hope we don't fall into the trap, as we have in years prior, with exceptions, restrictions and regulations being added on to protect various interests in the face of removing trade barriers because that would defeat the whole entire purpose.

So I thank this minister for this legislation. It's unfortunate that we're debating it today, when it could have been passed a month and a half ago, but it is what it is. We look forward to continuing discussion on this bill and look forward to all of Canada stepping up, committing and removing interprovincial trade barriers once and for all.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** And I want to put a few words on the record here for Bill 47, the fair trade in Canada international trade mutual recognition act. And I just want to—you know, I've been—want to thank my colleague, the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), for actually bringing up Bill 227 when it came to free trade within our—interprovincial.

She mentioned new western partnership. I was—been in this Legislature almost 12 years; I'm on my 12th year, honourable Deputy Speaker—and the fact is the importance of joining new western partnership.

I remember the previous Selinger government would not even budge on that opportunity. And the fact is they felt that when it came to other provinces, they were concerned about their labourers when it comes to unions, so when it came to protecting employees in this area. And so the fact is we missed the opportunity back in the day to have that free trade and being—working with the four other—three other provinces—BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan.

And it was until we formed government in 2016 when Brian Pallister actually signed onto the new partnership agreement and I remember—you know, the member for Midland had mentioned that—and we actually tried very hard to make sure that barriers would come down, and I know a lot of times when he met with the other premiers that was one of the biggest priorities that he had.

But, again, there was so many different provinces and so many different governments that decided that they were so protective of their—you know, when it comes to Ontario, their wine industry; when it came to BC, also had the wine industry issues. They were concerned about their protection, you know, when it came to many other provinces.

And the other thing, too, when—I found with the—my mother-in-law had a good saying that says, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. And I feel that with this bill, I'm hoping that this NDP government, when they sign onto this, they'll—that they'll have full intentions to make sure that there's trade—and fair trade—between all provinces and making sure that there's no restrictions and exemptions when it comes to labour.

You know, we're also in—competing with other provinces, especially when it comes to health care. We really need to make sure that we have fairness, because it's very competitive right now to track that—those individuals.

And it's funny that this bill took so long to be brought forward here. You know, our member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) had brought it almost weeks ago, and this could have been passed much like the other provinces, which I indicated through Midland's presentation about how many provinces have already signed up on this and—the province of Nova Scotia; Doug Ford in Ontario had one of the first agreements. This—it seems like the only time now that this got—is a priority is when now that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has a bromance with Doug Ford here. And the fact is this could have been processed a long time ago.

And the fact is, you know, being that I come from southwestern Manitoba and my constituency of Turtle Mountain has half the oil that produces here in Manitoba, whereas when I was in Arthur-Virden, it was almost all the oil was produced in my constituency when I first started.

\* (15:50)

And one of the things that, you know, with Carney coming—making sure that this intertrade barriers are eliminated by July 1, there was an opportunity that we could've been really focused on having pipeline. The Energy East Pipeline that was wanting to be constructed during the Harper government was actually cancelled by the Trudeau government as soon as he came into power, and the fact is, there was going to be a lot of jobs, bringing a pipeline directly from Alberta into Ontario, through the prairies into Ontario, through to Quebec and into the Maritimes.

All our oil now goes basically into the US via the US and then into Ontario. We—and most of the oil pipelines go to Michigan and Wisconsin, and the fact is, we could've actually had the pipeline directly, and that makes it that, you know, Quebec—I remember being the Deputy Speaker, and I remember we used to have these presiding conferences in—one time in Quebec—Nova Scotia. And we talked to the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of Alberta and the Deputy Speaker of Quebec. And we all got along very well. We actually all had very good working—professional relationship when it came to being—during these presiding conferences. And we had an opportunity to talk and actually sort of poke fun of why, you know, Quebec wants—they want transfer payments. They love their transfer payments. But they would not allow oil pipelines to go directly from Alberta into Quebec where a lot of the Quebec oil is purchased in the—in Saudi Arabia, in the Middle East.

And ships, which I couldn't believe that the Liberal government wanted to make sure that we're going to worry about a carbon footprint, so we don't want pipelines. Meanwhile, they're shipping ships full of oil, which is a big carbon footprint, which doesn't make sense.

And the fact is, the opportunity of being self-reliant, especially with our—there's—there are provinces, could be a very big opportunity that we could've been more revenue? Billions of dollars coming into our economy: that could've paid for a lot of our health care, our agreements with First Nations that we could've win working together to make more revenue for them, to make it a harmony with making sure that,

you know, reconciliation would've been great with actually having more revenue coming in from this, from the—for the whole country.

And the missed opportunity of, when the conflict in Europe, when Russia and Ukraine conflict. You know, Europe is looking for our oil. Could've actually—we could have sold oil for a premium. Instead we ship it down to the United States for a discount.

So I'm hoping that now, this agreement with the federal government and all the provincial governments come together and making sure that we can become so self-sufficient and not reliant so much on the US. And with these trade barriers that—the trade tariffs that we're going to be—we're having now with the Trump government coming in, it just shows us that we—so long we relied so much on the United States, and here's an opportunity to be more self-sufficient.

And we're also looking at possibility—tidewater. Like, we—when I was minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, we were looking at—I signed an MOU with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. BC wanted to come on board too. Ontario was interested. But this gives it an opportunity to have trade corridors, especially in the North, and shipping natural resources from all the way from northern Alberta, all the way to—into northern Manitoba.

And shipping our hydroelectricity, having a better opportunity to send hydroelectricity, instead of to the US, and the last Selinger government basically actually sold—made a deal with Wisconsin to actually lose money on selling hydro for 10 years down to Wisconsin.

And the fact is, now we—Alberta really needs this electricity. And there's an opportunity here that we can work with Alberta, get more money for our hydroelectricity, help our fellow prairie province and making sure that they're self-sufficient, and working on bringing liquefied natural gas come to Hudson Bay, and shipping it off to Europe. They're starving for it right now.

Germany used to have a—get a lot of natural gas from Russia. Here's an opportunity for Canada to sell that natural gas for a premium, and making sure that we continue looking at revenue—increased revenues that we can actually pay for the services that Canadians much want nowadays, especially when it comes to health care, when it comes to the education.

You know, right now we could take a playbook from Norway. Norway has a huge oil production. But, you know, things are going to change. Technology's changing. Here's an opportunity for us to 'het' the

revenue so that we can have the revenues to look at research and development when it comes to new energies out there, new hydroelectricity, more solar panels. We had an opportunity to have solar panels in this province. We—you know, there's an opportunity to—there—when it comes to this opportunity to actually produce solar panels, and there was a company from Germany that was looking at Winnipeg that could provide tens of thousands of jobs.

But I think that's now—the ship has sailed there and the opportunity of—now they say that 92 per cent of solar panels are made in China. We could have been—had an industry here that could have produced those solar panels. We had the raw materials, but that was used as a political football.

And here's an opportunity now to look at other precious metals—metals up in the north—and working with First Nations communities. This gives us an opportunity to—looking at a corridor going to—looking at another harbour. We—I did a—before I left, I did a feasibility study. We were going to agree with—if Saskatchewan and Alberta joined up on this agreement, we would put forward a—for a feasibility study for a second port in Hudson Bay.

And so the fact is I'm not quite sure where that's gone to, but I'm hoping that the good intentions does not pave a road to hell here, honourable Deputy Speaker, and we want to make sure that these full intentions of working together with other provinces is so important for us to continue to be self-sufficient.

And it's so important that we continue with making sure that when it comes to professional trades, when it comes to Red Seals, that these companies that do bidding across the country can come in and get the best possible bid when it comes to actually saving taxes, the—because again, at the end of the day, we—when government—when you're in government, you're actually paying with taxpayers' dollars and making sure that we get the best possible tender when it comes to any project.

So this is a good idea to have this agreement when it comes to other provinces and making sure that an opportunity—if a company in Manitoba has the resources, the talent, the staff, this gives an opportunity for them to bid on jobs in Ontario, Saskatchewan, wherever they feel that they can make a profit.

But this government, when it came for this first budget, the actual—I remember the first—the actual first quote that was given to—is like—the theme of the budget was join a union, become middle class. And

the fact is, you know what, when it comes to investment in this province, that basically chased a lot of investment out.

Because the fact is when there's uncertainty and there is pressure on unions—but it's so funny that this NDP government can put through union labour bills very quickly, but when it comes to an important bill like this, they leave it 'til the end. They use the last minute to put—bring this bill forward here.

And really, this is how important this really bill is when it comes to the priority for this NDP government. I think the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I think the intentions that he had—the Premier (Mr. Kinew) had with Doug Ford, I think the pressure's put on him.

But the fact is, I'm hoping that they honour a lot of those when it comes to labour and when it comes to trade barriers and making sure that certification is—not too many different professions get exempt when it comes to this competitive process when it comes to, you know, having certifications to be available—when it comes to anybody who wants to, no matter where they are in this country, if they get—have a spouse who they married—a Manitoban, that they can come to this province and be able to take the job based on their qualifications and their certifications.

So it's important that we can have the mobility of individuals that can go across this country. We saw a lot of times with the oil industry in Alberta how many people from the Maritimes actually went to Alberta to work.

I remember my wife working in health care, and she's what—did on some programs where she worked with many people in the health-care service, and they were from all—they lived in different parts of the country, but they're all originally from the Maritimes.

\* (16:00)

And it's so important that, you know, when it comes to opportunities, that we have everything established here so that people can go anywhere in this country and work and not have any restrictions on their qualifications; where they're actually—the residents are, that they can actually work for a company and there is no restrictions on what comes to, you know, when it comes to bidding on a job.

And, again, I'd just like to thank, you know, Brian Pallister when he focused on trade barriers, because he's before his time. And like I said, there was a lot of premiers who still wanted to protect their domain, and

the fact is, now, we see more than ever before that now with the—Trump and his trade tariffs, and then China putting tariffs on our canola, it is so important, especially in my constituency of Turtle Mountain, that we do have a lot of 'manufacture'.

I'm just going to, in June 5, I believe, I'm going to a grand opening of a larger expansion of PhiBer which is a company that manufactures equipment—farm equipment across the world. And it's so important that these barriers that—you know, they could sell their product to other provinces, and that actually have less restrictions on selling to other provinces than to sell internationally.

So it's so important, honourable Deputy Speaker, that I put a few words on the record here when it comes to this bill. We're in favour of free trade, we value the free trade, working with other premiers across of the country and making sure that this is not smoke and mirrors, that this whole—this bill is all about, and hoping that this road is not paved with good intentions.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

**MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie):** Thank you so much, honourable Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to put some words on the record today. And I think it's, you know, imperative, and I think each one of us has said it today, is—on this side of the House—that our PC team fully supports free trade and labour mobility within Canada.

What the issue is here is we're late coming to the table again. And, again, I think we have to look at what has Manitoba lost while we've been late coming to the table here. So, you know, I want to talk a little bit about the analysis of this bill. The main difference between our Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act and this pale imitation is as follows: they've changed the title from fair trade—from free trade moniker which was Bill 227. Again, that should've been passed and we will be dealing with it right now and that was at the start of April.

This bill exempts all regulated professions from reciprocity rules, which seems to make the bill somewhat ineffective and will not bring true labour mobility within Canada, and will not accomplish free trade for our labour force.

It has a huge loophole that the government can exempt entire industries' goods and services from the act through regulations without coming before the Legislative Assembly. It requires the Province to actively designate other jurisdictions as 'reciprocating' instead

of making the recognition automatic under the law established by itself.

It tacks on to the bill a new buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day on June 1. And I know one of the things we talked about was doing a week—sorry, a week-long buy Manitoba or buy Canada day week. Because if I'm not mistaken, June 1 this year, I believe, falls on a Sunday. So again, it will take a lot of business away that we can be doing already within the first few weeks of this.

The government has a great example of a free trade through reciprocity bill and PC Finance critic, Bill 227, The Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act, that the NDP chose to defeat in the Assembly so they could bring forward their own watered-down version for purely partisan politics posturing and grandstanding by this Premier (Mr. Kinew).

The Premier has decided he isn't serious about free trade within Canada. He could've just taken the bill our PC team produced, voted for it, and we would be well on our way to free trade and labour mobility within Canada. The Premier is putting partisan politics and his ties to special interest groups ahead of the economy.

Our PC team and leader fully support, like I said, the free trade and labour mobility within Canada. That's why we brought forward Bill 227 that would recognize, through reciprocity, other provincial jurisdictions' approvals of goods and services and the professional credentials and labour certifications. This would have helped speed up movement of nurses, doctors, tradespeople and other professionals into Manitoba.

And, like I said, I've been working for the last number of months myself on two young ladies that took their nursing degree at Minot State University that are doing whatever they can but keep running into roadblocks of why they cannot nurse here in Manitoba and particularly in some of the new hospitals that the PC government started to build.

And, speaking of those, when we talk about tariffs and the Free Trade Agreement, thank goodness that the hospitals in both—in Neepawa, in Portage la Prairie and in Morden-Winkler area were already started and far enough along and a lot of the parts and equipment had already been bought, so that they would—we wouldn't be hit with some of these tariffs that we're seeing right now.

All Manitobans will support the buy Manitoba and buy Canadian aspect of the bill. The PC Party



fully supports making June 1 the day to recognize as buy Manitoba, buy Canadian day.

But Manitobans expect more from the NDP, not the half measures that have been presented in Bill 47. A quote from our critic from Midland: like this Premier (Mr. Kinew), the fair trade act is superficial, and instead of taking bold new steps, it chooses to keep the status quo with regulatory hoops and protected sectors. It does little to help labour mobility. The NDP government had a great example of a free trade through reciprocity bill in our Bill 227, which they chose to defeat in the House and resurrect in their own half-baked measured way. End quote.

We don't want Manitobans to wait for what little improvements this free—this fair trade act might provide in reducing trade barriers between provinces. We support this bill that will be coming up on the buy Canada and buy Canadian.

So, again, in speaking of a few other things where when I asked the minister about things like our potato business and things like that, it's the agriculture business, you know, which is key to our area right here as well, too.

And when we look at how important it would have been to move forward on this bill a few months ago, it is so important when we look at the machinery business right now, and in talking to the machinery dealers, is they were begging for this to be done like it was done in other provinces earlier. So again, how much business have our Manitoba companies lost?

When we look at things like canola, \$983 million of canola just going to China alone. And then we look at the US as well, too, and again, we have to look and say how much money are we losing here today and how much could we have gained by keep moving on here?

Peas—peas. When we talk about peas when we're talking about the Free Trade Agreement, again, if we would have moved forward at a more rapid pace, companies like Avena Foods in Portage la Prairie wouldn't be looking for other customers. Their businesses in Saskatchewan have already secured that business because we stood on the sidelines, because we here—this government here—did not want to take Bill 227 and move forward with it.

\* (16:10)

And when we are looking at free trade, who is going to promote Manitoba out there?

When we look at Saskatchewan and Alberta—and we only have to look at their social media posts and see them all over the world, from Saudi Arabia to China—sorry, not China—from Saudi Arabia to Qatar, you know, again, they're out there looking for business already.

What are we doing here? We're sitting at home waiting and hoping that this business comes back to us. You know what happens when people wait and sit? They get no business. So I'm not sure who's looking after the agriculture business in this province, but I know there is nothing happening to try and gain new business in our province.

When we look at the potato business, again, we see the potato business that we're losing some of that business already to Alberta before we even had a chance. Because, again, we should have been on this regarding the free trade a while ago on this.

#### *The Speaker in the Chair*

And instead we are losing 30 per cent of our potato business to the Alberta market. The talk on that that I'd heard was this was going to off shore because it was closer to the west coast. Well, just as a reminder to everybody in the Chamber here: all of the potatoes—or over 90 per cent of the potatoes—are marketed into the US. Now those potatoes from Alberta are going to the US.

How do we get that business back? When is this Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) going to go out there, work on this free trade agreement and get some of that business back for us?

Instead, Alberta has decided to take steps further to encourage more free trade business being done in their province, and that's to include more irrigation and more tile drainage.

What have we done here? We have done nothing to try and promote more free trade across Canada and into other jurisdictions.

Manufacturing facilities. We have some opportunities here in Manitoba that I'm not sure if a lot of people in the House here know. In Portage la Prairie, we are one of the only places in Canada, if not the only place in Canada, that both the CN and CP railroad go through. But again, if we're not going to promote that, if we are going to live on hope, you know what we're going to get? None of that business. So, again, we have to continue to look at that.

We have to look at the work that's being done by the other provinces that started this many, many months

ago. And I want to go back again on that and just look at when did this—when did this all start, as it's been continuing on for a number of months now.

And again, we look at the NDP, how they've blocked interprovincial free trade. And, again, I'm going to quote from the member from Midland calling out the Manitoba NDP government for blocking Bill 227 from moving forward, a decision that fails workers, businesses and the people of Manitoba. And it is further proof that the government has no serious plan for the provincial economy until today.

With the current state of global trade and the ongoing economic uncertainties, it's shocking that the Kinew government won't act quickly to remove trade barriers between provinces, but already we're looking at slamming this bill through as quickly as possible. The NDP have had six months to show that they're serious about fighting the US and Chinese tariffs. They're putting our workers in industry at risk. But they've done nothing.

Today was a real opportunity to show leadership, to make Manitoba more competitive and to show that we're open for business. How are we showing that, that we are open for business anywhere? I know the Minister of Agriculture talks about going down and meeting with some of the people in the US, but I don't think that means going to a state fair and eating turkey legs.

The federal government estimates that cutting trade barriers between provinces could grow Canada's economy by up to \$200 billion and lower prices as much as 15 per cent. How much of that have we lost already? The NDP have no plan to deal with tariffs, no relief for rising costs and no support for Manitobans who are worried about their jobs and their future.

Interprovincial trade barriers cost the Canadian economy billions and billions of dollars each day. Why did this government not do this when we had Bill 227 on the table? Bill 227, modelled after legislation that was already in place in Nova Scotia, PEI, British Columbia, would've ensured goods and services from 'reciprocating' provinces are treated as if they were locally manufactured or produced, exempting them from additional fees or testing requirements for use in Manitoba. Another example we're seeing of that right now is chicken farms moving—have already moved to Saskatchewan because of barriers that we have had in place here.

According to the federal estimates, eliminating provincial barriers, again, like I said, cost the Canadian economy up to \$200 billion and lower prices by as much as 15 per cent. We need this to happen, and we support this from happening. The issue that we have is, once again, Manitoba and this government is behind the times.

Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 47, which tries to attempt at mirroring the member from Midland's Bill 227, which had actually worked thoughtfully and in a way that would actually address interprovincial trade barriers.

And, unfortunately, this NDP government was not willing to come together across party lines and actually work constructively to increase trade mobility and labour mobility within our country, something that economic experts have said would add as much, and growing, than \$200 billion to Canadian GDP.

My concern, with an economics background, is that Bill 47 dilutes the intent of Bill 227. As the member and Finance—member from Midland and Finance critic had stated, once you start creating exceptions in a free trade agreement, you dilute the effectiveness.

This is something that we don't need to look far to see examples of the effects. We've seen free trade agreements between the United States and Canada negotiated to a different extent over the past 40-plus years. And it wasn't until leadership in both countries, the United States and Canada, had come together to develop a free trade agreement without exceptions. It never was completely possible, and that's the reason why we saw renegotiations on a number of different occasions with change in administration on both sides of the border but especially that of the US.

\* (16:20)

Looking to those trade agreements between two strong trading partners, we can use that as an example of what to do and what not to do on interprovincial trade barriers in Canada.

Like I said, Bill 47 is a watered-down example of an effective free trade agreement between provinces. I think, you know, that the NDP government does not understand the extent of trade barriers within our country, and that may be why we see a weak piece of legislation being brought forward. And it's because the regulatory differences between provinces has a

tremendous impact on trade mobility and also labour mobility.

It's the things that we don't see as trade barriers. Everyone talks of tariffs on steel and aluminum between Canada and the US, and I think, as we debate this legislation today in the House, there's a hang-up that that's the extent of the scope of trade negotiation and trade barriers. But, in fact, when you look at trade restrictions between provinces, it's far more to deal—far more to do with regulatory limitations or limitations.

Those are things, as in my critic role of Infrastructure, that we see each day within the trucking industry. And most people don't even realize it, but there are different laws and regulations in place for hours of operation of commercial vehicles from province to province to province, differences in safety requirements for vehicles across provinces. These differences in regulation, they add to—or they take from the effectiveness and efficiencies of trade and business. These are companies that now aren't able to bid on jobs, contracts in other provinces or they're not able to travel between provinces depending on if—or if they're willing to meet the different criteria in different provinces.

Not only does this create inefficiencies but it also creates safety risk. It shouldn't be in a country like Canada that we've got different safety requirements for motor vehicles across provinces, in my opinion, and I think in the opinion of many Manitobans, that is unacceptable. When you're passing a commercial vehicle on the highway, on the Trans-Canada Highway east of Winnipeg or whether that be a commercial vehicle on the 401 outside of Toronto, you shouldn't have to look at the licence plate of the vehicle to see if that particular operator meets the same safety criteria as one in your home province.

This adds over 8 per cent to the effectiveness and the efficiency of the trucking industry across Canada. That's over 8 per cent of an increase—unnecessary increase—in the costs of trade within the trucking industry. And that's—directly, then, translates into an increase in our cost of food and the cost of all products that are transported by the trucking industry.

It's said by Manitoba businesses that 48 per cent of the business that they do across provincial boundaries is affected by interprovincial trade barriers. And these can be regulatory or direct limitations to access a market. And 43 per cent of businesses face challenges in selling their products to other businesses.

The issue that we see with Bill 47 is that it excludes sectors of our economy. It also allows within the legislation the ability for the minister to exclude sectors of the economy. That's concerning because we see that that waters down the intent of this legislation; it also waters down our negotiating abilities between us and other provinces.

As soon as it becomes reciprocal, then what's most effectively beneficial to our province is not to a neighbouring province and vice versa, so what we see is reciprocal restrictions put on trade by the other provinces. This again ends us up at square one.

And that's concerning because legislation like this is greatly beneficial to the GDP and the strength of our entire Canadian economy. When we talk about \$200 billion of growth to our Canadian economy, it benefits everybody. We are one country. We are one Canada. So what benefits us benefits our neighbours and what benefits our neighbours benefits us.

So this isn't a time, when we're talking of free trade and one Canada, to express protectionist measures.

Another example is seen almost anywhere, but one that I've brought up in this House was Crown timber dues. It's something that greatly affects my constituency. We've got a discrepancy on what the dues are between Manitoba and neighbouring Ontario.

Ontario has the timber mills that our loggers need to access the market. The ripple-down effect is widespread. You may think that it only affects some select group of loggers in eastern Manitoba, not an industry that people see each and every day. Unfortunately, that trickles down into the cost of lumber. The loggers in my constituency that access OSB mills in Ontario are producing plywood that goes into building homes in Winnipeg's new subdivisions.

The cost of those homes and affordability of homes is already out of reach of many Manitobans, especially young Manitobans entering the homeownership world. And right now, because of a simple trade discrepancy on timber dues, the mills in Ontario don't find it feasible to do business in Manitoba, so as of today, they aren't doing any business whatsoever.

\* (16:30)

And, unfortunately, the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures (Mr. Bushie) hasn't been able to give the logging industry in our province an answer. So that's one thing that if we start excluding government fees within our province, the effects will be tremendous. And I just use this one as a simple example,

because it affects the industry itself; it affects our lumber costs. But it goes further than that.

We've got wildfires burning out of control in Manitoba. Currently, we've seen wildfires that have created vast devastation, and part of it is due to not being able to manage the woodlots as we would want to. We don't have loggers that hold quotas. They own the right to extract that resource in certain areas. It's not feasible for them to carry out their business, and they're leaving timber lots now that are needing to be harvested untouched, creating an additional fire hazard.

So that—I'm just using as one example to show how widespread a difference in what a fee is in one province to another can have such a widespread effect across our entire economy. This costs millions, if not billions, of indirect impact to our Manitoba economy.

Another, you know, important part of this legislation is to address labour mobility. It's something right now, especially in health care, that we see as a tremendous limitation for access to certain trades and labour. Nurses that are licensed to practice across the provincial border in Kenora, Ontario, cannot come to Manitoba to seek employment. There's an artificial boundary that's set up, and it limits our access to that labour market.

And, again, it's vice versa. We've got skilled trade workers in western Manitoba that want to access the ability to do business in Saskatchewan and they can also be limited. We may have businesses that are able to provide a competitive service at a competitive price in Saskatchewan, and they now aren't able to currently access business in Manitoba, providing better value to Manitoba businesses and consumers.

Examples of this would be engineers. Engineers that are certified in Quebec aren't able to come to Manitoba and sign off on a licence for electrical hookup on a new home or business or commercial business in Manitoba. Our Manitoba tradespeople aren't able to go to Quebec and fulfill a service in that province that they may have demand for and they may be able to provide an economic value and benefit to that province. A benefit for a Manitoban is a benefit for a Ontario or Quebec resident as well. We are one Canada; what benefits us benefits our neighbours.

And I think that's—it's important that we look at the intent of Bill 47 and really hold the Kinew NDP government to account on what their intent is. It's important that we create additional value with this legislation immediately and also into the future, and that's something that deeply concerns me with the wording

of Bill 47 as it stands today and brought before this House to debate.

In order for us to effectively break down trade barriers across our country, we need to be mindful of the reciprocal trade negotiations that will be brought forward. I don't believe that protecting Crown corporations that only do business in Manitoba should be of any concern to tarnish or limit the effectiveness of a trade agreement.

Manitoba Hydro won't be setting up generation stations in northern Ontario. It's a corporation that's controlled by the minister within our province, and if it's not within their mandate, I think it's safe to say that they won't be doing business there. And vice versa: we don't have a concern that Québec hydro is going to be coming into Manitoba and setting up a generation station. It's unreasonable to think that that is an actual threat in our province. The environment licence to set up business in Manitoba needs to be approved by this Legislature and by the minister.

So we do have the ability to limit business of single-operator Crown corporations within our province. And, you know, same goes for MBL. We need to have increased trade of liquor and the mobility of liquor trade within our province. If there is a brewery in Manitoba providing an exceptional product that would like to be enjoyed by people in Quebec, like Farmery, a great local brewery that would like to be enjoyed by Canadians across our great country, shouldn't be limited by trade barriers and, unfortunately, that's what we've had, and vice versa. If there's great products and great distributors of alcohol in other areas of our country, we should be proud of having great products that can be enjoyed by all Canadians.

Unfortunately, when we single out certain sectors or certain Crown corporations, now we open up the chance of having reciprocal restrictions. So now, when we tell other Canadians that our liquor industry is closed to business with other Canadian provinces, it also puts up that guard by those provinces and runs the risk of setting up reciprocal barriers.

I don't think it's necessary; I don't think it's needed, and it certainly isn't asked for by the Manitoba consumer. So I ask this minister and the Kinew NDP government why, if we are trying to break down barriers, are we including certain barriers in a province like Manitoba that has the most to gain by broken-down trade barriers. We should be welcoming trade with other provinces. We've got far more to gain in

Manitoba by restricted trade barriers than we do to lose.

\* (16:40)

So I can't see how Manitobans would be asking for the protection of government-run liquor distribution as something that should be protected in the name of greater trade across our country. But, unfortunately, that's included in this legislation.

Like has been mentioned by other colleagues of mine, this is a watered-down attempt at breaking down trade barriers across our country. And I think it's concerning. I stand today doing my part in making Manitobans and Manitoba consumers aware of the insincere effects of this piece of legislation.

When we look at the importance of timing and wanting and desiring to act as quickly as possible to break down those interprovincial trade barriers, I'm confused as to why we've wasted weeks now turning down perfectly good legislation that could be amended and could've been amended by the government, a piece of good economic legislation, Bill 227, brought forward by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone). But, instead, the Kinew government has played political games with something that they know Manitobans and Canadians are passionate about.

We've seen increased pride in buying Canadian. We've naturally seen it, and we don't need legislation brought forward by the NDP government telling people to be proud of their country; I think it naturally happens on its own. I think who we are as Canadians are naturally proud of who we are, who we are as a country and the economy that we represent. And in order to strengthen that, a first important step is to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers. Along with that, we need to be sincere in the legislation that we bring forward.

So with that, I hope that this government can move forward—not excluding certain sectors or industries from their legislation—and that we can actually invite Canada to trade with Manitoba and that we will be welcomed across our country to trade with others.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk):** I'm very happy today to get up and put some words on the record regarding Bill 47, The Fair Trade in Canada Act and the Amendments to The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act, which I refer to as Bill 227 lite, because, really, it's just a watered-down version of Bill 227 that was brought forward by the member

from Midland who did extensive work to draft a bill that was brought forward in this Chamber.

It was debated weeks ago, back and forth, everybody talking about the importance of having a bill that has free trade within Canada, a bill that helps all members, all citizens of Canada who are engaged in commerce, the ability to do business without barriers from province to province.

And recognizing how we got here is very important. There is an acceptable situation that happens in this Chamber where somebody brings an idea forward, a great idea.

They do the homework; they get people involved; they discuss it with their caucus; they formulate a plan; they move forward; they get drafters involved. They go back and forth with the drafters until they get the bill just the way they want it. It gets on the Order Paper. It's brought forward in this Chamber. It's debated back and forth seemingly many times with great support from both sides of the aisle talking about the importance—on this bill in particular, the importance of having free trade in Canada.

In the face of the tariffs that we are facing from the US and Donald Trump, there—I don't think there's anybody in this Chamber that says we do not want free trade within our provinces.

But it's acceptable for someone, especially on the government side, to say, we're going to make sure that we hold this bill back, we don't allow it to pass. And we're going to bring back a version—a so-called version of the bill—and in this case, Bill 227 lite, now on the paper as Bill 47—brought back at the last moment, weeks after we've already brought forward a bill, weeks after our bill was debated, and now says, we need to bring forward a bill so we can take credit for it. And you know what, we're going to do something here. We're just going to add a buy Manitoba, buy Canada day. That's great.

But, again, the homework wasn't done. The first launch of this, if this bill was to pass in the next couple of days, would have that commemoration day happen on June 1. I don't know if calendars were not supplied to the other caucus, but they're on every phone nowadays. You could have checked that and said, hmm, June 1 is a Sunday. Maybe we should expand the scope of this commemoration days, weeks, months act and actually have at least a week so we can promote business out there, we can actually do something to promote that business.

But how did we get here? How did we get here? We are facing tariffs from our closest neighbour, a once highly respected ally of Canada. And for some reason, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, said, I'm not happy with Canada; I'm going to give them tariffs because I can.

And then they're off, and then they're on, and then they're off, and then they're on. And I know first-hand being a business owner how detrimental this could be. In my career, after getting my degree in commerce, sales, marketing, I started in a company here in Winnipeg who had a foundry located in Winkler.

And when I started in that company, I was a sales co-ordinator. I'd work for two salesmen that were there. I would enter their product; I would track the product; I'd make sure the customers got the information that they needed. I'd be the liaison between the foundry and the customers, informing the salesmen while they were traveling what was happening for that customer and what was going on. And through that position, 60 per cent of that business in that custom casting industry was done in the US. A large portion of it was done in Ontario and a smaller portion was done in BC.

At 24 years old, I became their youngest district sales manager, and I was responsible for all sales in North America except for BC. I was responsible for millions and millions and millions of dollars in sales, and I had to make sure that whenever we were negotiating on a product, we didn't just have the exchange rate of the Canadian-US dollar to contend with. I also had to make sure that regulatory that we didn't have any stipulations on what extra costs, tariffs, duties, fees would be.

\* (16:50)

So I came—became quite converse in what we needed to do. Also, I needed to become very familiar with the NAFTA agreement at the time, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and what we could do.

Several years later I entered business on my own. I mentioned before I had a machine shop; we had 70 people working for us. And I took those same ideals that I had in business with the foundry and I marketed throughout North America, because why just look under one tree for apples when you've got an orchard out there. So I went as far out as I can go looking for customers that could utilize my service, and what I offered was something a little bit unique.

I had the ability to not only to work with somebody to help engineer their products, but I knew the metallurgy and what should work, what was castable, what should remain a weldment, what was machinable, what could cut costs on them. And I was also a machinist, so I could find ways to save them money by machining.

So having the ability to have free trade across all jurisdictions throughout Canada and the US is very important.

After I left that industry, I've got on the building manufacturing industry, and one of the things that I learned very quickly is my raw products are only available for purchase out of US mills or overseas, and often there is a tendency to buy the cheapest product. Well, our philosophy in business has always been buy the best product, produce the best product, give a customer value for their money.

So we looked all across Canada for companies that could supply us the products that we need, and we found out there had been some. But they got washed out over the years because they could not compete in the marketplace, or regulatory issues came into effect that they couldn't retool for, or—variety of many different reasons.

So the only customers that they could have at that time was changing their product format. So the product that they used to produce was no longer available, so I was forced to look into the US. And typically around Chicago and in California is where I can draw my product from.

But the products that we bring in—we're a small company; we employ under a dozen people. But we build and manufacture and you've got the same family service that I had offered in the machine shop industry and in the foundry business. You get that every single day in the construction building material supply business that we have.

Now my son is taking over that business and he's doing an exemplary job. I should've probably had him take over a long time ago, because he excels at certain things that I didn't excel at. He's very good at many things, but some things he's just particularly better than I had been.

And he had asked several times: why aren't we buying some of the stuff locally? And I said because it's not available. We have distributors here that we can buy through. We can buy direct from the

manufacturers down there, but regardless of what we do, we have to buy large quantities to make the purchase reasonable so our customers don't get a huge price increase moving forward.

So in our business, if you come to me and you say: Kodiak Shelters, I would like to purchase a building from you and I want this building to be 5,000 square feet. I give you a price based on my current material costs, the current economic conditions in Canada, any fuel increases that we have, labour shortages, et cetera, et cetera, and we start moving forward.

But if I would need to order the materials from our suppliers at that point, it would possibly take six to eight months to get your building, which is unacceptable to our customers; they would go elsewhere to get it. So we need to purchase materials upfront and speculate that we are going to have sales of this variety sizes of buildings, so I need to purchase many different sizes of buildings, and I need to do that based on the fact of the price that I'm paying today.

So, when you have somebody like Donald Trump, who comes in and says there's going to be a tariff, there's not going to be a tariff, there's going to be a tariff, prices start to fluctuate. People get worried; people get jumpy. People buy extra product that they don't need right now because they don't want to get stuck paying later.

And in Donald Trump's first term in office, he imposed tariffs then as well. But they weren't on Canada; they were on other countries that supplied the same steel that I would purchase. And as those companies were—prices went up, the domestic market started purchasing more domestically. So that's a situation that happens when tariffs come in.

So, under free trade, and having the ability to purchase material freely from whether it's from one side of the country or the other side of the country, when the prices go up, sticker shock happens. And the last mandate, I had prices increase 40 per cent. When Donald Trump was elected this time, I could foresee there was going to be an issue. I bought truckloads of steel, trying to avert that.

And I also focused on Canada, focused our sales across Canada. And I've been very fortunate; we've done sales all over North America, from the DEW line right down to the Gulf of Mexico, putting buildings up in New Orleans, putting buildings up at the Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. We have been all over from one tip of North America to the other, working on shipping terminals in northern BC and doing small

little greenhouses for the lady who just wants to grow plants.

So we've got a phenomenal business, but we have no control on what the market's going to dictate. The only control we have is to spend money out of pocket up ahead. And when you have an opportunity to purchase something, you've got to be able to speculate properly or else you're going to sit on that material. And sitting on material is just as bad as not buying it. It's probably worse, because you've tied up cash and resources for that product.

So you have to start marketing across Canada. You start taking a look at one end of Canada to the other end of Canada and try to target those markets. And whether I'm talking to a guy in Nova Scotia who wants a product, or talking to the RCMP in Ottawa, who want massive warehouses for their equipment, everybody has different requirements.

And in the situation of the RCMP in Ottawa, where we sold them close to 70,000 square feet of building, they wanted specialized electrical services put in; they wanted heating and AC put in some of the buildings. We've got people. We've got great companies that we work through, here, right now, in Manitoba that were more than willing to come with us over to Ontario, but we found out there was trade barriers and they couldn't come.

So we had to employ other companies, and I know there's—99 per cent of the companies out there are phenomenal, but 1 per cent you just don't know or you don't have a relationship with, and you're not a priority to somebody.

So, as you move forward, you try to make sure you're doing the best thing for your customers, try to make sure that the best thing is happening. But if you don't have control on the costs and the materials or the labour that's coming in, sometimes they can get out of hand and out of touch for what you need.

Taking away those trade barriers, having the ability to show up and bring the crew that you need, can make everything move forward—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 13 minutes remaining—14 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 26, 2025

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