



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

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
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

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Good morning, Honourable Speaker. Would you please call for second reading debate Bill 234, The Pride Month Act.

The Speaker: It's been announced that we will now go to second reading debate of Bill 234, The Pride Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 234—The Pride Month Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz), that Bill 234, The Pride Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Loi sur le Mois de la fierté (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Blashko: Honourable Speaker, as a young queer person navigating the world, I spent a lot of time assessing my relative safety. Which person could I trust, which group could I share space with, which teachers could I connect with?

Whether they knew it or not, I was always looking for signals: which people around me freely used slurs, who in my circle readily laughed at unfunny jokes; whenever I mentioned my gay cousin I'd watch for how people responded. That's how I mapped my communities in schools, in sports, with my family and, if I'm being honest, I continue to use the strategy today.

I pay attention to who shows up for our community in person and online, who shows up for votes in this Chamber and who do they for and how do they vote. All these actions show us where people stand and their level of commitment to the queer and trans community.

This bill, Bill 234, is one of those important signals our government can send to the entirety of the province and beyond, that your provincial government sees you and that you are valued here. Regardless of your sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, you belong and we celebrate you.

The Pride month bill will recognize June as Pride month in the province. Many people are already celebrating in June through parades, marches, rallies and all types of gatherings. They happen in Winnipeg, in smaller centres across rural and northern Manitoba. For anyone worried that this bill will limit Pride to June in any way: have no fear. Pride is 365 days a year, and every fourth year, we get a bonus day for Pride.

June holds historical significance for our community. On June 28, 1969, the Stonewall Uprising began outside the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City. Gay bars offered a space for people to express themselves, free of public scrutiny; however, they were often subject to police harassment. Led by Black and trans community members, people fought back during one particular police raid. Part of the legend around Stonewall is that the community was in mourning over Judy Garland's death, her funeral being the day before. A solid five days of resistance ensued that

came to be known as the Stonewall Uprising, a catalyst for queer rights movements across the world.

While the Stonewall Uprising began on June 28, the law decriminalizing homosexual acts received royal assent here in Canada the same week, and on June 28, 2005, same sex marriage was legalized here in Canada.

Queer community and resistance didn't begin at Stonewall; we have always been here. Across geographies, nations, generations and gender expressions, the queer and trans community have contributed and been valued members of their communities. Colonialism, patriarchy, misogyny, fascism and racism have led us to this point where we have to reclaim our rightful space in the broader community. Our existence is only political because it's been politicized.

Here in Canada, there is a long history of state surveillance of the community. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights has an important exhibit about the LGBT Purge. From the 1950s to the 1990s, the Government of Canada systemically investigated, harassed and fired 2SLGBTQI+ members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and the federal public service. Now called the LGBT Purge, this official policy destroyed thousands of careers, did untold psychological damage and ruined lives.

It's important we consider Manitoba's unique context. In 1987, Manitoba was the third province to include sexual orientation in its Human Rights Code. Two weeks following its adoption, the first official Pride gathering in Manitoba was held in Winnipeg. The queer and trans community no longer had to hide, but many did due to the long-standing stigma around queer identity. During this first Pride march, some people wore paper bags to mask their identity.

The term two-spirit, now widely used, originated here in 1990. Two-spirit, or *niizh manidoowag* [*two-spirit*] in Ojibwe, was adopted at the third annual Interlake-Intertribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference. It is meant to capture that vast and unique gender identities and expressions within Indigenous queer communities. We're fortunate to have community elders like Albert McLeod present at the gathering who continue to play vital roles in our communities.

They were trailblazers that made my existence in the space much more plausible. Jim Rondeau was the first openly gay person elected in 1999, followed by Jennifer Howard in 2007. I want to give a special shout-out to Nancy Allan, the former minister of

Education who worked so hard to make schools safer in our communities. I'm lucky to be part of a thriving queer caucus today. Here on this side of the House, we have the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara), the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham) and the member for Radisson (MLA Dela Cruz), and I'm so fortunate to be among their colleagues.

In the 20 months of our government, we have made meaningful improvements in access to gender-affirming care. We've introduced legislation that will include gender expression under the Human Rights Code, made HIV medication free and accessible and we've officially recognized two-spirit and trans day of visibility.

* (10:10)

The queer and trans community have never been afforded the luxury of assuming progress is inevitable, and our place in the wider community has never been assured. We are in a moment in history where our trans relatives in the US are losing their jobs and trans existence is being literally erased from the Stonewall national historic site. Premiers in other provinces are willing to use the notwithstanding clause to ban doctors from providing gender-affirming care to trans youth. Here in Manitoba, we have hate-filled groups looking to erase the presence of our communities in schools.

At this time last year, four members of the PC caucus voted against the member for Kirkfield Park's two-spirit trans day of visibility bill. Just last week, the member from Dawson Trail said he doesn't see gender, a bold statement to say the least. I don't know if we're all just gelatinous blobs to him, but negating people's lived experiences is a pretty stunted position for someone sitting in this Chamber.

We can almost empathize with this level of understanding when we consider the company he keeps and the campaign the PCs ran in the last general election. Using tired dog whistles around parental rights, this formerly governing party targeted trans students. They targeted young people for simply trying to navigate their formative years in the best way. They targeted educators and parents who support young people. And the poster boy for this campaign is now their leader and has yet to apologize for it and arguably still actively courts transphobic sentiment within his supporters.

I come to this role having worked in education for over a decade. I worked with high school students and supported many queer and trans students as they embrace their identities. I would often be in conversations with guardians supporting them as they learned to fully celebrate the young people and their lives. For a little—for a political party to actively nurture disinformation and put young people at risk is abhorrent.

Honourable Speaker, I say all this to hold those members accountable for their actions and their silence, but also to underline why this bill is necessary. Pride is a recognition of our histories, our collective wins and our commitment to building a better world. There's space for joy, dancing and celebration at Pride, but also sorrow, reflection and anger. It also presents a giant opportunity to invite more people in and further build understanding and appreciation for the diversity of the community.

I want to thank the people in the gallery who have joined us. It takes all of us to make these futures possible, and we see your work and commitment.

Members opposite have a choice. They can ensure this bill passes second reading this morning or they can delay it and lean into their party's transphobic and homophobic lineage.

Clearly, we on this side of the House want this bill to pass. Regardless of where we get to today, many Pride celebrations will take place in June and 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, their friends, families and allies know they have an NDP provincial government that stands with them.

We are forever indebted to our community elders who share their experiences so generously and continue to fight to make a better world for future generations.

And to the youth: know that you are loved and deserve community, to flourish and share your talents with the world. We celebrate you not in spite of your sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, we celebrate you because of it. You are part of expansive futures we haven't even imagined yet. And you will lay the foundation for new possibilities for generations to come.

Thank you.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from

another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between parties; and each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I want to thank the member from Lagimodière for bringing forward this very important bill. As legislatures—legislators here, we have an opportunity to come together and protect the rights of everybody in our province, and this does that.

Can the member please tell me what the provincial government can do to help promote the essence of this bill?

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): I appreciate the question.

Us passing this bill—really, like, coming from the world of education, I think it really gives a prime opportunity for people in the community to take this moment where we are passing legislation, where there is potentially, like, coverage in the media and really amplify the message that everyone here in Manitoba belongs and everyone is welcome.

So it's incumbent on all of us to take on this work.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I've noted that several members of the opposition are never in the Chamber when LGBTQ issues are talked about. In fact—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Just to remind the minister that we're not allowed to indicate whether members are present or absent.

MLA Naylor: I think it's safe to say that there will be some MLAs who choose not to participate in listening to anything about queer joy ever and to hear about your bill.

And so I would just ask the member: Why should all MLAs in Manitoba enthusiastically support this bill?

Mr. Blashko: I thank the member for that question. And my default is enthusiasm.

So I think it's important for all MLAs to engage with the community because I—the queer community is, I think, unique in that whether you go to church, whether you go to temple, no matter where you work, no matter what sports you play, you intersect with the community. We're members of your family, we're members of your place of worship, and so there's a

unique opportunity for us to take this message and build those connections across different experiences.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Thanks to the member for Lagimodière (Mr. Blashko) for bringing this important bill forward; timely as well, as June is often recognized as Pride month.

So my question is: How would this recognition impact the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Manitoba?

Mr. Blashko: Thank you for the question.

Well, I think it's—as you mentioned, June is often already—or as the member mentioned, June is already often recognized. So in my opinion, this bill is arguably overdue. Some people were surprised that this wasn't already in legislation. But I think it positively impacts—it's an opportunity—I'll speak to the engagement that I did in consultation. I met with Rainbow Resource Centre, Sunshine House, Eastman Pride, Pride Winnipeg, Brandon Pride, Two-Spirit Michif Local, 2 Spirits in Motion Society, as well as the Bahaghari Pride group.

And so the opportunity to meet and discuss and talk about the potential for more conversation around the role of government, but also the role of community and amplifying healthy communities and—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Naylor: I appreciate that the member mentioned Jennifer Howard, who served as the first out lesbian in this Legislature. And I mention—I want to mention that because Jennifer's visibility was a contributing factor to my having the courage to put my name forward to run as an MLA and then serve as the second out lesbian in this Legislature.

So I want to ask the member what he thinks about how Pride month being recognized would help increase visibility for LGBTQ all-the-spectrum queers across the province and what that would mean for the community around visibility and being represented in spaces such as this?

Mr. Blashko: I thank the member for that question.

I think representation is super important. You see that on this side of the House, how diverse our caucus is. And June—I don't know about other members in the House, but I spend a lot of time going to schools and talking to young people about my journey, about the role of government, about my intersecting identities as a queer Métis person.

And so I think it's really an opportunity—everything we do in here is an opportunity to engage

different communities and the public and help build better understanding between different communities. So I think we can really take this and run with it.

Mr. Perchotte: Once again, I'm glad we're debating this beautiful bill here in the Legislature today. The PCs have—it was mentioned to your House leader that we are in full support of this bill and we look forward to its passing today.

In your consultations that you had, in your extensive consultations, were there any suggestions or calls to action to be done by us as legislators?

* (10:20)

Mr. Blashko: I appreciate the question and I'll just, like, point out that it was referred to as a beautiful bill, so I really appreciate the kind words. A lot of time went into this bill and we appreciate all the support that comes with it.

The community always—there's always opportunity to build on pieces of legislation and the work we're doing here, so, like I said in my opening remarks: the work is never done. Things are never taken for granted. We're working to build up different communities but we're also working to safeguard the things we have in place.

So we're in regular conversation with the folks I mentioned through the consultation process, but also so many other groups. And how do we build a more welcoming—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Naylor: As the member mentioned, Pride month has been recognized in the US and, of course, in Canada, I think, officially for about nine years now. But this is a big new step to recognize the whole month in Manitoba.

I know that, for me, it means lots of queer beer on—maybe not lots—a little bit of queer beer on patios, lots of time seeing drag shows, listening to queer poetry.

And I'm just wondering how the member plans to celebrate best this Pride month?

Mr. Blashko: I really appreciate the question, and I may join you for a queer beer.

So I spend Pride month going to a lot of different Pride events here in Winnipeg. Also I love going out to different Prides. I've been to Pembina Valley many times, been to Steinbach, been to Brandon. I think it's really important that we support Pride events across

the province because different communities are facing different—tough realities, depending on their context.

I—as I said, I spend a lot of time in schools. I also spend a fair amount of time tipping drag performers. And I also like to pick up a book by a queer author whenever I can. I just picked up a memoir—or, sorry, a biography on Marsha P. Johnson—

The Speaker: Time has expired.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, again, it gives me opportunity to ask a question on this important bill being brought forward.

My question is: Does any other jurisdiction in Canada officially commemorate Pride month, or will this be the only province to do so?

Mr. Blashko: You know what, thank you for the question. I believe we—I did look into that, and I have to be honest, I can't remember the answer at this moment, so I'm—I'd be happy to get back to the member on where we're at—regards to Pride month across Canada.

I like to think we're trailblazers, but also, in this context, it would be great if all the other provinces and territories are already doing this, so—but I am happy to get back to you—or get back to the member with that answer.

MLA Naylor: Just for our last question, maybe I'll give the member an opportunity to share a little bit about the Pride celebration that's taking place, hosted by our Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) later this week?

Mr. Blashko: I thank the member for the question.

Yes, on Thursday, we are having a wonderful Pride celebration here in the Rotunda. It's something that we've done—well, we started last year, but we're inviting more and more communities into the people's building. And so this year is the second year where we're having a Pride celebration. There will be drag performers. There will be music. There will be colour and food and—

An Honourable Member: No queer beer, though.

Mr. Blashko: No, no beer allowed, apparently.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I am proud to stand up and put some words on the record on this—what I referred to as a beautiful bill. Any bill that uplifts the spirits and the community that we are so blessed to have in our province is a beautiful bill.

When I entered into politics, it was not for an ego, it was to give back to my community, to represent the people of my community—everyone in the community. And when I have an opportunity to stand in the House and speak on something that goes a little bit further than we do on a daily basis to recognize people from the 2SLGBTQ+ community and to say that you matter, you're a part of our world, you're a part of our lives, you're a part of our communities and we embrace that.

I personally love people. I love all people regardless of who you worship, if you worship, where you live, your status in life, whether you have a physical or mental disability and, most especially, who you love is your business.

When I asked to speak on this bill, I was reminded of several stories that happened to me throughout my entire life. As a child going to school, I had a wonderful friend. His name was Mike. We hung out all the time. I discovered very early that Mike wasn't interested in girls, but he was a great friend of mine and we hung out together for a long time and, eventually, he told me when he was about 13 that he was gay. And he says, I know we probably won't be friends anymore. We stayed friends. A friend is a friend. He was always there for me. Because he told me who he was, didn't change our relationship.

And as I moved from the area, we stayed in friends and eventually, in grade 9, he came over for my grade 9 graduation. And, unfortunately for him, he was picked on, on my graduation, because people could tell that he was gay. And they couldn't understand because they knew I wasn't. So I was very disappointed in the people who I thought were my friends in the new school because they could not see past their own biases and bigotry. And I think this bill can do something to eliminate that.

And I've got countless stories of that situation happening to people throughout my lifetime. When I owned a machine shop, across my desk came the résumé from a lady. Her name was Michelle, and Michelle lived in Ontario prior to applying for a job here in Winnipeg. And when I looked at her résumé, it was glowing. She was a wonderful machinist. The capabilities of this lady was incredible, and I couldn't

wait to get her on the phone to have her come in for an interview.

And during the conversation, I said, well, why are you—why did you choose Winnipeg? And she said, well, I'm just looking for a change. I just want to have something different in life. I've gone about as far as I can go in my area where I live.

And, quickly, Michelle accelerated. She brought something into our company that nobody else had. She was super organized. She would take over on a piece of equipment. She would be able to not only keep the production numbers up, she would be—the quality assurance was a hundred per cent, but the areas were organized and tidy.

And I knew that she was gay. I knew she was part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. And some people call it gaydar; I could tell from her that she was from the community. And we didn't talk about it, but she quickly excelled in the company and became a supervisor. And eventually, we got closer in our communications; became more as friends.

As time went on, Michelle met another lady, and after them dating for quite some time, she asked me something that I was very honoured: she asked me if I would be able to walk her down the aisle in her marriage. And I was so proud.

And I asked about if any of her family was going to be there, and she confided in me that the reason she left Ontario is because she was being tormented and stalked, not just from the people she worked with, but members of her family who could not understand that she—her coming out didn't change who she was; she was always gay, but criticized and ridiculed her where she had to leave.

And when she came to Winnipeg, she found a home. She found a home for work within our company. She found a home within the community that she felt so a part of. And she had a beautiful wedding. It was a proud day that we were a part of it.

* (10:30)

Now, any opportunity that we have as legislatures to come in here and pass bills to protect people, to make sure that people have the right to be who they want to be, have the opportunity to move forward, love who they want to love—it's our differences that make us so unique as a community, but those differences bind us together.

And education, which this bill can really make a part of—help educate people, that the people in our

community are welcome here, people in all communities, people of different faiths, people of different beliefs, people of different parenting styles, people of different directions that they want to be in life—and especially people of the 2SLGBTQ+ community are welcome.

We need to put down barriers that stop people from being the best of themselves and allow people to do just what they need to do—is flourish in our province. And I said in the beginning, I love people. And this beautiful bill represents that.

And I want to thank the member from Lagimodière for bringing this forward and I look forward to its passing here this morning.

Thank you.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I want to just get up and say a couple of words in respect of this morning's bill.

First off, I want to just thank our colleague for bringing forward this really important—some would say beautiful—bill this morning.

I also just want to shout-out our caucus—it was mentioned by our—one of our ministers: we're so proud to have a caucus that represents all Manitobans, including 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. In fact, often when I'm asked to speak, I will often talk about how the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) is the first Black, queer, non-binary member elected anywhere across the country. That's our caucus, and I'm so proud to work alongside our 2S-LGBTQ2I caucus members. Nothing gives me more pride than that.

I want to just acknowledge a special shout-out to my chief of staff. Folks will know, and I think probably, you know, people will notice that I say this all the time, the—our Families team is the best. I have literally the best Families team. And all of it is led by Alex Krosney, who is my chief of staff, who is queer, who is unapologetically queer, who plays hockey, who rollerblades, who is one of the most incredibly intelligent, loyal, loving, compassionate individuals that I am so, so blessed to work with and I just wanted to give her a shout-out this morning.

And then, to all of our collective government and political staff, 2SLGBTQI staff, it's an honour to work with everybody and I'm so proud that our government is representative of all Manitobans. All Manitobans have the right to be in this Chamber, they have a right to work in this building, they have a right to come into

this building and celebrate—it is the people's building—and so I just want to also lift up all of our staff and our political staff that we have.

I just want to say this, I don't want to take up too much time or space: I want to reflect on, as an ally, something that ensured that I would always stand on the side of human rights and stand on the side of right, particularly in respect of 2S–LGBTQ2I community members.

In 1997, I was doing my first degree and I took a class on—I think it was child psychology. And at the time, my son Jonah, my oldest son—I believe he was like, 18 months old, 19 months old. And I'll always remember that we were talking about—I can't remember what we were talking about, but this statistic came out that the prof was talking about. And the prof said how the statistics bore out that little boys, young men from the ages of 12 to 18 who are gay, 60 per cent of those little boys and those young men will attempt suicide. And I was horrified by that statistic.

And I remember because my son was, like, 18 or 19 months old, and I love my children more than anything in the world, I remember thinking, well, I, as his mum, have to create a space, a family in which whoever he is, he knows that he's loved, that he's safe, that he's—he can exist. But for me, I take that for all of us. Like, every human being must be safe to live their most authentic, beautiful, unapologetic life.

And so, as the minister, all these years later, to now be the minister responsible for—in WAGE, in Women and Gender Equity, for 2S–LGBTQ2I, I just want the community to know that it is one of my—it is the honour of my life to be in this role and to be an ally and to work in a ministerial capacity to ensure that we are doing the best in this province, in this government to ensure that there is safety, there is inclusion, there is equity.

Particularly in this historic moment in which we see our folks across the border in the US, who are legislatively, methodically and strategically attacking the 2SLGBTQI communities; they are legislating the rights away of citizens and for what? Because people are ignorant, they are archaic, they're homophobic, they're transphobic, all of those things.

And so it's really important that us, as a government, but also this Legislative Assembly, every moment that we can stand up, not only for Manitoba citizens, but for all citizens, here in Canada, across the

border, or any other country in which we see attacks on the human rights of 2S–LGBTQ2I communities.

It is an honour for each and every one of us to be elected to sit in this space, to be responsible for Manitobans. And so, while I appreciate the members opposite and their support of this morning's bill, I want to point out that it's not enough to say that I support this bill; I had a friend who was gay, so I get it. And I appreciate that, but when you have members in the PC caucus that stand up in this Legislative building, in this Assembly and vote against trans rights and two-spirit rights; when you have the Leader of the Opposition who was the face of a campaign of hate against children, against the most targeted and marginalized of our communities, and still has not apologized today—is beyond disrespectful and deplorable.

And so I'm glad that we can all agree that the member's bill is beautiful. Indeed it is, indeed the Manitoba 2S–LGBTQ2I community is beautiful and resilient and courageous and generous and all of these things, but in this Chamber, people have to stand up and take their responsibility, their sacred responsibility serious and always stand on the side of human rights; and always stand on the side of right, including standing for Manitoba 2S–LGBTQ2I communities.

Miigwech.

* (10:40)

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: The question before—the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I just want to put a few words on the record.

I want to thank our colleague, the MLA from Lagimodière, for bringing this really important legislation forward. It's, quite frankly, long overdue—it's long overdue—and I'm really grateful that it's a member of our caucus, a member of the community, who thought to bring this legislation forward for our province. I am glad to hear that hopefully it'll be fully supported in this House and hopefully passed.

I want to thank the guests who are with us in the gallery. I see a lot of faces, folks in the community—from the community of which I'm very proud to be a

part of here in our province, who have done work for many, many years across many different areas to make sure that our communities are moving in the right direction and fully affirmed across Manitoba. It takes a lot of time and energy to do that work in community. It's pretty thankless work a lot of the time, but folks keep showing up, and it's wonderful that they took the time to show up here today.

I want to acknowledge the queer elders amongst our community—queer and trans and two-spirit elders. It's a real blessing in our community when you get to see decades and decades worth of life, and it's something that we take very seriously and we cherish because it's not a given.

As minister—the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) already stated, our young people, our community members navigate unfair oppression and hatred and harm that results in increased rates of suicide, premature mortality. It's work that we all must do to endeavour to make sure that our communities live long, full, healthy and happy lives.

And so our queer elders, who get to live in Manitoba and see that they have a government in place that truly champions them and sees them, they deserve that. They deserve to see this bill passed. They deserve to see that they have a government that honours them in their full identities. And, you know, someone like me gets to stand in the Legislature today because queer elders who came before us paved a path that was easier.

Honourable Speaker, I take very seriously being in the role as an MLA, a legislator and as a minister. I don't take it for granted, and I'm really proud to be part of a caucus led by a Premier (Mr. Kinew) that has never had to be reminded to stand on the side with community. I'm very proud to be part of a team that has always taken very seriously any opportunity that we have to celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and advocate for the rights of these increasingly diverse community members.

I do think it is important that we acknowledge that the harms of the recent past by the previous PC administration, by members—every single member on that side of the House, has yet to be fully atoned for. I still hear from Manitobans who are navigating the trauma and the fear that they experienced during the 2023 electoral campaign the PCs ran, where the leader of their now-party was the face of a campaign targeting trans children.

I remember standing outside this building during a rally during the campaign period where hundreds of Manitobans showed up to say that they don't support that kind of behaviour, and to also say that they were afraid. I remember having conversations with parents and with kids who were afraid for what their future in Manitoba might look like if the Leader of the Opposition and members of that side of the House were in power, and that fear carried on after our government came into power. People needed reassurance that we would make sure their rights were protected and advanced, and we have done just that.

And this bill, I think, is another really important example of our government's commitment to making sure that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is protected, is celebrated and is continually moving in a direction of true equity, not only in Manitoba, not only across our country, but beyond our country's borders. Because we know that people across the world are looking at little Manitoba right now, are seeing what we're able to do in the area of human rights and saying it is possible.

We know that queer and trans communities are looking at Manitoba and saying: it is possible to live a good life, to be respected by your government, to have gender expression brought forward as something that should be protected in The Human Rights Code. And you will have elected people who look like the diversity of our province standing up for you and having your back.

And so, on this side of the House, we're thrilled that this bill was brought forward. We want to see it passed.

Communities need to know that there is no government that could be in power, there is no political wind that could blow in the United States or anywhere else that would ever change our position as a caucus.

We stand with the community. We love the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, unapologetically. And we thank the community for making Manitoba a better place to be. We thank the community for making Manitoba a beautiful place to be.

And I look forward to moving forward into a Pride weekend full of joy, because we talk so often about the challenges the community faces; we don't talk enough about the joy of what it means to be queer and trans and two-spirit and a part of the community. There's a lot of joy there. And bills like this affirm that joy. And every single member of our community deserves to embrace it and to experience it. And we

are committed and I am committed to making sure that that is the path forward in this province, as long as you have an NDP government.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Speaker: The question before the House, then, is second reading of Bill 234, The Pride Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): A recorded vote, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested, and I must advise the House that, according to rule 24(7), a division requested during private members' hour must be deferred to the private members' hour the following Thursday. The deferred vote shall take place at 11:55 a.m. on Thursday and shall not be further deferred.

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, can you see if there's the will of the House to call it 11?

The Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 11? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 11, it is now time for private members' resolutions, and the resolution—*[interjection]*

The honourable Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, can we just recess for one minute, please? I apologize. Can we—

The Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader.

MLA Fontaine: I apologize, Honourable Speaker. Can we recess for five minutes, please?

The Speaker: Is there leave to recess for five minutes? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted and the bells will ring for one minute.

The House recessed at 10:49 a.m.

The House resumed at 10:54 a.m.

The Speaker: Order, please. I could call us back to order.

The previously requested five-minute leave has expired.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 18—Supporting the Agricultural Industry in Manitoba

The Speaker: So now we will move on to private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is resolution No. 18, Supporting the Agricultural Industry in Manitoba, brought forward by the honourable member for the—Burrows.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I move, seconded by the member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott),

WHEREAS agriculture is an important part of the economic and cultural history of Manitoba and is vital to the prosperity of the province; and

WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government shuttered 21 Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporations (MASC) and agricultural offices across the province, leaving producers without access to essential, in-person services; and

WHEREAS the previous, failed PC Provincial Government neglected to address issues the agricultural industry in Manitoba was facing; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government unequivocally supports farmers and agribusiness in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is proud to support agricultural businesses in the face of tariffs and threatened tariffs from China and the United States; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is proud to help keep life affordable for farmers by extending the rent freeze on agricultural Crown land into 2025; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is proud to bring in-person services back to farmers by reopening two new MASC offices in Shoal Lake and Virden; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is proud to help young farmers get the support they need by increasing the Young Farmer Rebate to \$40,000 with Budget 2025; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is stepping up to complete the Prairie Innovation Centre for Sustainable Agriculture with \$60 million in capital funding and an additional \$60 million in bridge funding, adding hundreds of additional training seats and creating more jobs to meet the growing labour demand; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government was the first provincial government in the country to signal its support in 2025 for AgriStability in the face of tariffs and threatened tariffs from China and the United States; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is investing \$13 million for Cereals Canada to develop the Global Agriculture Technology Exchange, a world-class centre in downtown Winnipeg that will support grain producers and processors in their ongoing efforts to establish new international trading partners.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly be urged to recognize and applaud the provincial government for its successful efforts in supporting and growing the agricultural industry in Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Brar: Honourable Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to bring this resolution forward on a very important day, which is the first day of my 51st round around the sun.

So I'm happy to speak to this resolution, and the topic is agriculture, so I love it; I like it. I would say:

Punjabi spoken

Bhatkiyan rohiyan te biyabaan vi bhatke /
Takkrdi toli te keetay kamm vi jattkay /
Kiddan Canada zindagi ki puchhdain taya /
Maza jo khet vich aya oh kidhray hor nahi aya.

Translation

*(During my settlement struggle) I wandered through desolate lands and wilderness too /
Did a variety of jobs from retail to farm work /
Dear uncle, if you ask me, how is life in Canada? I would say:
The joy found working at the farm, was never found anywhere else.*

English

I don't need a translator for this today, but anyways, thank you so much for the expansion of translation services, I would translate it right away. This is a little poem that I wrote in 2014 when I was working at a farm in Minto, Manitoba. What it says is that, during my settlement struggle in Canada, I had to go for so many jobs, which is a wide range of jobs, and one of them was working at a farm. And that is something that I enjoyed the most. That tells about my interests, that tells about my connection to agriculture and that reminds me that I belong to a family that has been farming for generations.

And it reminds me that agriculture is important and soil is the basis of what is produced around us and that's the basis of our survival. And I never forget how important soil is. And I realize that basically soil is our final home; that's where we would be resting finally. So very important topic, very important subject, very important opportunity.

And today's resolution, as I just said, talks about agriculture, its important—its importance and invites all members to share their thoughts about agriculture in Manitoba and how we can make it better. So the resolution says, therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to recognize and applaud the provincial government for its successful efforts in supporting and growing the agricultural industry in Manitoba.

I appreciate what our government is doing to make the ag industry better and I appreciate the team, which is all of us, specifically of our wonderful Ag Minister and of our Ag critic. This is a good team and we're all serving Manitobans together.

I want to share this story with you, maybe I shared with a few people. It was in late 2014 that I was working in the Agriculture office, Arborg, and my reception desk bell rings. I got out and see a gentleman. I said, how can I help you? And the gentleman says, I'm the minister of Agriculture. That was the first time when I met this gentleman, who is now again, Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) in Manitoba. So thanks for that introduction and thanks for all the great work that you did and you're continuing to do for Manitoba.

* (11:00)

When we talk about agriculture, we talk about the challenges at the same time. It's not just the farmer, it's not just the government. There are a number of people who work together to make it better. I want to mention researchers, extension workers, trainers, educators and also rural media; they work together to make it better.

And there are uncertainties and there are challenges all the time. We are currently in a phase where we are facing challenges. And I want to share this: that we're heading towards times when there would be labour shortage at its peak.

By 2029, we would be having 123,000 workers labour gap: that would be one in every three jobs vacant. So that's what we're heading towards and we have to work together to make things better. And I also want to mention that agriculture contributed

\$122 billion to Canadian economy in 2018; that's an old data.

So I want to mention a few things that our government has done to address these gaps—not just labour but training gaps, other gaps, research gaps and so on. I want to mention Prairie Innovation Centre for Sustainable Agriculture at Assiniboine Community College.

Our government has recently announced \$60 million capital investment in this project, which is going to be utilized for applied research labs, industry engagement, labour market development, and it would be surveying 800+ Ag students per year in that facility, so I'm proud to be part of the government that announced it.

And the beauty about this announcement is that the \$20 million, which includes the child-care infrastructure for 216 spaces on site, so that our workers, our researchers, our trainers can work worry-free and have their kids just beside them there in that child-care centre.

And it would be creating 1,000 new jobs, so I want to congratulate ACC. I want to congratulate Mark Frison and Nicole Gaudette for their leadership at ACC.

We have also opened two new Ag offices at Shoal Lake and Virden. And I want to remind that when I was Ag critic, I advocated against closing MASC and Ag offices by the previous government and I got so much appreciation for that.

I want to share this story. The other day I was having dinner in Brandon at a restaurant. Agricultural minister was with me, member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) was with me. Two tall gentlemen came to me, tapped my shoulder, saying, hey, are you the member for Burrows?

I said yes. We are just stopping to say thank you for your advocacy on the Ag file for so many years. And then I introduced those young farmers to my colleagues there. So people listen; people watch what you do. So it's very easy to close the offices but it's very hard to re-open them. We did.

I did go to Teulon office and collect pictures there to spread the word about the wrong choice that was made to close this, because the community in Teulon was worried about the economic loss. That office rent was a few thousand dollars and that rent and that, you know, money was being cycled into the local economy, and the staff working there would go to fill their cars, go to lunch, to local restaurants. So it was a

beautiful, beautiful, you know, office there: an asset for that community. That's just one example.

And everybody knows we have talked a lot about Crown lands. We are working to make Crown lands file better. And there are so many business risk programs that we are working to improve on.

In light of the time, I would conclude my comments here, and I would welcome my colleagues to speak to this resolution so that we can create and utilize this opportunity to talk about agriculture, talk about our wonderful producers and the land and the production that we have and that we feel proud of, and that we utilize to produce food to feed the world.

Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Prior to moving on to the question period for this resolution, I must remind members that, seeing as we called it 11 o'clock at 10:47, it will be called noon at 11:47. So just a reminder to everyone.

Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Thank you to the member from Burrows for his words today.

My question is, the NDP now claims agriculture is vital to Manitoba, but when they were last in government, they imposed a sweeping moratorium on hog barn expansion that choked growth across rural Manitoba.

Why did they cripple one of the most successful sectors in the agriculture business in Manitoba?

Thank you.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I want to say thank you to my colleague for the wonderful question.

I would just say this, that the leadership in the pork industry appreciates us. And I would just share this quote from Cam Dahl from Manitoba Pork, and he says: It is crucial that the 22,000 Manitobans who rely on our sector know that the provincial government recognizes what they do for our

provincial economy, which we saw in the budget announcement.

So that's what I know about the pork industry.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): I want to thank the member for Burrows for bringing forward this resolution. I know that he's got extensive experience in agriculture and it's very close to his heart, from his early childhood to his time in academia and also his time working in the agricultural industry.

So I'm hoping, if he could share a little bit with the Chamber as to why he brought this resolution forward today?

Mr. Brar: I thank my colleague for the wonderful question.

The first reason why I brought this resolution forward is that I love agriculture and I love producers.

Second is that I wanted to create this opportunity for all of us to talk about agriculture and everybody is welcome. And, you know, agriculture is an important subject that people want us to speak about, and our producers and ag industry people want us to talk about agriculture. And people need to know what their government, which represents them, is doing in this agriculture to make it better.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just ask the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), in his previous answer, he quoted something. Was that from a public document? If not, could he table it?

Mr. Brar: Honourable Speaker, it was a public statement by the leadership from Manitoba Pork.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Agriculture Crown land auction remains suspended for beef land, and by beef land, I mean pastures and hay land. This leaves young and expanding producers without means to grow their herds or plan for their future.

If this government claims to support rural expansion, why are they blocking the very land base needed by young farmers?

Mr. Brar: We're not blocking anything, actually. We are opening things. We are opening offices that were closed. We're opening Gate—I want to mention this—Gate is Global Agriculture Technology Exchange. We are investing \$13 million to Gate so that we can

improve trade along—while working with Cereals Canada.

* (11:10)

So we are bringing in great things. We are doing good things and we are improving the Crown land file, but it would take some time. We are working with industry, working with the farming communities, so that we can make it better because it was broken, previously.

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Burrows for bringing forward this resolution, and wish him a very happy birthday here today.

I was hoping that he could speak a little bit to how agriculture plays a role in our economy and how it's being affected with the tariffs.

Mr. Brar: Of course, as I said during my preamble, that soil is the basis. That's where everything comes from; that's what—where we build things from.

Agriculture impacts everything. Agriculture impacts our lives. Agriculture impacts our health. And agriculture is what we survive on. But recently, we have been facing barriers, and this is the time when we, as Manitobans and as Canadians, need to come together, brainstorm, strategize and face the challenges so that we can maneuver through these challenging times.

Thank you.

MLA Devgan: We know that during their time in government, the Progressive Conservatives left a lot of investment on the table and failed to support Manitoba producers, causing a lot of that investment to leave Manitoba into Saskatchewan and Alberta, and leaving us at a deficit in terms of competition.

So I'm wondering if the member could expand a little bit more on why the previous government failed to support Manitoba producers and why, even today, they are no friend to the Manitoban farmer?

Mr. Brar: Like, why the previous government did something, I can't say why because they did it. So I think they should stand up and explain why they failed to listen to the farmers, why they failed to invest in farming, and why I, as a critic, was listening to Crown land leaseholders begging for a reply to their email, begging for a phone call to go through and listen to them.

In some cases, I would say, there were particular cases—I can't mention their names—that they were

begging for some instalments because they were not able to pay the 300 per cent more rent on—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I'd like to thank the member for Burrows for his genuine passion to this portfolio.

I'd like to ask the member what he's going to do, or what this resolution would spur on the government to do to regain support by farmers who can still remember a previous NDP government that had wide-span, sweeping regulations that restricted the operation and feasibility of farming in Manitoba?

Mr. Brar: I don't know if the member is talking about 1855 or 1955, but the thing is the times he is referring to here is certainly before when the PCs were in power. So I don't know why they did not raise that issue or address that issue, if there was an issue at all.

Thank you.

MLA Devgan: Honourable Speaker, King Charles just delivered his Throne Speech, or the government—the federal government's Throne Speech. And in it he said, Canada will always remain the true north, strong and free. Certainly, folks on this side of the Chamber believe in that. I don't know if I can say the same for members opposite.

We know right now is a very challenging time for Manitoba producers and producers across Canada because of the US tariffs.

So could the member expand a little bit more about what our government is doing to support Manitoban farmers and the agricultural industry in our province?

Mr. Brar: I want to say thank you to my colleague for this wonderful question.

You know, first of all, the best thing we can do during a crisis is listen to each other, and our government, our Ag Minister, our Minister for Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation is listening to farmers, industry leaders, and we are getting together to face this challenge.

And I think, when I mentioned this Gate program, we are investing millions in this program, and it would be creating jobs, it would be improving business and it would be bringing more investments in Manitoba by various ag investors—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Johnson: The NDP falsely claim to support producers during tariffs and obviously it doesn't stand

up under scrutiny—\$140 million that they reference is not new spending. It's standard risk management programs administered by MASC for decades.

Where is there new investment to support farmers?

Mr. Brar: There are no false claims here. I would quote one example: there was a feed shortage during the—when the PCs were in power, and 100-plus farmers gathered in Woodlands. And I went there, Liberals went there, the local MP went there and so many leaders, farmers were there.

The only—the only—voice missing in that meeting was the PCs. Even the MLA whose constituency that event was being held in was missing. Member—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for question period has also expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

The—

An Honourable Member: You're first.

The Speaker: —honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Thank you, Honourable Speaker—my apologies to the Ag Minister.

Thank you, again, to the member from Burrows.

Honourable Speaker, before I get into the details of this resolution, I want to start by saying that I've spent 30 years in and around the agriculture industry. This isn't just politics for me, it's personal.

MLA Carla Compton, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I've worked with producers, I've seen the challenges they face and I've lived the cycles of weather, trade, policy and market change that define life on the land. I've watched governments at all levels come and go. I've watched promises being made and money not spent. I've seen good ideas rise, bad ones fall. And, sometimes, nothing at all gets done.

But I have to say, in all the years, I have never seen a government so proud of so little. After nearly two years in office, the current NDP government has not introduced a single original program—not one.

In the ag business, Manitoba is known for feeding the world. We have to help Manitoban farmers so that they can feed the world.

Every so-called initiative that this NDP government point to is either inherited from the Progressive

Conservatives or was established by governments before them. And now they ask this Assembly to stand and applaud for them dusting off old programs and reannouncing old funding and pretending to lead in sectors that demand real, responsive and bold action.

* (11:20)

Speaker, agriculture is more than an economic sector. It is the beating heart of rural Manitoba and the pillar of our provincial identity. It sustains communities, feeds families and supports jobs on farms, in processing plants and along supply chains. In fact, agriculture accounts for nearly 10 per cent of our Manitoba GDP. We export over \$9.4 billion in agrifood products every year, with \$4.3 billion of that going to the United States, and \$1.4 billion to China. Canola and soy exports to China have exceeded \$1 billion.

This isn't just a rural concern; it's a matter of our provincial prosperity. The tariffs from China and the US are real. The money that has been talked about by this government today will not cover anything but a small portion of that loss. Yet they do not go out and look for new markets.

So when the NDP claims it's supporting agriculture, we must ask, what have you actually done? They point to \$140 million in so-called tariff support, but what does that really include: \$75 million of it is crop insurance, standard coverage that producers already pay into, another \$15 million in AgriInvest—again, a long-standing federal program, not a provincial initiative; wildlife compensation accounts for \$7 million.

That leaves just \$42 million related to market volatility. And even that it is federally supported and administered through MASC, the minister himself admitted in this House that he doesn't control AgriStability or other mass programming. So how can this government take credit for anything that they're doing in the agriculture business today?

Speaker, it gets worse. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) didn't even participate in the government's trade mission to Washington. With a 10 per cent GDP going for Manitoba, should the Minister of Agriculture not been at the forefront?

Despite the United States being our largest agrifood trade partner, the Washington trade office, which the Premier (Mr. Kinew) claimed would reopen, still remains dark. And that same government that says it wants to expand markets has no visible

plan to do so; just recycled talking points and delayed action.

When the NDP stands and praises themselves for extending the agriculture Crown land rent-free, they fail to mention that it was the PC government that brought in a 50 per cent reduction and a freeze in the first place. It was minister Johnson and the PC caucus who listened to producers—[interjection]—I retract minister Johnson and retract—and replace it with the member from Interlake-Gimli.

The NDP are merely coasting on that success. Likewise, their so-called support young farmers comes in the form of expanding a rebate program that was created by who? This PC government. We welcome their decisions to keep a good program going, but let's not pretend that it's new. It's not. It's our PC government's program.

Meanwhile, the current government continues to delay desperately needed reforms to the agriculture Crown lands leasing system. The NDP promised to fix it, but they froze agriculture Crown land auctions, depriving producers of the ability to expand their herds and secure pasture. And they still haven't delivered on any meaningful change.

And let us not forget, honourable Speaker, that it was this NDP that imposed a hog moratorium that decimated investment in Manitoba's hog industry; a moratorium first introduced in 2007 in the Red River 'valley' and later expanded across the province.

This decision drove producers and investors out of Manitoba. And when the minister sits proudly in this House claiming his government has brought back services to farmers, what he really means is that they have re-opened two MASC offices, but the one in Shoal Lake isn't open after the PC provincial government led a digital modernization of agriculture services.

The NDP talks about limiting—[interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): Order.

I'm having a little bit of trouble hearing the member speak. If we could just be a little bit more mindful of our volume.

Thank you.

MLA Bereza: The MASC offices were opened because they said it took a long time and quite a distance that the farmers had to travel to a MASC office.

What about the 28,000 people waiting for an MRI that are travelling up to 800 kilometres?

This is no way that moves forward with opening offices. Honourable Speaker, let's talk—let's call this resolution what it is: it's a political prop designed to mask a lack and no vision.

The NDP government has not brought forward a single new program that wasn't already in place. They haven't advanced a new strategy, opened a new market or created meaningful policy, but they have gone to the state fair with one of the governors of the US.

They're out of ideas, out of credibility and, frankly, out of touch. Manitoba agriculture sector deserves more than recycled press releases and empty praise. It deserves real leadership, real support and real results.

And that's what the Progressive Conservative team, past and present, has delivered and will continue to deliver.

Thank you, honourable—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Let me first off start by thanking MLA from Burrows for introducing this resolution.

Honourable Speaker—deputy Speaker, it's really ironic to sit back and listen to a wannabe Agriculture minister, if I may say this.

And the fact is that I come on this position of 40 years of experience working with the cattle industry, the mixed grain operation, and I have the opportunity to talk about past experiences—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): The honourable Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, the member is using derogatory terms as referencing to members in the House. I think it's our long practice of recognizing them as their constituency or their portfolio, and I would ask that the Agriculture Minister would retract his statements and apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): I'm just going to consult for a moment, please.

* (11:30)

Okay, a point of—

An Honourable Member: I would speak to the point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): Okay.

The member from Waverley, on the point of order.

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): I appreciate the member opposite bringing forward this non-point of order regarding the way that we speak to each other in the Chamber.

It's always important that we show respect to one another, obviously. That is an important part of the job that we do here.

This, once again, feels like one of those moments where we have a bully that is calling names on the other side and then hides their hand as soon as somebody looks. And so, I would just say again that I hope that we can all treat each other respectfully, as always, you know, and that we can work on—this is not a point of order, obviously. This seems like a stalling technique from the member opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): So this is a point of order, but a caution is being issued to the minister, and a good reminder to everyone in the Chamber that we do refer to each other by our constituencies and/or our portfolios.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): And while the clock is stopped, I do want to acknowledge we have some guests in the gallery.

So, we have seated in the public gallery from École Pointe-des-Chênes, 10 grade 11 students under the direction of Michelle Gauthier. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé).

* * *

Mr. Kostyshyn: Well, let me just finish off. And my last comment is that I'm very proud to have been involved in agriculture for 40 years of my life. And I know members opposite have different opinions about how important agriculture is, but I've lived it. I went through the BSE scenario. I've gone through the importance of what agriculture producers face every day of their occupation.

And let's just take for an example, this year alone, the cost for agriculture producers to put a crop in continues to grow and the expenses and the challenges that they—to put it simplified, we—the producers do everything right. But at the end of the day, but it all depends on Mother Nature to make them rewarding of the opportunities.

I hear the MLA for Portage has opinions of crop insurance, of the business risk insurance programs

that exist in this province. And I question his credibility of MASC crop insurance opportunities that provide.

Let me share some information that's very vital for all of us across Canada to know. Manitoba is probably one of the highest numbers of agriculture producers that take advantage of the business risk insurance programs that exist, particularly in crop insurance opportunities.

So I question the somewhat challenging questions that the member opposite, from—MLA from Portage—is questioning; we're not doing enough. We are doing whatever it takes to have a program and partnership with the federal government, of opportunity to help producers that have some form of business risk insurance program in challenges times, in challenging years.

And I want to, also—

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): The Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): You just cautioned the member to refer to somebody as a constituency. The MLA for Portage is not a constituency; it is the MLA for Portage la Prairie that he proudly represents. And if we could please clarify the record and change our language in respect to each others' position inside this building.

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): Order, please.

So this is a point of order, but I just want to encourage folks again: let's just refer to each other with the full constituency titles and the full portfolio titles.

Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Kostyshyn: My apologies for not making it Portage la Prairie—MLA for Portage la Prairie.

What is so key about agriculture—it's the lifeblood of future investments that we see in this province. And we continue to travel our areas and I know members opposite, MLA for Portage la Prairie, had indicated that the fact that we made travels to the US side and I think—I would question the commentary that was made by the MLA for Portage la Prairie about the fact that I was down at Minnesota and I attended the Minnesota State Fair and that's all I did.

Well, you know what? I would take offence if I was—the individual that I was actually with was the commissioner of agriculture. And he'd be very proud to spend the whole day going throughout the whole Minnesota State Fair, and the conversations we had with a number of producers whether they were in the small side of the dairy industry or a small animal industry. But yet the MLA for Portage la Prairie really took a criticism to the point of encouraging me that I was just wasting time being there.

Well, let me share some more information with the member opposite about the fact—I'll let the commissioner from the state of Minnesota know his exact words and I wonder if he'll be professional enough to almost accept that as a negativity commentary.

I also want to talk about the fact—we were down in Iowa, and the importance of trade relationships and maybe one of the stemming comments about this is the Manitoba hog producers or Manitoba pork industry; Cam Dahl thanked me personally and this government personally for going down and talking to the agriculture pork industry in Iowa.

Honourable Speaker, 3 million weanlings leave this province on an annual basis for the benefit of the Iowa pork producers, and yet, there is always criticism that we're not doing enough. The sad reality is that you have a critic that almost feels that he could be doing better. Well, I'm not going to complain about that whatsoever.

You know, when we talk about the fact that we are challenged with tariffs, and in his commentary yesterday, the MLA for Portage la Prairie have no—and what is so troubling is the fact that—all talk, but cuts. All members opposite, all they do is talk but have no credibility on this.

* (11:40)

When Donald Trump was last President, Pallister government made a cut to the Manitoba trade representative in Washington. Yesterday's commentary by the MLA for Portage was criticizing the NDP because they have no representatives in various parts of the world, but yet during the Pallister reign, they dismissed the Washington representative. It took this government, it took our leader, our Premier (Mr. Kinew) to reinstate a representative in Washington.

And let me tell you, it was done in a professional manner where we included representatives from the Manitoba beef industry, we included representatives from the pork industry, we've included a number of commodity groups that we come in—we are dealing as

one commodity group organization, representing the economic growth of this province of Manitoba for the betterment of agriculture.

Yet members opposite—the MLA for Portage la Prairie—doesn't think that was a good idea. Well, I'm going to say this: I don't think it was a good idea that Mr. Pallister chose to dismiss the Washington representative who was our Manitoba—so maybe he is the one that maybe has some better ideas than anybody else.

Let me talk about—my favourite subject is Crown lands, honourable deputy Speaker. Let's put this into perspective. When the fact that when you have 250 producers show up in Ste. Rose, Manitoba, because that government chose to put a 300 per cent increase in Crown land rates in one year, and then you turned around during the time what the producers were in a drought situation and they've took no exception and didn't even have the Ag minister at that time stay around for that meeting. All they did is sent their Crown land representatives with shields to protect themselves, because when you're dealing with 250 producers in the hall and run away from the situation, I question the MLA for Portage la Prairie: Would you have stood behind that decision back then in—

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): Order, please.

I'd just like to remind the honourable minister, please direct your comments through the Chair and not directly to any members within the Chamber.

Thank you.

Mr. Kostyshyn: My apologies.

But the sad reality in the completion of what was done back then, it chased away the young individual producers that had a dream of taking over the family farm because they chose, for the benefit of their way of thinking, for the betterment of generational farming operations, and it continues to cascade of the benefit of agriculture producers and the beef industry today.

It didn't much matter whether they did a 50 per cent cut in the agriculture Crown land rates. Guess why? Because it was the election year. Let's fool the cattle producers. Let's fool the people in the Crown lands. We'll give them a 50 per cent discount and then we get re-elected, hopefully, and we're going to put it back up.

I question: Why was the Crown lands opportunity to save family farms to this day? And I can assure you, people don't forget.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Keep going? *[interjection]* Okay.

I think this resolution is missing a word or two—or, I think three, actually. So I'm going to reread the resolution as it should be printed: Therefore be resolved that the Legislative Assembly be urged to recognize and applaud the previous provincial government—PC, Conservative government—for its successful efforts in supporting and growing the agriculture industry in Manitoba.

The member has mentioned a few different things, and I know my time will be short here as we only have a few moments left, but there's a few things that I want to get on the record before they bring this resolution back and I continue to speak on it. The current Agriculture Minister and the member for the—Burrows is well aware that this PC government responded to drought conditions with \$155 million in emergency support, plus reduced Crown lands—cut them in half to a 50 per cent rate.

Now, I think—this is simple history here that I'm going into now, and it's the cow-calf herd in the province of Manitoba. Well, under the previous NDP government—I'm talking the last cycle they were here—went from one—the beef herd went from 1.735 million to 1.105 million. That's a reduction of 630,000 head while the NDP government was in power last time.

So now, if that happens again with this NDP government and their war on agriculture, we will be left with 355,000 head in this province if we have the same decrease that they had the last time they were in government.

Now, what's important to rural Manitobans and farmers is access to emergency rooms as well. This government, when they were last in power, cut 20 rural emergency rooms. Now, our farmers need these emergency rooms. It's very important to ensure that they have access to rural health care. It is important to know and I'm sure we all recognize that farmers have a very high rate of—

The Acting Speaker (Carla Compton): When this matter is again before the House, the member will have seven minutes remaining.

And the hour being noon, this House is recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

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