



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXIX No. 77A - 10 a.m., Tuesday, October 28, 2025

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 28, 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 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: Government business—private members' business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): On House business, I would call for concurrence and third reading of Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act, from 10 to 10:30, or earlier, if business is concluded; followed by Bill 208, the Manitoba small-business act, from 10:30 to 11 o'clock.

The Speaker: It has been announced that we will do concurrence and third reading of Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), and—at 10:30 or later—if we've finished the first one, then we will go to concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS—
PUBLIC BILLS**Bill 210—The Indigenous Veterans Day Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

The Speaker: So we will now do concurrence and third reading of Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): I move, seconded by the MLA for Thompson, that Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Loi sur la Journée des anciens combattants autochtones (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

MLA Pankratz: Well, it has been a long journey to get to this point. I am very pleased that we are now at third reading and concurrence of this really important bill.

I'm going to keep this very brief. I think that there has been support around this Chamber for this bill. We have a little bit of time today that I'm sure the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte) or the member for Spruce Woods (Mrs. Robbins) would like to stand up and add some words to the record before we pass this bill.

I do just want to quickly say, one more time, thank you to Wanbdi Wakita, Randi Gage, Devin Beaudry, Justin Woodcock, Elder Barb Nepinak, former Grand Chief Cathy Merrick, Colonel Cronk, Major-General McKenna, Brigadier-General Coutts and many, many others who have supported us in this process of getting this bill to this stage.

And, finally, I would like to ask for leave to have a vote before 10:30 on this bill.

The Speaker: So, if the member could clarify, is he asking for leave to have a vote at 10:30?

MLA Pankratz: Honourable Speaker, I would love to have a vote today at 10:25 so that we can conclude third reading and concurrence on Bill 210.

The Speaker: So again, for clarification, you want the question put at 10:25?

MLA Pankratz: That is correct, thank you.

The Speaker: Certainly, if there's leave, we can do that.

So, is there leave to hold the vote at 10:25 on this—put the question at 10:25 on this bill? *[Agreed]*

Therefore, we'll put the question at 10:25.

So, other speakers?

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Manitobans today should be very proud of our province's Indigenous veterans. First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Manitoba and across Canada have a long and proud tradition of military service to our country and have always played a part in the defence of Canada and the principles on which it stands.

I am so proud to stand here as the critic for military and be able to be here for this day. I have learned from the committee; Randi Gage spoke out and told her story. And it was so inviting and—to want to learn more and more from her, and she did offer that day to be able to sit down with us. And I still look forward to that in the future.

But I'm just going to say that, as Canadians, putting the return of the Indigenous veterans that were not always treated as heroes upon their return, and many of them returned home with nothing. Some were forced to give up their treaty status and not eligible for land grants offered to the 'nondigenous' soldiers—that were offered to non-Indigenous soldiers, while others were denied jobs and access to full veteran benefits and support programs.

This discrimination made their transition to life back home even harder. But yet some actually still went out and went on, continued on to be veterans in the wars. And I just think that we should be proud of everybody, no matter what race you are, that serves our country. They're brave people. And our freedoms today here is because of those people that have served.

* (10:10)

The National Aboriginal Veterans Monument in Ottawa now honours the contributions of all Indigenous people in war and peace operations from the First World War to today.

I look forward to November 7. I will be joining the Winnipeg Aboriginal—or Indigenous days veterans here in Winnipeg to watch the laying of the wreath.

And in my community, I know we had Indigenous people laying wreaths for many years, as I've been laying the wreath there.

So—but this one will just be a little extra special because I feel that now we truly are, as Manitobans, going to be recognizing these people for what they have done for us, the freedoms that they gave their lives—they risked to their lives to—and some gave their lives to make this day for us in freedom.

Some Indigenous veterans that were—have been recognized have been Tommy George Prince, Merv Clark, James W. Eagle, Leon Xavier Fontaine, Felix Ambrose Fontaine, Sergeant Donald Vernon Houle, Randi Susan *[phonetic]* Gage—Suzanne Gage, William George Mann, Michael Pashe, Rufus Prince, Elliott Ratt, Corporal Melvin Swan, Daniel Black, Donald R. Catcheway, Norman Thomas Beauchamp, Alfred Chartrand, Herbert Daniels, Lionel Daniels, Sherri Forward, Vince Henderson, Warrant Officer Julian Houle, Private Arthur Meeches, Chief George Myran.

These are all Manitobans that have been honoured and have served as Indigenous veterans, and they should be all—we should be all very proud of these and the many more that are—have and are still serving for the military. But as Manitobans, just having these names and the efforts that these—Randi Gage have put towards this day, and I am so proud that she kept fighting, and we are here today to actually pass this bill. And I look forward to this.

Thank you.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I'm very proud to rise and get some words on the record.

What we do here in this Chamber and have the ability to do as MLAs is an incredible honour. And to stand here today and to have Randi Gage here in the gallery to witness something that she has worked so hard for for the last 31 years; that says something tremendous about the person behind this bill, that talks about determination and perseverance but never relenting in doing what's right, for standing up every single day to keep moving this along.

Prior to this bill coming before the House, I didn't know Randi Gage, but I had the distinct honour of meeting Randi Gage during committee, where I don't know if I've ever heard anybody speak so passionately and eloquently about something that is of vital importance to every person in our country: to recognize the efforts of Indigenous veterans, not only of the past but for the veterans of our future, to let them know that

they are respected, they are heard, they are appreciated and they are the heroes of our democracy.

Everything that we do is a result of the heroes who have come before us, the veterans who put their names forward and put their self in harm's way so we can have the life that they wanted us to live. And many of those veterans returned home to glorious parades and welcoming parties cheering them on, and for some reason, hatred, bias, bigotry exists and has existed here for a long time where Indigenous veterans were made to feel less than. They were treated less than.

And these are people we owe our democracy to. These are people who went out upon sacrifice of personal freedom to work very, very hard to stand up against the oppressions of the world to make sure that we can have a life of freedom.

Since we have gone through committee, I've had the opportunity to meet Randi Gage, have several conversations, and Randi said to me that this process was like giving birth. She created this baby and she's carried it now for 31 years. Randi—I know Randi Gage is in the gallery, and I am so proud today that this bill is going to pass. Thirty-one years—31 years of governments changing positions, turning over; 31 years of facing roadblocks and challenges; 31 years of seeing political spin and bills being talked out, trying to get—negotiate, and nobody cares about that.

What people care about was what you do is right, what is the perception out there in the public. Nobody cares what happens in this Chamber, why their bill didn't pass. What they care about is: when will it pass; when will you make an impact; and when will you stand up for the rights of Indigenous veterans? And today, we're going to accomplish that.

The bill presented forward by the member from Waverley—thank you to that member for bringing this bill forward.

For the people who spoke on this bill over and over and over, speaking in favour of this bill, the people who have put time and research to find out information about heroes—and there's only hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of heroes that are laid to rest in cemeteries across our province and across our country that have made this country the place that it is today. But there's so many countless other heroes that don't get the recognition.

The past Saturday, I had the honour and distinction of being involved in event that I spoke about here during my private member's statement.

It was a 110th birthday celebration of Sergeant Tommy Prince, and it was held in Petersfield, Manitoba. And colleagues from either side of the House, the member from Waverley was there and spoke. He spoke very eloquently, had some beautiful words. I was joined by other colleagues from this side of the House. We were joined by our local MP, Mr. James Bezan. We were joined by military veterans from the PPCLI. Randi Gage was there representing. Randi wasn't feeling particularly up to the challenge that day due to health reasons, but she endured, and she made it and her presence—we were honoured to have her there.

*(10:20)

We had a wonderful ceremony. We had the family of Sergeant Tommy Prince there, who spoke. They spoke of their father, not as the war hero that we know, not of the sacrifices that he's made in the name of the Canadian military, but spoke of Sergeant Tommy Prince, of the man who was their dad. And the emotion felt on that Saturday afternoon weighed heavy on my heart as you talk about—listen to the family members talk about their father.

But we know that there was injustices done, where, at the end, they said they would like to ask the government, where is the piece of land that was promised to every soldier for serving that the family did not receive? Why was their father treated differently than any other soldier?

And I don't have the answers to that and I don't think many of us do here. We could probably speculate there's a lot of bias and 'bigotedotry,' there's a lot of people who think that they are superior. But the fact of the matter is we're here to make a difference. And we have an opportunity to bring this bill forward, and it's a small step in recognizing what is right. It is a small step in moving that compass a little more towards what is right in the hearts and minds of Manitobans and people across this province and doing what's right for the people who stood up when others did not, who went to war, put their lives on the line when others couldn't or wouldn't.

To stand in the face of the enemy and stand for what is right—Randi Gage did that for 31 years; 31 years, moving the needle forward to do what's right, 31 years having the hopes and dreams of the birth of this child of hers taken away. Well, today is going to be a glorious day, because today there's going to be a birth of something, a birth of a bill that's going to acknowledge the hard work of not only Randi Gage but all Indigenous members that form the Armed Forces,

the members that have so heroically guided our country to what we have here today.

My military career was very short, but I honour and respect every single person that puts their name down to stand up for their country. I respect every single person who goes out and fights for what is right. And I respect the notion that everybody should be treated equally, and we need to give honour where honour is due.

Thank you, Randi Gage. Thank you to the members of this House. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I know I have very limited time here, so my first words is I would like to thank the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) for bringing this very important bill forward, and I know it is very important to his portfolio and to the work that he does as the military envoy.

Fifty-seven members today get an opportunity to make history, and I'm proud to be one of those 57 members that will have an opportunity to see this bill move forward after 31 years of discussions, of debate, of no movement. I'm proud that each and every one of us will have the opportunity to stand up and say, yes, we support this bill. And what's even more important is having Randi Gage here to witness this and what I believe will be a historical moment in Manitoba.

So thank you everybody for the words that they have put to this bill. I know, from a military family myself, I have immense respect for all—

The Speaker: Order, please.

As previously agreed, I'll now put the question on this bill.

So the question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 210, The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

All those a—in the House in—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

The motion is accordingly passed.

Mr. Perchotte: Honourable Speaker, on House business.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte), on House business.

Mr. Perchotte: Is it the will of the House to call it unanimous?

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

The vote is accordingly passed unanimously.

Bill 208—The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)

The Speaker: Then, as previously announced, we will now go to concurrence and third reading of Bill 208, the Manitoba small-business act—the small-business month act, commemoration of days, weeks and months act amended.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle), that Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended); Loi sur le Mois de la petite entreprise au Manitoba (modification de la Loi sur les journées, les semaines et les mois commémoratifs), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Seine—oh, the honourable member for Waverley.

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): On House business, is there leave for the question to be put prior to concluding business on private members' bills this morning at 10:55 on the small-business act as well?

The Speaker: Is there leave for the question to be put on this bill at 10:55 this morning?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

MLA Cross: It is an honour to rise today for the third reading of Bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act.

This bill is deeply personable to me, and I would assume that it is deeply personable—personal to members on the opposite side of the House, as many of them are small-business owners, just like I am.

I think we all know what it's like to unlock the doors before sunrise, to greet your first customer with a smile, even when you're exhausted, and to hope—really hope—that you'll make enough by closing time

to pay your staff, cover your bills and maybe set a little aside for next week.

Owning a small business teaches you resilience, it teaches you community; it reminds you that success isn't measured only in profit, it's measured in people: the people you hire, the families you serve and the neighbourhoods you help keep strong. I think that's why this bill means so much to Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, small businesses make up 95 per cent of Manitoba's business sector. That's more than 40,000 entrepreneurs across this province, from cafes in Beausejour, to repair shops in Thompson, to family-run diners in Steinbach, to home base start-ups right in my own constituency.

These are the people who keep our communities thriving, from cafés—sorry; apologies—and when Manitobans buy local, two thirds of every dollar stays right here in our economy. That means that money we spend helps sponsor the kids' hockey teams, keep the lights on at the local community centre and support community charity drives.

That's the Manitoba way: we lift each other up. During some of the hardest times—the pandemic, supply chain chaos and now threats of tariffs south of the border—small businesses never give up. They adapt, they innovate and they keep Manitobans working.

* (10:30)

But I remember what it feels like when help doesn't come, when government doesn't come and support those small businesses and leave them behind. Programs go underspent and too many owners are told to fend for themselves.

That's why, Honourable Speaker, our government, our NDP government is doing things differently. We're standing shoulder to shoulder with the people who keep Manitoba working. We launched the support Manitoba, buy local campaign. We extended the gas tax cut, making Manitoba's inflation rate the lowest in Canada. We created a \$300 security rebate program to help protect small businesses.

And we know that's not enough. So today, we all have a chance through Bill 208 to do something that's actually lasting. We're not giving small-business owners a small handout. We're doing something that will belong to them forever. By proclaiming May as small-business month in Manitoba, we're saying loud and clear, we see you, we value you and we celebrate you.

Every May, Manitobans will be encouraged through the Chambers of Commerce to get out and support their local entrepreneurs, to visit that corner bakery, to buy from that young designer, to try that new restaurant or to hire their neighbourhood contractor. It's also a chance to highlight the diversity and innovation that make Manitoba's economy strong, especially the many women-owned businesses that are leading with courage and creativity.

When young women see entrepreneurs who look like them succeeding, they know they can build something too, right here at home. Honourable Speaker, when I think of this bill, I think of those entrepreneurs who dared to dream, who dared to take a chance, the baker who kept her doors open through sheer grit, the mechanic who mentors his apprentices and the artist who turned a passion into a livelihood.

They really don't ask for much, just a fair chance, a listening government and a community that chooses them. And I'm proud to say that that is exactly what our government is delivering. So today, as we move to pass Bill 208, I ask every member of this House, no matter where you sit, to join me in standing up for the bakers, the barbers, the builders, the brewers, the farmers who make Manitoba what it is.

Let's make the month of May small-business month in Manitoba. Let's make it a celebration of their resilience, of their creativity, of their heart. Because when small businesses succeed, Manitoba succeeds.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I'm honoured to be able to speak today about small-business month. For me, very specifically, it's been a very—it's a very important event that we're doing. Like, it's so important for us to acknowledge small businesses in our province.

Specifically, I had the honour of being a small-business owner quite a bit of my life and I think that that's something that we can all say: that we know small-business owners across our province, that they have a big heart, they serve their communities, they provide products and services that we need in our communities.

But one of the big things I find in our province specifically is that we have such an environment of support local and I think that's one of the big things that keep our small businesses going. And it's such an important part of who we are as Manitobans. We love our province, we love the people who live in our province and we support them.

And I think that that's one of the big things about Manitoba that I'm really proud of, having been a small-business owner myself, owning a little delicatessen.

I'll start with how it got started. I was a single mom and I really had a dream of doing something for myself. And I've kind of always had that dream and I put kind of on the back shelf for a while. But then one day, I was like, this is actually something I think I can do.

And there's programs, there's a lot of things out there in our communities that help us get started with small businesses. I decided to ask my son to join me in my endeavour to start a delicatessen eatery, and there was a program through Young Entrepreneurs through the Province of Manitoba and it was such a great program. It helped him to join in. He was 18 years old, and this program helped him to become a small-business owner with me. They gave him funding so he could invest in the business. They had conferences and workshops for him to join as well as for me, as well, being a woman in a young-like, a younger woman entrepreneur. And it was just a really amazing experience.

My son had a mentor as well. And those are all things that we do as a province and as people in our communities. We had a small-business owner come alongside my son and help him—mentor him for a full year. And I couldn't—I can't say how proud I am of him now. Now that I've been an elected official, he has since bought my—me out of the business, and he is doing really well and he's opening up his second location in Morden, so I'm really proud of him. Our floor—sorry, our ceiling is their floor, is always what I want to say.

It's really encouraging for me to see that happen with our young people. I've always been an encouragement—or, encourager for my family and for people around me that you can do anything you put your mind to, whether that's start a small business or a career or job that you want. But that's something that I think often, as small-business owners, we have a little bit of a something different in us that makes us step out and take that chance.

It's not easy being a small-business owner. You don't have a nine-to-five job; you are working 24-7; you're always on call. If there's any issues, whether at night, if there's, like, an alarm that goes off in your freezer and you have to go down there and check to see what's going on, or maybe there's been a break-in or something, but you're always on call; there's never

a time where you do not—are not working in your small business.

So I think taking a—being a small-business owner takes a special kind of person. And it's really important for us to acknowledge the work and effort that gets put into small businesses. If we didn't have small businesses, we wouldn't have all of the amazing services and products that we need every day: local corner stores down the street; gas stations; people who are making, like, baked goods, like the member had mentioned earlier. I was one of those people who used to get up at 6 in the morning and go make cinnamon buns every day. And people really loved them. And those are things that people need to be able to have available. And if we didn't have small businesses, they wouldn't have those opportunities to pick up and buy homemade goods. It's just something special about small businesses and what they provide for our local community.

And I think there's a lot we can do to support our small businesses in our communities. We have Chambers of Commerce; we have a lot of organizations that do work and help us. But I think we could—you know, we can continue to support each other is important, but the Chambers of Commerce, especially the local, smaller communities and the one—the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, they do a lot of work for small businesses, and that's really important.

They do small-business luncheons. We had—I attended a small-business luncheon last week, and they—what they do is they highlight two small businesses in the community, and they come up and share their journey from start to where they are now, and it's just great to see that happen and that's an encouragement. They also bring in a non-profit organization as well, because non-profits are also something that are run like a business. They have to fundraise and stuff.

So we had a really great lunch. We were able to gather as small-business owners and elect officials in our province. And I know that was happening across the province all over in Manitoba. So if I can encourage anybody, get involved in your chamber of commerce; they're on your team and they're there to support you.

I do want to do a little shout-out to the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce as well. I've had the incredible pleasure of getting to know the executive on the chamber—the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce of Manitoba. I would—Renee, I would like to do a little shout-out to her. She's been doing a great job—and her

team and really just having great events. I was able to attend one of their lunches in spring and just listening to the Indigenous small-business owners, the things that they were doing and the products that they were serving, as well, were—making and providing for our province was amazing.

I spoke—was able to speak to a young man who had his own little small business, and what he was doing is he was going to Indigenous communities and he was actually promoting how to get young people involved in their own endeavours and to become young entrepreneurs. And it was just really great to see. So I just want to just shout-out the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce in Manitoba; you guys are doing a great job. And looking forward to your Christmas toy drive that you always have.

* (10:40)

And I want to encourage all MLAs to check out the Indigenous Chamber of Commerce because it's a really great organization here in Manitoba. But I do want to say there's a lot of things that we could do better for small businesses. There's things that we need to be looking at. It's not easy in our current environment for small businesses. They're getting products and services, obviously, but they often need to import specific items from out of country.

There's a lot of economic turmoil right now happening in our province and in our country. And I think we need to do more to support them. For example, the payroll tax. I think that's something that we really need to look at. As a small-business owner, I know when I was, you know, I had employees working for me. And you're trying to make a go of it. You want to make sure that you pay your employees well.

You want to make sure, as a business owner, you want to make sure you provide a good wage for them. But as you—they keep on adding all these taxes on, the small businesses, the more you employ, the more wages you pay, the higher the payroll tax. And that's like penalizing small businesses. So we really need to take a look at that, we need to re-evaluate that.

I will continue to fight for our small businesses when it comes to those things. We need to make sure we set them up for success, not burden them with extra payroll taxes. So that's something I will definitely make sure that I continue to advocate for. There's so much more we can do for our small businesses. And we need to realize that they are the backbone of our communities, of our province. Without them we

would have—so many small communities wouldn't have anybody employed.

But they—the money, and the money that gets spent in these small businesses gets—they stay in the small communities, in our cities and in our communities. They stay local. And I think, in order for our economy to keep running the way it is and to improve, we need to make sure we invest locally. We need to make sure we invest in our people. We need to keep our jobs, we need to keep—our young people are often the ones who get employed by small business as well. But those all are such important parts that we need to make sure we don't forget.

And that payroll tax would be a huge impact for any business, whether it's big or small. It's just such an important thing. And again I just want to say, small businesses, congratulations on small-business month. I'm really looking forward to supporting this. I have the heart for small business. My family, between all of us, I think there's three or four businesses. My daughter-in-law is a florist, she has one and she's opening up a second one. My son has a car wash, a second car wash opening up.

So we need to really encourage these young people to continue to invest, because we want our young people to do well and stay in our province of Manitoba. And that's just my goal. And thank you very much for listening to me today.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): It gives me great pleasure to rise today in this Chamber and talk about Bill 208 and the small business month act. I can tell you, as a small-business owner—small-, medium-sized business owner for the better part of 34 years, operating a business in Manitoba has its challenges, it has its rewards. But for sure, we need to partner with not only government but other—all, at all official levels: municipal, provincial and federal and row in the same direction to ensure that, you know, we can continue to grow and prosper with our partners who really are our teams that work for us every single day.

The front lines of our businesses, which, I spent many years on the front lines in my business while my wife and I grew our company since 1981 to 2015. So I can tell you that the support for small business and medium-size and all businesses in Manitoba on this side of the House is very important.

I want to talk a little bit more about some of the challenges we've faced in small business when we were growing our company. We understand that, of course, and I think the member from Seine River

mentioned about, you know, making sure that they can make payroll.

Well, payroll is one of your No. 1 expenses in small- and medium-sized businesses. It sometimes can be up to 50 per cent of what your monthly income is for your business. So those numbers could be argued, they could be \$5,000 a month for a small business and income or \$500,000 a month in small income—small-business income.

So in payroll, with 50 per cent of that on a \$500,000 income would be, again, 250 grand. So that's a lot of money when you layer in certain taxes like payroll tax, which is really a job killer. We know that because we've experienced it our business as well. You get to a certain threshold and you are paying a lot more in business and tax—payroll tax and, quite frankly then, almost what you're paying for workers comp and matching the CPP and also paying 1.4 per cent on EI.

So these expenses are daily; they add up. They definitely pile up on small- and medium-sized businesses who are fighting for Manitobans and fighting to keep jobs and fighting to prosper here in this province of Manitoba.

I remember, when I first ran for elected office in Gimli in 2010-2011, I ran against the former member at the time, Pierre [*phonetic*] Bjornson, who was a member for 10 years when he resigned in 2014-2015. And I remember him and I in a debate in 2011 at Clandeboye School, and, you know, it was probably—it was my first debate. I know Mr. Bjornson had had a number of debates in his tenure as the, not only minister of Education but the member for Gimli.

And we finished our debate, it was quite cordial. We had a good discussion back and forth, good debate and we had a good turnout. Lots of folks came out to hear the issues and that's what democracy's all about.

However, there was one thing that stuck with me and actually stuck with our team. And Mr. Bjornson had said to me after, you know, I shook hands with him and I thanked him and wished him all the best, and he said, you know, you wouldn't have a business without me. I said, what do you mean. He says, well, everything we've done for Manitoba businesses in the province has made you successful.

Well, if that's not an ideology thought, I tell you, Honourable Speaker, there's something going on here, because that told me right there and then that this individual, Mr. Bjornson, had no idea what small and medium businesses go through on a day-to-day basis.

When he's taking credit for the blood, sweat and tears of not only myself, my partner, my wife and my staff, but he's saying this: the only reason why you're successful, Mr. Wharton, is because of me and our government—well, that's wrong, because we as small businesses and medium-sized businesses make governments successful by providing the tax dollars to support the important areas that we have to count on every day, Manitobans count on every day, like health care, education, social services. We know that those 95 per cent of small- and medium-sized businesses are paying the bills and helping to support the services that Manitobans count and rely on every single day in Manitoba.

So that was something that will stick with me for a long time and that really gave me the energy to continue on and actually win Gimli in 2016 and form the largest majority government in Manitoba history under the PC brand. So that was wonderful.

I can talk a little bit more about some of the things that I see in this bill, which I'm going to focus in on. And some of the areas here we talk about: small businesses face significant hardships during difficult economic times. Well, we listened to, in second reading and first reading, we listened to the member from Seine River and there wasn't really any clarity on what small- and medium-sized businesses are actually suffering from, what they're going through.

Absolutely, current tariffs that the US are putting on Canadian companies is a challenge; no doubt about it, unprecedented for sure. However, that's when Manitoba government needs to step in and really help support, to ensure that our small- and medium-sized businesses are not only here for today but will be here for generations to come because it's so important, as I said, to help support the services that Manitobans rely on every single day.

* (10:50)

Another area that I see in the whereas clause, that small businesses, over 95 per cent of businesses in the province again are the backbone of the Manitoba economy and rely upon Manitobans for quality goods and services. Very true, one hundred per cent. But when they're being taxed down, they're being red-taped, overrun, we know that those issues—not only what you said, we've got EI, CPP, workers compensation, payroll tax and a host of other taxes: property tax, education property tax—we'll get on that in a second, Honourable Speaker—but we know all these burdens are facing these companies every single day when they arise in the morning at 5 o'clock and go home at

midnight, every single day to support not only their staff, put food on their table, but also to help services for Manitoba government as well.

We certainly know that the recent actions by the NDP government with respect to the Manitoba jobs agreement that they signed on September 16, we know that this is going to be a job killer, Honourable Speaker. We know that Manitoba businesses—again, and I'm quoting from the member from Seine River—95 per cent of these businesses really are the backbone of our province, yet the NDP are saying, well, that's great, we do respect you, but I'll tell you what, you're going to have to now ensure that each and every one of your staff are unionized prior to even bidding on a contract.

Well, now we know that certainly set the table for what happened with the schools that we committed to build in Manitoba. Over 20 schools were cancelled in 2023. Well, now we know why. We know also why daycares, Honourable Speaker, were cancelled in 2023-24 by this government, by the NDP—failing NDP government. We know that, simply because they were waiting to bring in this legislation or this amendment, the Manitoba jobs agreements, that they signed on September 16, which is going to ensure that—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I'd just ask the member to please keep his comments relevant to the bill we're discussing here this morning.

Mr. Wharton: Honourable Speaker, I appreciate your guidance on that.

And, certainly, talking about the burden of government actions would definitely have an effect on small businesses. And we need to ensure that we're doing all we can to respect small business and continue to support them in these very difficult times.

We know that the property—education property tax portion that the NDP cancelled on small- and medium-sized businesses is affecting their bottom line. We know that. It's making it more and more difficult for them to make their payroll, to ensure that they are paying fair wages, that they are ensuring that their staff are safe on the job site and also to ensure that they, again, make it home to their families every single day after they put in their shift, Honourable Speaker.

So with those few words, I thank the—thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to put some facts on the record when it comes to

small- and medium-size business. And I look forward to further discussions on this bill.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Order, please.

Prior to recognizing any other speakers, I want to draw the Assembly's attention to the public gallery where we have with us this morning, from the Canadian Mennonite University, 12 undergraduate students under the direction of Jobb Arnold, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton).

We welcome you here this morning.

* * *

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): One of the things I wanted to put a few words on the record when it comes to Bill 208, basically, when it comes to third reading, again, I was able to put my words on record when it came to the second reading of this bill, and the importance of—you know, I know a lot of our colleagues on this side have had small businesses, have been very successful small businesses, and the fact is, knows what it takes, the risk and getting together to finance, to actually build a small business.

I've been there myself and—at a young age, I was 26 when I bought my business, a going business that was already an insurance agency, and then creating, building it up to—for the 20 years I was there, to build it up to—build it up 10 times bigger than it was when we first bought it and having a lot of good memories and remembering some of the challenges that I had to face as a young entrepreneur and the fact is the impact that, you know, at the end every day there's always things coming at you—changes.

We see that even with the City of Winnipeg. I know a lot of business people in the communities, the challenges of property taxes; you know, they've been bombarded with property tax, especially downtown Winnipeg. I have a very good friend who has a successful business, well-known business. And the fact is, he has had to challenge, especially the property tax that the City of Winnipeg has put on him. And the fact is, it's the bottom line. And the fact was when we were in government, he basically said, you know, I didn't have to worry what was coming at me.

Because we were a government that made sure that businesses had a competitive edge, especially when it comes to competing with other jurisdictions across Canada. Especially, we have neighbours, Saskatchewan and Ontario: very strong economies

that we have to compete with. We have, when it comes to Saskatchewan being a have province, basically giving transfer payments basically to us—I live right on—my business was so close to the Saskatchewan border. There was a lot of challenges, especially in the days of the dark days of the Selinger government.

I remember that was one of the reasons I decided to run is because the challenges that we had with Saskatchewan. We had an oil boom going on in the 2000s and—the early 2000s and we found Bakken oil in the Virden area, much we like had saw in eastern Saskatchewan.

But the challenge was that a lot of times the frustrations that, especially young people that went out and had businesses in Alberta, wanted to come back to their hometown to run that same business, because now there were some opportunities because the oil boom was happening.

And the challenges was the red tape. You know, they wanted to come, and the challenges when it came to Autopac, too, having to pay PST on their vehicles. There was so much more advantages of locating in Saskatchewan. Corporate rates were better. The—when it comes to employees, they didn't have to pay as much into taxes and to payroll taxes. And so that—they set up in Saskatchewan.

And the interesting thing was, the time of the oil boom, I've always been very focused on a census, and the population that grew in the Moosomin area grew by 12 per cent. That town had boomed with the oil boom going on. Our town of Virden barely grew by 2.6 per cent. Because I saw that, I saw the frustrations of a lot of our entrepreneurs, going to Saskatchewan because the fact is they had so much, and they actually did brochures, why you should do it, come to Saskatchewan versus Manitoba.

And you know what, I always say, my famous saying here, it's like, history doesn't repeat itself but it does rhyme. And the fact is it's rhyming again. It's rhyming with this NDP government. And the fact is, the same things are happening. We basically helped small businesses by reducing the property taxes, education property taxes rebates. That was big, that was big for the bottom line.

We also made sure that—and for entrepreneurs or for people who had their self-employed businesses that they were sole proprietors, we made sure that they had the same advantages, increased the personal exemption for people having their businesses, having a better tax rate, getting rid of the bracket creeping.

We basically indexed our tax brackets and we did that when we came into government and made sure that small businesses were actually going to benefit from this.

And now, some businesses, they do make \$200,000 now. But now if that's a sole entrepreneur, sole proprietor, they're going to have to pay, they're not going to have their personal exemption anymore. And that's a lot of times a doctor—they have a business. That is a business. And the fact is to track doctors by putting—reducing the personal exemption for individuals, that's a big impact to being competing, especially when we have—need doctors in western Manitoba—like, the advantage of Saskatchewan is far greater for—and then also the property taxes on their houses. They're not going to live in small houses. They're successful, they've done well for themselves. They're going to have a bigger house. Now they're going to have to pay more on their property taxes, they're not going to get the rebate that—because of the value of their house.

This is the philosophy that this NDP government has, is basically, as much as they say they're putting this bill forward for small businesses, they're the last ones that realize that, they think every small business, every business person, especially when they come from a unionized environment, they're the enemy almost.

And the fact is, this is what we have to endure when it comes to this NDP government. The fact is a lot of them have not, maybe the person who—the individual who brought forward this bill has a small business, her husband has a small business, great—

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

The hour being 11 o'clock, we will now move on to private members' resolutions.

House Business

MLA David Pankratz (Deputy Government House Leader): On House business.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Waverley, on House business.

MLA Pankratz: Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by

the honourable member for St. Boniface (MLA Loiselle). The title of the resolution is Fighting Climate Change and Protecting Manitoba's Air, Land and Water.

The Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(7), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for St. Boniface. And the title of the resolution is Fighting Climate Change and Protecting Manitoba's Air, Land and Water.

* * *

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Could you please canvass the House for leave to allow me to call Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities), for concurrence and third reading debate, with the House not to see the clock until the question has been put, despite rule 24(6) and despite the House currently being in the private members' hour allocated for private members' resolutions.

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member for Tyndall Park to call for concurrence and third reading of third reading debate of Bill 225, The Public Schools Amendment Act, universal screening for learning and disabilities, with the House not to see the clock until the question has been put?

Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 22—Advancing Manitoba's Economic Future through Provincial-Federal Collaboration in Churchill

The Speaker: Now is time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is No. 22, advancing Manitoba's economic future through provincial collaboration in Churchill.

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): I move, seconded by the member from Elmwood,

WHEREAS the Town of Churchill and the Port of Churchill are critical assets for Manitoba's economic development, Arctic sovereignty, and international trade, being the only deepwater port in North America with Arctic Ocean access and rail connectivity; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government launched Manitoba's new Economic Development Strategy, which includes a long-term vision to make Manitoba a "have" province through productivity growth, trade expansion, and strategic infrastructure investments; and

WHEREAS the Port of Churchill is identified as a potential future federal infrastructure priority, with plans to upgrade the rail line, develop an all-weather road, establish a new energy corridor, and enhance marine ice-breaking capacity to enable year-round shipping; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has emphasized the importance of a true nation to nation partnership with individual nations to advance economic reconciliation, create good jobs in the nations and ensure a healthy future for Indigenous communities and all Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government has acknowledged Churchill's strategic role in diversifying trade routes and supporting Canada's critical minerals strategy, with potential for growing exports to Europe; and

WHEREAS the Arctic Gateway Group, composed of First Nations and northern communities, is actively preparing for expanded operations and has expressed readiness to collaborate with governments and stakeholders.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba affirm its support for the inclusive and sustainable redevelopment of Churchill as a strategic infrastructure project of national importance and urge the provincial government to continue working collaboratively with all partners to ensure Churchill becomes a cornerstone of Manitoba's economic transformation and global trade strategy.

Thank you.

Motion presented.

MLA Redhead: Manitoba is a province of possibility, a place where prairie fields meet northern tundra and where communities from Winnipeg to Churchill share a common hope that every family can build a good life here at home.

Yet we know the challenges Manitobans have faced: costs have climbed because of global inflation, tariffs that have drove up prices across Canada while the previous government failed to invest in infrastructures that could have cushioned the blow.

Under their watch, Manitoba–Manitobans endured some of the steepest increases in decades. Food prices surged by 8.3 per cent in 2022 and another 7.2 per cent in 2023, squeezing household budgets and forcing families to make hard and difficult choices.

Since forming government, we have worked tirelessly to bring this inflation under control. After years of steep increases Manitoba is now the—is in a strong position. Overall inflation sits at 2.9 per cent as of September 2025 and food prices have slowed—food price growth has slowed to 3 per cent, less than half of those record highs. While global pressures remain, our policies are helping to stabilize costs and protect household budgets.

But we also must be clear about our reality. In northern communities, families still pay several times what southern households do for basic, basic necessities like milk and bread. And when rail service flutters and storms hit, shelves can go bare and costs spike even higher. These differences are felt at the checkout line and in the choices northern Manitoba families make every single day.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Moreover, we are seeing too many young people leave for better prospects elsewhere; in northern communities, struggle with limited career path, honourable Speaker. The previous infrastructure gaps left by the previous PC government have only added to the challenges. The Hudson Bayl [*phonetic*] Railway is a known lifeline for 33,000 northerners, yet the previous government failed to maintain the rail and when floods severed the line in 2017, communities were stranded for months, exposing just how fragile and costly our northern supply chain can be when a single corridor fails.

Our NDP government has been paying attention to these issues. We know these challenges are real and we're taking action to fix them. That is why Churchill is central to our plan. Churchill is not just a port. It's a chance to rewrite Manitoba's story. It is North America's only deep-water Arctic port with direct rail access, owned by Indigenous and northern communities through the Arctic Gateway Group. That means that every single investment here is an investment in reconciliation and shared prosperity.

Our plan will continue to lower costs for families. A modern Arctic trade route shortens shipping times and reduces reliance on southern choke points, in turn, stabilizing food prices and essentials, especially in our

most remote and northern communities. When the rail line is strong and the port is modern, shelves stay stocked and costs come down.

And the benefit goes beyond groceries. Rail upgrades, port modernization and logistic operations will create thousands of careers in construction, trade and technology, keeping young people in Manitoba and attracting new talent to the North. The economic growth Churchill will drive through new trade, investment and jobs will strengthen Manitoba's economy and help keep costs lower for families across our great province.

Honourable Speaker, this is about building a stronger, fairer Manitoba for all, where every family, from the prairies to the northern tundra, can thrive. That is the future we are working towards and that is the promise we intend to keep.

Honourable Speaker, due to the advocacy of our NDP government and the pressure we put on the federal government, they have confirmed new long-term funding to strengthen Churchill's transportation corridor, ensuring Manitoba's northern gateway remains open and thriving. Starting in 2025-2026, \$175 million in new federal support will be shared between Transport Canada and Prairies Economic Development Canada to sustain and expand northern infrastructure.

* (11:10)

Through Transport Canada's Remote Passenger Rail Program, \$125 million over five years will go towards the continued operation and maintenance of Hudson Bay Railway, ensuring its lifeline continues to connect northern and Indigenous communities from The Pas to Churchill.

Prairies Economic Development Canada will further invest \$50 million for pre-development activities at the Port of Churchill, maintaining safety, improving efficiency and attracting new private sector investments.

Honourable Speaker, this is just one of many, many steps our NDP government is taking to make Manitoba a have province, not a have-not province. We are building a future where northern development is not an afterthought but a cornerstone of our economic strategy, creating jobs, lowering costs and ensuring prosperity reaches every single corner of our great province.

Honourable Speaker, our NDP government is investing \$36.4 million over two years to rebuild and

expand the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay rail line, unlocking new opportunities for trade, jobs and growth in our great northern Manitoba. This investment is about more than infrastructure; it's about building one Manitoba by ensuring northern communities share in our province's prosperity.

The Port of Churchill is Canada's northern gateway to the world. By strengthening this vital link, we are positioning Manitoba as a leader in critical minerals, agriculture and clean energy exports. The \$36.4 million will support upgrades to the warehouse and port facilities, helping the Arctic Gateway Group expand capacity and attract private investment.

From the agriculture, mining and energy sectors, this work strengthens the Arctic Gateway Group, a locally owned company backed by 41 Indigenous and Bay Line communities. It's economic reconciliation in action, honourable Speaker, Indigenous ownership leading real development in the North.

The port's growth means good jobs, stronger communities and reliable transportations for residents and businesses across the region. This investment also ensures reliable and affordable rail service which remains a lifeline for northern communities, delivering food, fuel and supplies to remote northern communities.

Last year, Arctic Gateway and Hudson Bay minerals shipped 10,000 tons of zinc concentrate through the port, proving Churchill can be a major player in Canada's critical mineral strategy and clean energy transportation.

And I really hope that all members can come together and support this resolution to support northern Manitoba and really boost Manitoba's economy through the Port of Churchill.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Deputy Speaker: A 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 parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As always, we're skeptical on economic development ventures by the NDP. This resolution states the Port of Churchill is identified as a potential future federal infrastructure

priority with plans to upgrade the rail line, develop an all-weather road and establish a new energy corridor.

So can the minister tell us what the timeline is for these infrastructure investments by the federal government?

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): Sorry—I appreciate the member's promotion he just gave me, here, to minister. But I have to say that we have an amazing, amazing front bench of ministers, and I am more than happy to support the work that they do day in, day out. Thank you for that.

But what I will say is currently we do have—as in my speech, we already have federal and provincial investments in developing this port, and we have to continue working with all levels of government to continue that partnership so that we can build that project. And the timeline is as soon as possible.

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): Can the member tell us why Churchill and the Port of Churchill are so important to Manitoba's future?

MLA Redhead: Absolutely. Churchill is Manitoba's northern gateway to the world, the only deepwater port in North America with direct rail access. It's not just a port, it's a vital trade corridor that connects our province to global markets, supports Arctic sovereignty and provides lifelines to northern communities.

By investing in Churchill, we're unlocking the full potential of northern Manitoba and strengthening Manitoba's economy as a whole.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I just want to ask the member for Thompson, when it comes to—you know, when we were in government, I have actually signed an—I was minister; I signed an MOU with Saskatchewan and Alberta, because the importance of global markets is also making sure that you have partners with other provinces across this country.

And why was this Premier (Mr. Kinew) not willing to sign the MOU with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario?

MLA Redhead: You know, I thank the member opposite for that question.

What I will say is our Premier is doing amazing work in helping—help strengthening Manitoba as a whole. The members opposite failed to do anything with the Port of Churchill—absolutely nothing. And now they want to stand up and act like they're—

now they're fighting for northern Manitoba? I think not. Our Premier (Mr. Kinew) is doing great work.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

MLA Corbett: The PCs often neglected Churchill during their time in office.

How is our government's approach different?

MLA Redhead: The difference is simple: we're taking action, not just making announcements.

For years, the PCs treated Churchill as Ottawa's problem. Our NDP government is at the table from day one, working collaboratively with the federal government and Indigenous partners and northern communities.

We're investing in infrastructure, jobs and partnerships that will last generations. We're rebuilding trust and ensuring that the North has a real voice in Manitoba's economic future.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): The Premier has said in the media over the last few days that we'll be a have province in the next five to 10 years.

So my question to the member is, do you feel that the railway and roads will be completed within the next five to 10 years?

MLA Redhead: Honourable Speaker, that's a great question. I really believe our Premier. What he says, he gets done. You look at our election platform: check after check after check.

I don't even think the member from Portage la Prairie can even point out Churchill on a map. Our Premier has been there with me and other ministers.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

MLA Corbett: How does this resolution show that our government is listening and taking action on the challenges Manitobans face?

MLA Redhead: Well, finally, a great question in the Chamber.

For years, the PCs ignored Churchill and left northern communities vulnerable. Manitobans paid the price with soaring costs and limited opportunity.

Our government has been paying attention. We've already delivered the lowest inflation rate in the country, invested \$36.4 million to rebuild the port and Hudson Bay rail line and partnered with Indigenous communities to ensure growth is inclusive.

This resolution is the next step affirming Churchill as a strategic partner of national—sorry—project of national importance and securing—

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

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I have another great question here for the member.

The resolution preambles calls for the enhancement of marine icebreaking capacity to enable year-round shipping.

* (11:20)

So my question to the member is, can he share with us who will be responsible for building and purchasing that icebreaking equipment?

MLA Redhead: Honourable Deputy Speaker, actually that is a good question, because our government is working with all levels of government. When it comes to the federal government, we know that the federal government has shown interest in Churchill as one of the major infrastructure projects in the country to help loosen some of those chokeholds that the US has put on us with tariffs. We need to build our economy and that includes working with all levels of government, including Indigenous communities.

I know that's very hard for some of the members to wrap their heads around, but they're a vital part of this project and we need their input.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

MLA Corbett: Why is it important that we are taking a collaborative approach with the federal government?

MLA Redhead: Because collaboration is the key to long-term success. The PCs often treated Churchill as someone else's problem, black sheep of the province, do I say.

Our government is different. We're taking—we're at the table from the beginning, working hand in hand with the federal government, Indigenous leaders and northern communities. That partnership is what will make Churchill a sustainable, thriving hub for generations to come.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Narth: The member has spoken about private investment in this project. Would that member agree that it would be a lot easier to attract more private sector investment to the Hudson Bay line and the Port of Churchill if there was more mines being

developed in Manitoba's North with critical minerals to export?

Can the minister outline some of the things that are being done to attract more critical mineral development in our North?

MLA Redhead: Again, I appreciate him really wanting me to be a minister, but I think the member needs to understand that we have a great front bench and I'm more than happy to support the hard work that they do.

I mean, the member needs to know that we're actually opening up a gold mine right in my backyard—a gold mine to help support northern economy and northern jobs.

But what I will say, honourable Speaker, what happened under the previous PC government is they neglected the port; they neglected the rail line, a crumbling infrastructure.

Maybe private sector would look to that port if there was an investment and a well-maintained rail line and port to invest there. That's what we're doing. And that will attract the private sector.

MLA Corbett: How does investing in Churchill support our northern communities and our families up north?

MLA Redhead: You know what, that is a phenomenal question.

This investment is going to create jobs for, you know, the North. I know Indigenous communities, northern communities, we really struggle with finding employment because of the lack of investment from government, from other sectors; it's just very difficult.

I come from an isolated northern community. We grew up very, very poor. It's not that my parents didn't work; it was just that jobs were not available.

So this investment is going to create those opportunities for all of northerners, and I really look forward to us investing in Churchill so that it can be prosperous for all of Manitoba.

The Deputy Speaker: And with that, the time for questions has expired.

Debate

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

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to this resolution

brought forward by the member for Thompson (MLA Redhead), potentially future minister, but I'll wait to see. It speaks to advancing Manitoba's economic future through provincial-federal collaboration in Churchill.

Let me begin by saying that I believe every member in this Legislature shares a deep appreciation for the incredible importance of Churchill, not only to northern Manitoba, but to our entire province and, indeed, our country.

Churchill is a community that punches well above its weight. It's a symbol of resilience, it's a hub for trade, for tourism, for research and for reconciliation. It's a gateway to the world, a port with international potential and a home to people who love and care deeply about where they live. No one disputes that Churchill matters; the question before us today is how best to help it reach its full potential.

And that's where this resolution falls short. Honourable Deputy Speaker, the NDP resolution speaks of collaboration, but what we've seen so far from this government is not collaboration, it's centralization. They speak about partnerships but they too often forget to include the partners that matter the most: the communities, the local leaders and, importantly, the private sector and entrepreneurs who actually drive the growth.

When it comes to Churchill, what we need isn't another press release or photo op with Ottawa. What we need is a real, actionable plan that creates long-term, self-sustaining opportunity for northern Manitoba. And that is what's lacking.

Premier (Mr. Kinew) is fast to act when there's time for photo opportunities or press releases with federal recognition, but not actually getting the work done on the ground. Let's remember that Churchill's challenges and opportunities are very complex. The Port of Churchill, the rail line, the tourism industry: all of them depend on logistics, infrastructure and private investment that extend far beyond a single jurisdiction or budget cycle.

That's why the previous Progressive Conservative government worked to rebuild confidence in the port, helped reopen the rail line after years of neglect and supported local operators who know the land and the markets. We didn't just talk about collaboration, we sat down with local leadership, Indigenous communities and the private sector to make sure Churchill's economy could get back on track.

Honourable Speaker, under the PCs, there was progress. Under the NDP, we're back to plans, promises and panels—listening with the voice of collaboration but the action doesn't follow. Now, I'll give credit where credit is due: the NDP are right to say that Churchill has enormous potential. Global supply chains are shifting, northern trade routes are becoming a lot more viable. There's opportunity in tourism, in clean energy, in arctic research and in transportation—and the world is recognizing.

But where the NDP missed the mark is in their approach. They continue to believe that economic development happens by government decree, that prosperity comes from the top down instead of from the ground up. The truth, honourable Deputy Speaker, is that real economic growth in Churchill and in every part of Manitoba comes when we empower communities, respect local enterprise and remove barriers for those willing to invest and take risk. It can't be directed by government, it needs to be led by the communities.

This government likes to talk about federal collaboration. There's their Premier (Mr. Kinew) searching around for another photo opportunity with anyone from the federal government. But let's be honest. What that usually means is letting Ottawa set the agenda while Manitobans pay the bill.

* (11:30)

Whether it's on resource, development, transportation or energy, we've seen time and time again that the NDP are more comfortable asking permission from Ottawa than standing up for Manitoba interests. And we're seeing this day in and day out. We see the questions in question period, we see the headlines in the media.

If we want Churchill to succeed, we can't just be passengers on someone else's train. We need to be driving our own economic future. That means protecting Manitoba's jurisdiction, pushing for infrastructure funding that meets our priorities and ensuring northern residents have a seat at that table, not just bureaucrats in Winnipeg and Ottawa.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Churchill's future can't depend on subsidies alone. It can't survive on temporary grants and announcements that look good on paper but fail to deliver those long-term results. What Churchill needs is sustainability, predictable transportation, reliable infrastructure and an investment climate that gives confidence to those looking to build and grow there.

That's why the PC vision for Manitoba's North focuses on strengthening trade and transportation corridors that connect northern producers to markets, supporting Indigenous economic partnerships and create local ownerships and equity. Investing in skills and training to prepare northern youth for good jobs close to home and encouraging innovation, whether in renewable energy, cold climate research or Arctic logistics: these are the kinds of steps that make collaboration meaningful, not just a rhetoric.

The NDP may see Churchill as a photo opportunity; we see it as a long-term opportunity. We see a northern economy that deserves more than government dependency; it deserves empowerment. We see communities that don't want handouts, they want a fair chance to build their own success and, in turn, support building Manitoba's success and the success of the entire country.

And we see a province that can lead the way in responsible northern development if government has the courage to trust Manitobans instead of trying to control them. Honourable Deputy Speaker, let me say it again: the Progressive Conservatives support efforts that genuinely advance Churchill's prosperity. But we cannot support empty resolutions that lack accountability and rely on Ottawa's good will instead of Manitoba's determination and that ignore the vital role of the private sector and local leadership.

True collaboration doesn't come from more government; it comes from a better government. Smarter partnerships, stronger leadership and a shared belief that Manitobans, not government bureaucrats or this NDP caucus without a foresight for economic development, know best on shaping our future. Churchill has been called the gateway to the world, but it can also be the gateway to stronger, more self-reliant Manitoba. Let's make sure our policies match that vision.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Yes. I guess I'm up and I guess the member for Thompson (MLA Redhead) brought this resolution forward about Churchill and no other member wants to get up and speak on this. So I'd be happy to put a whole bunch of words on the record here when it comes to Churchill.

Our government—I know when I was minister we gave over \$75 million, along with the federal government, to repair the railway—road going into Churchill. It was neglected by the previous

Selinger-Doer government, and there was a lot of fixing up to do.

It was like anything else that the NDP—and the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) is just leaving here, because he was part of that government; he's part of the government that really neglected a lot of our infrastructure—not only highways, but schools, railway, but also schools and hospitals.

We had so much infrastructure to repair from the last NDP government—you know, my grand—my mother-in-law used to always say good intentions pave the road to hell. And why—with a lot of good intentions here, honourable Deputy Speaker, I think it's paving this railway to hell, because the fact is they have a past that they've never put the money into the railway and we did. We knew the importance of Churchill, economically. We always—our premiers in the past always looked at the Golden Boy, that they're—expressed the importance of the Golden Boy looking north because that's where the opportunity lies; that's where the opportunity lies when it comes to minerals and 'reexploration' of minerals and jobs up there.

And I—when I was—when I signed the MOU with Saskatchewan and Alberta back in April of 2023 in Edmonton, the ideal here was that we would actually have a trade corridor; and that would be so important. We would be the gateway for—of—for the world when it comes to the Hudson Bay. And the Hudson Bay, with Churchill especially, the challenges that we have with Churchill—with the railway going up there—is that there is permafrost, we're going through muskeg. That was a decision that was made back after World War II to make the railway to go to Churchill.

And the challenge there is that with global warming, the permafrost is disappearing. That is why we put \$75 million into investment into the railway, because of the importance of this for Manitoba. We have a lot of First Nation communities along the way. If a railway had—was ever taken out, there is a lot of airports that we would have to build for a lot of those communities along the railroad—roads. And so it's important that, you know, one of the trade corridors—MOU that we signed—is working with Indigenous peoples of the North, the opportunity of the land settlements that we have, the opportunity, because a lot of that land belongs to First Nations communities.

And the fact is, I worked with many, I met with many chiefs over the—over my time as minister, and still do, and the importance of how the gateway and the importance of economic development in the—

towards the Hudson Bay. But we have to work with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario—even work with BC, because a lot of minerals and the agriculture products do come from northern—north-western—north-eastern BC. And the opportunity also working with Ontario, with the ring of fire, could also connect the ring of fire from Ontario to the Hudson Bay.

Why didn't this government actually work—and it's the same thing that they did with the new 'wech' partnership agreement. They refused to join it with Alberta, Saskatchewan, BC; and the fact is we miss out. We miss out on working together because a lot of the products we can't just ship all—only Manitoba products into the Hudson Bay to go to the world market. We got to work—partner up with Saskatchewan and Alberta; a lot of uranium, a lot of resources come from northern Saskatchewan and Alberta: oil, opportunities of liquid natural gas—the opportunity is there.

When I was minister we also looked at possible—a second port that works much like the Vancouver port authority. We—I had the opportunity to do a tour of the Vancouver port authority, and they actually have the three biggest ports under their authority—and actually maybe the fourth one is that Burrard Inlet—outlet—inlet, is one of the biggest ports in Canada. That's when you go downtown Vancouver and you see all these grain terminals that the grain gets shipped to the port.

You actually have the delta, which is you ever take a ferry to Vancouver Island, you would actually see the port—and it's actually being 'expansh'—expanded now. And it took a long time for the federal government to actually license it, but the importance of how much cargo containers that get shipped from that location.

* (11:40)

And the third thing is—I was really surprised—was the Fraser River. They have a port there that they have so much of natural resources and lumber and every other product out there, manufacturing products that come from the Fraser River area.

And so, the three ports alone are the three biggest in Canada. And the fact is they also, there are also authorities over the Prince Rupert port too. So this gives an opportunity of maybe—like, I did sign an MOU, or intentions to look at a possible second port. Because the importance of a better railway—road that has structure when it comes through the Nelson River, it has a river bed that's natural rock that will actually

take railway—there's actually an old railroad bed that was supposed to be built in—before World War I.

The war came, and if you look at—if you google Port Nelson, you will actually see trusses that were built into the water for the first port. And it was scrapped and next thing, the Churchill was a choice because Churchill is a gateway for—it comes to the North. You know, shipping supplies and goods. It can be complementary to what—heavier materials that can't go through the muskeg because the permafrost is disappearing.

There's new technology. I'm not quite sure how that technology's going to work as that muskeg, the frost gets less and less. This is why we have to work with the other provinces, because it's not going to be able to be just financed by the federal government. There all has to be a participation and the energy and the commitment from all of the provinces. And I actually sat and was able to be on a panel at the Midwest Legislative Conference in Saskatoon.

And we were able to look at trade corridors. I was with Shane Getson from Alberta with—he's actually a legislative assistant for Danielle Smith. And also, we were actually—had a minister from Saskatchewan who was responsible for import and trade. And then we also had a senator from Michigan.

And we presented what the importance of the Hudson Bay was. But not one of the members from the NDP were actually in that seminar. They sent about eight people there; I think one of—was even the Deputy Speaker. So there was like eight members from the NDP caucus that didn't show up. And it was such an important—we got so much excitement that actually now they're going to put that on the agenda, to have a meeting midterm before the next Midwest Legislative Conference—and the importance of the excitement, because all those states are finding right now.

And this is going to be good economically, just for the member from Thompson has indicated, for communities up north, especially First Nation communities. This is going to be an opportunity for them to get good jobs, good opportunities, be connected to the world. And possibly, as economic grows in that region, we can get roads built. You know, I was the minister when we finally paved—for 20 years they've been asking for—Nelson House First Nation had 10 kilometres.

They asked, 16 years with the NDP, for that road to be paved. We got that done. I put that forward.

The importance of connecting our communities together in the North is so important.

And like I said, when we did this presentation at the Midwest Legislative Conference, it really brought the Midwest states, because they know that there is a—block it—block—to ship in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, and the importance that Hudson Bay is a solution for in a lot of their manufacturing. Their agriculture goods, their resources: there's an opportunity to ship it and it's a direct route to Europe. It would be cheaper if we can focus on Hudson Bay.

But the thing is, like I said, not one NDP member was during—at that conference and working with the other states and other provinces for the provinces that signed the MOU to look at the Hudson Bay. And this government has not signed that MOU. Why not?

And now I'm going to leave it at that.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Honourable Speaker, the people of Churchill and the North don't need just another press release. They need real infrastructure, real investment and real jobs. And we're seeing today the lack of importance that this is to this NDP government.

The member from Thompson that brought forward this resolution—not available. We need this real infrastructure. But what have we heard from the NDP? Silence. They talk about a so-called energy corridor, but where is it going to be? Where will it run? When will it be completed? Who was consulted?

We're seeing this right now with another bill that is trying to be pushed through, with Bill 48, with no consultation happening here. Has anyone in the government spoken to any shipping, trucking or rail experts, the people who actually understand how to move goods across this country? But it sure doesn't look like it. We didn't hear anything about that.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans deserve a government that can answer those questions. It's not a joke. It's important that we're able to tell people that. Instead, under the NDP, unemployment has climbed to 6.2 per cent in August alone. Manitoba's lost 4,300 manufacturing jobs and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) talks about this being a have province within the next five to 10 years? How? Those questions need to be answered. Those aren't just statistics; these are families; they're workers. They're communities struggling because this government does not have an economic plan.

The NDP seem to think good intentions are enough. But good intentions don't build rail lines, good intentions don't fill ships, and good intentions don't create jobs.

What Manitobans need is action, and that's what the Progressive Conservatives can deliver and have delivered. Under our leadership investments had purpose and accountability. We strengthened the Arctic Gateway. We supported northern trade routes. We built the foundation for longer term growth. Every dollar was spent with a clear goal: to create jobs and deliver value for Manitobans.

There's no meat on this bone in this resolution. That's what economic leadership looks like, honourable Speaker. Churchill's location gives us a strategic advantage, a direct route to the Arctic, to Europe and to world markets. With the right leadership, Churchill could once again become a thriving hub for energy, for shipping and for northern development.

But to make this happen there needs to be a vision and a plan, and this NDP government simply doesn't have either. They have stalled, they have studied and they have delayed. They have wasted opportunities and time. Manitobans deserve better.

Honourable Speaker, the path forward is clear, and I've always said in the past, if you're going to criticize, then bring a solution, just like we did with Bill 48, trying to bring solutions.

The rail lines that go up to Churchill are built on peat moss. That peat moss is extremely unstable. We've talked about, when the PCs were in government, a \$75-million effort to try and shore up that rail line. That rail line is still unreliable. And remember, the important thing is \$75 million. The member from Thompson spoke about \$134 million between the Province and the federal government to not only fix the railway, to create roads and to also fix the Port of Churchill—\$134 million.

* (11:50)

How is that even possible when \$75 million has been spent already and that rail line is still an unreliable way to take goods up there. Churchill can be a very reliable opportunity for us to ship product, but not without the proper thought and planning going into it, and I don't see where there is absolutely any plan in this resolution.

Manitobans deserve better than that. But to make this happen, we need a vision.

Honourable Speaker, the path forward is very clear: we need real leadership, not empty slogans. We need partnerships that deliver, not announcements that fade away. Not relying on the federal government to say that this \$100 million, plus the \$34 million that we have here, is going to fix the railway, make it reliable, fix roads that haven't even been built—there hasn't even been any decisions made on where they'll be built—and to fix that deep-water port there.

How is that possible? Why would we want to let Manitobans not have a plan? There is no plan for this. The federal government must bring real investment to the North.

But is this provincial government ready to lead? I don't think so; not without proper planning. Right now there's no plan, no clear direction from this NDP government. They can't answer basic questions. And let's ask these questions right now so maybe the member that brought this resolution forward, when and if he comes back, they can—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

We're not able to refer to people's presence or absence from the Chamber.

MLA Bereza: My apologies for that mistake, honourable Deputy Speaker.

They can't even answer basic questions. Where's the corridor going to be? When will it be ready? Because this Premier (Mr. Kinew) says that we are going to be a have province within five to 10 years. We are way more than five to 10 years of having that port ready.

We haven't designed a road. We haven't decided how we're going to work through the peat moss where the rail lines go. If we are going to ship immense amounts of grain, if we are going to ship immense and heavy amounts of critical minerals, we are going to have to build that railway properly and be able to use that.

Manitobans deserve transparency and results, not just talk. Our Progressive Conservative team has shown what real progress looks like, working with First Nations in northern communities, investing in critical infrastructure, delivering on economic growth. That's the model we need to continue to follow: practical, achievable and grounded in results.

Churchill is more than a port; it's a promise, a promise that Manitobans can lead in trade, in energy, and in Arctic development. It's time for the NDP to stop talking and start acting.

At this time for Manitoba to seize these opportunities to make Churchill a gateway to the North and our province prosper, when? When and what will happen? How do we get those grain products out of the North? We no longer have a market to share our canola with. Our ministers are not doing anything to increase those markets in any way, shape or form—

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I'm happy to stand in the Chamber here today and put a few words on the record regarding the resolution brought forward by the member from Thompson—minister—member from Thompson. The resolution, Advancing Manitoba's Economic Future through Provincial-Federal Collaboration in Churchill.

When our—and I'll go back to what some of my colleagues have already put on the record—and when our Progressive Conservative team was in government, we made substantial investments into the Arctic gateway and specifically, like the member from Turtle Mountain mentioned, \$75 million on the rail and the port infrastructure in Churchill.

These investments were not mere promises, they were a commitment to a vision. A vision of thriving northern economy that created jobs and opportunities for First Nations, northern and Indigenous communities. We recognized that by working together we could develop a northern plan and get into a region that would not only support local but also contribute significantly to the provincial economy.

What progress has this NDP government made? Nothing so far. They have not been able to effectively advocate for the northern communities. And in their first two years in office—let's put a few facts on the record here, honourable Deputy Speaker—the NDP have failed to get our economy moving.

We know that youth unemployment has risen by 3 per cent, resulting in the loss of over 2,600 jobs—youth jobs in the last year alone. Overall, unemployment now is at 6.2 per cent. In a troubling turn of events, we lost over 4,000 good manufacturing jobs in a single month, just this last summer. This is not just a statistic; it's a loss of hope for our families, our communities, our youth. And it is a loss of hope to see growth in our province and our economy.

The NDP have also failed to attract new mining operations here in our province. This is allowing our ranking as a mining jurisdiction to plummet. Under their leadership, we have seen our potential diminished. They've not made any significant moves to advance mining projects that were in the queue under the previous PC government.

What's more concerning is the NDP and this Premier (Mr. Kinew) have not succeeded in securing the funding commitment to make the Port of Churchill fully viable. Recently, and I think members—my colleagues on this side of the House made mention of this—we moved a resolution calling on the government to sign a member of—memorandum of understanding regarding an energy corridor with Saskatchewan, Ontario, Alberta. Yet the NDP voted this down.

This begs the question: Is this NDP genuinely committed to the concept of energy corridors or just playing lip service? Lip service. Why not take meaningful action instead of just issuing press releases, getting the photo ops, making phone calls. They could have signed the MOU and make direct investments in northern infrastructure. But instead we're left with empty resolutions, empty promises that do little to effect change and bring progress and build the economy here in this province.

Let's look at the facts. Our PC team initiated investments in the Arctic gateway project, and I already mentioned that. And we recognized the importance of the Port of Churchill. Our government began improving on the rail infrastructure in the North, including ballast for the Hudson Bay rail route and collaborated with the federal government on upgrades in 2018.

We understand that developing Manitoba's—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The time being 12 p.m., this House is recessed and stands—oh. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member has five minutes remaining.

The time being 12 p.m., the—this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. today.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 22—Advancing Manitoba's Economic Future through Provincial-Federal Collaboration in Churchill
Concurrence and Third Readings—Public Bills		Redhead 3163
Bill 210—The Indigenous Veterans Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)		Questions
Pankratz	3153	Narth 3165
Robbins	3154	Redhead 3165
Perchotte	3154	Corbett 3165
Balcaen	3156	Piwniuk 3165
Bill 208—The Manitoba Small Business Month Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended)		Bereza 3166
Cross	3156	Byram 3166
Hiebert	3157	Debate
Wharton	3159	Narth 3167
Piwniuk	3161	Piwniuk 3168
		Bereza 3170
		Byram 3172

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

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