



Third 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. LXXX No. 25B - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2026

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	Ind.
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, March 10, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone.

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 32—The Improving Access to
Breast Cancer Screening Act**

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I move, seconded, by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act, be now read a first time.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable member for Dawson Trail, on a point of order.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): It's with a bit of regret and not so much of a heavy heart anymore that I'm going to table the following documents that indicate that I intend to run as an independent and sit as an independent from this point forward. Here are the documents.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I just point out for the member that he did not have a point of order. And we'll have to restart the process of tabling—or introducing the bill. So if you could take that back.

* * *

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Families, that Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: I am so pleased to introduce Bill 32, The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act. This bill will result in improved breast cancer screening across Manitoba. It will ensure there are targeted measures in place to provide screening for

individuals at increased risk of breast cancer and for those communities that have traditionally had lower rates of breast screening, including BIPOC individuals and those who live in rural and remote areas. This bill is a demonstration of our government's continuing commitment to ensure all Manitobans have equitable access to cancer screening and treatment.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Further introduction of bills?

The honourable Minister of Families—oh, sorry.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 5—The Accessibility for Manitobans
Amendment Act and The Commemoration of
Days, Weeks and Months Amendment Act
(Access Awareness Week)**

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Accessibility): I move, seconded by the Minister for Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, that Bill 5, The Accessibility for Manitobans Amendment Act and The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Amendment Act (Access Awareness Week), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Fontaine: Bill 5 will implement recommendations from the second independent review of The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. These amendments help ensure people disabled by barriers continue to have a voice in the design of legislation meant to serve them. It also includes additional amendments to improve efficiency and modernize the act.

It will also amend The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Amendment Act to enshrine Access Awareness Week in legislation. I am pleased to present Bill 5 to the House for its consideration.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [Agreed]

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 23—The Advocate for Children and Youth Amendment Act

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the member—or, the Minister for Justice, that Bill 23, The Advocate for Children and Youth Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Fontaine: Bill 23 amends The Child and Family Services Act to support Indigenous Child and Family Services jurisdiction or asserting jurisdiction of child welfare. It also updates the act to reflect recently introduced voluntary support agreements and increased flexibility in making temporary orders.

These amendments ensure youth who reach the age of majority in these care agreements remain eligible for supports until the age of 21. The amendments are informed by the recommendations from First Nation leadership and Child and Family Services partner authorities. I say miigwech to all of those who provided guidance in the development of this legislation and I'm pleased to present this bill for its consideration.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 34—The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala), that Bill 34, The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm pleased to introduce this important bill to the Legislature. The bill will amend The Interprovincial Subpoena Act so that it will apply to a subpoena issued by a board, commission, tribunal or other body or person that has the power to issue a subpoena, whether that subpoena is in Manitoba or in another province or country—or territory.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on, there are some guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce, because they won't be staying long.

I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from St. Mary the Protectress Millennium Villa, Inc.: Eugene Hyworon, chair of the board; David Noseworthy, vice-chair of the board; Anne Ostry, secretary of the board; Claudia Brugger, manager; and tenants Zinovia Solomon, Anita Place, Gerry Holunga, Sylvia Klymkiw, Lesia McCarron, Stefanie [*phonetic*] Myhauluk, Dennis Dibora [*phonetic*], Heather Opitz, Janice Timlich, Howard Juce, Ester Juce, who are guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar).

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

* * *

The Speaker: Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Dr. Wil Fleisher

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to recognize an outstanding Tuxedo resident today, Dr. Wil Fleisher.

A proud Winnipegger and graduate of the University of Manitoba faculty of medicine, Dr. Fleisher began his career in general medicine, serving patients in rural and Indigenous communities and working at community-based clinics across Winnipeg. He was one of the founding physicians at Klinik community health, helping to build a safe and welcoming space for those seeking accessible care.

* (13:40)

In 1986, he returned to complete postgraduate training in psychiatry and went on to shape generations of physicians through his leadership at the Max Rady College of Medicine. He served as program director for postgraduate psychiatry, and later as associate dean for both postgraduate medical education and medical education. His influence has extended nationally through his work with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

Dr. Fleisher's many honours, including Educator of the Year, Mentor of the Year and Manitoba Psychiatrist of the Year reflect not only professional excellence, but deep compassion and commitment to learners and patients alike.

Today we celebrate his five-plus decades of extraordinary service to Manitoba's health-care system. He told me he wasn't planning to retire, but is enjoying his lighter workload.

Honourable Speaker and fellow MLAs, please join me in thanking Dr. Fleisher for his legacy of care, mentorship and leadership. And it's a couple days early, but I also ask all members of this House to join me in wishing him a very happy birthday on March 12.

Lila Dubé

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, Lila Dubé, from my constituency. Lila was born and raised in Powerview-Pine Falls and built her home, raised her children and shared her life with her husband, Marcel Dubé. Her roots were deep and her impact even deeper.

For decades, Lila worked as a home-care worker with the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority. She offered more than care; she offered dignity and friendship. At Sunnywood Manor, she provided respite, comforting patients in their most vulnerable moments. Lila's kindness touched many lives.

Outside work, she had a gift for baking and cooking, sharing love in every loaf and cake. She especially cherished teaching her granddaughters, passing on both recipes and joy.

Last year, Lila passed away at the age of 68 after living with frontotemporal dementia, FTD, a rare and devastating disease that gradually steals personality, language and independence.

In her memory, her daughters became tireless advocates, raising awareness of FTD. In 2025, five provinces recognized world FTD week for the first time in Canada, an extraordinary legacy born from profound loss.

While Manitoba did not join, as their request was denied by the Health Minister, their commitment to supporting families and raising awareness remains strong.

Today, Lila's husband Marcel resides in Sunnywood Manor and is living with another rare disease, progressive supranuclear palsy, PSP, and together, the family continues to navigate these new challenges with courage, resilience and love.

Lila's life shows that true greatness is measured in service and compassion, and it is our duty to honour her by supporting families affected by FTD.

I'd like to table the list of family members who've joined us in the gallery, Honourable Speaker, and I request a moment of silence in Lila's memory.

Aizley Boisvert, Kinley Boisvert, Louis Boisvert, Melissa Dubé, Miranda Dubé, Phoenix Dubé-Fleming, John Spafford.

The Speaker: Is there a leave for a moment of silence as requested? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Chief Richard Hart

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): I rise today to honour the life of Chief Richard Hart of the Bunibonibee Cree Nation, a man I was fortunate enough to know not only as a leader, but and a—but as a friend and a respected voice for Bunibonibee.

Chief Hart passed into the Spirit World this past January. Chief Hart dedicated much of his life to serving his people. He carried the responsibilities of leadership with humility and strength, always grounded in the values of his Community.

When he spoke, he did so with honesty and with a deep sense of pride for the Bunibonibee Cree Nation. And, of course, as a proud Cree, he also did it with humour, and I was privileged to share some laughs with him as well.

For many of us who work alongside First Nations leadership, Chief Hart was someone you could count on. He believed strongly in bringing people together and in making sure the voices of his community was heard clearly and respectfully. His leadership reflected a deep love for his people and a commitment to creating a better path forward for the next generation.

Chief Hart also carried his leadership beyond his own community. Through his work with MKO, he helped bring the concerns of northern First Nations forward and worked to strengthen collaboration among our communities.

His passing is being felt deeply not only by his family and his community of Bunibonibee, but also across the entire North.

Today we remember a Chief, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a community member and a leader who worked tirelessly for his nation.

Being honoured to carry the title of Chief for your community is not a job; it's a lifestyle. It's a lifestyle that Chief Richard Hart used to lead by example. One of the greatest compliments as a leader, as a father,

as a grandfather you can receive is to be emulated by people that care about you.

When I spoke with Chief Hart's wife Cindy, she spoke about how their grandkids act just like their grandpa, whether it be how they sit or how they act. And it was great to hear that Richard also had the privilege to have seen that for himself. And I know that one of the biggest compliments his children and his grandchildren can receive is for someone to tell them you're just like your dad or you're just like your grandpa. Hearing that, you will know that Richard's impact and presence will be with you forever.

Honourable Speaker, I ask for leave for a moment of silence to honour the late Chief of the Bunibonibee Cree Nation, Chief Richard Hart.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Betty Garnham

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Today I rise to recognize a remarkable woman from Portage la Prairie, Betty Garnham.

Betty was a hero, but she didn't wear a cape. She had a walker and sometimes a scooter, but what she carried every day was courage.

Betty lived at Oak Tree Towers, a Manitoba Housing complex that had fallen on very difficult times. Many residents felt afraid in their own homes as thieves, drug dealers and addictions took hold of the building. But Betty refused to accept this—accept that this would be how things would be. She stood up, she spoke out, she—and she was organized.

Betty became a fierce advocate for seniors and residents who simply wanted nothing more than a safe place to live. She worked tirelessly with neighbours, with housing officials and, yes, with me. In fact, Mister—Honourable Speaker, Betty would call me sometimes three times a day just to make sure I was doing my job and pushing me to make Oak Tree Towers the safe and dignified home it was meant to be.

Sadly, Honourable Speaker, Betty passed away a couple of weeks ago and can't be with us today. But her legacy lives on in the residents who found their voices, in a community that stood up and in the improvements that began because of one determined woman.

Betty Garnham proved that leadership doesn't require a title.

Today I ask this House to recognize Betty Garnham, a true community hero who reminded us all that courage can come with a walker, a scooter and an unshakeable belief that things can be better.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

* * *

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Oh, excuse me.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, I seek leave to include the names of Mrs. Dubé's family members who are here in the gallery below my private member's statement in Hansard.

* (13:50)

The Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted.

Sergeant Tommy Prince School Literacy Gains

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): Honourable Speaker, this past month was I Love to Read Month. To honour this, I read at nearly every school and daycare in my constituency of Kildonan-River East.

I didn't stop there; I also read to schools located in the constituencies of some opposition MLAs. While the constituents of Red River North and Springfield-Ritchot are looking high and low for their elected MLAs, I was showing up to support our leaders of tomorrow and to share my love of reading all across Manitoba.

I had the privilege, Honourable Speaker, of visiting Sergeant Tommy Prince School located in the constituency of Red River North. Here, educators are ensuring that students have access to books at every reading level and other supports they need to succeed. Some students arrive not yet knowing their letters or how to write their names, and in just a few years, literacy levels have tripled.

Let me say that again, Honourable Speaker: literacy levels have tripled. The whole school has worked hard to ensure students feel safe, welcome and proud of their learning.

And thanks to our NDP provincial government's universal school nutrition program, attendance has increased significantly, behavioural challenges have decreased and students arrive ready to learn.

Their success has even placed this small and mighty Manitoba community on the national stage. Staff recently presented their progress at the Assembly of First Nations Education Forum in Vancouver.

As the saying goes: Today a reader, tomorrow a leader. Honourable Speaker, the students and staff at Sergeant Tommy Prince School are embodying exactly that and reminding us all that reading is cool.

Honourable Speaker, what is not cool is opposition members missing in action in their community. Showing up matters.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Order, please.

We have—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please. *[interjection]*

Excuse me. The Speaker is standing. I've asked for order three times.

We have, seated in the public gallery, from St. Maurice School, 56 grade 9 students under the direction of Rebecca Stajkowski. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), and we welcome you all here today.

We also have further guests in the gallery. I draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Doreen Fleisher, Dr. Leonard Schwartz, Dr. Nora Korbinsky *[phonetic]*, Link Phillips, Dr. Maria Bronson, who are guests of the honourable member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton), and we welcome you all here today.

Further, I draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Miranda Dubé, Phoenix Dubé-Fleming, John Spafford, Melissa Dubé, Louis Boisvert, Kinley Boisvert and Ainzley *[phonetic]* Boisvert, who are guests of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), and we welcome you all here today as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Safe Consumption Site

Use of Site by Vulnerable Populations

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yesterday, I asked a series of serious questions about a new drug consumption site that this NDP government wants to open, and in these documents by this NDP government, it clearly says that the safe consumption site or the drug consumption site will allow

youth without checking their IDs, it will allow pregnant women into the facility and it will allow first-time drug users into this drug consumption site.

We know that this drug consumption site will not be asking Manitobans for their IDs. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) and minister want to stand up and say they won't let any youth in, but they're not going to ask them for any ID.

So I will ask the Premier today, or the minister, to stand up and correct the record; or will they admit that they are going to allow youth into the drug consumption site, first-time drug users and pregnant women to all have access to illicit, illegal drugs?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, I want to start off by doing what the Leader of the Opposition should have done, quite frankly, and acknowledge the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé). What we saw here before we got into business of the day was an act of courage. It really was. And what we've seen from the member for Dawson Trail over several years, being elected in this Legislature is courage.

This is somebody who has advocated for mental health, reducing mental health stigma, particularly around men and boys. This is someone who has been a really great advocate for his community in raising the voices of those in this area in a really positive way.

So I want to wish him well on this next step. It takes courage to stand up in the Legislature and walk away from your own caucus. But I want to reassure—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Khan: You know what an act of courage is? Saying no to drugs, not saying yes to drugs like this NDP government is doing.

This Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) yesterday seemed to have a really hard time with what I was saying, when I said—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —that youth should not have drugs, that pregnant women should not have drugs. The Minister of Families objected to the fact that I would say first-time drug users should not be allowed into a drug consumption site.

Let's not forget, this is the same Minister of Families that disparaged an ASL interpreter. It's the same

Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) that condoned the murder of a father. It's the same Minister of Families that blocked foster families and parents from reaching out to them. This is the same Minister of Families that supports youth, first-time drug users and pregnant women to have access to illegal drugs.

So I'll ask the Minister of Families, maybe she can stand up today and clarify the record: Does she support—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —the use of illegal, illicit drugs to youth, first-time users and pregnant women? Or will she say, you're right—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we're seeing exactly why the member for Dawson Trail (MLA Lagassé) has walked away from the PC caucus. It is the Leader of the Opposition.

The member for Dawson Trail is someone who has always been very clear that we must take a compassionate approach to delivering care to Manitobans. We have to reduce stigma to make sure that people don't feel shame and that shame isn't a barrier to people getting the care that they need.

It is—become very clear in this House that the Leader of the Opposition believes that stigmatizing people and shaming them is the approach that Manitobans want to see, and he's wrong. And members of his own caucus are trying to tell him that. We've had two resignations from the PC caucus in two days.

The only question he should be asking himself is, who's next?

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

Mr. Khan: Members opposite want to talk about courage and compassion. Great. You know what compassion is on this side of the House—and all Manitobans will agree—is helping someone out of the vicious cycle of drug addiction, not enabling them like this NDP government is doing.

This NDP government thinks it's compassion to allow pregnant women to inject themselves with illegal drugs. This NDP government thinks it's compassion to allow youth to access a drug consumption site. This NDP government thinks it's compassion—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —to allow first-time drug users into a consumption site. That's not courage. That's not compassion. That's being cowardly and that's playing to their misguided political ideology.

So I'll give the Premier (Mr. Kinew) another chance to stand up today, and will he say no to illegal drugs for youth, pregnant women and first-time users?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'm not sure if he did a quick count, but there are fewer people who can clap for the Leader of the Opposition now than there were, actually, when we walked into the Chamber this afternoon and this morning. It's a testament to the fact that his own caucus isn't buying into what he's saying. It's negative, it's divisive, it's harmful and, in fact, it's offside with his own campaign manager.

Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition looked stunned yesterday when it was revealed to him that his very own campaign manager has made very clear that supervised consumption sites save lives. It's a responsible harm reduction approach to take.

* (14:00)

And yet he comes back here in the House today—he's trying to shame and stigmatize pregnant women? He's trying to shame and stigmatize some of the most vulnerable Manitobans in this province.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Grocery Price Inflation Request for Plan to Address

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Everyone in the gallery here and at home can clearly see that—jokes and laughing on this side of the House. When I talk about not giving youth access to drugs, helping pregnant women, not injecting them with illegal drugs, this NDP government wants to laugh and make jokes. It's disgusting, it's despicable, and it's—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —unacceptable.

Honourable Speaker, on top of that crisis, we have an affordability crisis under this NDP government. Life is more expensive. Groceries are higher than they've ever been in the history of this province and this country. Food inflation is up 6.1 per cent under

this failing NDP government when it campaigned and promised to lower your food prices.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) commit today to tackling the cost of food inflation, and what is he going to do to lower that cost?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, our government takes very seriously making life more affordable for Manitobans, and every single budget are phenomenal. Some might say—we might say—I think Manitobans would say—the best Finance Minister in the country has done a phenomenal job bringing forward dozens of ways Manitobans can save.

We're doing a grocery study to make sure that we're doing everything we can to understand the market and take real action for Manitobans. The price of milk in Manitoba—cheaper for Manitobans under our government than it was for eight years under the members opposite. They did nothing; they made life more expensive. We're taking real action, making life more affordable.

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

Mr. Khan: Maybe the Minister of Health needs to go back and check what the Finance Minister got in his rating from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and Canadian independent businesses. What was it? It was an F. Definitely not the best Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) in the country; the absolute worst. He got an F.

Manitoba is almost \$4 billion in debt in just two and a half years under this NDP government. That is a clear F. Failure—failure on health care, failure on, now, affordability in Manitoba. Grocery prices are higher than they've ever been under this NDP government. Families are visiting food banks at historic levels in this province. Ages under 18 years old are at historic highs visiting food banks.

And what does this NDP government have to say? We're going to save you two cents on a litre of milk. It's embarrassing; it's shameful.

What will the Minister of Finance or the Premier or anyone on that side stand up with a real solution on tackling grocery prices under this NDP government?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we have the best Finance Minister in the country right here in Manitoba. And it's pretty obvious who's getting the

failing grade in this Chamber and it's definitely the Leader of the Opposition. And it's coming from his own caucus. The call is coming from inside his house.

Honourable Speaker, they did nothing for years. He did nothing when he was around the Cabinet table. He caused chaos in health care. He made life more expensive and now he thinks he has any credibility on affordability. He doesn't even have credibility in his own caucus.

We'll take no lessons from him. We're focused on Manitobans. We're going to keep fixing health care and making their lives more affordable.

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

Mr. Khan: It's actually no surprise that this Minister of Health thinks the Minister of Finance is doing a great job. They think an F is a great mark. They got a D—when it comes to health. So it's no surprise that the entire NDP government is failing.

But what also is concerning is for the people watching here. This is a very disturbing statistic that everyone should listen to: that more than two thirds of graduates—two thirds of graduates from university and college under this NDP government—are now visiting food banks. Your future is in worry under this NDP government. Two thirds—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —of graduates are visiting food banks.

Honourable Speaker, this NDP government has only made food costs go up. The Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) wants to continue to heckle me. She continue—wants to attack—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —when we're talking about food prices and affordability in Manitoba.

So I'll ask the Premier again: Will the Premier stand up and commit to saving Manitobans money other than giving millions of dollars to—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is the same person who thought that feeding hungry kids was a bad idea.

Honourable Speaker, he has no credibility. He had years around the Cabinet table with the failed PCs to take real action to make the futures of our kids brighter. He did nothing. Actually, he did something:

he cut health care, he made life less affordable and he attacked communities.

That leader of that opposition failed then, and he's failing now. He should focus much more on salvaging what's left of his caucus and leave the responsibilities of fixing health care, making life more affordable to the adults in the room on this side of the House.

Cost of Living in Manitoba Request to Address Affordability

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting that they are within \$200 from bankruptcy, and food prices keep going up. Manitoba has the second highest food inflation in the country. Vegetables are up over 5 per cent, the highest in Canada. Coffee is up 27 per cent, and ground beef has surged to a shocking increase of 39 per cent.

Families are struggling and they cannot even afford the basics at the grocery store.

Why, under this NDP, are Manitobans paying the highest food increases in Canada?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, after years of Manitobans having a government that wouldn't take action on affordability, they finally do.

We're proud to be doing that work, of course, making life more affordable up and down and around the entire province. And when it comes to groceries, one thing we're very proud to have done is to have brought in a freeze on the one-litre price of milk and to introduce more competition in our communities so more grocery stores are available to lower costs overall.

And we're very proud to have brought in the first-of-its-kind grocery study that is going to identify the way that we're going to reduce costs of groceries in this province.

The members opposite don't care; we do, and we're going to do the work of making life more affordable.

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

Mrs. Stone: Clearly, the motto of this NDP government is: Study and stall.

The studies have been done. What does this NDP government expect to find? Manitobans do not need another study. What they need is tangible, long-term tax relief that will help them pay for the food for

their families, heat their homes and pay the property taxes that this minister has jacked up.

Manitobans' inflation rate is the highest in the country at 3.7 per cent. Cost of living is the No. 1 concern, yet what has the NDP done? Jacked up education property taxes \$400 million, increased income taxes \$82 million and hiked hydro rates by 12 per cent over the next few years.

Manitobans are feeling the pinch.

Why does the NDP think it's okay to hike taxes on Manitobans during a cost-of-living crisis?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we cut the gas tax. We froze hydro rates. We reduced education property taxes. We cut your personal income taxes. We're doing the work. They made life more expensive; they know this.

When it comes to food, I'll share with the member honestly—and I beg them to actually look at this with an honest observation—we are doing the work of looking at how we can reduce the cost of groceries. The department in—within the Department of Finance, the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics is doing this study.

We trust them to look at this. We're going to look forward to seeing the recommendations that they bring forward, and we're earnestly looking to ensure that we can do everything we can to reduce the cost of groceries. Manitobans can count on it.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Study and stall, tax and spend: It's the motto of the NDP government over decades.

Food inflation is the second highest in Canada, yet the NDP refuse to call on the federal government to remove the hidden food carbon tax.

Fuel prices have soared to 143.9 cents a litre as of this morning, yet the NDP refuses to sign on to the Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan MOU to increase oil production in Canada domestically.

And the NDP government have increased taxes by almost half a billion dollars since they came into office.

Will this NDP minister admit that their decisions are making life more unaffordable for Manitoba—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, the members opposite are disconnected from reality.

* (14:10)

The member that's asking the question, nine of 10 individuals in their community are better off as a result of our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit—nine out of 10.

Again, we brought in the gas tax cut. We brought in the hydro rate freeze. We're cutting your education property taxes. We reduced your personal income taxes. We are doing that work, Honourable Speaker, and we're going to continue to do more work with that grocery study.

And you know what, Honourable Speaker? We're excited in our upcoming budget to show—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sala:—our next step forward in how we're going to reduce food prices for Manitobans.

Cost of Living in Manitoba Request to Address Affordability

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Every item in Manitoba household budgets is going up. Gas prices are soaring. Manitoba leads the country in food inflation. Hydro rates are going up. Property taxes are going up again. Manitoba parents are being forced to make tough choices between their kids' activities or paying their bills.

Why is this NDP government making life more expensive for Manitoba parents?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, they can keep repeating these talking points, but it won't make anything true. We know that for years, the members opposite made life more expensive for Manitobans.

Let's start with renters. Some of those Manitobans that are facing the most significant challenges: seniors, people on fixed incomes. What did they do? They hiked their taxes by \$175. What are we doing? We're restoring that tax credit to support renters in Manitoba.

They don't care about Manitobans struggling. They showed that for seven and a half years. We do, and every single day this team is going to get up and we're going to do the work of making life more affordable.

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, the facts don't lie. Life is more expensive under an NDP government. Education property taxes are going through the roof because this NDP government refuses to fund education properly and passes the buck to school boards. Grocery bills are skyrocketing because this government has allowed food inflation to soar unchecked.

And come tax time, families will be facing a higher tax bill because this NDP government de-indexed tax brackets.

How are Manitoba families supposed to keep up with this NDP government's assault on their household budgets?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine). *[interjection]*

Order.

An Honourable Member: Honourable Speaker, this team is proud to be finally doing the important work under the leadership of our Minister of Education, our Premier (Mr. Kinew), of funding education adequately after years of cuts under the members opposite.

We're finally doing that work and, of course, we're helping to keep the cost of education property taxes low with our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit. That was \$1,500 last tax season and is going up to \$1,600 this tax season. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: The members opposite, what did they do? They jacked cost of living for renters. They increased the cost of living for all Manitobans through their creative hydro rate hikes. They made life more expensive for producers by increasing the cost of rentals on Crown lands. That is their record on almost every metric. This team is lowering costs for Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin, final supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Manitoba parents are being squeezed like never before. The cost of child care, the cost of our children's activities, gas, groceries, hydro bills. Raising a family in 2026 is more expensive than it has ever been, and this NDP government is making the problem worse by de-indexing income tax rates, by raising property taxes, by jacking up hydro rates and allowing food inflation to soar.

If the NDP won't do anything to make life more affordable for Manitoba families, will they at least stop making the problem worse?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, just on a line-by-line list in terms of what was identified, they said that child care is more expensive. What did we do? Ten-dollar child care all year round.

They said we're making rent more expensive. They rent—they hiked rent—taxes on renters by \$175. What are we doing? Restoring the renter's tax credit.

They said that we're making groceries more expensive. We brought in a one-litre freeze on the price of milk. We brought in more grocery stores for more competition and we're going to be bringing in more measures in our upcoming budget.

And we know, finally, when it comes to education, they continue to make life more expensive. They failed to fund our education system properly. We're bringing credits to reduce your cost of education property taxes and we're going to keep doing that, Honourable Speaker, serving Manitobans every single day.

Measures to Address Affordability Crisis Investment in Jobs and Manitoba's Economy

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I don't think we need to overcomplicate affordability. It simply starts with the economy, and that means people having good jobs and strong economic opportunities close to home. The problem is, Manitobans' economic growth continues to lag behind much of the rest of the country, and businesses are telling us each and every day that it's becoming harder to invest, expand and make a profit here in Manitoba.

So my question for the minister is: How does he expect to improve affordability for Manitoba families if the government cannot create the economic conditions needed to grow jobs and investment right here in Manitoba.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, I'm delighted to have the chance to talk about the good work that this team is doing. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sala: Not only are we doing the work of making life more affordable, but under the leadership of, of course, of our minister for BMTJC and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this team, we've created over 30,000 new jobs in Manitoba since coming into government.

That's driven by things like our \$3.7-billion capital plan that we announced last budget. That's driven by things like our investments in CentrePort and trade-supporting infrastructure. That's driven by things like our investment in critical minerals and opening up more mines in Manitoba. That's driven by things like our investment in more tourism, bringing more people to Manitoba to bring their dollars here.

We're growing this economy. We're making life more affordable, things that the members opposite didn't do for seven and a half years.

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

Agriculture and Food Processing Sectors Regulatory Environment Adding to Food Costs

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Like I said in the first question, affordability is very simple. It starts with food, and food starts with agriculture and food production. Manitoba is one of the most productive agricultural regions in the entire world. Our farmers grow the food that feeds families not only across Canada, but around the globe. Yet despite being an agriculture powerhouse, Manitobans are still facing rising grocery prices and increasing costs throughout the food supply chain.

My question, Honourable Speaker: Why is this government making food more expensive for families by adding to the regulatory and tax burden for farmers and the agriculture and food processing sectors?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture): Finally—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kostyshyn: —I get an indirect question about agriculture.

You know what, Honourable Speaker, I've had the privilege to be at a number of AGM meetings with the turkey organization, the eggs organization, the chicken organizations. And let me tell you, the No. 1 thing they said: Thank you to the government of Manitoba today for making it—that they're in a profitable position for agriculture and the importance of food in the province of Manitoba.

Which—but last but not least, Honourable Speaker, I want to personally thank the agriculture producers from the ground up to the processors in this province—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Taxes and Debt Servicing Costs Impact on Affordability for Manitobans

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, that's an absolutely bizarre response to that question because every single agriculture producer that I've spoken to over the last two and a half years has said that the regulatory process and the convoluted

operation of this government is making operations tougher for every producer in Manitoba.

But you know what's even more concerning is that we're seeing taxes increase on every single Manitoban everywhere we turn. March 24, we're going to see a new budget, and every dollar spent servicing NDP debt is a dollar that cannot go towards increasing the position of our economy and helping Manitobans.

So, Honourable Speaker, my question is: Why doesn't this minister recognize that increasing taxes are making it harder—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Member opposite doesn't seem to be getting the memo. We are lowering taxes for Manitobans. That simple.

And while we do that, to the other part of the member's question, we're managing the books responsibly. Finally, after years of poor management, are the members opposite where they sent us into the fiscal ditch with a \$2-billion deficit. I'll say a \$2-billion deficit when there were no wildfires, when there wasn't a historic drought, when we didn't have tariffs applied. They still took us in that place.

What is this team doing? We're managing the books responsibly. We're building great relationships with investors, credit-rating agencies, and we're showing the path forward to that balanced budget commitment—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sala: —we made in '27-28. Manitobans can count on this team to manage the books responsibly while we invest in fixing the health care, affordability—

* (14:20)

The Speaker: And member's time has expired.

Cost of Living in Manitoba Request to Address Affordability

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): Honourable Speaker, across Manitoba, Manitoba families are struggling to manage their books with the struggling rise of groceries, rent, basic bills. Food bank usage continues to climb. Manitobans expect their government to focus on making life more affordable.

Will this government stand up today and commit to not raising taxes on Manitoba families?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, again, I'm delighted to have this chance to stand up and talk about all the important work we're doing to make life more affordable for Manitobans, especially those Manitobans that are facing those higher levels of challenges.

We know that, for years under the members opposite, they thought giving breakfast to kids was a bad idea at school. What did this team do to ensure that every kid in this province can start their day with a full tummy and get the best possible chance at success in school? Every single kid in this province now gets that snack through our universal school nutrition program.

We're supporting families through all of our various affordability measures, including, of course, the renters tax credit increases, the changes to the gas tax and beyond. And, of course, to further support those families that are struggling, we're building more—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Byram: Many Manitobans are doing everything right raising their families. They're working hard, looking after their children and contributing to their communities, yet they are still lining up at food banks because of the cost of living; it keeps rising. Instead of 'focusing' on these real priorities, this government seems to be losing control of affordability.

Why has this government allowed life to become so unaffordable for hard-working families here in Manitoba?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, again, we're proud to be doing that work of making life more affordable, and we've got, just in our last budget, 25 ways to save. The budget before that, we brought in a whole other long list. This upcoming budget, what can Manitobans expect? More affordability measures to make life easier.

We know, for years, the members opposite refused to do the work. They refused to do anything about the high cost of fuel.

What did we do? We cut the gas tax entirely for an entire year, and now we brought in a permanent 10 per cent cut to reduce fuel costs. We brought in a hydro rate freeze for an entire year. We reduced the cost of your education property taxes by \$1,500 last year, \$1,600 at this year at tax time.

Overall, this team, again, each and every day, is focused on making life more affordable while we fix—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Ms. Byram: Manitoba families want leadership focused on affordability, not—and stability, not political games. Hard-working Manitobans continue to see costs rise while affordability declines.

Based on this government's track record, how can Manitobans trust that the next budget won't make life even harder for families who are already struggling?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, how can Manitobans trust them?

They know that in many of their communities, eight, nine out of 10 people are better off as a function of our Education Property Tax Credit than they were under their measure. How do they go back to their communities and rationalize that when they look around and nine out of 10 people are better off?

That is the work that we're doing, Honourable Speaker: significant. A vast proportion of Manitobans are better off under that measure along with the huge suite of other measures we've taken to lower their costs. Again, whether it's through that hydro rate freeze, whether it's reducing their cost of gas, whether it's through our increasing of the renters tax credit.

For years, they didn't have a government that was focused on their needs. They didn't have a government that cared about their challenges. Finally, we have a government that is concerned about the challenges Manitobans face, and this team, each and every day—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Illegally Modified Firearms Prevention of Offenders from Obtaining

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, on March 7, just three days ago, Winnipeg police arrested an individual carrying a loaded, modified, fully automatic GLOCK handgun from someone who was already barred from possessing firearms.

Can the minister explain what role the Province is playing to keep illegal and illegally modified firearms off the streets and out of the hands of violent and repeat offenders?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): That's a great, great question from the member opposite. I appreciate her bringing it to the Legislature here today.

Keeping illegal guns off our streets is one of the most important things that we can do, and that's why we, of course, work with law enforcement. We've added officers here in the city of Winnipeg, but that actually extends broadly across the province.

And by setting up integrated units between the RCMP, the Winnipeg Police Service, Brandon Police, we know that we can have an effect on the illegal trade and movement of these guns.

It's all part of the work we're doing as part of our task force that we convened earlier this month. And we're going to continue that work to keep illegal guns off of our streets.

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

MLA Lamoureux: Honourable Speaker, just yesterday on March 9, Winnipeg police arrested and charged two individuals in a stolen vehicle with possession of a number of illegal substances like fentanyl, a loaded, illegally sawed-off rifle and multiple rounds of ammunition.

We need to make sure that guns are not ending up in the wrong hands. With two separate incidents occurring within two days, both involving restricted and illegally modified firearms, can the government share with Manitobans how these firearms are being obtained?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, an important topic, an important issue to bring to the Legislature here.

I had the opportunity to sit with police chiefs from across Manitoba, but also with RCMP and national representatives, CBSA and Canada's fentanyl czar here in the Legislature. We brought together these voices because we are focused on disrupting organized crime. And that includes, of course, toxic drugs that are coming into our communities, but also, importantly, as the member opposite mentioned, the illegal movement of firearms across this country.

I'm reluctant to share some of the details we learned at that table. Suffice it to say, we had all the experts at one table for the first time ever, and that's going to really bear results in keeping communities safe.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Protection from Gun Violence Request for Plan to Address

MLA Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Honourable Speaker, according to Stats Canada, in 2023, firearm-related crimes substantially increased here in Manitoba, averaging around 81 incidents per 100,000 people.

With concerns about rising gun violence here in Manitoba and across our country, what is the government doing provincially to protect Manitobans against gun violence right now and in the near future?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, well, as I said, Honourable Speaker, it's about working together.

Just this morning, I was at a conference that brought together security experts, intelligence operatives and police officers from across the country, and—including, in fact, some from the United States who have come up to work on this issue.

We know the illegal flow of guns, especially coming up from the United States, is certainly an issue we want to continue to be vigilant about. And I think there's an important note that the work that we're doing with the federal government to push them on bail reform, a true reform that's coming from the federal government. Members opposite never did that work. We're going to ensure that those who possess and use firearms are held to the highest account.

Menstrual Products Mandatory Availability in Workplaces

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Honourable Speaker, from safer access to abortion services to lowering the breast cancer screening age, our government is taking real action to improve women's health care. That's why, yesterday, we announced that for the first time ever, every—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Dela Cruz: —workplace in Manitoba will provide free menstrual products for their workers.

Can the Minister of Labour and Immigration please tell Manitobans more about the gravity of this initiative and what it holds for women and workers across this province? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we take women's health seriously, not just

on International Women's Day, but on every single day of the year.

Honourable Speaker, no one should have to worry about safe access to abortion, and no one should have to worry about safe access to basic necessities while at work, and that's why Manitoba is becoming the first province in the entire country to require workplaces to provide free pads and tampons. It's simple—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Marcelino: —but it's an important step that supports women's health and makes workplaces more fair and inclusive for everyone.

* (14:30)

Manitoba's Construction Sector Statement Regarding Manitoba Jobs Agreement

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I'm curious if the Minister of Labour has read the joint industry alert put out by the Winnipeg Construction Association, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba and Manitoba Heavy, warning all Manitoba construction companies of the high risk of bidding on government projects under the NDP's so-called Manitoba Jobs Agreements.

Has she read the industry alert?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I want to thank the member for that question.

We are listening to Manitobans and we are listening to Manitoba workers as well, Honourable Speaker. Manitoba Jobs Agreements are good news for all workers. MJAs are about hiring Manitoba first and making sure every worker has good wages, benefits and working conditions. This is about seeing more friendly licence plates on our work sites.

We know that both union and open-shop workers are the foundation of our construction industry. That's why MJAs are open to everyone.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

Mr. Guenter: You know, they didn't consult before they implemented the Manitoba Jobs Agreements, and it's concerning now that the minister—well, the Minister of Labour apparently isn't allowed to get up and answer questions although it's her file—but the minister won't say—Minister of Public Service Delivery won't say that he's read the industry alert either.

This unprecedented joint industry alert, unprecedented by the associations representing Manitoba's construction sector, goes on to say that the—this NDP government's MJA will significantly impact labour flexibility, cost structure and project delivery approach—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —and warrants an increase of administrative and compliance burden.

Question for the minister: How much more will it cost to build schools, hospitals, bridges and roads now that the government has effectively erased competitive fair bidding on government projects?

MLA Sandhu: I was very happy to announce that we were at the—were—new school announcement today where we did a sod-turning ceremony which will be having—creating good, bankable jobs with MJA, Honourable Speaker.

This is about protecting Manitoba jobs, Honourable Speaker. I don't know why the opposition want to bring the labour force from out of province. Why? That's the question to them. Maybe that's the reason some of their members are leaving, because they don't care about Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Borderland, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Guenter: You know, the reason—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —the only ones in Manitoba cheering for this MJA are the NDP because they're going to be lining their pockets with taxpayer funds, and we can demonstrate—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —that and the industry leaders can demonstrate that. *[interjection]*

Can the Minister of Labour—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Everybody needs to calm down. I can't hear; the member's screaming.

Mr. Guenter: This industry alert was put out as a warning to all Manitoba construction companies to beware of dealing with this government.

Can the minister tell this House what impact her government's MJA will have on the unemployment

rate for Manitobans who work in the construction sector when Manitoba companies can't afford to bid on government projects?

MLA Sandhu: My question is again to the opposition benches: Why you hate Manitoba workers? Each and every day, this side of the House, we—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sandhu: —will always prioritize Manitoba workers, Manitoba companies.

Honourable Speaker, we care about Manitoba workers. That's why, on this side the House, we signed the first MJA in the history of this government and we are building four new schools under MJA with the first one—we just did a sod-turning ceremony this morning at the Highland.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: Order. *[interjection]* Order.

The NDP bench needs to come to order.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Petitions.

The Speaker: Petitions.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Teaching Certification

Mr. Khan: I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects—I got to go back—ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

These amendments—oh, (3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable

subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: first point, senior years' credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early/middle year credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early- to middle-years credit requirements for specific subjects, including math, physical or biological science, English or French and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the facilities of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without significant training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoban students receive.

We petition the—apologize, Honourable Speaker. We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle year requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous and subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

Honourable Speaker, this petition has been signed by Ian Burley, Samantha Cook and Tammi Chowdhury, along with many, many other Manitobans.

* (14:40)

Education Property Taxes

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

The background—to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property

tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and compounded by the arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, and those changes have made many Manitobans ineligible to receive the \$1,500 rebate.

(3) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rates; yet, secondary property owners are still required to pay full education taxes in their division.

(4) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced Education Property Tax Credit on their primary residence.

(5) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying education taxation to assessed property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This is signed by Darryl [*phonetic*]—Dale Reed, Nicole Toews, Larry Overby and many, many more Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Thanks to the investments made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction of the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous people in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aero-dome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition was signed by Martha Harris, Bev Teezen [*phonetic*], E. Desjarlais and many, many other fine Manitobans.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and a computer-generated radio-computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

* (14:50)

(6) Located in the close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide an opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This is signed by Maria Victor, Stan Lambert, Pauline Calder and many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

New Neepawa Health Centre

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Neepawa Health Centre is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from the added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of a CT scanner.

(2) The new hospital is being built east of Neepawa, on the north side of Yellowhead Highway, PTH 16. It will be nearly double the size of the existing hospital and will better serve patients from this broader, western Manitoba geographic area.

(3) CT scanners are standard equipment that combine X-ray images from several angles to create detailed, three-dimensional models of structures inside the body. They perform critical diagnostic procedures that support the diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of injuries and diseases, and the new equipment will be able to complete these important scans faster and with sharper and clearer images.

(4) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive a CT scan is currently seven weeks, and there are over 14,000 patients on the wait-list to receive the diagnostic imaging procedures.

(5) The new CT scanner will reduce these wait times as it would decrease the need for patients to travel long distances, sometimes involving overnight stays, to access the care they need.

(6) The new scanner will reduce pressure on emergency response services, who would no longer have to transport these patients, opening up appointments in other communities and allowing more people to get the care they need sooner.

(7) A CT scanner in the Neepawa Health Centre will enable further treatment and diagnosis to take place in community, reducing the wait times for patients in surrounding areas and reducing the burden of travel to other facilities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of a CT scanner machine in the Neepawa Health Centre in Neepawa, Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Jaymie Yabago [*phonetic*], Roberto Tembella [*phonetic*] and Dorthe Tripp and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, and the reasons for this petition are as follows:

(1) Kellie Verwey, a beloved young woman from Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, was tragically killed in a car crash caused by a repeat violent offender with a long criminal history.

(2) Despite repeated violations of his bail conditions, the offender was free to roam the streets and to ultimately claim Kellie's life. This tragedy was entirely preventable.

(3) While the Criminal Code falls under federal jurisdiction, provinces have been given the responsibility for the administration of justice, allowing for meaningful provincial action on bail reform to ensure public safety.

(4) Other provinces have taken proactive steps to strengthen bail enforcement, but Manitoba has not used all the available tools to address this issue effectively.

(5) The provincial government has the ability and the responsibility to advocate for and implement measures that protect its citizens by ensuring that repeat violent offenders are not released into our communities without proper safeguards.

(6) Immediate action is required to close gaps in the justice system that allow dangerous criminals to remain free, which puts innocent Manitobans at risk.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate and decisive action on bail reform to address serious deficits in enforcement by utilizing all available provincial mechanisms to strengthen warrant enforcement, increasing bail supervision and opposing release of offenders, thus ensuring that repeat violent offenders are held accountable and that public safety is prioritized over leniency; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to immediately repeal provisions of the Criminal Code that allow for the continued victimization of law-abiding Manitobans while granting repeat offenders additional rights.

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by David Mulaire, Vance English, Kimberly Markus and many other fine Manitobans.

Phoenix School

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Phoenix School, a kindergarten to grade 5 school located in Headingley, has experienced consistent enrolment growth over the last several years. Enrolment is expected to reach 275 students in the next two years.

Because the school is now over capacity, the school division has had to install portable classrooms on site as of fall 2024.

For several consecutive years, the top capital priority of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division has been the renovation and expansion of Phoenix School.

In 2022, the Phoenix School expansion and renovation project was approved to proceed to the design phase. The project included, among other amenities, a new gymnasium, two new classrooms, a multi-purpose room and room for 74 child-care spaces.

In June 2024, the school division received notice from the provincial government that the project has been deferred. There is no guarantee if, or when, the project will move forward.

There are currently hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. The daycare operator in Phoenix School has been told that they will continue to have space within the school for the 2024-2025 school year only, that further expansion of child-care space within the school is not possible and that space may be reduced moving forward due to the shortage of classrooms. If new space is not constructed as planned, many families may be left without child care.

It is critical that the expansion and renovation of Phoenix School proceed as planned in order to support the needs of students, teachers and families in the growing community of Headingley.

* (15:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to proceed with the planned renovation and expansion of Phoenix School without further delay.

And this petition is signed by Mallory MacEachern, Katie Oleson, Patti [*phonetic*] Tokar and many, many other Manitobans.

Education Property Taxes

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government's decision to cancel the Education Property Tax Credit and the property tax offset grant has enabled and encouraged school divisions to introduce massive tax increases.

(2) These massive increases have been felt by all Manitobans and, compounded by arbitrary and punitive changes to the education property tax rebate, have made many Manitobans ineligible.

(3) Residents of the rural municipality of Victoria Beach are currently subject to a 26.6 per cent increase on their 2025 property tax bills as they fall within the catchment of the Lord Selkirk School Division.

(4) Victoria Beach residents are paying a disproportionate rate per pupil, totalling almost \$300,000 in taxes collected per student in the RM.

(5) Secondary property owners are subject to taxation without representation as they are ineligible to vote for trustees who set the rate but are still required to pay.

(6) Additionally, families can only claim the reduced education property tax rebate on their primary residence.

(7) These increases and the revocation of rebates were done suddenly and with no consultation, punishing Manitobans who maintain family cabins by tying taxation to property values.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately reverse these unfair and punishing tax policy changes and restore education property tax rebates for all Manitobans.

This petition is signed by Maria Mikanoz [*phonetic*], Grace Plewczynski, Stan Mikanoz [*phonetic*] and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Persons struggling with mental health as their sole condition may access medical assistance in dying unless Parliament intervenes.

(2) Suicidality is often a symptom of mental illness, and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the age of 10 and 19.

(3) There have been reports of the unsolicited introduction of medical assistance in dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

(4) Legal and medical experts are deeply concerned that permitting Canadians suffering from depression and other mental illnesses to access euthanasia would undermine suicide prevention efforts and risk normalizing suicide as a solution for those suffering from mental illness.

(5) The federal government is bound by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

(6) Manitobans consider it a priority to ensure that adequate supports are in place for the mental health of all Canadians.

(7) Vulnerable Manitobans must be given suicide prevention counselling instead of suicide assistance; and

(8) The federal government should focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering medical assistance in dying for those with mental illness.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling

with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest increases.

(3) Agriculture and agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added to every step of the process for Manitoba's agricultural producers. In order to make 18 cents from one loaf of bread worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax on every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating is—a livestock barn, machine shops and utility billings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

In food production, there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable, hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and agri-food sector

to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition was signed by Crystal Heinrichs, John Heinrichs and Jacob Heinrichs. Thank you—and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I wish to present the following petition.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for a new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from an added diagnostic machinery—from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

* (15:10)

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in Southern Health/Saunt Sud [*phonetic*] health authority. Currently, there is only one MRI machine and—in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than

adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This petition was signed by Hailey LaBelle, Charlotte Jones and J.W. Woodward, along with many, many other fine Manitobans.

Construct New Personal-Care Home—Stonewall

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The government of Manitoba funded the design for a new personal-care home in Stonewall to address the critical need for additional care-home spaces in the community and the surrounding areas.

(2) The community has committed to raise \$10 million in funding for this project, demonstrating strong local support and readiness to proceed with construction.

(3) Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority is experiencing a critical shortage of personal-care-home beds.

(4) Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority has the lowest number of personal-care-home beds per capita, with a shortfall of approximately 400 beds.

(5) Despite these approvals, the government has made no mention of the construction of the Stonewall personal-care home, leaving many seniors and their families without access to adequate personal-care services in the region.

(6) The delay in commencing construction exacerbates existing challenges in providing timely and appropriate care for aging residents, forcing some to seek services far from their families and their community.

(7) Investing in the timely construction of this personal-care home will provide essential services to a growing senior population, support the local economy and demonstrate the government's commitment to the well-being of Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately restore funding and commence construction on the personal-care home in Stonewall, ensuring that this essential project proceeds without further delay.

This petition has been signed by Todd Campbell, Leonard Lindley, Brian Sackney and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Green Valley School Expansion

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The residents of La Vérendrye and other areas around Manitoba are extremely frustrated and concerned by the provincial government's decision to cancel the school expansion project for the Green Valley School in Grunthal.

(2) In 2021, the PC provincial government committed funding to expand Green Valley School for a new gymnasium and classrooms.

(3) The school is so crowded that three mobile classrooms were added to alleviate overcrowding in classrooms.

(4) In order for construction to begin, the school removed all three portable classrooms, leaving Green Valley in a further critical state of overcrowding.

(5) As a result of overcrowding, parents are choosing to home-school their children due to safety concerns and the challenges associated with overcrowding.

(6) The current Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning have said they are committed to investing in education.

(7) The concerns of residents of La Vérendrye and the surrounding area are being ignored by the provincial government.

(8) The lack of space in the school is affecting the quality of education and extracurricular activities for students.

(9) The minister and Premier have a duty to respond to the educational needs of children and youth identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (15:20)

(1) To urge the Minister Education and Early Childhood Learning to immediately bring back three portable classrooms to help alleviate the stress and overcrowding classrooms.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reinstate the expansion project for Green Valley School.

And this petition has been signed by Ken Friesen, Linda Brown, Dave Clarenbould [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

(2) An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

(4) An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to the new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

Honourable Speaker, this petition is been signed by Linda Picard, Norm Picard, Mike Hordeski and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

Removal of Federal Carbon Tax

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Honourable Speaker, I want to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The federal government has mandated a consumption-based carbon tax, with the stated goal of financially pressuring Canadians to make decisions to reduce their carbon emissions.

(2) Manitoba Hydro estimates that, even with a high-efficiency furnace, the carbon tax is costing the average family over \$200 annually, even more for those with older furnaces.

Home heating in Manitoba is not a choice or a decision for Manitobans to make; it is a necessity of life, with the average of almost 200 days below 0°C annually.

(4) The federal government has selectively removed the carbon tax off of home heating oil in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, but has indicated they have no intention to provide the same relief to Manitobans heating their homes.

(5) Manitoba indicates that natural gas heating is one of the most affordable options available to Manitobans, and it can be cost prohibitive for households to replace the heating source.

(6) Premiers across Canada, including in the Atlantic provinces that benefit from this decision, have collectively sent a letter to the federal government, calling on it to extend the carbon tax exemption to all forms of home heating, with the exception of Manitoba.

(7) Manitoba is one of the only provincial jurisdictions to have not agreed with the stance of all Canadians' home heating bills should be exempt from the carbon tax.

Provincial—(8) Provincial leadership in other jurisdictions have already commented to removing—committed to removing the federal carbon tax from home heating bills.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove the federal carbon tax on home heating bills for all Manitobans to provide them with much-needed relief.

This petition has been signed by Darryl Jackson, Mandy Landers, Charlotte Parham and many, many other Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made by the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage regional health facility is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

An MRI machine is a non-invasive medical imaging technique that uses a magnetic field and computer-generated radio waves to create detailed

images of organs and tissues in the human body. It is used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on the No. 1 Highway in the Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden on stretcher service and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across the province.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their home communities and provide greater access to diagnostic testing.

(6) Located in close proximity to their new Portage regional health facility is the Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

* (15:30)

(7) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility will help reduce these wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This is signed by Candace Preston, Jess Brooks and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt)—Swan River.

Provincial Trunk Highway 45

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for the petition:

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

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

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

(4) Safer roads further benefit both competitive-ness and commercial—or commuters and commercial vehicles, minimizing accidents and damage.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Bennett Foster, Shelly Kaskiw and Mark Laycock and many, many other fine Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further petitions, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call the start of second reading of Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; followed by Bill 10, The Employment Standards Code

Amendment Act (Attachment Leave for Adoption and Surrogacy).

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that we will do second reading of Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; followed by Bill 10, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Attachment Leave for Adoption and Surrogacy).

SECOND READINGS

Bill 31—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

The Deputy Speaker: I will therefore call debate on Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (MLA Marcelino), that Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wiebe: Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

This bill amends The Highway Traffic Act to enhance and further Manitoba's licensing and suspension regime by strengthening the sanctions and extending alcohol-related restrictions to address impaired driving. It takes further concrete steps to separate the use of alcohol from the privilege and the responsibility of driving on Manitoba roads.

The bill will increase roadside suspension lengths, expand mandatory participation in the Ignition Interlock Program, extend the application of alcohol prohibitions following certain convictions and offences and introduce a new zero per cent blood alcohol content rule when drivers are operating certain large vehicles.

This legislation, honourable Speaker, was developed with and by the advocates and the victims of impaired driving in this province, including, and most importantly, the work of MADD Canada, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving. I want to specifically shout-out my friend and amazing advocate, Tanya Hansen-Pratt, as well as MADD Manitoba, Trevor Ens and many more families that have been a part of developing this important legislation.

This reflects the work that they and so many other victims are willing to come to the table to do even though they have been devastated by the impacts of impaired driving. And we once again seek to lead the

country and develop some of the toughest impaired driving legislation anywhere in this country in conjunction with them to ensure that the message gets out to all Manitobans: If you're impaired, don't get behind the wheel.

This legislation reflects the work that our department has done following my commitment to bring legislation incrementally to this Legislature to continue to build on some of the toughest laws anywhere in the country and I look forward to having all-party support of it.

I'll just review some of the important changes that are being made by this legislation for the information of members opposite.

First, a new zero per cent blood alcohol concentration for drivers when operating a class 1, 2, 3 and 4 commercial emergency vehicle's provision is established. This bill also introduces a new zero per cent blood alcohol concentration requirement for drivers when they are operating class 1 through 4 vehicles. This is a stringent alcohol restriction, and it's important—it's an important preventative measure that is aligned with the higher operating and safety standards that we already expect of those who are operating those class of vehicles.

Drivers operating class 1 to 3–1 to 4 commercial large passenger and emergency vehicles, these are professional drivers who must meet a higher training, testing and medical fitness standard in order to obtain and retain their licences. These higher standards reflect the nature of their work and of their elevated duty of care to other road users. Due to their size, when collisions involve these vehicles, the risk of serious injury or death is significantly higher.

This bill removes any risk that alcohol consumption might compromise judgment, reaction time, focus, hazard recognition and the ability to assess their level of impairment. This is essential for the safe operation of commercial and emergency vehicles and the safety of the public. Manitobans want confidence that commercial drivers are safe and that they are being held to the highest standards possible.

* (15:40)

Secondly, currently under the immediate roadside prohibition, the IRP regime, drivers who register a warn on an approved screening device—that is, a blood alcohol level of 0.05 to 0.79—are suspended from driving for three days if it is their first incident. This bill will increase that suspension from three days to seven days. The length of the suspension for

subsequent occurrences will remain the same: 15, 30 and 60 days.

The bill also adds four days to the suspension length in all instances where a driver registers a warn if there is a passenger under the age of 16 in the vehicle. This change ensures that the extra suspension for exceeding the HTA alcohol limit with a child in the vehicle applies to all incidents, not just the first occurrence.

Thirdly, currently drivers who refuse to be screened or who register a fail on an approved screening device are subject to a three-month suspension—administrative suspension—following—followed by a period where they are required to participate in an ignition interlock program. However, in certain cases, if a driver is also charged criminally, they are not subject to the Ignition Interlock Program immediately following their three-month administrative suspension.

These amendments extend the post-suspension IIP requirement to all cases of three-month roadside suspensions. This means that ignition interlock requirement will begin as soon as the three-month suspension ends, including when the driver is also awaiting trial on criminal charges. The Ignition Interlock Program is an important intervention that separates drinking alcohol from driving.

Fourth: the bill will also impose an alcohol prohibition on all drivers who are convicted of any impaired-related offence and to drivers who register a fail or refuse screening under the immediate roadside prohibition regime. This alcohol prohibition, which requires drivers to have a zero per cent BAC, will start immediately when the person is convicted criminally or when the roadside HTA suspension is issued, and will end when they have a valid licence for two years for a first offence.

In the case of a second offence within two–10 years, the driver will be subject to a lifetime alcohol prohibition. They will not be allowed to drink any alcohol and drive again. If a driver breaches their zero per cent BAC alcohol prohibition, they will be subject to additional sanctions that mirror those at the IRP warn tier and include licence suspension starting at seven days for the first breach and escalating for each subsequent breach to 15, 30 and 60 days; vehicle impoundment for three days after the first breach and then increasing for each subsequent breach to seven and 30 days.

Following a second breach within any 10-year period, there is a referral to Addictions Foundation of

Manitoba for a driver's assessment. The interlock–ignition interlock is imposed following a third breach and the administrative penalty of \$400 following a first breach and increasing with each subsequent incident, as well as a licence reinstatement fee of \$50.

This alcohol prohibition will strengthen road safety. Impaired driving continues to be a scourge in Manitoba and it poses extremely serious road safety concerns. As I said, honourable Speaker, we are working with victims and advocates who work every single day to ensure that our roads are safer and that people get the message: If you are impaired, don't get behind the wheel.

Our government is committed to that work and we look forward to working with the opposition to get this bill passed promptly.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'm certainly glad to see this government on board with some very proactive measures when it comes to highway traffic act amendments and impaired driving.

Can the minister tell us what the costs are of the ignition interlock system that drivers must put into their vehicles after a roadside suspension, and who will install them in the vehicles?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, a good question from the member opposite.

If he's looking for a dollar figure, I don't have that in front of me right now. Of course, this isn't a new technology. This is something that's being employed right now in many vehicles for many drivers who are subject to these conditions at this point. This is simply expanding their use and closing loopholes that were created under previous legislation. We're tightening it up to make sure our roads are safe.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): As my colleague had stated, it's always welcomed when the government's proactive on legislation to make the highways safer.

I'd just—I'd like to ask some questions, and one of those being that I'm unaware of—if this is a large issue, a small issue, something to close a loop, but how many professional drivers that have been found on the job to be impaired and how many accidents have been caused by impaired operation of vehicles within those classes?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, happy to discuss further with the member for specifics that he's looking for.

Again, what this is doing is sending a very clear message to all Manitobans, but specifically those commercial drivers. They are operating large, dangerous vehicles. We expect the highest standards from the folks that are operating those.

I would probably think that most people that work in that industry are doing so very responsibly. We want to send the message to those who aren't that zero BAC is the standard that they need to meet.

Mr. Balcaen: I've heard the minister say a couple of times that these individuals are operating the large vehicles and the largest ones on the road. Actually, it could be a smart car that a person's operating if it's a class 4 and it's a taxi, so we have to make sure that we're ensuring that the public is aware of all of this.

So I'll go back to my previous question with interlock—ignition interlock. Will the government or the community have the capacity to install all of these if there's a number of people convicted and told that they have to have the interlock system installed?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, the interlock program is an important one, and we know that community can support that.

Addressing the member's previous point, he's right. Anytime someone is transporting passengers, that puts an additional responsibility to those passengers' care. The standard should be clear: zero per cent BAC. That's the standard that we expect of anyone operating, again, a large vehicle, a vehicle carrying passengers, an emergency vehicle.

You know, members opposite, I think, should agree that that's an important standard and a message to send to all Manitobans.

Mr. Narth: So, from the response for my last question and my colleague's question here, we've clarified that it's a range of professional driving classes. This could

be something that's opened up to taxicabs, and we'd all expect that a taxicab driver would not have any blood alcohol while they're driving.

So my question is, why would it not be expanded to Uber drivers?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, interesting line of questioning. Members opposite, of course, are members of a party that refused to work with the taxi industry to regulate ride sharing in a way that would be, again, constructive in a scenario such as this.

You know, he's right. There is a simple class 5 licence required for Uber drivers. You know, I think there's definitely some work that we can do to ensure that everyone is safe.

But, again, this is about sending that message that we expect that if you are driving these vehicles, if you have a class 1 to 4 licence and you're operating one of those vehicles, zero BAC is the standard.

* (15:50)

Mr. Balcaen: Minister's absolutely right. We have to send a clear message in this province about zero BAC when they're operating vehicles, and I'm personally a proponent of any vehicle being driven.

I notice in this it talks about having a child 16 years or younger in the vehicle and having additional suspension parts. Where did that idea come from?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, great question. Our government's all about protecting kids. This is an important step in that direction. But as I said at the outset, this work has been done, you know, in conjunction with MADD Canada, who have an incredible amount of capacity to develop legislation across the country but certainly have worked closely with my department to ensure that my pledge to Manitobans, that we're going to continue to make our roads safer.

We're going to crack down on impaired driving each and every single year. We're going to continue to lead the country. Again, kudos to MADD Canada for working with us to develop this legislation.

Mr. Narth: I'll maybe reposition my question on what the extent of drivers within that class range functioning unsafely by being found to have a blood alcohol content above zero. And I'll leave the minister to expand on that because, so far, what we've gotten is that it's only a signal, is—this bill is only a signal and it does not answer any call for safety.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I'm not sure, to be perfectly honest, honourable Speaker, the—you know, the tactics or the strategy being employed by members opposite. This is real legislation. This is developed in conjunction with MADD Canada. It's going to make a difference in keeping our roads safe.

And by doing this and by sending a signal, hopefully a united signal from this Legislature, that impaired driving needs to be stamped out in our province, it's going to make a difference. So it's sending a signal and it's making a difference in concrete, specific ways that I'm happy to delve more into.

Mr. Balcaen: You know what, sending a signal is important, but having something to back it up is even more important, and making sure that there's the laws and the legislations in place to not only send that signal but have some sort of denunciation and deterrence. So I have to agree with my colleague from La Vérendrye.

Can the minister tell us how this new legislation compares to other jurisdictions in Canada provincially? Are we now going to be back to No. 1 in Canada after many years of neglect from this government?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, under former NDP governments, we led the country. Of course, under the former PC government, we were last in a lot of these areas. We are seeking to be the strongest in Canada and that is our goal.

But, you know, I'm curious which parts the member opposite don't think should be included here. Should he—does he think we shouldn't increase the roadside suspension lengths for driving over the alcohol limit; that we shouldn't expand mandatory participation in the interlock program; that we shouldn't extend the application of blood alcohol prohibitions to certain convictions and offences? Which part of this bill is he saying isn't important in saving lives on Manitobans' roads?

Mr. Narth: I think we can all agree that sending a strong message for increased safety is important. The problem that I'm having on this side of the House is, when we ask the minister the rationale and justification for drafting a bill, he doesn't have any.

And the same concerns stem from our highways being increasingly less safe, more commercial truck accidents than we've ever seen before and honest, clear-driving-record, hard-working Manitobans not being able to get extension policies by this

NDP government and their Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, but yet we're coming up with legislation—

The Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, again, you know, the member opposite—I guess he's got speaking notes that were provided to him from his caucus. He's following his leader's lead on really just, you know, driving us into the gutter. He's not going to have the courage as other members in his caucus have had.

But again, I just want him to just explain to me which part of this bill does he not like. Does he not like that we're imposing the zero BAC for commercial drivers, that we're consolidating these definitions related to alcohol and drugs to reduce duplication, that we're changing sections and we're renumbering to ensure that alcohol prohibition when operators are on the roads are being safe, extending the application to certain convictions and offences?

Again, the member opposite—

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

Mr. Narth: I'll try to refrain from looking down on my notes here as the minister had said.

But my question for the minister is: Can the minister agree that the highways through Manitoba are becoming less safe each and every year and that the data supports that with the amount of commercial vehicle accidents, while the minister at the same time is bringing forward legislation that he cannot support?

I support it. It'd be interesting to hear the minister say that he's got data to support that, but yet we don't see it. So would the minister be able to answer that highways are becoming increasingly less safe across Manitoba?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, stay tuned. We're going to have more to say about keeping our roads safer, but when it comes to impaired driving, this is legislation that's developed in conjunction with MADD Canada. It's developed with the victims of impaired driving.

You know, member opposite should spend some time talking to some of those families, spend some time with them here directly. You know what they've lived through. Yes, I'm really surprised by the member opposite's take on this. Again, might reflect their leader's position and maybe, you know, betrays why so many folks in their caucus are leaving at this point.

Mr. Balcaen: A lot of this legislation revolves around the IRP program and the immediate roadside prohibition. I'm wondering if the minister can comment on

what year that came into effect and who introduced that legislation.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, as I said, honourable Speaker, a few times now, I've been around this place for a few years and having a little bit of experience in this place, maybe I can help the members opposite understand how this has been done in the past.

You know, what we used to do as a government is bring forward really good legislation like this, and then the opposition would say, you're right, let's get this done. And, you know, the members opposite, again, they are taking the lead of their leader and they're willing to go to any lengths to block even good legislation. We've seen that in the past legislative session.

You know, I'm wondering why members opposite think this is funny. Not sure I understand why the member opposite thinks this is funny.

The Deputy Speaker: Time has expired.

Mr. Balcaen: Speaking of blocking legislation, last year there were some great amendments brought forward regarding The Highway Traffic Act specifically to talk about having a child in a vehicle and increasing suspensions, and that came from our side of the House making that suggestion.

I'm just wondering if that was the catalyst for this minister to add that to the legislation, because he knows good legislation when he sees it, as he's already seen.

Mr. Wiebe: As I said, honourable Speaker, we listen to the experts like MADD Canada. If the member opposite wants to take credit for it, great. He can have credit for this whole piece of legislation. If he's on board with this, if he wants to pass it right now, let's get to work and let's get this passed in the Legislature.

* (16:00)

It's not time for games. It's not time for laughter. It's not time for goofing around like these guys do on a regular basis. It's time to make our roads safer, it's time to listen to victims and it's time to make a difference for impaired driving in this province.

Members opposite should just get on board, stop goofing around, stop listening to their leader and get serious with Manitobans.

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

Debate

The Deputy Speaker: But the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'm so proud to be up here today and speak about legislation that really impacts something that Manitobans care about deeply. Manitobans are concerned about impaired driving on our roadways. They're concerned about their safety and they know that legislation has been blocked by this government, the NDP government, prior—last session and the session before—talking about the importance of that.

And I would be remiss if I didn't bring forward the discussion involving the Reimer family and the Verwey family that have suffered such devastating consequences because of impaired driving and because of unsafe use of our roadways. And it's really those individuals that need the credit, not the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) parading around saying, oh, look what I've done. It is really those individuals that bring the need for that forward, and the individuals that have suffered greatly because of the impacts of impaired driving.

Having this legislation, I can say—and the minister said—we need to pass this; I'm sure by the end of today this legislation will see passage at this stage. The minister and this NDP government often get upset when we ask tough questions. Tough questions need to be asked when we're making legislations for Manitobans because this legislation, as we know, will be on the books for many years, but we want to make sure we do it right the first time.

And, unfortunately, we don't see this often with this government. We've seen last-minute changes, we've seen spiraling legislation at the committee stage because they haven't been prepared, they've tried to rush things through. So when my colleagues and myself and any member on this side of the House ask those difficult questions, it's nice to get a respectful answer and an answer that will actually benefit Manitobans and the people that we serve. And not posturing and not trying to inflame the issue, but making sure that when we bring legislation forward, it's proper and we listen to all people.

And as a matter of fact, a lot of the experts have advice, and we take it from experts when we consult, and I'm hoping that this minister also does that and makes sure that Manitobans are kept as safe as possible, particularly on our roadways.

As my colleague from La Vérendrye mentioned, statistically our roadways are getting much more

dangerous with the number of class 1, 2, 3 and 4 drivers that we're seeing on there. And we have to make sure that we respond to that responsibly.

And I do believe that this legislation is responding to a lot of the concerns that we have, a lot of concerns that Manitobans have, a lot of concerns that families have. Because impaired driving causes significant damage not just to the families, not just to those who immediately suffer, but the long-term effects and impacts that it has on the communities and the individuals' friends, families and the greater, as I said, communities that these individuals are involved with.

And I know when we talk about what's happened with impaired driving and when there's a death, that has impacts even across the educational system in the schools where these individuals went to and the workplaces that these individuals went to.

And I'll use Jordyn Reimer's passing at the hands of the impaired driving and the dangerous driving that she was unfortunately subject to. It happened here in Winnipeg, but Jordyn worked in Brandon. And the irony of it is that she worked for Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, which is charged with the licensing and the registrations and, you know, ultimately part of the cascading effect of keeping our community and our roadways safe.

She was a hockey player that made—that was involved with female hockey, and it actually impacted all the way to the Olympics this year, because friends of hers played on that Olympic team and I'm sure she had Olympic dreams and the possibility of being there.

So, honourable deputy Speaker, Bill 31 is an important piece of legislation to protect Manitobans. And I think it's important that we continually protect Manitobans, but that we also listen to all sides because if good ideas come forward—and nobody in this Chamber has a monopoly on good ideas—when good ideas come forward or suggestions, we need to work together. We need to listen. This government claims to be a listening government, but are they actually hearing what is being asked of them, of what's being said by individuals when it comes to legislation such as this?

And it is so very important when we talk about all of the different classes that this is going to impact with a zero BAC, or blood alcohol concentration. This is going to put a significant responsibility on those professional drivers, because not only do they now have to be zero BAC, they will have to make sure that if they consume alcohol or intoxicating substances,

that they are ensuring that they are fit for duty when they start the ignition of their vehicles, whether it be a bus driver, whether it be a person driving an ambulance, any emergency vehicles, a taxi or up to the semis that are out on the road. It'll be up to them to ensure, as professional drivers and the responsibility that they have, to have a zero blood alcohol concentration when they get behind the wheel.

And, you know what, that's an important factor to protecting Manitobans and all of us on the roadways, including other vehicle operators, cyclists, pedestrians or all vulnerable road users.

So, yes, impaired driving is an extremely serious offence and we've seen that happen throughout legislative changes, whether it be through provincial legislation or through Criminal Code processes, moving from impaired operation of a vehicle to even simply naming it the impaired operation of a conveyance to allow for all sorts of machinery or vehicles that can convey people or move people.

Those simple changes really send messages, but they're also enforceable. So if you're found operating a conveyance, then you are going to be subject to Criminal Code charges for impaired driving, impaired operation, driving over 80 milligrams per cent, refusal of any of those—which is also very important to talk about because many people, when they're given the opportunity to take a roadside test or to do a Breathalyzer, demand—they refuse to do so.

* (16:10)

And so what legislation has said, and what this legislation also ensures, is that people that refuse to do this, or people that deny that they're involved will also suffer the consequences. They can't just hide behind the fact that they said no and they don't have a reading; now they have to show—or now that they will be held accountable for refusing that. Which is extremely important, and I know every single member on this side of the House within our caucus supports strong legislation against impaired driving.

We want to make sure that Manitobans are protected and they are the No. 1—not just Manitobans but anybody who uses our roadways, because, let's face it, many people come to Manitoba to visit our beautiful province, and I'm proud to invite all of those individuals into our province and help our economy. Lord knows we need that right now.

Making sure that we protect those people goes deeper than just talk, and having legislation puts that into action. Professional drivers with a class 1, for

example, operating semis, really do put people at extreme risk if they're operating while impaired. And let's make that risk—any vehicle is, but if you're in a collision with the person operating a vehicle that's tens of thousands of pounds travelling down the highway, or somebody who's on a bicycle, it makes a significant difference on the impact of lives and serious injury, damage.

So having this impact on class 1 drivers is very important, and I would dare say that an extremely large percentage of professional class 1 drivers are responsible, as are the class 2, as are the class 3 and certainly the class 4 that we're talking about.

But it's just like the saying with a—with one bad apple can ruin the barrel, so if we have one bad actor, if we have one bad apple in those licence categories, it sends a message to the public that they can't trust that, and that's simply not the case. We need to weed out those bad apples and we need to make sure that they're held accountable for this.

And I'm very pleased to see the addition of operating any of these vehicles while you are carrying a youth in the vehicle. I brought that legislation—or that amendment forward last year. Unfortunately, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and his committee at the time wouldn't listen to it. But, again, we've seen that happen, and I knew it would come forward, is that they take good legislation and they put it into theirs and introduce it so they can take credit. We've seen it with the member for Tyndall Park (MLA Lamoureux); we've seen it for the member from Roblin and we've seen it across the board.

So I'm not upset about it. I'm actually happy to see that happen and to take that, because, you know, flattery—or having that—I'm quite flattered that they would take that and move it forward. But more importantly, it's important that youth are kept safe and they're the ones that are going to learn as they're in the vehicles what proper standards are. And if they're driving with somebody who is under the influence or somebody who consumes while they're driving, then they, too, will see that as something that may be acceptable. And we need to send that message strong and clear, and making sure that these individuals are taking care of—they're our next generation.

So you know what, I think that we're on the right track here to make sure that Manitobans, and young Manitobans now, are kept safe under this.

Part of a professional driver is ensuring that you're ready for work and that means, as I stated earlier,

abstaining from alcohol for periods prior to when you are expected to drive. And this legislation is actually going to codify that and make sure that individuals that get behind the wheel from the start of their shift are sober, have zero BAC. I should make sure I say zero BAC because there's a difference in that, to make sure that they are zero BAC and they're driving with no blood alcohol concentration within their system.

You know, we look at class 2 drivers, people that are driving conveyances like school buses or tour buses and, unfortunately, we've seen the tragedy of class 1 versus class 2 over the last couple of years. And we look at Humboldt, and I'm not suggesting that there was impairment there, but where we have a class 1 semi going through a stop sign and colliding with a class 2 vehicle, a passenger vehicle. We saw the same thing in Carberry at the intersection of No. 1 and No. 5 here.

Two of the worst and most significant fatal accidents within our country have happened in Saskatchewan and then in Manitoba. I believe it's 16 lives were lost in Saskatchewan and 17 in Manitoba, and that's just absolutely a travesty. So any work we can do to make our roadways safer is welcome, not only from this side of the House, but I know from all Manitobans, because we don't want to see these happen.

I bring this forward because I think we could see this happen more often if people were behind the wheel intoxicated. And that's certainly a pre-emptive strike here to make sure that people are not operating while they are impaired or have any alcohol in their system. And it's important to make sure that we're protecting Manitobans, and that's what we're put here in this Legislative Assembly to do, is to create laws and to make sure that they're the best laws as possible to protect the people that rely on us. That's our sole duty, is to make sure that we're protecting people and to make these laws, that are critically important, to do that.

You know, we look at class 3 vehicles. A lot of these are the larger tri-tandem vehicles, dump trucks and those larger equipment that aren't quite semis but have that larger vehicle and weight. Again, we're seeing these on our roadways, especially during construction season, and we're starting to come up to a lot of that with roadway construction and safety. So it's imperative that these individuals also remain alcohol-free when they're driving on our highways, ensuring the safety for all.

And of course, we can't forget about class 4 vehicles. I think it's absolutely expected that people that are operating emergency vehicles are going to be sober and have zero BAC, but it extends to other conveyances like taxis and the people that operate those services.

And so I didn't have a chance to hear the consultation—whether a consultation was done with the Manitoba Trucking Association, whether it was done with the different taxi associations on this, but I'm going to assume that it was, and I'm sure that will come up in committee when we get to the committee stage on this bill.

But it's very important to have that consultation because that consultation will also send a signal to all of those operators when they send out their memos, when they send out their informational dialogue to all of their drivers that this is coming and this is what's expected.

So we certainly appreciate all of this. And so this side of the House, I know we've worked towards the court system and making sure that responsibility lies with individuals that are breaking the laws, breaking the rules.

* (16:20)

And under the Criminal Code of Canada, you can be convicted for impaired driving or impaired operation. There's a number of different areas.

But in 2019, under this government—under the PC government, I should say, the IRP program was introduced. And I know it was introduced then because I was sitting around the decision-making table at the time as chief of police for Brandon, and it seems the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) talks about a novel idea of getting all the police chiefs together; that's been happening since the history of time here, but he seems to want to take credit for getting police chiefs together. But it happens sometimes weekly within our province and, I know, in other provinces as well.

So talking about the IRP and its introduction, I'll just read the backgrounder that was sent out at the time and how important it is, and this can talk to this bill and how changes have evolved as we move forward. So this is from November 7 of 2019, honourable Deputy Speaker, and it's a backgrounder put out by the government of Manitoba at that time.

And it says: Tougher and more timely consequences for drinking and driving in Manitoba will come into effect December 16—and I'll add 2019—including new

sections that will see drivers temporarily lose their vehicles for registering a warn on an approved screening device, Minister of Justice Cliff Cullen announced today.

Impaired drivers are still taking the lives of Manitobans, and we need to do more to make sure people get the message that this is unacceptable, said Cullen. Immediate roadside prohibition ensures on-the-spot consequences for making the poor decision to drink and drive. The consequences are clear: Impaired drivers will lose their licence, their vehicle and face significant financial penalties.

The new approach, called immediate roadside prohibition, increases sanction for drivers who register a warn level on an approved screening device. It also provides a faster alternative to the Breathalyzer test and resolves matters outside of the criminal justice system for drivers who refuse or fail an approved screening device test for the first time. However, the immediate roadside prohibition approach is not intended to be used in cases where the impaired driver kills or injures another person, or if there are other significant aggravating circumstances.

It goes on to say: The new sanctions for drivers who register a warn on an approved screening device include a new monetary penalty of \$400 for a first violation, escalating to \$500 for a second violation and \$600 for a third or subsequent violation. The 'trime' frame for vehicle impoundments also escalate from three days for a first violation, seven days for a second and 30 for a third or subsequent violation.

For first-time impaired drivers who register a fail on an approved screening device and cause no bodily injury or death, police will have discretion to oppose—impose a \$700 monetary penalty as well as a mandatory ignition lock of one year rather than proceeding with criminal charges.

The new sanctions would be comparable to those applied post-conviction and would be applied on top of the existing pre-conviction 90-day license suspension, 30-day vehicle impoundment and mandatory remedial programming.

Still further, individuals who refuse the screening will face the same sanctions as a fail, with vehicle impoundment extending to 60 days. In addition, a warn reading will result in the driver receiving five demerits on their Manitoba Public Insurance driver safety rating scale, increasing to 10 demerits for either a fail or a refusal.

The sanctions for first-time refusals or drunk drivers who register a fail on an approved screening device are only intended to apply where the case does not involve serious bodily harm or death or other aggravating factors. Under the new approach, testing a suspected impaired driver can take as little as six minutes. This is significantly less than the time required to administer Breathalyzer tests and process an impaired driver for criminal charges, which is often up to four hours.

Collisions caused by impaired drivers continue to kill and cause significant injuries to far too many Manitobans. These collisions are entirely preventable and it's time we look at new ways of getting these dangerous drivers off of our roads, said Assistant Commissioner Jane MacLatchy—who was the commanding officer of the Manitoba RCMP at that time. Without a doubt, the immediate roadside suspensions will be a powerful tool that will help our officers to quickly remove impaired drivers from Manitoba roads, making our highways and roadways safer for all.

Adding up all of the administrative sanctions and monetary penalties, the minimum cost of a warn will range from \$700 for a first violation to \$3,420 for a third or subsequent violation. The minimum cost for a fail would be \$3,520, and the maximum cost for refusal of the approved screening device will be \$3,970. A province-wide public education campaign by Manitoba Public Insurance focused on impaired driving and immediate roadside prohibition approach will be launched later this month—and again, that was in November of 2019.

The immediate roadside prohibition approach was implemented in British Columbia in 2010 and it has been credited with helping save 351 lives and reduce alcohol-related deaths by 50 per cent in that province; and it has had a similar impact on alcohol-related injuries and collisions. This model was strongly—is strongly supported by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD Canada.

MADD Canada fully supports the expansion of immediate roadside prohibitions in Manitoba, said Andrew Murie, their Chief Executive Officer of MADD Canada. Having quick, strong short-term sanctions offers a powerful deterrent to those who might otherwise drive impaired. We welcome these new provisions and we thank the government—2019, that was a PC government—for its leadership in helping to reduce impaired driving and make roads safer.

The minister noted that this legislation also supports the objectives of the recently released public

safety and policing strategy by ensuring police can spend more time on policing and less on administration, and this strategy is online—and it gives the URL. We strongly believe this approach will allow police officers to get back on the road sooner, allowing them to catch more impaired drivers and keep us all—or keep all of us safer, said Cullen.

It finally notes: In 2018, 70 people were killed and 437 were seriously injured in traffic collisions in Manitoba on public roadways. Impaired driving accounts for 40 per cent of those killed. Already this year, at least 10 people have lost their lives because of an impaired driver.

* (16:30)

That last paragraph was certainly very important, honourable Speaker, because it shows when the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) was asking questions on this, statistics are readily available to the minister; but it seems that this minister can't find the availability within his staff or within his area to get these statistics to help support this legislation, so I'm happy to do so and provide them. Although this one goes back to 2018, I'm sure significantly more statistical data is available here under 2026 and 2025 data.

So, honourable Deputy Speaker, I will end by saying our government strongly supports any legislation that protects Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): I rise today to speak about the issue that affects family, communities and every person who travels on our roads: impaired driving.

While Manitoba has been significant progress improving road safety, impaired driving continues to be one of the leading causes of serious collisions, injuries and deaths. And like my colleague that brought up Jordyn Reimer's death—Jordyn actually was dating my nephew at the time, and it was so devastating. And the family, it's just—it never ends for them, and it's something that Tyson will live with for the rest of his life, that he let her go to drive because she was driving that night to pick up people that were drinking so that she was the designated driver.

So impaired driving is very, very important that we have some of the strictest laws because there's no reason before we go out, if we're going to choose to drink, we need to decide how we're going to get home. We're going to have to decide what we're going to—if

we're going to take a taxi or Uber in the city, it's great. Rural Manitoba, a little different, but we all have family and friends. And I know I tell my children, call me at any time of the day. If I'm home, I will come get you.

So impaired driving is not just a violation of the law; it's a reckless decision that places everyone on that road at risk. Alcohol, drugs and other substances impair judgment, slow reaction times and reduce drivers' ability to make safe decisions. Even small amounts can have serious consequences when someone is behind the wheel.

One important thing is that these measures can include licence suspensions, vehicle impoundment and mandatory participation in the Ignition Interlock Program. Immediate consequences send a clear message: impaired driving will not be tolerated—will not be tolerated and action will be taken right away to remove unsafe drivers from our roads.

Another key component of these measures is the use of roadside screening technology and testing. The law enforcement officers across Manitoba are equipment-equipped with tools that allow them to quickly determine whether a driver may be impaired by alcohol or drugs. These tools are critical. They help officers detect impaired drivers early and prevent dangerous situations before a collision occurs. By supporting these enforcement measures, we empower police to protect our communities and keep our highways safer.

For drivers who have been convicted of impaired driving, Manitoba uses the—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'll just give the members a gentle reminder that if we're reading off of devices during debate they have to be kept out of the camera shot.

The honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mrs. Robbins).

Oh, oh, sorry. Apparently my mic cut out. So if we're reading off of devices when we're recognized by the Speaker, the device just has to be out of the camera shot.

Mrs. Robbins: Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Robbins: So for—to drivers who have convicted of impaired driving, Manitoba uses the Ignition Interlock Program, which requires a driver to provide a breath of sample before their vehicle will start. If alcohol is detected, the vehicle's safety—the vehicle

will simply not operate. Programs like this are not about punishment alone; they're about prevention. They ensure that individuals who have previously made dangerous choices cannot repeat their actions without safeguards in place.

Impaired driving is an—entirely preventable. Every Manitoba has options: calling a friend, using a taxi or a ride-share service, arranging a designated driver or simply choosing not to drive. When someone chooses to drive while impaired, they are choosing to gamble with lives. This is why legislation like this matters. Strong laws help reinforce responsible behaviour and provide law enforcement with the tools needed to intervene with necessary.

But legislation alone cannot solve this issue. Road safety also depends on public awareness and communities' responsibility. Organizations across Manitoba such as community groups, law enforcement, educators and advocacy organizations work tirelessly to raise awareness about the dangers of impaired driving. Their effort reminds us that preventing impaired driving is a shared responsibility. As legislatures, we must continue supporting policies that encourage responsible decision making and prioritize public safety. Strengthening impaired driving measures under The Highway Traffic Amendment Act sends an important message: Manitoba is committed to protecting its citizens whether they are driving to work, cycling through their community or traveling our rural highways.

Our roads connect us. They connect our farms to markets, our towns to cities and our families to one another. They should never be places of preventable tragedy. Every measure we take to reduce impaired driving helps save lives, prevents injuries and spares families the pain of losing a loved one—the goal.

By supporting stronger safety measures related to impaired driving we are taking important steps. We look at its class 1 to 4. I would have thought that those would have already been implicated and have a—because they do have a duty to Manitobans. I can't imagine the school bus driver getting on the school bus knowing he's transporting several of our children and having a drink before he goes. So, yes, it—I support legislation will—that will ensure Manitobans are protected from impaired drivers.

Professional drivers and those with class 1 to 4 licence, they have a responsibility and duty of care when they take on these positions and they should be held to higher standards. Part of being a professional driver is ensuring you are ready for work and that means

abstaining from alcohol for the prerequisite period to ensure you can drive safely. Extending roadside suspensions will ensure drivers understand the serious nature of the offence. Requiring ignition interlock after three months' suspension for those criminally charged with impaired driving closes loopholes and ensures these criminally charged are treated similar to those that are required to get an ignition interlock after a shorter roadside suspension.

* (16:40)

Public safety is of paramount importance to Manitobans, and our PC team—sorry—our PC team believes in public safety for paramount importance and we support stricter laws for impaired driving and ensuring that professional drivers are held to a higher standard of care. Professional drivers must abstain from consuming alcohol and be ready to work to ensure our highways are kept safe for all Manitobans.

I have been honoured to speak on this and I do believe that our safety is so important and impaired driving—the laws can never be not strict enough. People need to realize that when you have a drink and you get in behind that wheel, that they're taking a risk, and that risk is—could be somebody's life. And that somebody's life could be somebody's daughter, somebody's son, somebody's mother, somebody's father. No person should feel unsafe on our Manitoba highways.

Thank you.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

This legislation proposes several changes to Manitoba's impaired driving network—framework, including new zero blood alcohol rules for certain drivers, longer roadside licence suspensions, expanded alcohol prohibitions after convictions and changes to ignition interlock participation requirements.

Let me begin by stating clearly that all members of this House share a common goal: safer roads for Manitobans. Impaired driving continues to be a serious public safety issue and the consequences can be tragic for families and communities.

Any effort to reduce impaired driving and prevent collisions deserves thoughtful consideration and serious debate in this Assembly. Bill 31 attempts to strengthen existing measures through a number of approaches. Among other things, it proposes a zero blood alcohol requirement for drivers of class 1, 2, 3 and 4 vehicles,

drivers of semi-trucks, buses and other large commercial vehicles, as well as emergency vehicles.

It also extends zero tolerance provisions to certain novice or restricted drivers and allows regulations to impose similar rules on supervising drivers. In addition, the bill increases the length of administrative roadside suspensions in certain circumstances. A first suspension for a driver with a blood alcohol concentration between 0.05 and 0.08 or who fails a drug screening or physical co-ordination test would increase from three days to seven days. If a passenger under the age of 16 is present, the suspension would be extended further.

This legislation also introduces a two-year alcohol prohibition for individuals convicted of impaired driving offences after they regain their licence. Furthermore, a second conviction within a 10-year period would result in a lifetime prohibition from operating a vehicle with any alcohol in their blood.

Finally, the bill modifies participation in Manitoba's Ignition Interlock Program. It would require drivers to participate immediately following any three-month suspension regardless of whether criminal charges are laid, while allowing the Licence Suspension Appeal Board to determine in some cases whether a person convicted of impaired driving may eventually drive without the device after their suspension period.

Honourable deputy Speaker, these are significant policy changes and they warrant careful examination. We recognize the importance of reducing impaired driving and protecting public safety. Manitoba has made considerable progress over the years through a combination of enforcement, education and administrative penalties. Measures such as roadside suspensions, ignition interlock programs and graduated licensing have contributed to a decline in impaired driving incidents compared with past decades.

However, when new legislation is introduced in this area, it is important that we carefully examine both its potential benefits and its practical implications. Effective road safety policy depends not only on stronger penalties, but also on clear rules, fair procedures and enforceable standards.

One area that merits discussion is the proposed zero blood alcohol requirement for drivers of class 1 through 4 vehicles. Commercial drivers operate large vehicles and carry significant responsibility for public safety. In many jurisdictions, stricter standards apply to these drivers and the intention behind this measure is understandable.

At the same time, we must ensure that the implementation of such rules is clear and practical for those affected. Manitoba's transportation and logistics sector play a critical role in our economy. Truck drivers, bus operators and emergency vehicle operators perform demanding jobs that keeps goods moving and communities connected. It will be important to ensure that these workers receive clear guidance on the new requirements and that enforcement is applied consistently.

Similarly, the bill also allows regulations to impose alcohol or drug prohibitions on supervising drivers who are assisting individuals learning to operate certain vehicles. Supervision is an important part of the licensing process, and ensuring that supervising drivers meet appropriate safety standards is a reasonable goal. However, the details of these regulations will be significant, and members of this House may wish to examine how they will be implemented and communicated.

Another element of Bill 31 involves the extension of roadside suspension periods. Increasing the initial suspension from three to seven days represents a notable change. Administrative suspensions are intended to provide an immediate consequence for unsafe behaviour while keeping the process efficient.

At the same time, longer suspensions can have real impacts on individuals' ability to travel to work, attend school or fulfill family responsibilities. This is particularly relevant in rural and northern communities where alternatives to driving may be limited. While road safety must remain the priority, policy-makers should consider how these measures interact with the realities of transportation in different parts of the province.

The provision that increases suspension periods when a passenger under the age of 16 is present reflects a principle that children deserve additional protection. Many jurisdictions recognize that impaired driving with minors in a vehicle represents an elevated risk. This is an understandable approach and it reflects a seriousness with which the law treats the safety of young passengers.

Bill 31 also introduces a two-year, zero-alcohol requirement following a conviction for impaired driving once a person regains their licence. The intention appears to be to reinforce responsible driving behaviour during the period after an individual returns to the road. In considering this measure, it will be important to ensure that individuals clearly understand the restrictions placed on them and the

consequences of violating those restrictions. The effectiveness of such policies depends on drivers being fully aware of the conditions attached to their licences.

The bill also proposes a lifetime prohibition on driving with alcohol in the blood for individuals who are convicted of two impaired driving offences within 10 years. This represents a substantial long-term restriction. It reflects a policy decision that repeat offences within a relatively short time frame indicate a heightened risk to public safety.

While the seriousness of repeat impaired driving cannot be understated, members of this Assembly may wish to consider how such lifetime restrictions will operate in practice, particularly many years after an individual's second conviction. Questions about monitoring, enforcement and long-term rehabilitation may arise as this policy is implemented.

Another key component of the legislation involves the Ignition Interlock Program. Ignition interlock devices are widely used as a tool to prevent impaired driving by requiring a breath test before a vehicle can be started. Evidence from various jurisdictions suggests that these devices can be effective in reducing repeat offences while they are installed.

Bill 31 would require participation in the Ignition Interlock Program immediately following any three-month suspension, regardless of whether criminal charges are laid. This could expand the use of the program and potentially increase its preventative effect.

At the same time, the bill introduces a change allowing the licensed suspension appeal board to determine whether a person convicted of impaired driving must continue with the program after their post-conviction suspension. This approach introduces a degree of discretion into the process. As with any system involving administrative decision making, transparency and consistency will be important to maintaining public confidence.

* (16:50)

Honourable Deputy Speaker, legislation of this nature also raises questions about enforcement, resources and administrative capacity. Road safety measures are most effective when they are supported by appropriate enforcement and clear procedures. Police officers, licensing officials and administrative bodies will all play roles in implementing these changes.

At public hearings, which we assume this bill will go to after second reading, members of this Assembly

might wish to hear from stakeholders such as law enforcement agencies, road safety organizations, commercial transportation representatives and legal experts at the committee stage. Their perspectives can help ensure that the legislation achieves its intended objectives without creating unintended complications.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, another aspect of Bill 31 that deserves attention is the role that prevention and education continue to play in reducing impaired driving. Legislative changes are an important part—part of the policy framework, but they're most effective when combined with public awareness campaigns and accessible education programs. Manitobans have seen over the years how co-ordinated efforts between governments, community organizations and law enforcement can shift public attitudes about drinking and driving. Continued investment in public awareness initiatives, particularly those that reach young drivers and new drivers, can help reinforce the message that impaired driving is both dangerous and unacceptable.

For novice drivers in particular, the bill strengthens provisions that prohibit driving with any alcohol or drugs in the body. The principle behind zero tolerance for novice drivers is well established in road safety policy. New drivers are still developing their skills and judgment behind the wheel, and additional safeguards during that learning period are intended to reduce risks for both the driver and others on the road. As this Assembly considers these provisions, it will be important to ensure that the rules are clearly integrated with Manitoba's existed—existing graduated licensing system so that drivers understand exactly what is expected of them at each stage.

The bill also includes provisions related to drug screening equipment and the authority of peace officers to request bodily samples to determine the presence of drugs. As technology evolves, tools used to detect drug impairment have improved and become more widely used by law enforcement.

However, the accuracy, calibration and appropriate use of such equipment remain important considerations. Ensuring that police officers receive proper training and that equipment is well maintained according to established standards will help support the reliability of roadside testing procedures and the fairness of enforcement.

Another point that merits discussion is how administrative suspensions and penalties interact with federal criminal law provisions related to impaired driving. Canada's Criminal Code establishes offences and

penalties for impaired driving while provinces are responsible for licensing and administrative sanctions. This shared framework has long been a feature of impaired driving policy in Canada. As changes are made at the provincial level, it is important that they align effectively with federal laws so that drivers, law enforcement and the courts can operate within a clear and consistent system.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we must also consider the administrative side of these changes. Licensing systems, suspension notices, appeal processes and ignition interlock monitoring all rely on administrative capacity within the Province's driver's licensing and vehicle regulation system. When legislation introduces new rules or expands existing programs, those systems must be ready to implement them efficiently. Clear timelines, accessible information for drivers and streamlined processes will be important to ensure that the system functions smoothly for both officials and the public.

Additionally, there may be broader questions about accessibility and equity that arise from the implementation of these measures. For example, ignition interlock devices involve installation and maintenance costs, and drivers may also face fees associated with licence reinstatement and administrative processes. While these measures are designed as a part of a deterrence framework, it is worth considering how financial barriers may affect compliance or participation in rehabilitation programs. Policies that support safe reintegration of drivers after suspensions can contribute to long-term road safety outcomes.

Finally, honourable Deputy Speaker, when discussing impaired driving legislation, it is important to recognize the experiences of those who have been affected by impaired driving incidents. Families and communities across Manitoba have felt the impact of collisions caused by impaired drivers. Their experiences remind us why strong and effective road safety policies matter. As legislatures—legislators, our responsibility is to ensure that laws reflect both the need for accountability and the broader goal of preventing future harm.

These considerations do not diminish the intent of the bill, but rather emphasize the importance of examining it carefully as it proceeds through the legislative process. By reviewing the details, listening to stakeholders and considering practical implementation issues, this Assembly can help ensure that the measures adopted truly contribute to safer roads throughout Manitoba.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we approach Bill 31 with a constructive perspective. We recognize the importance of addressing impaired driving and strengthening road safety measures. At the same time, it is our responsibility to review legislation carefully, ask questions where clarification is needed and ensure that new policies are fair, effective and workable. The committee stage of the legislative process will provide an opportunity for Manitobans to share their views. Stakeholders may have suggestions about how the bill could be refined or improved. Listening to those perspectives is an important part of responsible lawmaking.

Ultimately, the goal we all share is simple: fewer impaired drivers on our roads, fewer collisions and safer communities for everyone who travels in this province. As we continue debate on Bill 31, I encourage members on all sides of the House to focus on that shared objective while ensuring that the details of the legislation are carefully considered. Thoughtful discussion and collaboration can help produce laws that effectively protect the public while maintaining fairness and clarity for those who must follow them.

With those comments, honourable Deputy Speaker, I look forward to further discussion of this bill and to hearing the perspectives of Manitobans during the legislative process.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Bill 31 makes several amendments to The Highway Traffic Act.

Broadly speaking, it modernizes road safety provisions, clarifies licensing and driver improvement authority, expands enforcement tools related to impaired driving, updates definitions and regulations related to vehicles and machinery, improves oversight of commercial vehicle safety systems. The bill also aligns Manitoba's legislation with federal definitions used in the Criminal Code, particularly relations to impaired driving and drug screening equipment.

This may sound technical, but in reality, those provisions have real consequences on Manitoba roads. Manitoba geography makes highway safety unique. We have vast rural areas, agriculture equipment frequently shares highways, commercial trucking is critical in our economy and winter conditions create dangerous driving environments. Many Manitobans commute significant distances daily.

I'll leave it at that, honourable Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 31, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Measures to Address Affordability Crisis	
		Narth	610
		Sala	610
Bill 32—The Improving Access to Breast Cancer Screening Act		Agriculture and Food Processing Sectors	
Asagwara	601	Narth	610
		Kostyshyn	610
Bill 5—The Accessibility for Manitobans Amendment Act and The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Amendment Act (Access Awareness Week)		Taxes and Debt Servicing Costs	
Fontaine	601	Narth	610
		Sala	611
Bill 23—The Advocate for Children and Youth Amendment Act		Cost of Living in Manitoba	
Fontaine	602	Byram	611
		Sala	611
Bill 34—The Interprovincial Subpoena Amendment Act		Illegally Modified Firearms	
Wiebe	602	Lamoureux	612
		Wiebe	612
Members' Statements		Protection from Gun Violence	
Dr. Wil Fleisher		Lamoureux	613
Compton	602	Wiebe	613
Lila Dubé		Menstrual Products	
Ewasko	603	Dela Cruz	613
		Marcelino	613
Chief Richard Hart		Manitoba's Construction Sector	
Bushie	603	Guenter	613
		Sandhu	613
Betty Garnham		Petitions	
Bereza	604	Teaching Certification	
Sergeant Tommy Prince School Literacy Gains		Khan	614
Schott	604	Education Property Taxes	
Oral Questions		Stone	615
Safe Consumption Site		MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility	
Khan	605	Balcaen	615
Asagwara	605	Bereza	616
Grocery Price Inflation		New Neepawa Health Centre	
Khan	606	Byram	617
Asagwara	607	Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders	
Cost of Living in Manitoba		Goertzen	617
Stone	608	Phoenix School	
Sala	608	Cook	618
Cost of Living in Manitoba		Education Property Taxes	
Cook	609	Ewasko	618
Sala	609		

Medical Assistance in Dying Guenther	619
Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices Hiebert	619
MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility Johnson	620
Construct New Personal-Care Home--Stonewall King	620
Green Valley School Expansion Narth	621
MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility Nesbitt	621
Removal of Federal Carbon Tax Robbins	622
MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility Schuler	622
Provincial Trunk Highway 45 Wowchuk	623

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Second Readings

Bill 31--The Highway Traffic Amendment Act Wiebe	624
Questions	
Balcaen	625
Wiebe	625
Narth	626
Debate	
Balcaen	628
Robbins	632
Nesbitt	634
Bereza	637

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>