



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon. | Union Station | NDP |
| BALCAEN, Wayne | Brandon West | PC |
| BEREZA, Jeff | Portage la Prairie | PC |
| BLASHKO, Tyler | Lagimodière | NDP |
| BRAR, Diljeet | Burrows | NDP |
| BUSHIE, Ian, Hon. | Keewatinook | NDP |
| BYRAM, Jodie | Agassiz | PC |
| CABLE, Renée, Hon. | Southdale | NDP |
| CHEN, Jennifer | Fort Richmond | NDP |
| COMPTON, Carla | Tuxedo | NDP |
| COOK, Kathleen | Roblin | PC |
| CORBETT, Shannon | Transcona | NDP |
| CROSS, Billie | Seine River | NDP |
| DELA CRUZ, Jelynn | Radisson | NDP |
| DEVGAN, JD | McPhillips | NDP |
| EWASKO, Wayne | Lac du Bonnet | PC |
| FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon. | St. Johns | NDP |
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| 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 |
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| 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 |
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| NESBITT, Greg | Riding Mountain | PC |
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| PANKRATZ, David | Waverley | NDP |
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| PIWNIUK, Doyle | Turtle Mountain | PC |
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| 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

Thursday, March 12, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

The honourable—private members business—order of the day, private members' business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Could you please call Bill 211, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 211—The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act

The Speaker: It's been announced that we will now proceed to second reading of Bill 211, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I move, seconded by the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), that Bill 211, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stone: I am pleased, again, to rise in this House to discuss a very important topic, and that is the topic of transparency and accountability with Manitobans' hard-earned dollars and how the government utilizes those tax dollars for the purpose of running this Province.

What we have seen, over the past few years, is a government that has proven that they are willing to hide from Manitobans, they're willing to hide taxes, sneakily hiking taxes on many Manitobans, and they are willing to push through major pieces of legislation without the proper scrutiny that it deserves to the public.

We saw this two years ago when the NDP pushed through a \$24-billion omnibus bill that included major pieces of legislation, non-budget-related pieces of legislation, that Manitobans did not have the opportunity to speak to in committee to present their concerns and their ideas to the government.

Last year, we also saw this NDP government again push through the budget implementation bill in the last wee hours of the day without proper questioning and scrutiny from this House. This is why, for the second time, we are bringing this bill forward, because Manitobans are concerned about the transparency and the lack of transparency that this NDP government is operating in.

The BITSA bill, or the budget implementation bill, is the largest bill that impacts every single Manitoban. It is how Manitobans' hard-earned tax dollars are spent on services within this province. Manitobans deserve to have a say as to how their hard-earned money is spent. And this is why we have brought this bill forward.

And this isn't new practice in Manitoba. For every other bill, we go to a public committee. The public committee gives Manitobans the option and ability to come here to the Legislature to present their concerns, their ideas, to provide positive remarks, negative remarks. That is democracy. That is why we have those committees.

The government doesn't know everything. Stakeholders and Manitobans, when it's issues and taxes that are impacting their daily lives, their daily household budgets, their families, their workplaces, their businesses, have a right to come and present

those concerns and those ideas to government. This is why we have committee.

So why do we not have a public committee for the largest bill that impacts how those Manitobans earn their money and what they keep at the end of the day? On our side of the House, we think that this is wrong and we think that Manitobans deserve to have a say.

Now, including pieces of legislation in BITSA, it's not a new thing. But what we're saying is that that practice needs to stop. And what we have seen, over the past couple of years, is this NDP government take that leeway and expand it to the point where non-budgetary pieces of legislation have been stapled to the back of budget bills without the proper scrutiny it deserves.

This is why it is timely now to ensure that budget implementation bills do have the proper accountability, transparency and scrutiny that the public deserves.

So, obviously, Honourable Speaker, this is a bill that I am quite passionate about.

When the NDP government brought forward their \$24-billion omnibus, I heard about it from stakeholders. We all heard about it from stakeholders, about their concern about not being able to speak at public committee on major pieces of legislation, like labour legislation, that would impact their businesses.

The Chambers of Commerce spoke out against the direction that this NDP was going. The Canadian taxpayers spoke out against the direction that this NDP was going. They spoke out in favour of being able to provide the public scrutiny at public committee as it relates to BITSA bills.

In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, when we first debated this bill in the House last year, put out an immediate statement in support of passing a Budget Bill Public Accountability Act. The stakeholders have spoken. Manitobans have spoken.

Manitobans are concerned that this is going to happen again and again. The precedent has now been set. The leeway that has been given before and in previous years, it's not just a little bit of leeway anymore, as this NDP government has proved.

This NDP government has proved that they are willing to sneak in major pieces of legislation, major tax increases without Manitobans being able to come to committee and have their say.

* (10:10)

This NDP government is hiding. They're hiding from the public when it comes to their BITSA bills, and they're controlling the media. They are hiding from the public through complex legislation, where Manitobans, at the end of the day, last minute, are finding out what these impacts really are. This is why this bill needs to pass. If the government has nothing to hide, if they truly believe in their budget legislation and believe that they can defend it to Manitobans, then they should have no problem supporting and passing this bill.

If the members opposite thought what has been done in the past was wrong and that other pieces of legislation should not be included in the BITSA bill, then they should pass this bill. But what they've proven is that they are willing to go to extra degrees to hide from Manitoba. Unprecedented major pieces of legislation stapled to the back of budget bills. That was not done previously. This is why Manitobans need transparency and accountability. This is why Manitobans deserve the right to come and present to the government of the day of how their hard-earned money is being spent. That is democracy. That is what accountability is.

Stapling legislation on the backs of a budget bill in wee hours of the night is not accountability; it's not transparency. Pushing through budget implementation bills in the wee hours of the night without proper questioning and scrutiny from members of this House is not accountable to the public either. Not only does it show really bad planning by this NDP government, the fact they even need to staple pieces of legislation that should be stand-alone bills, stand-alone pieces of legislation, the fact they needed to staple that to the back of the bill shows their inability to govern properly, but it also shows that they're trying to hide something from Manitobans. And that's what we saw two years ago with that \$24-billion omnibus bill.

So, Honourable Speaker, as I've mentioned, we understand on this side of the House that this has been done in the past from both sides of the House. We, however, are saying it's time to stop. So if this NDP government sticks with their words that they disagreed with how budget bills have been presented to the public, or lack of presentation to the public, through public committee in the past, those like the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) that spoke up and said, you know, it was wrong what former governments did when it came to BITSA bills, if they truly stick with their words, then they will stand today and they'll say no more.

Let's set a precedent for Canada. Let's ensure that budget bills go to public committee. We've added a 10-hour window; 10 hours is not that much to listen to the public and hear what they really think and hear what their concerns are. Manitoba's money are Manitobans' money. It's not this NDP's money to spend willfully without any accountability or transparency to the public. It's Manitobans' hard-earned dollars.

And they deserve—Manitobans deserve—to know how that money is being spent; not last-minute surprises of hidden taxes, like when the NDP quietly ended indexation on income taxes, thus pushing many Manitobans into a higher tax bracket; not surprise legislation on labour that impacts employers across this province at a time when we're trying to grow the economy and attract new jobs. This is not how democracy should operate, Honourable Speaker.

So, if the NDP is going to stick with their words of the past, then they should have no problem supporting this bill.

Thank you.

Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Nellie Kennedy (Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism): So I would like to ask members opposite why Manitobans should trust members opposite on budgetary matters when their failed PC government mismanaged the Province's finances?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Honourable Speaker, that's almost a comical question considering, under the PC government, they balanced two budgets with two surpluses, unlike the NDP members and the members opposite who have back-to-back deficits totalling \$1.6 billion this year alone.

The NDP have missed their budgetary projections quarterly—every single quarter—since they came into office. How—this NDP government took a \$373-million surplus and have turned it into back-to-back deficits of billions of dollars every single year.

So if the member opposite wants to talk about budgetary accountability, it's our side of the House that has shown Manitobans how to run a Province and how to be fiscally responsible.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the member for Midland for bringing this bill forward once again.

When Manitobans go to the polls, they need to ensure that they have trust—trust in the government that they've elected. What does this bill do to ensure that trust is maintained?

Mrs. Stone: I thank my wonderful colleague from Selkirk for that question.

This bill is all about building trust with Manitobans. It's about building transparency and accountability of how Manitobans' hard-earned tax dollars are spent by the government.

So this bill ensures that the government will have 10 hours—like I've mentioned during my remarks, it's only 10 hours to hear and listen from the public about what their concerns are on tax increases, on pieces of legislation, on how government is planning to spend their hard-earned dollars.

This helps build trust for Manitobans so Manitobans are not faced with last-minute, sneaky tax hikes like they have been faced with under this NDP government.

MLA Kennedy: Honourable Speaker, I just—it's really rich coming from members opposite that they're talking about trust. I think that Manitobans really showed them who they trust when they voted for our government to become the government of the day.

Anyways, my question is, can the members opposite explain why they continue to ignore the voices of Manitobans who raised issues with their irresponsible budgets that left the Province's finances in disarray?

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, if anyone is ignoring the wishes of Manitobans, it's this NDP government. Manitobans did not vote for tax increases—\$400 million in increases to education property taxes since this NDP government came into power. Manitobans didn't vote for that.

Manitobans didn't vote for this NDP government ending indexation on income taxes, pushing many Manitobans into a higher tax bracket.

In fact, what Manitobans actually voted for is this NDP government promised to keep indexation. They promised to increase the basic personal amount.

The NDP has broken that promise. That is how Manitobans lose trust in government and with this NDP government. Manitobans did not vote for half a billion dollars in additional taxes.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Swan River.

An Honourable Member: I thank the member for bringing this bill forth.

How does this bill help hold the government accountable for their budget decisions?

The Speaker: I'd just point out that the member is not in his correct seat; therefore, he's not allowed to ask questions from a different seat.

The honourable member for Swan River.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I want to thank my colleague from Midland for bringing this very, very important bill forward.

You know, after the dismal performance that we've seen in the first two and a half years of this government, can she tell me how does this bill help hold—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wowchuk: —the government accountable for their budget decisions?

Mrs. Stone: I thank my wonderful colleague, the MLA from Swan River, for that question.

What this bill does is it ensures that all budget BITSA bills go to public committee, so this allows Manitobans to come to the Legislature to present what their concerns, the challenges, their thoughts are on a particular piece of legislation. And this isn't any legislation, this is the largest, most impactful bill that a government can bring forward.

* (10:20)

We, on our side of the House, believe that Manitobans deserve to have a say in how their hard-earned money is being spent by government. This increases transparency and it increases accountability from the government to the public. We are asking the government to allow for 10 hours—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Kennedy: Honourable Speaker, when we talk about accountability, the members opposite still has a member in their caucus who was fined by the Ethics Commissioner who is still sitting in their caucus. So when they talk about accountability, I think it's laughable. But I digress.

Can the member opposite explain why they chose to cut and mismanage our health-care budget when they knew it would hurt all Manitobans?

Mrs. Stone: Perhaps the minister can 'exply' whether—explain why there's numerous individuals on her side of the House that she stands behind that have actual criminal charges with the law.

Mr. Perchotte: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and to the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), when we talk about accountability, can you tell us what the BITSA bill does when you put a bunch of non-BITSA bills included with that?

The Speaker: I would just caution members to make sure they're always addressing their comments through the Chair and not directly to other members.

Mrs. Stone: So what it does when legislation is stapled to BITSA bills without the proper scrutiny through public committee that it deserves, and would otherwise follow that process if it was stand-alone legislation, is it erodes public trust.

And we saw that two years ago, when this NDP government stapled major pieces, non-budget pieces of legislation to the BITSA bill just to push it through without accountability to the public, without accountability to the stakeholders that that legislation was actually impacting. That erodes public trust.

This is why this bill is so important. It ensures that the public has the ability, as it does with every other piece of legislation within this province—this is not a new thing—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Kennedy: Can the member opposite explain why their failed government refused to listen to rural communities when they cut and closed rural emergency rooms across the province? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Kennedy: This has a lot to do with budget and the PCs' lack of accountability.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, as a member who represents rural Manitoba, I 'actury' recall it was the NDP government that closed 16 rural ERs when they were in power.

Mr. Wowchuk: Can the member tell us about some of the broken promises that have been hidden in the NDP budget bills?

Mrs. Stone: I thank the member for that question, because, since the NDP government have come into power, they've broken almost every promise that they made to Manitobans.

They promised that they would maintain indexation of income taxes, and what did they do last year during budget? They removed indexation. Now, it may sound technical, opposite members may not understand it, but by removing indexation, it actually pushes Manitobans into a higher tax bracket. So any increase of wages that Manitobans may experience will not be felt because now, they're in a higher income tax bracket, paying taxes, additional taxes, to the NDP taxman.

That was a very clear broken promise by this NDP government.

MLA Kennedy: Honourable Speaker, every day we sit here and listen to members opposite ask questions about housing and homelessness, and we want to understand why, if the members opposite can explain, why they sold off social housing and refused to listen when residents told them they would end up homeless as a result?

This is something that they clearly did, zero accountability, zero interest in caring for the people of our province who are at risk and vulnerable to become homeless.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, this bill is about accountability and transparency of the public's finances. This bill allows Manitobans to come to the Manitoba Legislature to speak to the challenges, their concerns, their thoughts about how their hard-earned money is being spent by the government of the day. That's what this bill is about.

Every other piece of legislation and bill goes to a public committee. But yet, we have a budget bill, which is the largest, most impactful bill that a government brings forward, that does not. We believe that it's—the time has come for that practice to stop, that the public deserves to have the scrutiny and to have a say of how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent.

The Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): Honourable Speaker, when I stand in this Chamber to talk about budgets or government decisions, I'm always thinking about the people I represent in Seine River, because from the families in our neighbourhoods, from St. Norbert to the growing communities across the southeast of Winnipeg, the provincial 'busn't'—budget isn't just a document, it affects the things people talk to me about at community events, at the grocery store and at the doors; it affects whether people can get a doctor; it affects the supports their kids have in school; and it affects whether they feel their government is actually listening to them.

So when I see legislation that claims to be about budget accountability, I think it's important that we talk honestly about what accountability really means. Because accountability isn't about a title on a bill, it is about how we govern, it is about whether we take the time to listen to the people we represent before decisions are being made, and that's something our government has made a priority.

Honourable Speaker, when our government began preparing Budget 2026, we didn't start with a closed-door meeting. We started by listening. We held prebudget consultations across Manitoba, speaking directly with the people about what matters most in their communities.

Manitobans talked about affordability. They talked about health care. They talked about the future that they want for their children. And those conversations matter because a budget should reflect the priorities of the people who live here, not just the priorities of the government that's writing it.

We also made sure Manitobans could participate even if they couldn't attend a consultation in person. Through the online budget survey, people across the province were able to share their ideas and their concerns. That's the kind of engagement—

The Speaker: Order, please.

If I could get the member to draw her comments back to the specific bill that we're here talking about. We're not talking about budgets in general, it's more focused on BITSA and specifically on a committee. So if the member could bring her comments back, I'd appreciate it.

Thank you.

MLA Cross: What I am talking about is Bill 211 and how we get to a place of creating a budget.

And so, when we're talking about budget accountability, this is accountability. It is listening to the citizens of our province and what means the most to them. So Bill 211 is about building trust. It's about being transparent, and that's exactly who we are as a government.

One of the most meaningful things we've ever done was going on a health-care listening tour because we knew that our budget had to reflect the needs of our workers on the front lines of health care. These are the people who care for our systems, our—care for our citizens, the nurses that work long shifts, the paramedics responding to emergencies, the doctors and health-care aides caring for patients every day. That requires us to budget so that we can pay for those services.

And they told us honestly what they're experiencing. They told us about the strain on the system after years of cuts. They told us about services that were lost. They told us about what needed to be changed in our budget.

These are not easy conversations, they—but they're necessary ones because that's how you build trust and accountability, just like Bill 211 is asking for. Because accountability means listening to people and doing the work on the front lines.

Honourable Speaker, our government brought people together to talk about community safety. Why? Because we need to ensure that our budget provided the services we need to make sure people felt safe, felt safe in their community, feel safe in their businesses, feel safe going to school, feel safe living everyday lives. And if that's not accountability, I don't know what is.

Because safer communities don't happen through slogans or headlines, they happen through real collaboration. They happen when governments listen to people who understand the challenges and work together with them to build solutions, which means that we have to build that through a budget. We have to be accountable. That's the approach that we choose to take.

* (10:30)

So, when I look at Bill 211, I do understand the intention behind it. It proposes mandatory committee hearings and fixed timelines for budget implementation bills. And, on the surface, that might sound reasonable and a way to strengthen transparency, but, in practice, it risks doing the opposite.

Budget implementation bills are the legislative tools that allow governments to deliver the investments Manitobans rely on and the investments that they want. They include measures that support health care, education, community safety and affordability. If we introduce rigid procedural delays into that process, we risk slowing down the very investments Manitobans are waiting for. The people I represent in Seine River are not asking for more red tape, they're asking for results.

Honourable Speaker, another concern with this bill is that it assumes public engagement only happens at one point in the legislative process. But meaningful engagement happens long before a bill is introduced. It happens when governments go out into their community; it happens when people are invited to share their experiences and their ideas and it happens when those voices actually shape the decisions that we follow.

That is the approach our government chooses to take, because Bill 211 doesn't suggest that and it's certainly not the way the members opposite governed during their seven and a half years. Because accountability doesn't begin in that committee room; it begins in our communities.

Honourable Speaker, we have to remember the situation our government inherited. When Manitobans elected this government in 2023, they did so because they wanted change. They had experienced years of health-care closures. They had services stretched thin. They felt that their voices were not being heard. Sitting in a committee room after decisions are made certainly doesn't listen to the voices of our constituents.

An independent review later confirmed, in fact, that our—the previous government had left Manitoba with a deficit approaching \$2 billion. I don't know how the members opposite can argue with an independent review. That's the reality that we inherited. And Manitobans expect us to rebuild: to rebuild a health care system, to rebuild trust in government and to make decisions that put people first.

Bill 211 brings people in after the fact. That is not listening and centring people at the decisions we make. The work that our government is focused on is rebuilding that health care, supporting schools and educators. We're working to make life more affordable for Manitoba families.

How do we do that? We need to consult with the constituents. We need to consult with the folks

that these decisions affect and we're doing that when we ensure our finances are managed responsibly. Because accountability is not just about a process, it's about stewardship, it's about making decisions that strengthen our province today and for the future.

Honourable Speaker, the people I represent in Seine River expect their government to listen before the decisions are being made. They expect their government to act, and they expect their government to focus on real solutions.

Bill 211 may sound like it strengthens accountability, but in reality, it risks creating duplication, delays and unnecessary bureaucracy without actually delivering meaningful improvements.

Our government believes accountability starts with listening to Manitobans, engaging with community and delivering results that really improve people's lives. That's the approach that we're committed to.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): When I was asked yesterday if I'd like to speak to this bill, my answer immediately was yes. I was very excited. As a matter of fact, I was—spent a large part of the night last night thinking about what I was going to say in the House today.

Accountability to the citizens who vote for us is our job. The fact that we have to put forward a bill that asks us to do our job is actually quite shameful. I'm not sure how everybody found their way into these chambers, whether it's been a lifelong dream to represent the communities they come from, whether it was a calling from somebody in a party saying, please, we like you, we'd like you to come and represent us, or if it's something internal where you didn't like what was going on in government of the day and said I want to make a change and go forward.

I believe that everybody who's in these chambers deserves to be here because they won that right. They've got the confidence of the people who voted for them, and that confidence is paramount in everything we do here. But this bill, Bill 211 says, do your job; don't hide, don't find loopholes, don't find a way to put through legislation that is not related to the budget by simply tacking it on, because that BITSA bill will not be debated, will not be up for scrutiny. It is shameful that as legislators who come here to create laws are the ones bending those laws to fit the narrative that we want as a government.

And I know, on either side of the—on the aisles, we say the same thing: well, you did it last time, you did this, you did that. Let's stop that. Let's have the integrity to look at the people who voted for us and quit saying what somebody did or didn't do and talk about what we're going to do in the future.

I've had the opportunity to come forward and say that I'm not seeking re-election publicly, and I would have assumed that the haters out there would have flooded my emails with the good riddance, can't wait to see you go. Not one—not one—because I refuse to let this Chamber change who I am. I refuse to let my integrity fall to try to push forward legislation and try to be something I'm not.

The people I represent in Selkirk understand that I do so from a true, wholesome place. I believe it is the integrity of the roles that we hold to come here on a daily basis and uphold the laws that are provided in front of us, to strengthen the laws to protect the citizens that we represent and to make sure that we are accountable for our actions.

We talk about integrity, we talk about ethics, we talk about violations that have happened on both sides of the aisle, but we need to talk about the future. We need to talk about accountability, true representation. Can you imagine if everybody in this Chamber was permitted from their parties to vote whichever way they wanted, to represent truly the individuals that we serve?

Knocking on those doors and talking to the people of Selkirk has been an honour. Representing those people has been an honour and I do so with full intention to serve them correctly. I don't always agree what the masses are asking me to do but it's my job to bring that forward because I'm not here to just represent my values, I'm here to represent the values of the community that I serve.

Bill 211 says, do your job; do your job, have accountability. How can we stand here as legislators, as lawmakers, come in here every day and say, no it's okay, we stuck 16 bills—totally different bills—on the back of a budget implementation bill and we think that's okay because we know that those bills might be controversial, we might not get support, we might not get approval.

It is absolutely disgusting that we ask for people's votes at the door and then we say, you don't matter. It is poking them in the eye and saying, I know better, I will do what I want, when I want, how I want and for my own personal gain.

We need to do better here, and I believe that the system is fundamentally flawed. When you find areas where you can hide bills, bills that affect the people, affect the people's bottom line, the amount of money they take home, what they're able to do for their future, their investments for their retirement or investing in their children for soccer or hockey or dance, we need to step back and take a look at what our responsibility is here.

I ask everybody in this Chamber, every single person in this Chamber, to reflect on what your values are. Bill 211 is an opportunity to regain your values; to say, you're right—simply—you're right. We need to be accountable.

* (10:40)

And maybe we don't like sitting in committee and maybe we don't like debating these bills and maybe we don't like having the conversations, but, darn it, that's what we're here for. We're here to do the tough jobs. We're here to say, yes, maybe things are tough, maybe we need to raise certain costs in the community, maybe hydro needs to go up or we're not going to have hydro.

We need to make sure that we can have the tough conversations and have input from the community. We need to have people come to this sacred building and have their words put on the record. We need to go back in the communities, and not just at election time throwing money out there to try to get votes; we need to be able to go to the doors at any time, to be in a grocery store, to be at a hockey game, to be able to pick up the phone.

I give my personal phone number to every constituent that asked for it, and they call me; they call me at all hours, and I'm able to help them whenever possible. I will talk to them. I'll meet them where they are, and they like that.

The hundreds of people who have reached out since I made my announcement tell me I am what they need in politics. They voted for me because they've seen something that was different. They've seen somebody that showed up in the community, that showed up at events, sat next to my colleagues when they were sitting alone so they wouldn't be sitting there by themselves—to have integrity, to have respect for the position, respect for the office, respect for what we do here.

Our job here as legislators is to come in here and to govern for the people. This is the people's money that we represent and it's our responsibility to spend it

wisely and to make sure that we're doing so in the most intelligent way possible so their futures are protected—and that we can work together across the aisles. We need to stop this divisive rhetoric that goes back and forth.

And I've said it from the first time I stood up: I am shocked at the behaviour that happens in this House, absolutely shocked. I've sat on many boards, aerospace companies, manufacturing companies, auto companies. I have never seen behaviour like this. If anybody behaved like that in those settings, they'd be walked out.

An Honourable Member: Relevance.

Mr. Perchotte: The relevance is on the public transparency and accountability of what we do here. Bill 211 says, do your job, do it well. Nobody came here with the intention of not serving their people. They knocked on the doors and asked people for their vote. Let people know they didn't waste their time voting for you.

Let Bill 211 move forward, and don't stick a thumb in the eye of the people who voted for you. Have integrity. Have the backbone to stand up and say, this is correct, you are right. We need accountability on all fronts. We need to stand up and make sure that we are accountable to the people who elected us and to make sure that we govern accordingly.

Thank you.

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): It's always a pleasure to rise in the Chamber and put a few words on the record and to be putting a few thoughts forward on Bill 211.

Before I get into what I had prepared, I just want to acknowledge our colleague across the way from Selkirk who's obviously recently announced that he will not be seeking re-election. And I think, you know, when we come to this Chamber, we have a lot of impassioned debates and sometimes it gets hot in here, but I will say that I have respect for my colleague across the way. I know that he's got a connection to the part of the city that I grew up here in Winnipeg, the Tyndall Park area, so I've—have a fondness for him on that. I've always got sort of a team-northwest-Winnipeg attitude, so I do sincerely wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

I will say I, too, share my personal phone with my constituents too. I've been advised not to do that, but you just can't stop; once—if someone has it, everybody has it. And this is why we do what we do, right?

We want to serve our constituents, we care about the communities we represent and we want to make sure that we're bringing the concerns of our community folks into this Chamber and having fulsome debates.

And here we are having a debate about bill twenty-one—or, sorry, 211 this morning. I think the member across the way—Morden, I believe it is—used the word comical. And I think that's a pretty accurate description of what this bill ultimately is. She used the word accountability repeatedly, democracy repeatedly, transparency. And that's a little bit rich coming from the party whose leader is in the position he's in, despite having lost the leadership vote to Wally Daudrich. So what lessons do the members opposite have to teach us—or anybody, for that matter—about democracy when simple math is not something that's been grasped across the way? And I think Manitobans will hear that and laugh.

But, you know, sometimes we come to this Chamber and question period, we hear a lot about—a lot of complaining from the opposition that our government is listening, listening. We're listening too much, we're consulting too much. And now they're coming to the Chamber today and saying, you're not doing it enough. They can't seem to decide which one we're doing: are we being too consultative or not consultative enough? So there's a little bit of an incongruence with where the members opposite want to criticize this government or criticize the work that we're doing here.

But I can very confidently say that, when it comes to budget consultations, our government takes an extensive, thorough approach to consulting with Manitobans. We just wrapped up budget—prebudget consultations for the upcoming budget.

And I had the opportunity to join the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) out in Gimli, where we had a great crowd come out and share their thoughts on the budget and what they thought should be the focus of Budget 2026. Of course, to no one's surprise, health care, education investments came up repeatedly. A lot of work has been done, but yet there is a lot of work to be done still. And, of course, a lot of that work is required because of the deep, deep cuts the opposition had made or the members opposite had made when they were in government.

But I will say the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson) was at the Gimli consultation. It was really nice, we had a lovely conversation and he had an opportunity to get up and present as well, too, and that was really nice of him to do. He gave an

impassioned speech, a very moving speech about protecting the 1 per cent. He was pleading, please, please think about the 1 per cent. Don't overtax the 1 per cent. And I just thought, you know, there's nobody who's got more of a pulse on Manitobans, the working class, than the member for Interlake-Gimli, who really took his time to come out to the consultation and remind us, Galen Weston really is struggling right now.

So I just really appreciate that and I think, you know, he could speak to the fact that that consultation did happen. We drove out to Gimli, had a great conversation with the folks there. The mayor of Gimli showed up, he gave the Minister of Finance a nice little pin. I think he's an honorary Viking now. But it was really nice, but there was sincere appreciation from the folks in Gimli that our government went out there and it was the same in south Winnipeg, it was the same for the telephone consultations. These are extensive consultations that happened, and that is in addition to the consultations that happened with stakeholders as a part of this process, right?

So if we're talking about the budget-building process and accountability, that work is already happening. This budget proposal—or this bill proposal here is entirely redundant. But it is comical; it is comical that it's coming from members opposite, who would shut the door on stakeholder groups when they were in government, who had no regard for the impacts of their cuts and, in fact, would run for Manitobans and conceal the impact of their cuts to health care, to education. So now that they want us to have consultations, when we're already doing it—again, they can't pick a side, they can't pick which one they want to criticize us about, whether we're too consultative or not consultative enough.

But I will say, and it's worth mentioning because the member opposite also noted this, they left a \$2-billion hole in the finances when they left government: \$2 billion. MNP, not us, MNP said this: \$2 billion, and what they were doing, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Perchotte) was saying that we shouldn't go out, that's something about, you know, pushing money out the door. That's exactly what was happening. The Leader of the Opposition was going on a spending spree before the last election to buy votes just to end up in those seats, \$2-billion hole to the finances.

And it's hilarious to me that members opposite want to call themselves conservative. What kind of fiscal conservative would light money on fire—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I realize the member's quite impassioned about what he's speaking about, but if he could speak about the bill before us this morning, that would be better.

* (10:50)

MLA Devgan: I think it is very important to talk about accountability, and I guess that's the—what I was trying to illustrate here, was the complete and utter lack of accountability that we saw over the past seven and a half years, and the complete and utter lack of transparency that we saw. And that is quite the opposite of what we get on this side of the House today.

We've listened to a lot of folks, everyday Manitobans we've heard talk about the importance of investing in health care, investing in education, but also making life more affordable for Manitobans with the gas tax cut, with changes to the income tax brackets, to a cut for the payroll tax for small- and medium-sized businesses.

Our government has been cutting taxes left and right. They sat on their hands; they had the opportunity. Again, we're talking about accountability here. If they were accountable to Manitobans, at a time of extreme inflation when they were empowered, where their coffers grew in government, extreme inflation and cuts to health care, that's where they would go back to Manitobans and say, look at us, aren't we good at managing the finances on the backs of Manitobans?

And so, before we go into the budget preparation process, we're going out to Manitobans and saying, what do you want to see in Budget 2026? We did it last year, we did it the year before, we're doing it again this year. And there's a lot of colleagues on this side who've themselves went out to these consultations to hear from Manitobans. This work is happening before the fact.

This bill is talking about doing that work after the fact, very typical for members opposite. But we're putting in that consultative work before the budget is developed so we know what our guiding light is. And, based on the feedback that we've been getting from Manitobans, I would say we're on the right path here.

Manitobans are also concerned about the devastating impacts of Donald Trump in general, right; we can see the price of oil right now and the impact that's happening—that's having at the pumps, the impact of trade tariffs and everything. Manitobans want to see a government that is responding to that.

And we've heard this at the consultations, at the feedback we're getting from everyday Manitobans.

So I can appreciate what the members are trying to illustrate. I don't know where they're coming from on this—comical, again, is a word that I keep thinking of here. But this bill proposal is entirely redundant. And I think it's a little bit less—there's less weight given to it.

When the members 'halk' about accountability and democracy, given what we're seeing happening in their own caucus, we had a member just this week run towards the doors. Why? Because the Leader of the Opposition cannot be accountable. It's got a criminal in their caucus who's found guilty of violating the constitution—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I'd ask the member to, once again, bring his comments back to the bill before us. [*interjection*]

And I would caution members that, the Speaker's standing, then we should be quiet.

MLA Devgan: Members opposite know nothing about managing finances, they know nothing about accountability. This bill is completely redundant.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I rise today to speak on Bill 211, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act, because this bill is about something very simple. It's about ensuring Manitobans have the right to be heard before the government passes laws that affect their lives and their taxes.

At its core, this bill is about accountability and transparency in the legislative process. The public deserve the opportunity to present and make representations on all legislation, including any measure the NDP choose to paperclip to their budget at the last minute. Manitobans expect, when laws are being proposed that affect their lives, they will have the opportunity to speak about those laws and place their views on the public record.

Manitobans also expect openness from their government. They expect that, when laws are proposed in this Legislature, those will be subject to scrutiny and public input. They expect that legislative process will allow citizens, stakeholders and communities to come forward and share their perspectives.

That expectation is reasonable. It's also fundamental to the functioning of a healthy democracy.

Public budget accountability bill will help hold governments, including the current NDP government, accountable to Manitobans for the spending of taxpayers' dollars and for all legislative changes undertaken in the budget bill each year.

Budgets are among the most important pieces of legislation introduced in this Legislature. They determine how taxpayers' dollars are spent and include legislative measures that affect many aspects of public policy. Manitobans deserve transparency when those decisions are being made.

For too long the NDP have been unaccountable and have tried to hide their legislative agendas and budgetary bills. By placing legislative changes inside the budget bills, the government can move those changes forward without the same level of public scrutiny that other legislative legislation typically receives. That practice reduces transparency and it limits the ability of Manitobans to participate in the legislative process.

Honourable Speaker, this legislation also serves another important purpose: It'll be the incentive for the NDP to append non-budgetary items to the budget bill. If legislation or measures attached to a budget must face public review, governments will be less inclined to include unrelated policy changes in a bill simply to avoid scrutiny. In that way, this bill encourages greater transparency and more responsible legislative practices.

The bill also establishes a clear standard for public participation. It'll add a minimum of 10 hours for public consultation at a legislative committee. Those 10 hours will provide Manitobans with the opportunity to come forward, present their views and contribute to the process. Public committees are a part of the democratic accountability. They allow citizens to engage directly with their elected representatives and ensure that legislation is formed by the experiences and perspectives of the people it affects.

By establishing a minimum of 10 hours for public consultation, this legislation ensures an appropriate level of public input. It means Manitobans will have the opportunity to come before a committee of the Legislature and express their views. It means stakeholders will be able to provide input. That's an important part of our democratic accountability. Public committee hearings allow citizens to engage with the legislative process and allows people of Manitoba to share their expertise, their experiences and their concerns.

Honourable Speaker, this bill strengthens transparency, improves accountability and ensures Manitobans have that opportunity to participate in the legislative process when budget legislation is being considered. Public deserve the opportunity to present and make these representations on all legislation, including measures that may be attached to a budget bill at the last minute. The public budget accountability bill ensures that opportunity will exist.

So let's get support from the entire House and all stand in support of this bill.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, always a pleasure to rise in the Chamber and put a few words on the official record.

And, you know, we're hearing a lot of hyperbole by the members opposite. We're hearing a lot of words like trust and accountability and integrity and the ethics and transparency and all of those things. And, you know, the member for McPhillips (MLA Devgan) used the word that he was finding it comical, and I, as well, would agree with that statement in that we have a party that tried to ram through a controversial mining project that was completely anti-democratic and yet they're talking about accountability, integrity, transparency with Bill 211.

And so it's—it is deeply ironic. It's deeply ironic that we have a government—or a party—sorry—rather, a failed party that literally tried to sneak through something behind—

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—Calling on the Provincial Government to Increase the Personal Tax Exemption

The Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is resolution No. 5—*[interjection]*

Speaker shall be heard in silence.

The resolution before us this morning is resolution No. 5, Calling on the Provincial Government to Increase the Personal Tax Exemption, brought forward by the honourable member for Midland.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I move, seconded by the MLA for Roblin,

WHEREAS Manitobans are facing an affordability and cost-of-living crisis; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has cancelled the indexation of the Basic Personal Amount and personal income tax brackets, costing Manitobans more money each year going forward; and

WHEREAS since this Provincial Government took office, it has broken its promise to not raise taxes by increasing school taxes, education property taxes, and ending income tax indexation, thus pushing more Manitobans into higher tax brackets; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is phasing out the Basic Personal Amount for important medical professionals such as doctors and other skilled professionals making Manitoba less competitive for important workers in the health-care system; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has increased taxes on more than 55% of Winnipeg Families and property owners, that amounts to over 130,000 property owners in Winnipeg alone; and

WHEREAS property taxes and other taxes are 19.5 per cent higher since the Provincial Government took office; and

WHEREAS Manitobans now pay the highest taxes in Western Canada and have the highest inflation in the country as grocery prices have risen by 5.9%; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2026 MNP Consumer Debt Index report, half of Manitoba families are two hundred dollars or less a month away from being able to pay their bills and service their debt; and

WHEREAS the previous PC Provincial Government successfully removed over 75,000 lower income Manitobans from the tax rolls by increasing the Basic Personal Amount to \$15,000 between 2016 and 2023; and

WHEREAS, a 2025 Fraser Institute report identified that the lives of families purchasing a home or renting in Winnipeg has become significantly less affordable, requiring a larger share of after-tax income with a quarter of their annual income on rent, or having to save for 13 months to buy an average home in Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS, many Manitoba families are struggling to keep up with the cost of living. Families are struggling to put food on the table and pay their heating and property tax bills, and have less after-tax income.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to call on the provincial government to raise the basic personal amount for provincial income tax to \$30,000.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stone: I am pleased and proud to stand up today, on behalf of our PC team, as we call for real tax relief for Manitobans.

Manitobans are deeply struggling, and we want to help. While over 50 per cent of Manitobans are within \$200 of not being able to afford and pay their bills, our PC team believes Manitobans should keep more of their hard-earned money.

We stand with Manitobans—[interjection]—we stand with Manitobans who say the NDP taxman takes enough and more. This is why we are calling for an increase to the basic personal amount to a historic, unprecedented \$30,000.

Across Manitoba, families are struggling. They're struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living under this NDP government. I hear it from my neighbours, from people at the hockey rink, people at the grocery store and school pickup. Families are working harder than ever before but they feel like they are falling further and further behind. They are struggling to keep up.

We are seeing this struggle in spikes in food bank usage. Families are using food banks more than ever before. Post-secondary-educated individuals are using food banks. We are seeing this struggle from parents who cannot put their child in their favourite sport because they need the extra few hundred dollars at the end of the year. We see seniors struggling to afford medication and quality-of-life aids such as walkers.

Groceries have skyrocketed. All food—and especially wholesome, healthy food—has become unaffordable for so many Manitobans: a 5 per cent increase in fresh vegetables—the highest in Canada—here in Manitoba; coffee is up 27 per cent; children's clothing is up 12 per cent; and ground beef is up a shocking 39 per cent, under this NDP government.

Groceries are costing more, heating bills are costing more and property taxes have skyrocketed to historic, unprecedented highs. At the end of the month, families are left with less after income tax than ever before.

For Manitobans today, the struggle is very real: the struggle of putting food on the table, the struggle of paying their hydro bills, the struggle of paying their

mortgages and property taxes, the struggle of buying clothes for children—and as parents we know children outgrow their clothes rather quickly.

And while Manitoba families are tightening their belts, this NDP government is doing the exact opposite. During a cost-of-living crisis, this NDP government has collected almost half a billion dollars from Manitoba families in additional taxes—half a billion dollars—when Manitobans are struggling, when over 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting that they are within \$200 of bankruptcy. This is the real struggle that Manitobans are facing under this NDP government.

The NDP promised that they would continue indexing tax-income taxes. They broke that promise. They have now pushed more Manitobans into a higher tax bracket. Any increase in wages that Manitobans would seek would not be felt as a result of paying higher income taxes.

Manitobans are literally paying the price, as Manitoba has the highest inflation in the country and the second highest food inflation. These are sneaky taxes, hidden taxes that Manitobans did not vote for. But the NDP did not stop there.

The NDP decided, during the cost-of-living crisis, to hike education and school property taxes by hundreds of millions of dollars—\$400 million since this NDP came into power. Families in Southdale, Waverley, Lagimodière and McPhillips are paying higher property taxes, thanks to this NDP government.

When property tax bills arrived in May, families were shocked; 55 per cent of Winnipeg property owners are worse off, thanks to this NDP government; fixed-income seniors are worse off, thanks to this NDP government; and parents are worse off, thanks to this NDP government.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

How did it get so bad? The NDP removed all guardrails to protect homeowners. They got rid of the 2 per cent cap on school divisions. They got rid of the education property tax rebate. They failed to plan for property values increasing, and homeowners are paying the price for those poor decisions.

Perhaps the most troubling example of this government's approach is their ideological targeting of professionals and job creators. Rather than increasing the basic personal amount, like they promised in the election, they clawed it back and are

already looking at doing it again, targeting highly skilled professionals that Manitoba needs.

Think about this: at a time when Manitoba is struggling to recruit and retain doctors, engineers, veterinarians, businesses, investors; when ERs are closing and Manitobans are waiting for care, the NDP are targeting these highly skilled professionals. When businesses are struggling with tariffs, the NDP are targeting those small-business owners. The NDP decided the solution was to tax these skilled professionals more and they're looking at doing it again.

That sends a message far beyond health care, honourable Speaker. All of these people hear the same message from this government: if you succeed in Manitoba, you will be punished for it. This is exactly the wrong message to send if we want to grow our economy.

Because the truth is, Manitoba is not competing in isolation. Look around. We're surrounded by prosperity: Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, North Dakota, Wisconsin, jurisdictions attracting investment, communities growing, economies growing, creating opportunity. And when you look at GDP per capita, the gap between Manitoba and these places is stark.

Under the NDP, Manitoba is losing, and we are losing badly. The clearest proof is an embarrassing \$5 billion in equalization payments to this Province—\$5 billion. Equalization was meant to be a helping hand, but when it reaches levels like this, it becomes a warning sign. It tell us something is fundamentally wrong with our economic performance.

Manitoba should be a Province that creates prosperity, not one that relies on federal transfers to drive it. That means we must be competitive again—competitive for workers, entrepreneurs, investment. And that's why we're bringing this resolution forward. Our Progressive Conservative team believes something very simple: Manitobans deserve to keep more of their hard-earned money.

When we were in government, we took real steps to make this happen. In 2016, the basic personal exemption was \$9,000. The PCs almost doubled that to over \$15,000. But we say that this should continue to grow, because the struggle for Manitobans is real.

* (11:10)

The PCs protected Manitobans from hidden tax hikes by increasing tax brackets, indexing of tax

brackets every year, but now Manitobans are facing a real affordability crisis, which is why it's time to take this bold step. So today we are calling for Manitoba's basic personal amount to be increased to \$30,000. This would make it the highest in Canada and it means something very simple.

The first \$30,000 that Manitobans earn would be completely tax-free before the NDP taxman takes a single one of those dollars. This policy would make Manitoba one of the most competitive places in Canada for workers and entrepreneurs because when Manitobans keep more of what they earn, they support local businesses and they support their communities.

So, honourable Speaker, we are here to stand with Manitobans. We understand that their struggle is real, that there is a real cost-of-living crisis, and we want to help.

Once fully implemented, more than 350,000 Manitobans would pay zero provincial income tax. Our PC team stands with you Manitobans. We know your struggle is real and we're with you.

Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): The members opposite talk about affordability now, yet when they were in government, they weakened the Rent Assist program, reducing support for low-income Manitobans and making it harder for people to keep up with rising house costs.

Why did the PCs cut housing affordability supports for the very families they claim to care about now?

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): It was the PCs that created the renters tax credit to begin with. The PCs also created the education property tax rebate helping many homeowners across Manitoba, but we have brought this resolution forward because it helps the most struggling of Manitobans.

Manitobans are within \$200 of not being able to pay off their debt. The struggle is real. *[interjection]*

Members opposite want to heckle, but we understand when parents are struggling to put food on the table. We feel that if they have more money in their pockets they will be able to provide for their families.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I commend the member for Midland for bringing forward this great resolution that calls on the government to truly make a real difference. This member understands how the economy works and how to increase affordability for Manitobans.

We can all understand that increasing the personal tax exemption to \$30,000 makes a difference to those below \$30,000, but your average family of four making \$90,000 that's really struggling—my question to the member is, how much of a difference will it make for the average Manitoba family of four making, let's say, \$90,000?

Mrs. Stone: I thank my colleague for that question.

For a family of four with a household income of \$90,000, they will have an extra \$3,000 every single year: \$3,000 that will help put healthy food on the table for their families, an extra \$3,000 that helps make that decision to put their child in sports, an extra \$3,000 that can maybe help with a vacation or help support a local restaurant in their area.

This is \$3,000 that provides Manitobans with additional after-tax income to support their families and this is why we believe that many Manitobans will be better off—

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

MLA Corbett: The failed PC government sold off hundreds of public housing units, shrinking the supply of affordable homes at a time when rents were already rising.

Why did the PCs choose to reduce affordable housing stock instead of protecting the Manitobans who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads?

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, this resolution and this call for action is about supporting Manitobans who are struggling. An individual who earns \$30,000 won't pay any after-tax income to the NDP taxman. That is true tax relief. That is helping that family put food on the table for their own families. That is supporting children. That is supporting household budgets.

If this NDP government really wants to help the truly struggling Manitoban, then they should fully

support raising the basic personal amount exemption to \$30,000. This is good tax policy.

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

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to ask the member—my good friend and colleague—about the fact that why does she think that increasing the basic personal exemption to \$30,000 is so important to all of you Manitobans who are watching today? We know, from the amount of heckling coming from the Justice Minister this morning, obviously he doesn't get it.

Can the member please explain to the House, to Manitobans, and also to the Justice Minister, why it's so important to raise this basic personal exemption to \$30,000?

Mrs. Stone: I thank my colleague for the question.

And this is why it's important: because Manitobans are struggling. Manitobans are living through an affordability and a cost-of-living crisis and it is getting worse under this NDP government. This NDP has proven that they have no real long-term, tangible solutions for affordability relief.

Over half a million Manitobans are earning less than \$40,000. Raising the basic personal amount to \$30,000 will help those Manitobans. It'll help those Manitoba families be able to afford food, afford rent, afford mortgages, afford putting their kids into sports.

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

MLA Corbett: Honourable Deputy Speaker, many of the affordability pressures Manitobans are experiencing today—rising rents, reduced services, higher costs—stem from years and years of PC cuts, freezes and weakened supports.

Will the member opposite acknowledge that today's affordability crisis is the direct result of decisions they made when they were in government?

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Deputy Speaker, under the previous PC government, the PCs put more money back into the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. The former PC government almost doubled the basic personal amount between 2016 and 2023, and we don't want it to stop there. We believe that Manitobans know best how to spend their hard-earned money rather than going into the endless hole of the NDP tax-man. This is why we want Manitobans to keep their hard-earned money. *[interjection]*

The member opposite is heckling me because clearly she doesn't think that Manitobans should keep their hard-earned money. She thinks her government should be making choices for Manitobans.

We feel the opposite. We feel that Manitobans should be able to—

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

Mr. Narth: We're seeing life becoming less affordable for all Manitobans. Those are Manitobans that are earning minimum wage all the way up to Manitobans that, a couple years ago, felt that they were earning a comfortable wage and could provide for their family. Now those same people that felt that they could provide for their families are finding it harder and harder to pay the mortgage and put food on the table.

But yet we heard many promises in the last election, so my question for the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) is: Did the NDP not promise to index tax brackets and the BPA in their blast—platform, and did their leader not promise to not increase taxes for Manitobans?

* (11:20)

Mrs. Stone: My colleague is absolutely right. The NDP did make a lot of promises and they have broken every single one of them when it comes to tax relief. They stopped indexing income taxes and instead that has drawn in \$82 million off of the backs of hard-working Manitobans. They pushed more Manitobans into a higher tax bracket. So any increase in wages that those Manitobans would see would not be felt as a result of being pushed into a higher tax bracket.

But the NDP did not stop there. They increased education property taxes by \$400 million since they came into office. Homeowners are seeing property tax bill shock, they saw it last year and the NDP is refusing to step in with guardrails—

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

MLA Corbett: Under the PCs, public services were cut, programs were weakened and community supports were eliminated: decisions that directly increased everyday costs for families who had to pay more out of pocket.

Why did the PCs make life more expensive for families through cuts that pushed costs onto households?

Mrs. Stone: An additional \$400 million in education property taxes on the backs of Manitoba homeowners is what this NDP government has done since they came into office. Manitobans can't afford their mortgages, they can't afford to put groceries on the table and they cannot afford to put kids into sports.

This is why we are bringing this resolution forward. A \$30,000 basic personal amount will help many Manitobans to be able to afford the basic necessities and have more after-tax income to spend within our Manitoba economy.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, honourable deputy acting Speaker; I want to really thank our colleague, my colleague from Midland, for bringing forward this resolution.

Just this morning on CJOB, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was on, and when asked about what he was going to be doing for—to make life more affordable to Manitobans, he really didn't have any answers.

We know that the NDP, since forming government, has only increased taxes, and now I think Manitobans would definitely be in support of the basic personal exemption increase to \$30,000 and I'm looking forward to passing this resolution forward.

I'd like to ask the member, how much has the NDP raised taxes on Manitobans since they've been elected?

Mrs. Stone: Since coming into office, this NDP government has raised taxes on the backs of Manitobans by half a billion dollars.

We believe Manitobans should keep more of their hard-earned money. Manitobans are the right person to make the decision for their families on how their hard-earned money is spent, not the NDP government.

This resolution will help more Manitobans provide for their families to pay for groceries, to pay for their kids in sports. This resolution will help more Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, unfortunately, time for questions has expired.

Before we move on to debate, I heard a variety of ways to refer to myself in this Chair, and I just want to clarify for everyone, it is honourable Deputy Speaker. We can work with that.

Debate

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Honourable Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging the resolution

brought forward by the member opposite. It raises the issue of affordability, and that is a conversation every Manitoban understands right now.

Families across our province are feeling the pressure of rising everyday costs. Whether it's groceries at the checkout counter, rent or mortgage payments at the end of the month or the cost of filling up the family vehicle, Manitobans are carefully watching every dollar. These pressures are real and they are being felt in households in every region of our province.

When Manitobans talk about affordability, they are not speaking in abstract economic terms. They are talking about the everyday choices they must make.

They are talking about whether the grocery bill will stretch to the end of the week. They are talking about whether there's enough left over after rent or mortgage payments to cover child care, clothing for their kids or the rising cost of transportation. These are the realities that families are facing today.

And it is important to recognize that these pressures are not happening in isolation. Across Canada, in PC provinces, NDP provinces and around the world, households are facing higher costs driven by global economic conditions. International trade disruptions, supply chain challenges and tariffs imposed by United States have all contributed to increased costs across North America. Those global forces affect the price of food, fuel and goods that Manitobans rely on every day.

French spoken

Il est important de reconnaître que ces pressions ne se produisent pas isolément. Partout au Canada dans – et dans le monde, les ménages font face à des coûts plus élevés en raison des conditions économiques mondiales. Les perturbations du commerce international, les défis des chaînes d'approvisionnement et les tarifs imposés par les États-Unis ont contribué à l'augmentation des coûts en Amérique du Nord. Ces facteurs mondiaux influencent les prix des aliments, les carburants et les biens dont les Manitobains dépendent chaque jour.

Translation

It is important to recognize that these pressures are not occurring in isolation. Across Canada in—and around the world, households are facing higher costs due to global economic conditions. Disruptions to international trade, supply chain challenges and tariffs imposed by the United States have contributed to increased costs in North America. These global

factors influence the prices of food, fuel and goods that Manitobans depend on every day.

English

But while we cannot control global markets, what we can control, and what Manitobans expect from their government, is how we respond. Manitobans deserve a government that listens and acts to lower the cost of living. That is exactly the approach our government has taken since forming government, lowering everyday costs where we can and strengthening supports that put money back into Manitobans' pockets.

This resolution is about affordability and what governments can do to help Manitobans, so let me tell you about some of the things we are doing.

One example of that approach can be seen in fuel costs. Starting January 1, 2025, our government permanently reduced the fuel tax to 12.5 per-cents per litre—*[interjection]*—yes, roughly a 10 per cent reduction from the previous rate, something PCs never did. For Manitobans who rely on their vehicles to get to work, drive their kids to school, attend medical appointments or travel between communities, that reduction provides real and ongoing relief every time they fill up their tanks.

Housing is another area where families are feeling pressure, which is why our government strengthened affordability supports for both renters and homeowners. Under Budget 2025, the Renters Affordability Tax Credit increased to \$575 and has now risen to \$625 for the 2026 tax year, with seniors' top-up increasing to five—\$357. For homeowners, the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit has increased to \$1,600, helping offset property taxes on principal residences, making it easier for Manitobans to remain in their homes.

French spoken

En ce qui concerne le logement, notre gouvernement a renforcé des soutiens à l'abordabilité pour les locataires et les propriétaires. Pour ces propriétaires, le crédit d'impôt d'accessibilité à des propriétaires a augmenté à 1 600 \$.

Translation

With regard to housing, our government has strengthened affordability support for renters and homeowners. For homeowners, the homeowners accessibility tax credit has been increased to \$1,600.

English

Affordability is also helping families raise their children. Although this resolution calls for a tax cut, given that this government has already raised the basic personal amount, we are taking more approaches.

Our government made true \$10-a-day child care a reality in Manitoba. We expanded the program to include non-school days, including summer months, ensuring families have access to affordable child care year-round. For many Manitoban families, that represents savings of more than \$2,800 every year while also helping parents remain in the workforce.

This resolution does not address food costs. We are not standing still. We are also helping families manage food costs.

Through a universal school nutrition program, our government is ensuring children across Manitoba have access to healthy meals at school so that no child has to try to learn on an empty stomach.

At the same time, we launched a provincial grocering—grocery pricing study, we're challenging covenants and we're doing what we can to drive food prices down. And that's what Manitobans expect.

Earlier this year, our government also acted to freeze the wholesale price of certain milk products to prevent sudden increases to one of the most commonly purchased grocery items for families. These are practical actions designed to stabilize essential costs and protect household budgets.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we must also be honest about how we arrived at this moment. Sure, the opposition will propose tax cuts, but we should not forget that many affordability pressures families face today developed over years under the previous Progressive Conservative government.

* (11:30)

Over seven and a half years, key supports that helped Manitobans stay ahead of rising costs were weakened or scaled back. Programs like Rent Assist were change to reduce support for many low-income Manitobans, while hundreds of public-housing units were sold off at a time when the supply of affordable housing should have been expanding.

At the same time, the previous government pursued a broad austerity agenda that weakened public services across Manitobans. Studies have documented wage freezes in the public sector, major staffing reductions and cuts to program funding across

departments. Labour programs alone saw budgets decline by more than 26 per cent, while staffing levels dropped significantly, shrinking the capacity of government services to respond to Manitobans' needs.

Under the PCs, not only were there tax cuts, but there were also wage cuts and job cuts. Workers across public service reported chronic staffing shortages and growing workloads, often doing the work of one and a quarter or even one and a half employees.

Our government believes Manitoban public servants deserve respect and stability, which is why we are committed to rebuilding the public service and acting as a good faith partner in collective bargaining with public-sector workers.

French spoken

Les travailleurs du secteur public ont signalé des pénuries chroniques de personnel et une charge de travail croissante, plusieurs affirmant faire travail de plus qu'une personne – et c'est pourquoi nous engageons à rebâtir la fonction publique et agir de bonne foi dans les négociations collectives avec les travailleurs du secteur public.

Translation

Public sector workers have reported chronic staff shortages and increasing workloads, with many saying they are doing the work of more than one person—which is why we are committed to rebuilding the public service and acting in good faith in collective bargaining with public sector workers.

English

Rebuilding these supports take time, but it's the work of our government and it's the work we are committed to doing. Our approach to affordability is to build on real, measurable actions, lowering everyday costs, strengthening tax credits, supporting small businesses and investing in economic growth that creates good jobs for Manitobans.

Let's talk about a bill that made a difference—our budget bill. Budget 2025 included the largest capital investment in Manitoba's history—the largest capital investment in Manitoba's history—\$3.7 billion improving infrastructure while putting Manitobans to work, putting them to work at the Grunthal Arena, building a Grunthal Arena. And the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home, and Riding Mountain where we're expanding vet clinics, building Shoal Lake's water infrastructure.

Hey, let's talk about Woodlands, Stonewall, all the recreational spaces we're building for the community. Let's talk about Spruce Woods, the Spruce Woods-Souris golf club. What a great place to go and visit. And I see Carrie there, spent some time in Winkler, Morden-Winkler getting a lot of love—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

Reminder to all members that other members must be referred to by their portfolio or their constituency.

Mr. Simard: I apologize for calling you by your first name.

But all that to say: Since forming government, these investments and initiatives have helped create more than 30,000 jobs across Manitoba. We are growing the economy while also taking concrete steps, those steps I just mentioned, to lower everyday costs for families.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, affordability is not solved simply through a single tax measure or symbolic motion in this Chamber. It requires sustained action across housing, child care, food 'crops', economic growth and strong public services. Manitobans want a government that understands the pressures they face, takes practical steps to help manage those costs. That is exactly what our government is doing and is exactly what Manitobans expect.

Let's build Manitoba together.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): I appreciate the opportunity to stand today to support the resolution brought forward by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone). This is an important direction—this indicates an important direction that we need to bring our province to achieve increased affordability for all Manitobans.

We just, prior to me, heard the member for Brandon East (Mr. Simard) talking about, patting himself on the back for the investment—necessary investments that he claims to have been made in communities across the province and speaking negatively to the resolution that we've brought forward, making it a choice between the investments that the minister has indicated and our approach here on the PC team of reducing taxes.

And the truth and reality is that we don't have to pick one over the other. When we invest in our economy and we invest in the people of Manitoba that

are working to grow our economy, make their homes a better place, make their communities a better place and contribute, we are able to achieve both of those.

An economy that is grown under reduced taxation is able to afford us the abilities to invest in those communities. Growing our economy achieves the same tax revenues for the government.

This is something that's near and dear to me as a lifelong employer. I grew up in a household that talked about how much my family could afford to pay employees so that we could grow and prosper the business, and give more to those families so that they could grow and prosper within their households and give back to their communities. And it's a balancing act.

What I have noticed in recent years versus decades prior is that it's becoming increasingly less affordable for Manitobans to achieve the same standard of living in the same jobs. They are increasingly being taxed year after year, more and more. And I think all Manitobans can see that reducing the tax burden gives them the ability to contribute more within their community and to grow and prosper within their own personal households.

We are hearing more and more, each and every day, that people earning minimum wage, which has dramatically increased over the last decade, are still not able to afford to live. And it's clear to see because if we increase the minimum wage by a buck or two, as we've been doing in the past, that translates into very little money.

But what would make a difference is increasing the personal tax exemption to \$30,000. All of those people currently earning minimum wage would no longer need to pay provincial personal income tax. That's an additional \$3,000 a year into the personal household budget of each and every one of those people. That's helping those people most 'vulnerable' out there. That's helping our youth enter into the workforce; it 'incentifies' youth entering into the workforce.

And in a time where we have some of the largest labour shortages that we've ever seen, I'm seeing first-hand with employees that people are deciding between social assistance and sitting at home over entering into the workforce at minimum wage because of the amount that they're taxed. We're—we are no longer incentivizing people to work harder and work longer. People now are choosing against working overtime because they feel that they're being punished

for working more. Manitobans today that choose to work overtime realize that all of the money that they earn goes to personal income tax.

So that's why this sets out the difference between us as Progressive Conservatives and the socialist NDP that we have governing this province right now, because the fundamental difference is this government, the socialist NDP, they want to choose who gets the money and they want to tell everyone to go to work, to pay your taxes and we will choose who benefits from it. We hold the purse. That's what this socialist NDP government sets out to do.

And, fundamentally, we're different on this side of the House. We believe that allowing you to keep the money that you've earned allows you to invest in your household, contribute to your family. And everybody has the same opportunity; it doesn't matter if you are a minimum-wage earner, an 18-year-old just entering into the workforce or somebody that is a family of four earning \$90,000.

* (11:40)

And we heard it during question period of this resolution earlier that we have ministers on the other side of the House that are saying we shouldn't think about the family of four making \$90,000.

In some way, this government feels that your average family making \$90,000, which I'm sure every Manitoban watching here today knows the stress and the financial constraints that they have each and every month making \$90,000 and providing for two young children.

This is a wage that at one point would make a family feel very comfortable, allow them the privileges of their efforts, and that is no longer the case. These are the same families that are now identified as being \$200 a month away from insolvency. And that's extremely concerning in a province of opportunity like we have in Manitoba.

We should never accept that people that have gone out, got an education, worked hard, wanted to have a family and prosper in our province are held down by the tax burden of a socialist government. So this really sets the pace to show the difference between what we fundamentally believe in and clearly what the NDP fundamentally believe in. They would rather sprinkle \$40 rent tax benefits here and there each month to a select few people than actually allow those exact same people the ability to keep an extra \$3,000 a year in their pockets.

Honourable Speaker, this is very concerning for us, and it should be concerning for all Manitobans. When people keep more money, they spend more money, and they spend more money in their local economy. When somebody saves money on their personal income tax on their checks, this is money that directly goes back into the community. They support the local stores, they hire local services, they invest in their local communities, and that activity supports businesses, which creates more job creation and in turn more economic growth.

That is how you build a stronger economy. It's from the ground up, and that's our fundamental difference. It's not by taking more, it's by letting people keep more.

Honourable Speaker, the contrast here is very clear. Our Progressive Conservative team believes affordability starts with trusting Manitobans with their own money.

This NDP government believes governments should take more and promise relief later, but Manitobans know better. They know that no government spends money as carefully as the hard-working Manitoba family does. They know that the best relief is relief they can actually see in their very own pay cheques and they know that when they work hard, they deserve to keep more.

Honourable Speaker, this resolution is practical, it's meaningful, and it meets the moment. Raising the personal basic income tax amount to \$30,000 would provide real, broad-based relief to Manitobans when they need it most. It would help workers, it helps families, it helps seniors. It would strengthen Manitoba's economic competitiveness at the same time.

And this is why I am proud to stand for this resolution, and I expect all Manitoba legislators to—

The Deputy Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I do want to acknowledge the resolution that was brought forward by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone).

It raises the important issue of affordability, and that is a conversation that every Manitoban understands right now. But honourable Speaker, I think that we really have to be honest about how we have arrived at this moment. My colleague—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Naylor: —the minister for municipalities and northern—my colleague, the member for municipality and northern relations has already outlined some of—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

When people are participating virtually, it tends to be a little bit harder to hear them, so it requires even more silence in the Chamber. So out of respect for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I'd ask folks to keep it quiet.

MLA Naylor: So, as I was saying, we really have to be honest about how we got here, and I know that the member for Midland wasn't here under the previous PC government, but she chose to run under their banner, despite all of the harmful decisions that were made by Brian Pallister and by Heather Stefanson, specifically related to affordability for Manitobans.

Many of the affordability pressures that families are facing today didn't appear overnight, and over seven and a half years key supports that helped Manitobans stay ahead of rising costs were weakened or scaled back by the failed PC government. For example, the previous Progressive Conservative government weakened the Rent Assist program. They introduced a two-tier system that reduced support for many low-income Manitobans and they made it harder for people to keep up with rising housing costs.

The previous government also sold hundreds of public housing units, reducing the supply of affordable housing at a time when Manitobans were already struggling with rising rents.

The previous government further pursued a broad austerity agenda that significantly weakened public services across Manitoba. And studies examining this period found that the failed PC government implemented a public sector wage freeze, major reductions in staffing and cuts to program funding across departments.

And you may be wondering, you know, what does that have to do with today's affordability, but this failed austerity agenda found that civil service workforce was reduced by approximately 17 per cent, while the broader public sector was directed to cut around 15 per cent of management positions. And what that did was dramatically shrink the capacity of public services to respond to Manitobans' needs.

And, at the same time, funding to many external organizations that delivered social and community services was reduced or eliminated and programs

were increasingly privatized, often leaving communities with fewer services and longer wait times. And workers across the public service reported that these failed austerity measures created chronic staffing shortages and increased workloads, many saying they were effectively doing the work of 1.25 to 1.5 employees due to reduced staffing levels, which contributed to burnout and made it harder to deliver government services effectively.

And rebuilding these supports takes time, but it is work our government is committed to doing. That's why our approach to affordability has been focused on very real, measurable actions. We have been lowering everyday costs, strengthening tax credits for renters and homeowners, supporting small businesses through tax relief, investing in economic growth, and taking action on grocery prices to make sure Manitobans are not paying more than they should.

You know, I just want to come back to small business owners for a moment, because one of the other things that happened, another terrible decision that took place under the previous PC government, is that one time they chose to gift a grant of \$500,000 to the current Leader of the Opposition so that his small business could thrive. Well, they essentially put other small businesses out of business, including a woman who operated a very similar business in my constituency.

Yet, the member who brought forward this resolution supports her leader every day and, you know, I think if she truly wanted to help, if she was really concerned about Manitoba's deficit, wanted to reduce federal transfers, she would tell the Leader of the Opposition to pay back the half-million dollars he received from the public purse. And until she does that, it's hard to believe that she truly does care about the cost of living for regular people.

* (11:50)

You know, honourable Deputy Speaker, affordability measures show up in very real places and addressing those pressures requires action across all of those areas and more. That's why our work on affordability is continuing.

In the coming weeks, Manitobans will see the next steps in Budget 2026, which our government will introduce on March 24.

Our fabulous Finance Minister has already made it clear that affordability will remain a central focus of that budget and that Manitobans can expect additional measures aimed directly at lowering everyday costs,

including supports that address pressures related to groceries, housing and 'mortgage'—mortgage costs. These are the kinds of issues that families raise every day, and they're exactly the kinds of pressures our government is focused on addressing.

The resolution brought forward today suggests that affordability can be addressed primarily through one tax lever.

The—affordability challenges don't come from [*inaudible*] can't be solved by one policy alone. For our government, too, affordability will not be something that is addressed once and forgotten. It'll continue to respond to the realities that people are—Budget 2026 will build on the—we've already taken and continue to delivering support so that Manitoban families feel the difference—symbolic—gestures or one [*inaudible*] they faced every day, and that is exactly what our government will continue to focus on now and in the coming years ahead.

And still, we recognize that affordability means more than lowering costs. It's about building a stronger economy so Manitobans can earn good wages and find opportunities close to home. Over the past year, our government has taken important steps to grow Manitoba's economy and create these opportunities.

In Budget 2025, we introduced the largest capital investment in Manitoba's history, \$3.7 billion. That puts Manitobans to work and improves critical infrastructure across the province.

Our government also launched Manitoba's economic development strategy to make Manitoba a have province, doing that through strategic investment, growing the private sector, expanding trade through the Port of Churchill, and boosting productivity.

And under this strategy, we're supporting Manitoba businesses with the new \$50-million business loan program. We've also launched our \$50-million trade, growth and investment fund to help Manitoba businesses scale up, attract investment and compete globally.

And we're building up the Port of Churchill with an \$87.5-million investment over the next two years, on top of the \$36.4-million earlier investment, to strengthen Manitobans' northern supply chain. We're also implementing our critical mineral strategy to create good jobs for rural and northern Manitobans while building our low-carbon future and establishing

a single-window critical mineral office to streamline approvals and get projects done faster.

Just this month, our government announced an investment of \$3.4 million to support development of the First Nation-owned Minango *[phonetic]* nickel mine, a project expected to create jobs and economic opportunities in northern Manitoba while supporting the critical minerals factor.

Since coming into government, we've created over 30,000 jobs driven by these investments. We are growing this economy and we're making life more affordable, things the members opposite failed to do for seven and a half years.

I appreciate having the opportunity to put a few words on the record, honourable Deputy Speaker, and I just want to remind Manitobans that they deserve a government that listens and acts, and we are here for you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Deputy Speaker, I just want to get up and put a few words on the record in regards to resolution brought forward by my good friend and colleague, the MLA for Midland.

Of course, trying to bring some common sense to this government, which obviously is missing some common sense and faith in their own MLAs, considering that the past two speakers from the NDP—and I could almost imagine that the next speaker after me, because I'll give other people the opportunity, will probably be a backbencher because now that I'm pointing this out that during private members' time the only ones who the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has faith in is to have ministers stand up and speak.

So raising that the basic personal exemption—it sounds like the Minister of Education wants to get up and talk—but basically this resolution should pass unanimously today, Deputy Speaker, because this basic—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko:—personal exemption increase, the resolution, will actually bring over 350,000 Manitobans off of the tax rolls, make life far more affordable.

And listening to CJOB in—this morning, to the Premier, he absolutely had zero plans to make life more affordable for you.

So I think all of us could come together in the Manitoba Legislature today, pass this resolution

unanimously and let's get to work on taking 350,000 Manitobans off the tax rolls.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I am proud to stand here as a member of the backbench because the member previous couldn't even sustain five minutes on the record.

On that side of the House they don't care about one Manitoba; they only care about one Manitoban and that Manitoban is themselves, honourable Deputy Speaker.

That's why, over the course of a pandemic, over the course of many years they forced workers in the public service to work without an increase on their annual salary, honourable Speaker—zero percent, zero percent, zero percent three years straight through a pandemic.

Honourable Speaker, they have no credibility when it comes to affordability, so much so that the kitchen table they talk about is their own. The only thing vulnerable about them when it comes to, you know, advocating for vulnerable Manitobans, is that they—if they keep harping like there's something that they're not, their seats are at risk. They are vulnerable. What's vulnerable about them are the millions that they sent to landlords of shopping malls amid a pandemic, the half a million dollars they sent to their own leader to get him to run and put businesses out of business.

Not only that, but their failed premier gave herself a \$19,000 raise over the course of their tenure in government, including members of their own Cabinet that they have failed their way into the backbench on the opposition with.

That being said, a \$40,000 fine for violating, you know, the ethics—the Ethics Commissioner's rules—is nothing, clearly. It's pocket change to them, clearly. So why won't they pay the fine, honourable Deputy Speaker?

Young Manitobans don't have the luxury of being a lifelong employer the way that members opposite do, so how dare they speak as if they know what it's like to be a young Manitoban in this economy, honourable Speaker? Members opposite talk about, quote unquote, their youth—their youth—and members opposite are saying that I am ageist for saying that they can speak for us.

Honourable Speaker, that is atrocious. Youth unemployment skyrocketed because of the work that they did to dismantle jobs for young people.

Meanwhile, here in Manitoba we are listening to young people, not only listening but encouraging them to take the lead when it comes to policy decisions that affect their own lives.

That's why there's—*[interjection]*—thank you. That's why things like the Canada-Manitoba Housing Benefit exists for young people in this province. That's why we're investing across our entire government, across departments in things like the youth summit that bring together almost 300 youth from across Manitoba.

And when it comes to affordability, honourable Speaker, members opposite will continue to heckle me because they can't stand that a young MLA can stand up and put words on the record for longer than they can and they harp me continuously because I'm a member of the backbench.

Meanwhile, what were they doing with their time in government? They weren't putting forward recommendations like this to their own premier at the time, and men we—many of them were in Cabinet, honourable Speaker.

And so, that being said, we are doing some incredible work on affordability and there's more incredible work to come in Budget 2026. Already the pressures—yes, we're acknowledging—are real and they're being shaped not only by local factors but also by broader global conditions.

When Manitobans raise their concerns they deserve a government that listens and acts and we are that government. That is exactly—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 12, 2026

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