



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I'm pleased to rise today and table the Supplements to the Estimates of Expenditure '26-27 for the Department of Finance, Public Service Commission, Employee Pensions and Other Costs and Enabling Appropriations, Tax Credits and Public Debt.

The Speaker: The—further tabling of reports?

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I am pleased to table the 2026 Supplement to Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Advanced Education and Training.

Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations): Honourable Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2026-27 supplementary Estimates of Expenditure for the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations.

The Speaker: No further tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

International Day of Pink

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I rise today to recognize April 9 as the International Day of Pink.

The Day of Pink began with a simple but powerful act of solidarity and has grown into a global movement against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia and all forms of hate. Today, people in Manitoba and across the country are wearing pink to send a clear message: everyone deserves to feel safe, valued and respected for who they are.

The day reminds us that inclusion is not passive; it is something we actively build. It is built in our schools where young people should be free to be who they know themselves to be and learn without fear. It is built in workplaces, including the Manitoba Legislature, where diversity must be welcomed and protected. It is built in our communities where each of us has a role to play in standing up against hatred and intolerance.

This year's theme for Day of Pink is a celebration of re-emergence, honouring 2SLGBTQIA+ people whose work has shaped the world we live in and who continue to fight for a more inclusive future.

At the same time, we're seeing an increase in misinformation and discrimination targeting queer communities. South of the border, we are seeing a government roll back protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in real time. Donald Trump is literally erasing transgender and queer identities from the public record, from signing an order recognizing only two sexes to removing the T and the Q in the LGBTQ+ across government. In February, the US government went so far as erasing references to transgender people from the website of New York's Stonewall National Monument, the very birthplace of the modern 2SLGBTQ+ rights movement in North America.

We are not immune here in Manitoba. In fact, we only need to look at the other side of this House to see an opposition taking notes from Trump's playbook. In the last election, the PC litter—leader was the literal poster child of transphobia, targeting transgender youth on bus benches across the city during the PCs' failed election campaign.

And just yesterday, the PC leader was found guilty of targeting the deputy minister with hateful remarks aimed at their identity right here in this Chamber.

Our government has chosen unity instead of division. What governments say and do matters. Governments have the awesome and profound responsibility of setting the tone for the entire province on inclusion, respect and justice. We are building one Manitoba where we are proud to stand with 2SLGBTQ+IA—sorry, QIA+ Manitobans.

We know that 2SLGBTQIA individuals, particularly youth, continue to face higher rates of bullying, harassment and violence. The impacts are so real—on mental health, on well-being and on the ability to fully participate in society, and that is why days like today matter. They shine a light, but they also call us to action.

Wearing pink is a symbol, but it must be backed by meaningful commitment: commitment to inclusive education, commitment to policies that protect human rights. That is why our government has introduced legislation that increases inclusivity and safety for all Manitobans and expands human rights protections. It also must be backed by commitment to listening to those with lived experience and ensuring their voices shape the decisions we made, and commitment to representation in government, ensuring that queer, trans and non-binary people are in positions of leadership and can shape our province and our laws.

It also means having the courage to speak up when we see harm, even in small moments. It takes courage to stand up against bullying and transphobia in a space like the Manitoba Legislature, just as it does to stand up in schools or in other workplaces. I hope that members opposite who chose to wear pink today will stand up to their leader and hold him to account for his hateful remarks to a non-binary member of this Legislature. This is important for all Manitobans. Culture shifts not just through laws and practice, but through allyship and refusing to stay silent.

* (13:40)

Honourable Speaker, the International Day of Pink is rooted in the belief that a single act of solidarity can spark change. That belief continues to inspire people in Manitoba and across the globe to stand together and say we will not tolerate bullying and we will not accept discrimination. Our government stands with all 2SLGBTQ+I—QIA+ Manitobans

to say you are loved, valued and perfect just as you are.

Let us carry that spirit beyond today. Let us work together as one Manitoba to build communities where everyone, regardless of who they are or who they love, can live with dignity, safety and pride.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Today I rise to recognize the International Day of Pink, a day to stand against bullying, discrimination and intolerance in all forms, particularly homophobia and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate. This day is an important opportunity for us as legislators to reaffirm our shared commitment to ensuring that every Manitoban feels safe, respected and valued.

Being part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community does not make anyone less Manitoban. We strive for a province where all Manitobans are treated with dignity, shown fairness and able to live freely and securely. While sometimes these ideas can feel out of reach, we must never be discouraged. It is important that these principles continue to guide how we build our communities, our workplaces and our schools. It is incumbent on all of us to work together to counteract bullying and discrimination wherever it occurs.

A stronger Manitoba is one where all people can participate in our society and find a sense of belonging, where Manitobans from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community are able to thrive free of hate.

I must apologize today for not wearing a pink shirt, as I'm colour-blind and I believed this was a pink shirt that I was wearing.

But, together, let's build that stronger Manitoban.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No further ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

New French School for St. Boniface

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Today, I'm proud to share news that will deeply resonate with families in St. Boniface and with francophone communities across Manitoba.

Our community is growing and we see it every day: in our neighbourhoods, in our classrooms, in our neighbourhoods and in an increasing number of students choosing to learn in French in Manitoba. With more than 6,500 students expected in the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine next year, that

growth tells a powerful story of language; it tells the powerful story that our language is strong and our future is bright.

But it also brings real challenges. Across the DSFM, our French schools are working hard to keep pace with rising enrolment. This is why I'm proud to share, as part of the upcoming school year, a new DSFM school will be opening in St. Boniface, helping our community meet this growing demand.

What makes this announcement especially meaningful is where this school will be located. The building, at 261 Youville, once stood as King George V School, built in 1916, the same year the teaching of French language in Manitoba was made illegal by the deeply racist and unconstitutional Thornton law, a law, Honourable Speaker, that was not overturned until 1970.

This fall, this school, under a new name, will welcome francophone students whose constitutional right it is to learn in one of the two official languages of Canada.

L'Honorable Président, I find this deeply symbolic. Where French was once excluded, it will now be celebrated. Where opportunity was once restricted, it will now be expanded.

As a Red River Métis, a francophone and an educator, I see how this new school will help respond to the pressure our classrooms are facing, while also creating spaces where students can grow to their full potential.

This is more than a new school; it's a powerful reflection of who we are, how far we've come and a true measure of—

The Speaker: The member's.

Drew Luhowy

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, today, I want to recognize a man whose journey from the quiet of his home in the Yellowhead Municipality to the front lines of Ukraine speaks to courage, conviction and an unbreakable sense of duty.

Drew Luhowy's younger years were shaped by farm life, community values and a deep respect for service. After nearly five years in the Canadian Armed Forces and completing his agriculture diploma at the University of Manitoba, he returned home to build a good life: working locally, staying close to family and contributing to his community.

But in February 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, that life was interrupted by something deeper than distance: a call to conscience.

When Drew saw reports of orphanages being hit, he made a decision that would change everything. As a proud Canadian of Ukrainian descent, he reflected on the courage of his ancestors who left their homeland in search of freedom and opportunity. He realized that the peaceful life he enjoyed in Manitoba was built on their sacrifice and he felt compelled to stand for the very freedoms they once sought.

Arriving in Ukraine in April 2022, Drew began by delivering food, water and medicine, essentials in a country where infrastructure had collapsed. He co-founded the Renegade Relief Runners, ensuring that every dollar donated went directly to those in need.

But as the war evolved, so did his role. Determined to do more, Drew trained in Tactical Combat Casualty Care and became a combat medic. Today, he serves on the front lines, providing life-saving care under unimaginable pressure in a war defined by drones, missile strikes and constant danger.

Through it all, he remains grounded in humility and purpose. He believes courage is not the absence of fear, but action in spite of it.

Honourable Speaker, Drew Luhowy stands in defence of his ancestral homeland and in defence of the values we all hold dear.

Godspeed, Drew.

Thank you.

Dr. Frank Leith Skinner

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the remarkable legacy of Dr. Frank Leith Skinner, one of Manitoba's true pioneers in horticulture.

Born in Scotland in 1882, Dr. Skinner immigrated to Dropmore, Manitoba, where he learnt about realities of prairie life and our cold climate.

From this remote nursery in Dropmore, Dr. Skinner bred and introduced hundreds of hardy trees, shrubs, roses and lilies capable of surviving Manitoba's severe winters. His creation included the well-known Dropmore Linden, the Dropmore Elm and hardy lilacs. They continue to flourish in gardens and shelterbelts across the province and the country.

He also earned a—international respect for his work and was named a Member of the Order of the British Empire and awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Manitoba.

Today, the Frank Skinner Arboretum stands as a living tribute to his dedication and vision, as well as a reminder that beauty and resilience can thrive, even in the toughest conditions.

His work and legacy will now be honoured at the International Peace Garden on the Manitoba and North Dakota border, where a project honouring his legacy and his contributions to the landscaping world. The garden will now dedicate a landscape plan and a dedication plaque to honour Dr. Frank Skinner for his contributions to the garden industry in northern climates around the world.

This project will connect the newly renovated Willis Pavilion with other attraction sites, thanks to the MLA for Fort Whyte who provided nearly a million-dollar grant, while matched by the North Dakota, when he was minister.

Honourable Speaker, Dr. Frank Skinner's family are watching us here today with this statement, and unfortunately, with the snowstorm that happened in the Asessippi and Dropmore area, where my hometown is, they were unable to make it today.

* (13:50)

I want to welcome my colleagues to join me today in recognizing Dr. Frank Leith Skinner for his lasting contributions in horticulture, to Manitoba, to Canada and to the world.

Grant Park School's Mission IMPROVable Team

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): I rise today to recognize a group of students from Grant Park High School's competitive improv team, Mission IMPROVable.

While improv classes have been offered at Grant Park for many years, their participation in the Canadian Improv Games only recently began. Starting out two years ago with just five members, the team quickly made their mark in Manitoba, placing second in the province in their very first season competing at the regional Canadian Improv Games.

Last year, the team expanded to eight students and beat out a long-standing undefeated team, earning the right to represent our province at the Canadian Improv Games national competition.

This year, the team tied for the lead with another team at the Manitoba competition, forcing an unexpected tie-breaker round. Mission IMPROVable rallied and rose to the occasion to secure the win. As such, they have earned the right to represent our

province at the Canadian Improv Games national competition, taking place next week in Ottawa.

The Canadian Improv Games have been running for 49 years. It's one of the most prestigious youth improv tournaments in the country. It's challenging, fast-paced and collaborative art form that builds skills students carry well beyond the stage.

Under the guidance of drama and improv teacher Elizabeth Stephensen, these students balance rehearsals around busy schedules filled numerous with other performing arts commitments.

Their dedication speaks volumes about the values of arts in education, fostering creativity, collaboration and confidence in our youth.

The team includes students Aaron, Anna, Asher, Eva, Lachlan, Leo, Josh, Lana and Lukas, and they are here with us in the gallery today.

Please join me in congratulating Grant Park High School's competitive improv team, Mission IMPROVable, as they prepare to represent Manitoba on the national stage.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to proceeding to oral questions, there are guests in the gallery that I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce.

We have seated in the public gallery from Valley Gardens school 90 grade 6 students under the direction of Alanna Stromberg and they're in the constituency—the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

And we welcome you all here today.

And your Speaker has some very special guests that I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today students from throughout the North who are in the city for the Skills Manitoba competition.

From Frontier Collegiate in Cranberry Portage, Manitoba, automotive technician Joel Hutchinson of Cormorant Lake; and observing is Max Mooth [*phonetic*]—sorry, Max Moose of South Lake and Wawatew Colomb of Pukatawagan. In public speaking, we have Nora Chartrand from Duck Bay; observers Emma Carriere from Cranberry Portage. From the Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre in Norway House in hairstyling: Payton Laugher of Norway House; Rose Paupanekis of Norway House. In fashion design and technology: Miley Muswagon; Mallory Sinclair.

And I would now like to introduce the instructors from Frontier Collegiate. We have Sheldon Yaremchuk, outdoor power and recreation equipment, and just as a side note, his wife Lyla is my constituency assistant for the last 10 years. Also is Glennis Valladares from cosmetology. And instructors from Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre: Kathy Foley from cosmetology; Richard Wilson, principal.

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

And at this time, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's gallery, where we have with us today former Speaker Myrna Phillips and her granddaughter Jessica Phillips, who resides in Calgary and was once a page in the Northwest Territories legislature.

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

Also seated in the public gallery, we have with us today Richard Bage, Benita Bage, Blandina Westervelt, Henry Westervelt, Eric [*phonetic*] Hendrik, Jan Westervelt, and they are guests of the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

NDP's 2026 Budget Projections Impact on Borrowing Costs and Credit Rating

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Year after year, this NDP has received warnings on their unrealistic fiscal budgets. Moody's credit rating agency is again raising red flags, saying the NDP's budget projections don't line up with reality. Manitobans should be very concerned about this.

I ask the Premier: Will this affect Manitoba's ability to borrow or cost to borrow?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, borrowing costs are lower under our government than they ever were under the PCs' last term in office. And I would encourage the member to review the actual text of the Moody's note that was released following our budget. It says that the budget anticipates a faster fiscal recovery than other provinces.

It's because we've got the lowest deficit in all of Canada. It's an ambitious pace of improvement underpinned by a diversified economic base, moderating

inflation and limited exposure to volatile resource revenues despite ongoing trade-related uncertainty.

Think we all see what's happening here today. It's a real surprise not to see the Leader of the Opposition taking questions today. I'm not commenting on his presence or absence; I'm just saying he's not asking the questions. And so my heart really goes out to the critic.

Why is it that she is the one who has to pick up the pieces after the shameful display that we saw from the leader of the PCs yesterday?

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

Mrs. Stone: I will read the rest of the quote from Moody's, which has said: The Province's forecast of a rapid fiscal improvement relies in part on its expectation of a significant year-over-year improvement in Manitoba Hydro's performance. We note that the rapid pace of projected fiscal improvement appears inconsistent with this slow growth.

Moody's has directly said the projected fiscal performance is inconsistent with Manitoba's slow growth. Deloitte has actually downgraded Manitoba's GDP growth to just 1 per cent for 2026.

As this is the second warning to Manitoba's NDP on their budget performance and fiscal realities, will this be a credit downgrade to Manitoba?

Mr. Kinew: Problem with the PCs, as we saw yesterday, is you can't believe anything their leader says. Can't believe a single thing. So, again, the members opposite who are, I guess, mumbling their way through question period heckles today rather than the vociferous yelling that we heard yesterday, probably need to answer some questions of their own.

I'll share with the House by tabling a copy of the PC nomination package. One of the points that it says that PC MLA wannabes need to fulfill is to have honesty and integrity.

Is that why the Leader of the PCs isn't here today?

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would once again remind members that we're not allowed to comment on the presence or absence of a member of this Chamber.

Mrs. Stone: Red flags by a credit rating agency is a serious concern for Manitoba, and this Premier needs to start taking these warnings seriously. The NDP is betting all its fiscal success on rain and unrealistic

growth during challenging times. This is highly risky considering Hydro's recent performance and under a \$27-billion debt for the corporation and this government's own \$1.6-billion deficit last year.

So I will ask the Premier again a very simple question: What does this warning mean for Manitoba's credit rating and interest rates?

* (14:00)

Mr. Kinew: What does it mean for the member opposite when you can't believe a single word her leader says? What does it mean when their nomination package says that you need honesty and integrity?

Can their leader fulfill that criteria? Yesterday, he went out into the hallway and—even after you ruled that you heard him on the audio saying something hateful about the Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) of Manitoba—he still tried to insist that it didn't happen.

You want to talk about ratings? Our rating outlook is favourable. The cost of borrowing is down. Morningstar DBRS says balanced budget is within reach. Moody's says we're on a recovery from the damaging fiscal policy of the PCs. But you can't run away from this: you cannot believe a single word that their leader says.

How do you square that as a Conservative? I thought it's about honesty and integrity. Turns out it's just about lying, lying and lying.

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

Stop the clock, please. I would remind the honourable First Minister that using terms like lying are considered unparliamentary language, and I would ask the honourable First Minister to withdraw those words.

Mr. Kinew: Withdrawn.

Economic Development in Manitoba Business Investment Concerns

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, it has become clear to see that the Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation (Mr. Moses) is failing Manitobans. In his mandate letter, the Premier told this minister it was his job to grow Manitoba's economy, support businesses, increase investment and streamline economic development.

Instead, more than three quarters of Manitoba businesses now say uncertainty is hurting hiring, financial planning and investment decisions.

Why has this minister failed so badly on the mandate this Premier has given him?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Why is the Leader of the PCs failing so badly? Why can't he answer—or, ask the first questions in question period, as has been the long-standing practice of this House?

On the subject of lying, here's a quote from the leader of the PCs, and I quote, verbatim: Everyone has their own rules in there, in the Chamber. You're right. Technically there are not a lot of rules. The only rule is you can't use unparliamentary language. You can lie all you want in there because you're protected by what's called parliamentary privilege. So, technically, you can lie. End quote.

Does the Leader of the PC's thoughts about what happened in here explain what we saw outside? Or is it just hatred for somebody who's doing an amazing job on behalf of the people of Manitoba, and somebody who regularly dumps on the Progressive Conservatives?

I'd like to know what it is. I think everybody would like to know why it is that the backbenchers have to carry water today after their leader was lying in the House yesterday.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Stop the clock again. Once again, I would ask the honourable minister to withdraw the comment. It's unparliamentary language.

Mr. Kinew: Withdrawn.

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, once again, this Premier is hiding from the poor performance of our economy. Business leaders have said this budget—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Narth: —fails to send a clear signal that Manitoba is open for business and ready to unlock private sector investment. Investors continue to raise concerns about regulatory duplication, poor communication and slow, inconsistent permitting. Provinces like Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta are actively streamlining approval processes to attract capital and they are succeeding. Those provinces face many of the same challenges as we do here in Manitoba, but yet, their economies are booming.

So why, under this Premier, is Manitoba falling behind on what investors expect?

Mr. Kinew: What inspect—investors expect is a good return, and you know what we're giving them? The lowest deficit in all of Canada, a better deficit number than Saskatchewan, a million times better than in Ontario. We've got better employment numbers than Ontario.

But you know what? My friend, Doug Ford, he wouldn't lie. My friend, Scott Moe, wouldn't lie. What can we say about the Leader of the PCs in Manitoba? You can't believe a single word that he says.

And now the backbench of the PCs, again, have to follow this profile in courage, and they are the ones who have to come into the Chamber and atone for the hateful, bigoted commentary.

What does a caucus meeting look like on the PC side these days? Is it, hey, I didn't tell the truth? Or do you just double down and say, don't believe your ears, don't believe your eyes?

I'd really love—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Narth: Honourable Speaker, there you have it: zero economic plan. But guess what? The results are in. Other provinces are growing while Manitoba continues to fall behind.

Their own budget projects a weak 1.3 per cent GDP growth. Not only is that subpar, but analysts say that it's unrealistic.

In fact, experts like Moody [*phonetic*] and Deloitte are predicting a further 33 per cent reduction in Manitoba's economic growth. Delayed permits mean delayed projects, delayed jobs and delayed opportunity for all Manitobans.

How can this Premier claim to be delivering economic development when investors and experts agree, under his government, Manitoba is not open for business?

Mr. Kinew: The problem PCs now have is that you can't believe anything they say. They all line up behind a leader who clearly contradicts your ruling, who refuses to accept responsibility. They did it for Brian Pallister, they did it for Heather Stefanson and now they're doing it again with the current PC Leader of the Opposition. They're having a ho, ho, ho kind of

moment in opposition. I hope they enjoy it because they're going to be sitting in the opposition benches for a long, long time.

We're not talking about suburban Winnipeg anymore; we're talking about rural Manitoba. Good luck on the doorstep explaining why you can't believe a single thing that your leader says.

The Speaker: Order, please. Stop the clock.

I would just caution the honourable First Minister. The language he's used is dangerously close to being unparliamentary.

Non-Unionized Construction Industry Workers Registration of Personal Information

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): With Bill 47, the NDP are forcing tradespeople to register their personal information with their political allies. In order to work in Manitoba, workers must register with the executive director of Manitoba Building Trades, a coalition of union bosses who support the NDP.

Why is this government forcing non-unionized Manitoba workers to give their personal information to a union organization they've chosen not to belong to?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, member opposite is clearly way off base, doesn't know what he's talking about with the piece of legislation before the Chamber. I will clearly say to Manitobans that we want to build up more people in the construction trades, and that's why we're investing an additional \$7 million into the apprenticeship system right here in Manitoba.

But the real question on the minds of Manitobans is, how can we believe anything out of the Leader of the Opposition's mouth? And that goes with his team.

The member opposite, who brings forward a question today, does he believe his leader or does he believe the hateful rhetoric that he spoke in this Chamber a few weeks ago? The question—member opposite has to answer that question not only to himself, to his colleagues, but to all Manitobans.

Mr. Guenter: You know, that so-called business minister should do a little more careful study of his own file in the decisions he's made because, for the first time in six years, there are fewer apprentices and fewer apprentice registrations in Manitoba, thanks to their job-killing policies and the opportunities that they are shutting out of young Manitobans.

Red tape, hidden fees, now worker registration with a non-government third party. The WCA, Manitoba Heavy, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba have all raised major concerns on the effect this government's job-killing policies are having on workers—Manitoba workers—and infrastructure projects.

So why is this so-called listening government ignoring the concerns of stakeholders and industry experts?

* (14:10)

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, the facts are that there are more apprentices today than ever before in Manitoba. The facts are that in 2025, we actually trained more apprentices than ever before. Members opposite are clearly wrong.

But the reality is that we ought to talk about the issue of the day, that members opposite can't be believed for the words they say. The Leader of the Opposition, in fact, can't be believed on any word that comes out of his mouth: that's his track record.

Manitobans can see it very clearly from the Leader of the Opposition, from the member who asked questions today, from their entire team. They cannot be believed. That is trust that is broken with Manitobans.

So member opposite has an opportunity in the next set of questions. Can he clearly say, does he believe his leader? Does he believe the recordings that the Speaker verified? Or does he have a lot of questions—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Guenter: You know, it's his job to answer questions.

Let's see if he'll answer this one: What happens to workers, to Manitoba workers, who choose not to give their personal information to the Manitoba Building Trades?

Mr. Moses: We have built an economy here in Manitoba that supports more skilled trades, growth in our projects. With our Manitoba jobs agreement, we're adding more opportunities for training and we're funding more training seats that led to more apprentices being trained in 2025 than ever before in Manitoba.

But here's the question of the day: The question of the day is, does the member opposite believe his leader? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: Or does he believe the recording of the hateful words spoken by the member opposite directed towards our Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) that were verified by you, Honourable Speaker? Now that's the question before member opposite and all their PC backbenchers. Do they believe the leader or do they believe the truth?

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Funding Inquiry—Budget 2026

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Honourable Speaker, the City of Winnipeg needs a real partner on the North End Water Pollution Control Centre. The Premier (Mr. Kinew) insists there are billions of new funding available. His minister says no; there's millions. But the City can't find any new funding in this budget.

What page in the budget is this new funding found?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, we've been so clear with the City. We've been so clear with members opposite, but they keep regurgitating the same questions day after day. We are going to be there for the—for NEWPCC, for getting it built, for phase 3.

The Premier just had a meeting this past week with the mayor. We know that that is going to get done under our watch.

What is the question, though, is where does—where do the members opposite stand? Do they stand with Manitobans against the hate that was spewed out by their leader or are they actually going to be good human beings, especially on this day of pink?

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, the minister can't say a page because it is not there. It wasn't in Budget 2025; it isn't in Budget 2026.

The Lake Winnipeg Foundation understands it even if the minister doesn't, and I quote: Without that in writing from the Province, the City has no choice but to download the cost onto ratepayers.

Why is this minister putting that cost on Winnipeg families in an affordability crisis?

MLA Moyes: Honourable Speaker, let's look at the context of this a little bit. For seven and a half years, two terms in office, the PCs didn't do anything for municipalities, including the City of Winnipeg. In fact, from 2019 to 2022, the City of Winnipeg got

zeros for an increase. They talk about good partners. They were, in fact, the worst partners and wouldn't even talk to the mayor.

We, in fact, are going to build up our infrastructure, including our water infrastructure, because we know how important it is. We're catching up just like we are in health care and education and everything else in this province.

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

Mr. King: Honourable Speaker, this project is foundational for the economic growth of Winnipeg. City of Winnipeg finance chair, Jeff Browaty, was clear to the media, and I quote: If we don't have the sewage capacity, we're going to have to say we can't add 10,000 new homes. We can't build a new food processing factory. Unquote.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) says there are billions in the budget for this project; when will they be released to the City?

MLA Moyes: Honourable Speaker, just this past week, I was in Brandon and I got to tour their new water facility that they are building under our watch, because we are building infrastructure right across our province, including NEWPCC.

Now, I understand that we would want NEWPCC built yesterday. Unfortunately, they dithered away year after year after year and didn't get it done. We are in fact going to do that. If the PC caucus wants to know why NEWPCC isn't built, all they have to do is look in the mirror.

North End Sewage Treatment Plant Funding Commitment Inquiry

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, this Minister of Environment and Climate Change has a lot of explaining to do. When asked yesterday about his government's failure to fund the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, he couldn't point to a single dollar in new funding. Instead, he doubled down on vague threats to the City of Winnipeg.

Why is the minister refusing to work with the City to fund this critical infrastructure?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I welcome my critic back into question period. He hasn't asked me a question since last June, so I'm glad he woke up. Appreciate that.

And let's look at what we have accomplished in two and a half years. We saved the Lemay Forest. We built—we're building the first wind project since 2007: 600 megawatts. We stood up the first electric vehicle strategy with an EV rebate, 5,000 Manitobans on board. Funded EV stations across our province with Manitoba Hydro building another six going all the way to Thompson.

The list goes on and on and on. Much accomplished, more to do, much to lose if the PCs ever get back into power.

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

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, the minister said he would push the City on NEWPCC, but the only thing holding up phase 3 is his government's refusal to come to a funding agreement. It sure sounds like the minister is more concerned with picking winners and losers between union and open shops instead of focusing on getting the shovels in the ground.

Why is this minister putting ideology ahead of this crucial environmental and economic infrastructure?

MLA Moyes: Honourable Speaker, we believe in Manitobans, and we believe in the Manitoba jobs agreement, and we're going to get NEWPCC built. We've put milestones in, and we're going to make sure that we hold the City to account.

Now, I wasn't quite finished my list here because we've accomplished so much in two and a half years, so let me continue on. We are moving to protecting more pristine nature with the Seal River watershed, 7 per cent more. We're moving on the national marine conservation area in the Hudson Bay.

We have created an efficiency power plant with Efficiency Manitoba. We built out the path to net zero. We funded environmental groups that the PCs cut on their funding. We hired the first climate action educator-in-residence, and we are having free transit for youth, just announced in our budget.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Nesbitt: Honourable Speaker, not one answer so far.

Our PC government funded hundreds of millions of dollars for phase 1 and 2 as partners with the City of Winnipeg. This government can't even get their story straight for how much funding they are claiming

is available. The City has been clear: If there is no immediate funding commitment, utility fees will have to rise dramatically.

Why is this minister downloading his responsibility onto Winnipeg ratepayers?

MLA Moyes: Honourable Speaker, they had seven and a half years, two terms in government, to get it built, and they didn't do a thing. This is unfortunate that they didn't put down milestones. Now we are holding the City to account to make sure that they get progress, and we are going to be—we'll be—we'll know if they are missing those targets right away so that we can hold them to account, have environmental protection orders put in place.

We're going to be there. We're going to be there for Manitobans, we're going to be there for Winnipeggers and, of course, we're going to be there for NEWPCC, unlike members opposite in their dithering for seven and a half years.

Mobile Overdose Prevention Site Community Safety Concerns

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Yesterday, the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness refused to commit to shutting down her mobile consumption site operating out of a parking lot of a dry treatment program. What we have learned on Monday was this same block was also the site of a violent assault on a good Samaritan. Manitobans are paying the price for the minister's inactions.

* (14:20)

When will she stop making things worse for Manitobans?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): What I will say is we are getting things done on this side of the House. We are building housing; we are wrapping around supports of those who need support, unlike members opposite, who turned a blind eye on folks who needed housing, who needed supports. You know, seniors were knocking on those very members' doors asking for them—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —to save their housing. They didn't listen.

On this side of the House, we are hiring police officers. They fired police officers. We're not taking that approach.

We're going to continue to uplift social workers, unlike those folks who dismissed and didn't treat them as professionals. We will not take that approach.

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

Mr. Balcaen: Manitobans seeking treatment are seeing a mobile injection site show up right next door. A woman who witnessed an overdose was on the phone with 911 when she was robbed of that very phone. The minister promised her drug consumption programs would increase public safety. Well, the jury's back with that verdict, and it's simply not true.

How many more Manitobans need to be assaulted before this minister looks at the facts?

Ms. Smith: So we've hired over 50 mental health workers, and these include social workers who are, you know, folks who are highly trained, regulated professionals who play a critical role in Manitoba's mental health system.

I want to uplift, you know, a social worker who helped make sure that I'm here today, Sandra Lagimodiere. You know, someone who—I was someone who was on the street in survival mode, which many of these folks are. And, you know, our front-line police officers are out there supporting. Our DCSP folks are out there. Our Bear Clan folks are out there. Our MOPS folks are out there. Main Street Project folks are out there. All these folks are out there supporting, meeting people where they're at.

We are making sure that supports and services are out there so that we can get people on a path of recovery. We know that we can't police our way out of this, so we need to make sure that we are wrapping supports, making sure that there's housing there, unlike members opposite who sold off housing. We need to make sure that we are getting supports and services so we can get people on a path of recovery, something that members opposite didn't do.

And we're going to ensure that we continue to build housing so that those services are—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Sorry about that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

As I allowed that minister to answer dramatically longer than I should have, I'll allow one extra question at the end.

Mr. Balcaen: The minister's van is set up five days a week at 631 Main St. until 5 p.m. This assault and robbery took place while the mobile 'overdose'—overdose prevention site was supposed to be operating on that very block. Everything this minister promised was fake, because who was left to support an overdosing Manitoba? Oh, that's right, an innocent citizen. And for those troubles, she was attacked.

When was the minister informed that her mobile site was so drastic—was—failed so drastically, and why did she keep that secret from Manitobans?

Ms. Smith: Again, what I will say, it went from 143 deaths in 2019, when they took government, to well over 750 deaths. These are people's lives. We'll continue to support, meet people where they're at.

We're working on opening up this first supervised consumption site so that we can get people to the supports that they need, unlike members opposite who left people in the streets with no supports. We're taking a health-led model with supports so that we can make sure that they get onto a path of recovery.

We've opened up supports and services, treatments. We've opened up mobile withdraw services. We're going to continue to open up—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Union Station Job Fair Health-Care Recruitment

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): Honourable Speaker, we inherited a broken health-care system in 2023. Too many workers left the system or couldn't find a clear path into it. Today, our government is bringing nurses and health-care aides together here in Winnipeg for a hiring forum to connect them directly with jobs.

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans more about this exciting event?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Great question from my colleague. Thank you so much for that.

Honourable Speaker, it was a real pleasure to meet with nurses and health-care aides today at our job fair right in Union Station and to hear first-hand about their commitment to caring for Manitobans. For far too long, they have faced barriers to just get into the health-care system, but we're changing that by connecting them directly to jobs and rebuilding the workforce with over 4,000 net-new health-care workers on the front lines here in Manitoba.

And, Honourable Speaker, that number is actively growing. Before 12 o'clock noon today, over 40 job offers had been signed by regional health authorities and employers in Manitoba.

Much has been done, much more to do. We're fixing health care and making it stronger for all Manitobans.

Safe Consumption Site Youth Access Inquiry

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Winnipeggers already know that under this NDP government, they are allowing youth under the age of 18 without proper ID into their drug consumption site.

Can the Education Minister let the House know and Manitobans know when she abandoned the project and allowed youth into that drug consumption site?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): As an educator myself, that educator should be ashamed of themselves. That member knows that there will be no youth under the age of 18 allowed in the supervised consumption site.

If someone under the age of 18 presents themselves at the supervised consumption site, they will be referred to the appropriate services. We have Huddle support services, we have RaY and we have so many other youth-supporting services that are doing amazing support services.

Again, that member is stigmatizing youth that need supports. That's what—why folks are losing their lives. That member should be ashamed of themselves.

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

Safe Consumption Site Information Inquiry into Placement in Schools

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, this minister is the one who should be ashamed of herself. She said herself yesterday that she was working quite closely with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), so we asked yesterday: Why is this government hanging posters inviting students and youth to attend the drug consumption site?

I'm asking the Education Minister today, will she stand up and tell the House, when did she authorize those posters to be hung in schools? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I'll keep saying it again and again, and I know that member is tone-deaf, he's not listening. Members on that side don't want to hear this, but we are going—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —to continue to support and meet Manitobans where they're at—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —including youth. We know that there are youth that are struggling with addictions and there are support services that are appropriate to meet those youth with their—where they're at.

The supervised consumption site is not the appropriate service. If there is a youth that presents that is under 18, they will be referred to the appropriate service. But the supervised consumption site is not the appropriate service. The—that service will be there for those that are over 18, and it is there to support and meet—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So whilst the Premier (Mr. Kinew) sits in his spot today and just laughs at the question about the seriousness of—*[interjection]*—allowing youth to go and take part in the drug consumption site—and there he goes again, Honourable Speaker. It's unfortunate.

But, again, I'm asking the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt): When did she authorize the posters to be hung up in local schools to advertise and invite youth to attend the drug consumption site, Honourable Speaker? Will she answer today, when did she authorize it?

* (14:30)

Ms. Smith: I want to uplift our Education Minister—the best Education minister in all of Manitoba—doing an amazing job, you know, getting nutrition in schools—something the former failed government couldn't do.

And, again, we are not stigmatizing youth that are using substances; we are ensuring that we are opening up the first Huddle—guess where? In the member for Lac—or, Portage la Prairie constituency.

We're going to ensure we're meeting youth where they are at. We're hiring mental health workers—guess where? In Steinbach, in Winkler, in Brandon, Altona, Stonewall, Swan River—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Safe Consumption Site Cost for Security Services

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Since December 5, a security truck has been parked outside the government's drug injection site at 366 Henry, costing taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars.

The facts are simple: There is daily spending, there is visible activity and there is a minister responsible. Yet, when asked how much money had been spent up to this point, the answer of, I don't know, is unacceptable.

So which is it? Is the minister admitting over-seeing daily taxpayer-funded activity or does not exist? Or is the minister just refusing to tell Manitobans the truth about where the money is actually going?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Speaking about the truth, that member sits beside the Leader of the Opposition.

So will he tell us the truth about what the member—what the Leader of the Opposition said a couple of weeks ago? You ruled on it yesterday, Speaker.

Did the Leader of the Opposition, in fact, say what he said about our Deputy Minister, yes or no?

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

Addiction Treatment Services Recovery-Focused Spaces

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): There was no answer about the drug consumption site. Every single day, a security truck idles outside the empty drug injection site, costing over \$2,000 a day.

Families are pleading for treatment beds. Communities are demanding real pathways out of addiction. Instead, they get ongoing spending with no transparency, no measurable path to getting people off drugs. This government is spending five times the amount on drug consumption than it is on recovery.

Why won't it invest those same resources onto—into recovery spaces that actually help to heal people?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I just want to lift up the work of our addictions, homelessness, mental health and housing minister, who does great work for Manitobans every single day—outstanding work.

And our government has been investing in recovery, in treatment, in meeting people where they're at to save lives, something that didn't happen for seven and a half years under the failed PCs. But I noticed that the member who's asking the questions is wearing a pink ribbon. That isn't just a ribbon; it's a statement.

So is he going to stand in his place and condemn the actions, the hateful and divisive and dehumanizing actions of the person who sits beside him in the Chamber, the Leader of the Opposition? If he isn't, he should take off that ribbon today.

Chronic Absenteeism from School Request for 2025 Numbers

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Over 15,000 Manitoba students are chronically absent from school. Despite the Kinew government being aware of this since 2024, they've refused to act. They lied about having those numbers. They buried the report and refused to release it despite having a legal obligation to do so.

I've filed a formal complaint with the Ombudsman so we can get to the bottom of who's responsible for this violation of Manitoba law.

Now the Province has the current numbers from 2025. The Minister of Education has doubled down and refused to release those numbers.

Does the Premier (Mr. Kinew) agree with the minister that Manitobans do not have the right to know how many of their children are chronically absent—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —from our schools?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): We know that the best place for students to be during the school day is in their classroom with this—trusted educators and receiving education so they can achieve their full potential.

That's why the very first thing that our government did when we came into government under the leadership of the late Nello Altomare was to bring in the universal school nutrition program, the single

largest thing that any government has ever done to address absenteeism in this province.

And I would argue, Honourable Speaker, in Budget 2026, we saw the continuation of Nello's Law when we promised free transit for all youth in Manitoba. That is something that is going to make sure that every single student across this province can get to the classroom and be with the trusted adults and receive the education—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wasyliw: This minister hasn't apologized—in fact, hasn't taken responsibility about her department lying to Manitobans and breaching FIPPA laws and refusing to disclose the chronic absentee numbers. She said she would do it again. In fact, she attempted to deflect right now saying that, well, we brought in the 'school' nutrition program.

Well, Honourable Speaker, we have the absentee numbers from 2025. We can compare them with the numbers from 2024. Manitobans will be able to see if the program has made any impact at all.

Given the minister's assertion that nutrition program will solve all this problems, will she now release the 2025 chronic absentee numbers, and if not, why not?

MLA Schmidt: Honourable Speaker, since the member opposite stands up and puts such dishonourable language on the record, accusing our government—no worse, the department—of lying. How dishonourable, how shameful.

I will ask the member for Fort Garry to stand in his place today. Will he demand the resignation of the Leader of the Opposition who stood in this House and lied to all Manitobans and he continues to lie—*[interjection]*

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Once again, I'd caution members using—*[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please. Order.

A little respect all the way around would be nice.

I would ask the member to withdraw those comments. They've been ruled as unparliamentary, so please do so.

MLA Schmidt: Withdrawn.

The Speaker: Now, as I previously said, that I'd allow one extra question, so the honourable member for Fort Garry.

Programs for Indigenous Youth

Mr. Wasyliw: Again, Honourable Speaker, no apology from this minister.

We know that chronic absenteeism has become an epidemic under this Premier (Mr. Kinew). We know it's disproportionately affecting Indigenous students. Out of the students of the Winnipeg School Division who are chronically absent, 82 per cent are Indigenous. In Pembina Trails, it's 39 per cent. In Flin Flon, it's 95 per cent.

We know the Premier was aware of the problem since 2024 and chose to ignore it. He has not put any new money aside in this budget to address the issue. He's not created any new programs or policies to focus on chronic absenteeism.

I ask this Premier, why is he prepared to leave so many Indigenous youth behind?

MLA Schmidt: If the member for Fort Garry cares so much about the children of Manitoba and if the member for Fort Garry cares so much about Manitobans, then I would ask him to represent his constituents and I would ask him to represent all Manitobans and stand in his place today and demand the resignation of the Leader of the Opposition for his continued—continued—hateful, bigoted attacks on all Manitobans.

On this side of the House, on the International Day of Pink, we stand with all Manitobans. I'm so proud to stand and work with our Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara), the greatest Health Minister that Manitoba has ever seen. I am so proud to stand with a team that sticks up for each other and will always stick up—

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

The time for oral questions has also expired.

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: And I have a ruling for the House.

* (14:40)

And just while that ruling is getting distributed, I have to comment on some things that took place. I did caution one member about language coming close to being unparliamentary, about suggesting people weren't telling the truth. Other members used similar language and I didn't caution them.

And I will tell members that it is not in the—if you specifically say a member is lying or has lied, that is unparliamentary. If you refer to a group or a government as lying, that's been cautioned as being close to being unparliamentary. So I would ask all members—all members, because I heard it on both sides—so I would ask all members to be very careful in the language they use when they're referring to a person or an entity lying.

So, now, at the commencement of private members' business on March 19, 2026, the honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) rose on a point of order contending that Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, was out of order as it was in violation of our rules 66 and 67(2).

The member explained that, after analyzing Bill 233, he believes that it varies the tax bill authorized by government by approximately \$250,000. He further stated that this could correspondingly increase taxes on residents and businesses for that amount. The member concluded it is not in order for a member who has—who is not a minister of the Crown to move a motion or a bill that increases taxes on residents or businesses in our province. As such, it is out of order and should not be debated or voted on in this Assembly.

The honourable member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook) spoke to this point of order before I took it under advisement.

I've now considered the members' claims regarding Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, and I have consulted with the Assembly's law officer in order to determine my ruling on this point.

Regarding the orderliness of Bill 233, I will first note that the honourable member for Waverley is correct in stating that it is out of order for a member who is not a minister of the Crown to move a motion or sponsor a bill that increases tax on residents or businesses in our province. The question then is would Bill 233 increase taxes?

To provide some important context, I will note that The Municipal Assessment Act includes provisions that provide for exemptions for taxes levied on property by municipalities. Some of these provisions provide for an exemption based on use but then limit the amount of land that is subject to exemption.

Bill 233 would expand the exception for certain uses—homes for the aged or infirm, elderly persons' housing and property used to give relief or assistance to the aged—from 0.81 hectares to 2 acres, to 5 hectares. Property captured by the expansion will be listed on

the assessment roll of the applicable municipality as exempt and, as such, the amendment proposed in Bill 233 relates to assessment matters under The Municipal Assessment Act.

I would note that in the area of taxation, matters are dealt with under The Public Schools Act, The Municipal Act and The City of Winnipeg Charter, none of which are amended by Bill 233.

As the honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz) correctly noted, our rule 67(2) states that: No member who is not a minister of the Crown shall move any amendment to a bill or to Estimates that increases any expenditure or varies a tax or rate of tax, or provides an exemption or increases an exemption from a tax or a proposed tax, but a member who is not a minister of the Crown may move an amendment to a bill that decreases an expenditure or that removes or reduces an exemption from a tax or a proposed tax.

The restriction described in this provision does not apply in the case of Bill 233, as Bill 233 is an amendment to an act, not an amendment to a bill or an amendment to Estimates. It is worth noting here that the contrast to what is allowable in consideration of departmental Estimates in the Committee of Supply. In those proceedings, it is in order for an opposition member to move that a minister's salary be reduced.

Moving past rule 62(7) and turning to the procedural authorities, we note that in the fourth edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Janse and LeBlanc state in citation 18.10 that: A royal recommendation is not required if the bill's effect is to reduce taxes otherwise payable.

Further to that point, in the article, When bills and amendments require the royal recommendation, on page 20 of the winter 1997-98 edition of the Canadian Parliamentary Review, John Mark Keyes specifically includes provisions that provide exemptions from taxes within the list of provisions for which a royal recommendation is not required.

This point is consistent with Michael Lukyniuk's article, Spending proposals: When is a royal recommendation needed, on page 37 of the spring 2010 edition of the Canadian Parliamentary Review, where the author notes that: In the same view, a bill which relieves taxation—for example, by reducing a tax rate—would not require a mains and wades—a ways and means motion or a royal recommendation since it does not involve the imposition of tax or the withdrawal of monies from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Such a

bill could result in a situation where revenues in the CRF would be substantially reduced; however, this fiscal imbalance does not directly relate to the prerogative of the Crown to initiate increase in taxation and spending.

Finally, we note that the consideration of Bill 233 by the House is consistent with past practices in the Manitoba Assembly, as two previous bills with similar provisions have been introduced and considered by this House: bill 216, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, in the Fifth Session of the 38 Legislature; and bill 200, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, in the Second Session of the 42nd Legislature, which was not only considered by this House but was passed and received royal assent on April 15, 2020.

In summary, Bill 233 is in order because the bills that provide for an exemption from taxation do not require a royal recommendation. Accordingly, I rule that the member for Waverley does not have a point of order, and that Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, is properly before this Assembly and may proceed to a second reading.

Thank you for your attention.

* * *

The Speaker: We'll now move on to petitions.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Just had a point to make about question period. I'll refer to rule 1, where there's not a rule that the traditions of the House prevail.

Just wanted to ask, Honourable Speaker, in question period, you provided for another question to the opposition because of a reason that you provided there, and then the extra question ended up going to the independent member.

I just wondered, like, if you're a PC MLA, why would you do that? Why would you give up your time in question period so somebody elected under my name could get more time in the House?

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'd ask the First Minister to remain seated while the Speaker is standing.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister, please remain seated. And the rest of you, please remain quiet. [*interjection*]

Did you hear me say that the rest of you should remain quiet?

Is there anyone else wishes to speak to the point of order?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, obviously not a point of order.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: And I would rule that it is not a point of order.

PETITIONS

Education Property Taxes

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

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

* (14:50)

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes

and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This is signed by Frank Manning, Kate Tyler, Augustine [*phonetic*] Siragusa and many, many more Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Kaylee Routledge, Krista Hodgins, Dianna Bartley and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Education Property Taxes

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

Mrs. Rachelle Schott, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to remove education funding and taxation from property taxes

and find a fair and equitable way to fund education in Manitoba.

This petition is signed by Marlene Boyda, Darlene Phillips, Susan Meagher and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Trunk Highway 45

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

* (15:00)

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Barry Juba, Jared Berezig [*phonetic*], Jennifer Neugfor [*phonetic*] and many, many other Manitobans.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): I wish to present the following petition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by Judy Greenslade, Dawn Davis, Lucille Clay [*phonetic*] and many, many, many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Trunk Highway 34

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 34, PTH 34, is a two-lane provincial highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

(2) PTH 34 runs north-south in the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The deterioration of PTH 34 has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) Construction of a new bridge is in accordance with current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

This petition has been signed by Alexis Meachem, Heather Brewster and Jennifer Boucher and many, many more Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): I wish to present the following petition as follows to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background of this 'petition' is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made by our previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction of a new Portage regional health facility is well under way and it's actually completed now. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from adding diagnostics, machinery and equipment, but specifically an addition of an MRI machine.

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

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

(4) An MRI machine located at the Portage la Prairie health facility will reduce transportation costs for patients as well as reduce the burden of stretcher services and ambulance use. It will bring care closer to home and reduce wait times for MRI scans across our province.

* (15:10)

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

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

(7) The average wait time for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage la Prairie

health facility will help reduce the wait times for patients and provide better care sooner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by John Knott, Wayne Ross, Lindsey Leng and many other Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living and not death.

This petition was signed by Brigitte Tanghe, Susan Penner and Ginette Marie Plett [*phonetic*] and many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Trunk Highway 34

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

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

(1) Provincial Trunk Highway 34, PTH 34, is a two-lane provincial primary highway that runs from the US border where it meets with ND 20 to PTH 16 at the town of Gladstone.

(2) Honourable Speaker, 34 runs north-south on the south-central region of the province. It is the main highway for the towns of Crystal City, Pilot Mound and Holland, serving as a main corridor for semi-trailers, farm equipment, daily drivers and local school bus routes.

(3) A new bridge is currently being constructed over the Assiniboine River at PTH 34, north of Holland, in the RM of Victoria. The bridge serves as an important north-south link over the Assiniboine River between the Trans-Canada Highway and PTH 2.

(4) The deterioration of PTH 34 has raised major concerns due to its narrow shoulders and numerous deep potholes that pose serious safety risks considering farmers often need to use the highway to transport heavy equipment.

(5) Construction of a new bridge in accordance-current design codes and the RTAC standard, located on PTH 34 crossing the Assiniboine River, will support trade and commerce and improve the public safety in the area, and also accommodate flood events on the Assiniboine River.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to address the conditions of the Provincial Trunk Highway 34, making it-making the necessary upgrades to RTAC standard and to resurface the road once the new bridge has been completed.

This petition is signed by Harlan Perchotte, Luke Lovenjak, Gerard [*phonetic*] Sawatsky and many, many, many other fine Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (15:20)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to protect Canadians struggling with mental illness by facilitating treatment, recovery and medical assistance in living, not death.

This petition has been signed by Lisa Sawatsky, Susan Peters, Rachel Hildebrand and many, many Manitobans.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Thomas Boonstra, Dean Rasling [*phonetic*] and Griffin Adrieansy [*phonetic*] and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And honourable deputy assistant Speaker, this petition was signed by Crystal Nichol, Kim James, Rose Carriere and many, many other fine Manitobans.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Seeing no other petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BUDGET DEBATE

(Fifth Day of Debate)

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): We'll now resume debate on the motion moved by the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) to approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, standing in the name of the honourable member for—and the amendment thereto—standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood, who has nine minutes remaining.

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'd like to continue from where I left off yesterday. I spoke 11 minutes on the budget and how good it is and how it compares to the other provinces.

And the fact is that Manitoba has that balanced economy that we talked about yesterday that has served us well over the years. Because if agriculture's not doing well, mining usually makes up for it. If mining's not doing well, aerospace makes up for it. And that's the beauty of Manitoba compared to some of the other provinces.

* (15:30)

And we ended up at the 11-minute mark dealing with how important it was to get a renewal on the

CUSMA free trade deal, which is coming up in July and it's very important.

While it's—I know we're looking at other jurisdictions for trade, things do not happen overnight. The trade arrangements we have right now have come about over 150 years. And if there was a real need for having different trade patterns, we would have developed them by now. And you cannot turn the economy around in a dime—on a dime.

So we have to encourage the Prime Minister to attempt to get a deal—get a renewal on CUSMA. And that should, at least, hopefully, pull us through until there's some changes in governments in the United States.

But, nevertheless, I want to thank you, Madam Speaker—Madam deputy Speaker. And I would look forward to seeing this budget pass and—tomorrow.

Thank you very much. Bye-bye.

The Acting Speaker (Rachelle Schott): Before recognizing the next speaker, as per the Speaker of the House's request, all members are to be recognized with the word honourable in front of them, including the Chair.

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Good afternoon. Today marks the first time I rise to put words on the record since announcing my decision to serve as an independent member of this House.

I want to begin by acknowledging what a meaningful moment this is for me. It's both an honour and a responsibility that I take very seriously. I am especially pleased that my first opportunity to speak in this new capacity is on the provincial Budget 2026, an issue that directly impacts every Manitoban and, most importantly, the people I represent.

As an independent member, my path forward is clear. My commitment is to listen carefully and thoughtfully to the constituents in Dawson Trail, to listen carefully to their experiences, to understand their needs, their priorities and their concerns and to bring those perspectives forward in this Chamber.

I believe that respectful dialogue and collaboration are essential to good governance. My goal is not to contribute to division or partisanship, but rather to foster co-operation and practical solutions. I will work with any member who shares a commitment to improving the lives of Manitobans, and I will advocate strongly for the priorities of Dawson Trail every step of the way.

Now, that said, I would like to express my appreciation to the Minister of Education for talking—taking the time to meet with me. It was productive and respectful discussion, focused on the real needs of families in Dawson Trail. That willingness to listen and engage is important, and I thank the minister for it.

Dawson Trail is growing. Communities like Ste. Anne, Lorette, Landmark, Anola and Richer are welcoming more young families every year. This growth is a positive sign, but it also brings increased pressure to our local schools and services. One of the most consistent concerns I hear from parents is the lack of accessible, affordable before- and after-school care, as well as classrooms and schools that are bursting at the seams.

For many families, before- and after-school care is not an option. It is an essential. Parents are working often with long commutes, and they need to know their children are in a safe and supportive environment during but also outside of school hours. In too many cases, those options simply are not there. Spaces are limited, wait-lists are long and some families are left without any viable solution. This especially is true in communities like Ste. Anne, Lorette and Landmark, where population growth has outpaced the availability of child-care spaces. Schools and local providers are doing everything they can, but they cannot meet this growing demand alone. If we are serious about supporting working families, then before- and after-school care must be treated as a core part of our education system.

This budget includes important investments in education, and those are welcome, but we must ensure that our planning reflects how families live today. For many children, the school day does not begin at the first bell and end at the last. The care they receive before and after school plays a critical role in their development, well-being and success.

We need a forward-looking approach, one that plans for growth in communities like those in Dawson Trail, rather than reacting after services are already stretched. That means working closely with school divisions—I was pleased to hear the minister talk about how she was working closely with school divisions—municipalities and community organizations to expand access to care and investments to schools to ensure they have the space they need to school our children in these growing communities.

It also means recognizing the unique challenges faced by rural and growing communities and ensuring they are not left behind. Families in Dawson Trail

deserve reliable access to these supports. Their children deserve safe, structured, enriching environments throughout the day.

This is not only a matter of supporting families, but it's about supporting our economy. When parents cannot access child care, it affects their ability to work and contribute. Addressing this gap is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. Many parents have raised serious concerns about school capacity, large classrooms, limited individual attention, making it harder for teachers to support different learning styles, identify challenges early and keep students engaged. Overcrowding can lead to more distractions and weaker outcomes. Overall, while smaller classes better support—while overall—while smaller classes better support students' success.

Now, I also wanted to thank the Minister of Education for the recent conversation about the vocational high school in Ste. Anne, which will help relieve the pressure locally. There are other communities that have the same pressure, and we must not forget them. We need a clear path to address growth in other communities across Dawson Trail and the province.

Another concern that continues to come up repeatedly in my constituency office is the situation facing our seniors. Compared to Budget 2025, Budget 2026 does show an increase in funding, something that is both necessary and welcome. It is encouraging to see additional investments being made. Part of this funding included a \$71.8 million for the construction of new personal-care homes.

According to the budget, this includes facility in Lac du Bonnet, which is already under construction; the Arborg personal-care home set to begin this summer; Park Manor in Transcona, expected to start this winter; and the newly announced facility in Bridgwater. These are important and much needed investments.

However, the question remains: What is the plan for the rest of Manitoba? While some progress is better than none, there's a significant and growing gap in regions like Dawson Trail and across the province when it comes to the adequate housing and supports for seniors. Dawson Trail is my home. It is where I live, I work and shop. It is also where I regularly hear from constituents, friends and neighbours about the challenges they are facing.

The number of concerns related to the lack of appropriate housing for seniors is deeply troubling.

We have individuals spending tens of thousands of dollars on daily hospital rates, sometimes for up to a year, simply waiting for a bed to become available in a home that provides the supports they need to lead a fulfilled life.

Whether the cost is being borne by the individual, their spouse or their children and grandchildren, this is not something families should have to endure, especially in the midst of an ongoing affordability crisis. Some might say these individuals are fortunate because they are at least close to home and near their loved ones while they wait, but it's telling and deeply concerning that this is considered lucky. Many seniors are being transferred an hour or more away from their communities, separated from their families, friends and everything familiar to them, simply because it is only available—it is the only available option in south-eastern Manitoba and much of rural Manitoba.

The increased funding for health—meals in the seniors' homes is certainly a positive step. The Manitoba Safe and Healthy Home for Seniors program is also a welcome initiative. However, the reality is that not every senior has the ability to remain in their home with only home-care supports. There's a significant gap in care and housing options, and it is one we can no longer overlook.

As our population continues to age, the need for accessible, appropriate and timely housing will only grow. We must take this seriously and act now to ensure that all seniors, regardless of their circumstances, have access to the care and living arrangements that they need and deserve.

* (15:40)

On the topic of Sio Silica, Budget 2026 states: Budget 2026 will support a public inquiry into the controversy surrounding the attempt to inappropriately push through an environmental licence for the Sio Silica project. Terms of the reference and commissioner will be named this year to begin this important work to strengthen our democracy and ensure Manitobans learn the facts about what took place in the public forum.

I've been very clear about my views on this—the controversy surrounding this issue, but my primary concern remains: What will this ultimately cost Manitobans? What concrete steps is this government taking to ensure that projects such as Sio Silica are thoroughly reviewed and properly vetted, particularly when it comes to protecting the safety and integrity of our drinking water?

For me and many Manitobans, this is where the focus must be. This is where meaningful action is required and where investments should be directed towards safeguarding our communities, protecting our natural resources and preserving the long-term well-being of our province. Again, I'm encouraged by the dialogue that has begun, and I hope it continues.

These are only a few of the needs in Dawson Trail, which are clear, and with thoughtful planning, they can be addressed. I look forward to continuing to work with the ministers and with all the members of this House to ensure that investments reflect the realities on the ground.

And, at the end of the day, this is about families. It's about ensuring that children have the support they need, seniors receive the care they deserve and all Manitobans can live with comfort and the confidence that their communities will be there for them and that they have provincial leaders that understand and work together to give them just that.

Thank you.

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's an honour to speak to the budget, the wonderful budget that our government just presented. And as per my feedback and conversations with my constituents and Manitobans, I have heard appreciation, just like I just heard the appreciation about the budget from the independent member from Dawson Trail. I want to thank him for his remarks, for the appreciation, because I think he spoke from the heart.

But sometimes, when we are in a partisan mode, people, in spite of liking the budget and decisions of our government, just because they are sitting opposite, they have to not appreciate or say something that they think should be politically beneficial to them. So that's what I think.

Yesterday, one of my friends across the aisle stopped by me and said: Oh, man, you've got a nicely waxed moustache, I like it. I was like, thank you, thank you so much.

But now, that was a metaphor; I think he was talking about the budget. And—because that's how the system is structured. When you go on record, you're not the same person. You're not sometimes the real, real person speaking from the heart.

But, anyways, I want to say thank you to that member on record for 'appreciashing'—appreciating my moustache. Thank you. That encourages me. That makes my day.

The other day, I was with some seniors from Burrows in this Chamber. Many of them, they were here in this Chamber, in the building, for the first time. And we had so many conversations. We talked about the question period. We talked about the policies. We talked about how we work as a team, or how do we not work as a team, in this Chamber. And one senior, as old as my parents, she goes, in spite of blaming each other and finding faults in the other team, why can't you work together to serve the people of Manitoba? And I said, yes, that's the right thing to do; we should be doing that.

But sometimes it's hard to execute to, you know, practically do that, to practise that due to a thousand-plus reasons. It comes down to respect. It comes down to perceptions and misperceptions about each other. I support the debate. I support difference of opinion, but I do not support anger. I do not support aggression. I do not support hatred in any case because the members sitting in opposite teams, they represent Manitobans that I respect so much.

So when I say I represent people of Burrows, who do I represent? I represent regular Manitobans. I represent workers. I represent small-business owners, seniors, youth and students. But I do not represent billionaires. No billionaires I represent here in this Chamber.

So these people that I represent, what do they need? They need good jobs. They need affordability measures, and they need better health care. And that's what our government is offering. That's what our government is aimed at. That's what our budget talks about. And we have to make better choices for making our people's lives better.

What are those choices? Of course, when we got into government in 2023, we inherited a health-care system which was totally broken. There were vacancies. People left. Doctors felt disrespected.

So what we did, we started recruiting more doctors, recruiting more health-care workers. And how many we hired so far since we took over the government? Over 4,000 health-care workers. And we hired new doctors as well. We hired 317 doctors; 90 out of them are working in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba.

And we have also added fully staffed hospital beds. How many? Three hundred and eighty-four. We are also opening personal-care homes and adding personal-care-home beds. How many so far? One hundred and forty-five.

And we—when we talk about our health-care system and how it's working today, I want to share my own experience. I have to take my family members, my aging parents, for regular checkups. I went to Medinav, booked an appointment at Concordia, once again at Concordia extended-hours clinic. Once I had to take my father to extended-hours clinic at St. Boniface Hospital. It was two minutes' wait. We showed up; the nurse called. And we were treated so nicely. I want to thank all the health-care workers who are serving Manitobans with their hearts.

Guess what? The nurse that attended my father recently, her name is Lyle. Thank you, Lyle. On record, I want to say thank you, Lyle, so much. And Lyle told me that I am her MLA. And she lives close to my office, and we connected, and my father was smiling. And they took care of my father.

So I want to say that it's not just the government, it's not just the opposition; it's all Manitobans working together to make our health care better. That's what we are doing. That's what this budget does.

* (15:50)

When we talk about affordability and when we talk about a regular Manitoban family, what are their issues? Their issues are grocery bills, rent, child care, taxes, and they're concerned about big grocery chain monopoly. And for those who don't know, some grocery chains, they are using predatory prices. What that means is that the same product on the shelf, when you buy online, that could show two different prices to different—to two different individuals based upon their data.

So we are trying to fix that problem. We are trying to create competition in the market so that regular Manitobans are benefited out of those policies. And we are also cracking down on property controls so that more grocery stores can open in the same mall next to each other and the customers have a choice to choose which one is better for them.

So to address this affordability crisis, we are using some measures like Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit—\$1,700. And when we think about people of Burrows and other constituencies adjoining my constituency, people are happy about it. And to be fair, when we talk about those people who own \$2-million homes, honest question is: Do they need \$1,700 support?

Our aim is to help those who need help, and our request to those who are blessed with so much on this planet is to share something to make this society better. Again, this is a teamwork. Let's continue

working together to develop policies that uplift all of us together. And we're also offering Renters Affordability Tax Credit which is \$675, with seniors top-up—\$385.

And when we talk about seniors, I remember when I was sitting on the other side in the opposition benches, we used to advocate for a Seniors' Advocate. Finally, we hired a Seniors' Advocate, and seniors must be happy about it so that there is somebody listening to their issues, there is somebody working on their issues.

I can't miss this; I have to talk about youth. I have a young boy going to high school very soon, and I was talking to him: What do you think, dad would drop you every single day? He was like, yes, Dad. What if I'm not available; would you take the bus? I haven't, either. I haven't taken a bus ever, so do I need to pay for that? I said, not anymore.

So we have made transit free for youth. That's good news, and we are investing in child care. We are building new schools. I want to give a shout-out to our Education Minister for their leadership and I want to remember my colleague, my brother, Nello Altomare, for advocating for the nutrition program—universal nutrition program in our schools which is appreciated by all Manitobans.

There's a lot that I want to mention, but I want to give the floor to other speakers who want to speak. I want to say thank you to everyone, and I want to say that let's keep working together without anger, without aggression and without hating anybody in this Chamber.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): This is a bleak budget. Out of the seven budgets that I've witnessed here, this is by far the least ambitious, the least impactful one that I've seen. There's absolutely no vision here.

There's no focus on growing the economy, rebuilding our infrastructure, providing fair and stable funding to our schools, our municipalities, tackling the drug and mental health crisis, rebuilding the education system, addressing child poverty, addressing the lack of living wages and social inequality. This is an issues management budget.

The Premier (Mr. Kinew) basically looked in the last six months and took every single negative headline that he's got, sprinkled a tiny amount of money on each area, in hopes that when he's inevitably criticized

again, he can point to some minor announcement and say, look, I'm doing something.

But these actions are so small, so disparate, no strategy or plan in place, that there won't actually be any fix to any of these problems. And it's going to kick the can down the road for future governments to deal with when the problems are more complicated.

This is not a serious Premier or a serious government. This is a government that chases headlines instead of making life better for Manitobans. All these minor initiatives put together, it's difficult to see any measurable improvement in Manitobans' lives in this budget. It's not just me saying this. Angus Reid released a poll today and found that only 29 per cent of Manitobans have confidence in this government. Now, think about that. It means three quarters of Manitobans do not have confidence in this government because they can see, after three budgets, that their lives haven't gotten better and there hasn't been progress.

When I started here in 2019, Manitoba paid about \$900 million in interest on our debt; that's now \$2.4 billion. That's money not going to rebuild infrastructure. That's money that's not going to our health-care system or our schools. That's money that's leaving Manitoba and it's lying in the pockets of Wall Street and Bay Street bond traders. This budget is more about the Premier's personal ambition than doing right by Manitobans.

After three budgets, this government's finances are stagnant. We started with a \$1.6-billion deficit. We still have a \$1.6-billion structural deficit. And the only way this government was able to get down to \$500 million this year, and that's on paper, that's not—we'll wait to see what the actual numbers really are, is because of record transfers from the federal government. This is the federal government paying off the deficit. It's not anything that this government has done.

We have the worst economic growth in the country and we have kept austerity in place in Manitoba for over 10 years. Manitobans rejected austerity in 2023, yet this Premier delivers more of it. There's no money for emergencies, there's no money for contingencies, and by the government relying on transfer payments to pay down the deficit, it makes it a lazy government. It means they're not doing the work to grow the economy, they're not making the tough choices and the strategic moves that we need to build this province.

Now when it comes to mental health and homelessness, Manitoba hasn't opened any rapid new access

addiction medicine clinics, they haven't expanded hours, they've underfunded treatment options. In fact, the emergency mental health clinic was so understaffed, they raised a call-out to the government, said that they have a huge spike in clients, but no additional funding and they have retention problems with staff because they're so burnt out and overworked. So even if someone is seen in one of these clinics, there's no bed that they can actually go to for help. In fact, there was a judicial inquest that called on the government to expand clinics and beds, and of course, this government ignored that.

Housing: despite this being one of the key priorities for the Kinew government, we're actually going backwards. This is one of seven departments to see a freeze, and with, obviously, inflation, that's a cut. Manitoba housing renewal corporation was cut, and this year they're only promising 215 new affordable social housing units. Last year it was 600. That's a major reduction. The homeless strategy is only seeking to house 700 people, when estimates show that in Winnipeg alone, there's over 5,000 homeless Manitobans. And, of course, there's no plan outside the city of Winnipeg to house the homeless there.

We need 1,000 units of social housing a year, and for every year that we're not doing it, that number grows. So there's an invisible housing crisis here, where low-income Manitobans can't afford housing because of skyrocketing rent and a lack of non-market housing. That doesn't make headlines and Manitobans can't see that from their car window, so naturally this Premier (Mr. Kinew) has ignored that problem, and it's only getting worse.

* (16:00)

The budget cut \$12 million from funding for non-profits to access federal funds to build homes. When you apply for federal funding, you have to bring the money to the table to get something built. That \$12 million allowed non-profits to bring money to the table to build housing. That cut alone reduces the number of affordable housing units that are going to be built in Manitoba. We are doing the exact opposite of what we need to actually build houses.

Then it comes to health care. So this is how underfunded health care is: Even with the 10 per cent increase in funding this year by this government, we have just caught up to the funding from 2016. That means we've gone 10 years with rapid population growth and inflation and haven't kept up with the funding.

In 2016, Manitoba spent the second most per capita per person on health care. We are now the third least spender per capita. We are underfunding our health-care system.

So when people are wondering, well, this is the government's priority. They're always talking about it; they're putting money into it. Why aren't we getting any progress? Well, because the system is fundamentally underfunded and we're not discussing that.

It is not uncommon now for people to wait 15 hours in a waiting room. Four out of eight of our hospitals are considered the worst in Canada. We've had three hospitals greylisted, another three are being threatened to be greylisted. There's currently over 400 vacancies for nurses, yet the Premier and the Minister of Health say we have enough. Last year, 57 per cent of the nurses hired quit. That's not sustainable, and there's no plan for retention or recruitment.

And it's not just there. The PCHs also have staffing issues. We also have underfunded the PCHs and many of them are struggling to keep their doors open. And we've seen in this last year two of them basically hand their keys over to the Province because they couldn't sustainably keep going.

Just to put some perspective here, the Province has a ratio. There's a standard of 120 beds per thousand Manitobans over the age of 75. If Manitoba followed that ratio, that's 13,000 beds and growing. We currently, in this province, have about 9,500 beds. That's 3,500 beds short. This government is only committing to one PCH a year, roughly about 100 beds a year. Take 35 years to catch up to what we need this year. That's a crisis that clogs our ERs and increases wait times, and it means that seniors are sitting in an ER because they don't have a PCH bed.

To say the economy is underperforming would be an understatement. We have the lowest GDP growth in Canada. We are the child poverty capital in Canada and Manitobans are struggling under a mountain of personal debt. A quarter of our population, overwhelmingly BIPOC and women with young children, earn less than a living wage, and people are having to sell their plasma to survive to a for-profit Spanish company. That's Manitoba. We're not talking about the United States. That's happening here. It's happening in my riding of Fort Garry, and it tends to prey on the most vulnerable of Manitobans.

Youth unemployment has skyrocketed to 14.1 per cent, up 2.5 per cent in December. And that's the canary in the coal mine; when you see youth

unemployment rates going up, it means your economy is tanking. Four thousand jobs lost in February alone. Our debt-to-GDP ratio is going to reach 38.2 per cent; it's one of the highest ratios in the province's history.

Our finances are not sustainable. We are running a structural deficit and our infrastructure is degraded. There's no money left over for proper economic development to transition our economy into a low-carbon one where forward-thinking governments around the world are doing that and sort of getting ahead of their curve and actually building wealth for their communities. We see inequality skyrocketing in Manitoba and, of course, that comes with higher costs for policing, for corrections, for health care, for CFS, for education.

Having the level of poverty that we have is extremely expensive. We can't afford it, and it actually costs money to keep so many Manitobans behind. We have been experiencing a decade of austerity spanning three governments, and every single government system is straining and about to break or is broken. This government and this budget has done nothing about that.

The cost of living crisis doesn't hit all Manitobans equally. In fact, the bottom 40 per cent of households are hit hardest, reducing purchasing power, struggling to afford skyrocketing groceries and housing costs. Manitoba leads the country in escalating prices.

Now, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) made the bold prediction that just in four years, Manitoba would become a have province. Well, you don't become a have province when you get almost, you know, 40 per cent of your revenue from the federal government in a transfer. And he said three megaprojects were going to get us there, and so let's check in on how they're doing.

The first one is the Port of Churchill. Well, this government can't even pass piece of legislation creating the Crown-Indigenous corporation because they can't get buy-in from First Nations. Despite the promise in the Throne Speech, despite this being a signature issue—the Premier has staked his reputation on it—he cannot get it done. He couldn't even get draft legislation before this Legislature.

In August 2025, when it was first announced, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs were cautious and said they didn't endorse the project and were taking a wait-and-see attitude. In December, when the Premier announced that it would be in the Throne Speech, the very same day, AMC response was that this has to be

led by First Nations, and they reminded the Premier he has a duty to consult and that he had to do this with their consent.

It's clear he hasn't consulted, they haven't consented and that this isn't going anywhere. Indigenous commentators have described this as the new beads-and-trinket approach to Indigenous-Crown relationship. To this day, no major First Nation governance organization has shown any support for this initiative. That's telling.

Economists say there's no business case for the Port of Churchill. It's not financially viable. In fact, we know that you can't do modern business without insurance. What insurance company is going to insure gas and oil to be transported through the northern Arctic where a spill would be devastating and cost billions and put them out of business? They will not do that, and without insurance, you don't move anything.

Building an oil pipeline on permafrost is exceptionally expensive—three, four times what it would normally cost. It will cost billions of dollars. No company is paying for that, and that means it will fall onto Manitoba taxpayers. This is a betrayal of the Manitoba NDP.

The Premier stood at Standing Rock and said he was against pipelines 'crushing' freshwater on Indigenous territory. He signed the Leap Manifesto. He also told candidates that he was anti-pipeline and if they wanted to run under his banner, they had to be anti-pipeline as well. Premier also told the media repeatedly he was opposed to a pipeline in Churchill. Now he gets into government, and there's the bait and the switch, and all of a sudden, he's their biggest proponent.

In the—under this Premier, Manitoba, of course, is not building the infrastructure that actually would create jobs, would actually grow the economy. And, of course, the biggest example of that is the North End treatment program, phase 3. Without it, in four or five years, Winnipeg will have to stop building. They will be at capacity. Why this isn't an alarm, why this isn't a priority of the government is absolutely mind-blowing.

We also know that the second sort of project he was interested was the Bell Canada largest data centre in Canada. That was—apparently was coming here according to the Premier in November, and all of a sudden it went to Saskatchewan. So that was his second major project that is disappeared.

And it appears the third one is a project called Deep Sky, which is a carbon-capture-and-storage facility in rural Manitoba that was supposed to start drilling in early 2026. I checked the registry the other day. It's early 2026; they haven't even applied for environmental licence.

None of these three megaprojects are happening. This is the Premier (Mr. Kinew) chasing rainbows.

When it comes to affordability, this Premier has broken a number of promises, including closing the above-guide rent increase, and Manitobans are seeing their rents skyrocketing. He's underfunding post-secondary education; tuition is skyrocketing. He's underfunding education, which means education property taxes are skyrocketing. He's underfunding municipalities, which means municipal taxes are skyrocketing. He's broken his promise to regulate gas prices and stop the long weekend gouging and, all of a sudden now, is in favour of surge pricing after saying he would ban the practice for hydro.

* (16:10)

Now, Manitoba doesn't currently charge PST on real groceries, so then he brought in a \$30-million tax break on junk food. On an average bill, that's literally pennies. But again, it doesn't address the problem; it just chases a headline. And, in fact, it creates new problems. Manitoba is the diabetes capital and child obesity capital of Canada and we're now just making it cheaper and easier to buy junk food.

Take that \$30 million and give it to the lowest income 30,000 Manitobans and you will see real progress and real movement in their lives. It's also fairness because this tax break only goes to large mega corporations like Walmart and Superstore. It doesn't go to ma and pa grocery stores.

So we want more competition in Manitoba when it comes to grocery stores. So what does this Premier do? He gives Walmart a leg up. And that small ethnic grocery store in Fort Garry—too bad for you; try to compete with Walmart. This Premier just made it harder for you. So this is going to reduce competition, not increase it.

EIA rates have been frozen again four years in a row. Three budgets—the NDP have cut EIA rates, making things worse for their most vulnerable Manitobans. Nutrition program—big splashy announcement, but it's been frozen two years in a row and with skyrocketing grocery store prices, that's a cut. That's your signature plan. This is where you trot out to progressive voters and say, you know what? We're not

a Conservative government. We love children; we want to feed vulnerable children. Yet they've cut their program two years in a row.

They promised 23,000 new child-care spaces by 2026. They've broken that promise. They've only built about 15 per cent and 51 per cent of Manitobans live in a food desert.

We know from the first Throne Speech, the government would pay for 5,000 geothermal units. Well, they've broken that promise as well. They were going to spend \$32 million a year for this. Now, they are offered a coupon of \$1,000 off your geothermal installation and you have to come up with 25 to 40 per cent of the costs, where before it was 100 per cent paid by the Province. Only a wealthy few can afford this.

So the Province is not going to spend \$32 million a year on this; it's now only going to spend \$10 million, but it's doubtful they actually will get \$10 million spent because there's not \$10 million worth of wealthy people who are going to do this.

It's the same thing with EV ownership. The average EV owner makes over \$100,000 a year, is a male and is over 45, not exactly a Manitoba demographic where Manitobans average \$60,000 a year. They're not buying EVs. So, essentially, you are subsidizing some of the wealthiest Manitobans with a vehicle that they can afford and they're spending \$14 million a year on that.

So this government has now frozen EIA rates for our most vulnerable. They've frozen funding to the Manitoba School for the Deaf after the scandal, which is amazing that they did that. They also froze—they brought in a poverty strategy that will not do anything to alleviate poverty. And they've cut the only independent agency that was holding them to account on a regular basis—the children's advocate office gets cut. Who cuts the children's advocate office?

So there is so much more to say, but like I said, I think Angus Reid certainly has noticed Manitobans, when they actually know what this government is doing and not doing, do not approve. And two out of three Manitobans do not think this government is doing a good job, and I count myself among them.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): I appreciate the opportunity to—

An Honourable Member: Did she acknowledge you?

Mr. King: – stand here today to speak on the government's budget.

Yes, she acknowledged me, [*inaudible*] couldn't hear.

I–20 minutes isn't enough to talk about what isn't in this budget. And, I mean, we hear from my colleagues who've got a chance, but it gives me an opportunity to speak from my critic role, stand up here for municipalities as well as my community and the people that are facing an affordability crisis that we're going through in this province right now. So I appreciate the few minutes that I get to talk about some of the things—many of the things that aren't in this budget, but many, many more that could use a whole lot more time.

An Honourable Member: You should ask for leave.

Mr. King: Maybe at the end I will ask for leave.

But I want to move beyond the surface-level presentation of this document and focus instead on what it actually means for communities across this province. Because a budget is not simply a collection of figures or a series of announcements, but a reflection of priorities, demonstration of choices, and ultimately a test of whether a government is prepared to follow through on its commitments.

Now, when one takes the time to look carefully at this budget, setting aside the framing and examining substance, a consistent pattern I see begins to emerge here. It is a pattern defined not by restoration or renewal, but by gradual erosion, where funding has not been returned to prior levels, where increases fail to keep pace with inflation and where the systems that support municipalities, schools, community programs remain unchanged in ways that leave them increasingly strange—strained.

This erosion does not always present itself dramatically, nor does it necessarily appear obvious at first glance, but its effects accumulate over time in much the same way that a shoreline is worn away by repeated waves, where each individual change may appear modest, yet the overall impact is unmistakable as the foundation itself begins to recede.

So if we could begin at the level where Manitobans experience these decisions most directly, which is within their own communities, we see this pattern clearly in programs such as From the Ground Up and Green Team, which are supposed to fund local initiatives, create employment opportunities for young people and allow communities to maintain and

improve the places in which people live their daily lives.

Now, despite their importance, these programs have not been restored to the levels that existed under the previous PC government, and even a straightforward review of the numbers shows that they remain behind where they once were, with From the Ground Up receiving less than what had been delivered through Building Sustainable Communities, and Green Team funding falling below its previous levels as well, which means that communities are working with fewer real resources than they once had available.

Now the effect of this becomes even more pronounced when inflation is taken into account, honourable Deputy Speaker, because the reality that Manitobans experience in their daily lives is that costs have risen across the board, including materials, labour, services, and therefore a dollar today does not carry the same purchasing power that it did only a few years ago, which means that funding which does not increase in line with inflation is effectively reduced in real terms.

So this is a matter of basic arithmetic, honourable deputy Speaker, since when funding fails to keep pace with riding—rising costs it inevitably results in fewer projects being completed, fewer opportunities being created, fewer services being delivered, even if the nominal figure suggests stability. And it is for that reason that describing such funding as an investment does not align with the reality experienced by communities.

A similar dynamic is evident when we turn to municipal funding, where the pressures become even more visible because municipalities are responsible for core services and infrastructure that Manitobans rely on every day, including roads, water systems, local facilities. Therefore any reduction in their real capacity has immediate and tangible consequences.

When municipal funding is adjusted for inflation, it is, in fact, lower, which means that municipalities are being asked to manage growing demands and deliver an expanding range of services with a diminished level of real support, creating a situation in which expectations continue to rise while the resources available to meet those expectations are constrained.

* (16:20)

This tension places municipalities in a difficult and unsustainable position where they are forced to

balance competing priorities with insufficient resources, often leading to deferred projects, increased local taxes or reductions in services, all of which ultimately affect the residents that they serve.

The situation is compounded by the continued application of provincial sales tax to municipal infrastructure projects, which introduces an additional layer of inefficiency into our system, as the Province provides funding for infrastructure while simultaneously increasing the cost of that same infrastructure through taxation, thereby reducing the net value of its own investment and placing additional financial pressure on municipalities.

This issue has been raised repeatedly by municipalities and by their representative organizations, yet despite the consistency of these concerns, there has been no meaningful change to the policy and the result is a system in which municipalities receive support with one hand while being required to return a portion of that support with the other.

Beyond these specific issues, there remains a broader structural concern in the absence of any new or modernized funding models for municipalities. There is currently no framework that reflects population growth, evolving infrastructure needs or the increasing complexity of municipal responsibilities, nor is there a predictable long-term approach that allows municipalities to plan with confidence.

Instead, municipalities continue to operate with an outdated system characterized by flat funding and uncertainty, which limits their ability to make strategic decisions and invest in the future; and this lack of reform is particularly evident in the area of education funding.

The Province retains control over funding decisions while municipalities remain responsible for collecting school taxes. This arrangement creates a disconnect between responsibility and accountability. Its municipalities are required to administer a system they do not control, and when funding shortfalls lead to increased property taxes, it is municipalities that face public frustration despite the fact that they are not the source of those decisions.

Recent increases in school division property taxes, in some cases are approaching 30 per cent since 2023, illustrate the real impact of this arrangement on families who experience these increases directly, while municipalities are left to manage both the financial and the political consequences of decisions made at the provincial level.

When these various elements are considered together, including the underfunding of community programs, the decline in real municipal funding, the added costs associated with PST on infrastructure and the absence of meaningful reform in both municipal and education funding, a consistent and concerning pattern becomes apparent in which responsibilities are effectively shifted downward while control remains centralized.

This pattern is particularly problematic because it occurs with a broader economic context in which Manitoba is already underperforming relative to its peers, with lower growth rates, weaker investment, lower productivity compared to neighboring provinces such as Saskatchewan and Alberta, which limits the Province's ability to generate the resources needed to support public services and our infrastructure.

These economic realities are directly connected to the issue of affordability, as rising living costs cannot be addressed in a lasting way without corresponding growth and productivity and income. Therefore, any approach that attempts to separate affordability from economic growth risks addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes. The challenge, therefore, lies in recognizing that sustainable improvements in affordability require a strong growing economy, one that is capable of generating the revenue needed to support public services while also providing opportunities for individuals and businesses to thrive.

The Speaker in the Chair

What emerges from this analysis is a budget that presents itself as supportive while delivering less in real terms, that speaks of partnership while placing additional burdens on our municipalities and that emphasizes affordability without addressing the economic fundamentals that underpin it.

Manitobans experience the effects of these decisions in very practical ways, whether through reduced capacity in community programs, increased financial pressure on municipalities, higher property taxes driven by education funding decisions or a broader economic environment that is not keeping pace.

I also want to speak today, honourable deputy Speaker—oh, it's Honourable Speaker; you're back—about a matter that is very important to Lakeside.

Cuts to the heart what a budget debate is supposed to expose, because budgets are not simply about dollars and cents, they're about, you know, things that go on in your community. Nor are they merely about the government's preferred headlines, but rather about

the difference between what's promised, what's possible and what has been deliberately delayed.

In no area is that difference more glaring or morally serious than in the matter of personal-care homes and seniors' care, where the record shows that projects were not sitting on a wish list waiting for imagination, but had already been greenlit, planned, funded for design and set on a path toward completion by 2025, only to be cancelled by the NDP, later reintroduced in pieces whenever it became politically useful for them to stand behind a podium and pretend they were bringing something new to life. And I talk about the personal-care home in Stonewall in particular.

But the public record is remarkably clear at this point. The previous PC government had six new personal-care homes ready to go, in Arborg, Lac du Bonnet, Oakbank, Stonewall and two Winnipeg locations, with roughly 670 beds tied to those projects. The government of the day had already authorized \$15 million to move the projects through planning and design. In fact, Arborg was given its money for the design and planning phase in September 2023. These PCHs were moving ahead. The announcements of these PCHs did not describe vague aspirations, but rather a concrete series of projects that had identified sites, bed counts and a broader provincial strategy aimed at exceeding the commitment to open 1,200 new personal-care-home beds by 2025.

What that means, Honourable Speaker, is that the hard work of deciding whether these beds were needed had already been done. The decision to proceed had already been made, and communities were already getting money. The help they had been promised was not years away; it was there, until the NDP took over.

In Stonewall, the community themselves committed, and are still committed, to raising \$10 million towards the personal-care home there, just of community funds, to have the add-ons in this PCH that they were counting on being put-built in their community.

So that's just what makes the conduct of this government so revealing, Honourable Speaker, because they did not inherit a blank page and began writing a plan from scratch, nor did they discover that no thought had been given to the needs of Manitoba seniors. In the Interlake, the stats are, we're short—one of the highest in the province at over 400 beds. They inherited projects that were shovel-ready, projects that had already been approved by Cabinet and Treasury Boards and projects that would have brought

meaningful relief to families and seniors across Manitoba communities.

Instead of allowing that work to continue, instead of putting the needs of seniors ahead of their own partisan interests, they chose to stop, delay and unravel what had already been set in motion, only to later rediscover the value of those very same projects when it became politically advantageous to do so.

That is the central hypocrisy that cannot be ignored in this debate, because members opposite would very much like Manitobans to believe that every new mention of a personal-care home is proof of their compassion, every recycled announcement is evidence of their commitment and every delayed project is somehow part of a careful and thoughtful process.

The truth is much less flattering and far more cynical, because if they had truly been motivated by concern for Manitoba seniors, they would have let those projects proceed uninterrupted. If they had truly believed that timely access to care mattered, they would not have inserted politics into the middle of a construction schedule. And if they had truly wished to support families carrying immense emotional and financial burdens, they would not have converted projects that were ready to go into a series of staggered announcements designed to extract maximum political value from minimum actual progress.

What we are left with, then, is a government that cancelled what was ready, delayed what was needed and then slowly dribbled those same projects back into public view, as though Manitobans had no memory and seniors had no right to ask why they were forced to wait.

* (16:30)

That approach reveals a great deal about the priorities of this government, because it treats seniors' care not as a solemn obligation to people who built this province, but as a communication strategy to be managed according to polling, timing and partisan optics.

They did not look at those projects and see families under strain, seniors waiting for dignified care close to home or communities preparing for the needs of an aging population. They looked at those projects and saw a series of future announcements, each one to be held back until the moment was right for them.

Consequence of that behaviour pushes uncertainty outward into the lives of real people, Honourable

Speaker; pushes uncertainty into the lives of sons and daughters, wondering whether a parent will be able to remain close to family and community when care becomes necessary; pushes uncertainty into the lives of spouses who are already carrying crushing caregiving responsibilities and have no clear answer about whether support will come this year, next year or some indefinite point in the future; pushes uncertainty into the lives of seniors themselves, many of whom are left in the cruel position of knowing that care is needed, knowing that beds were supposed to be coming and yet being forced to wait while government manages the timing of its next politically convenient announcement.

There is something especially offensive in the government's attempt to present itself as the defender of seniors after having chosen to obstruct projects that had already been selected, advanced and funded for planning. The original PC government announced—announcement spoke plainly of building capacity in areas with the highest needs and described a broader model of care aimed at helping seniors remain in environments that felt more like home with a continuum of supports designed around dignity and independence.

Those are good objectives and no one in this House would dispute them, but the government cannot borrow the language of compassion while practicing the politics of delay, cannot cancel the meal and then expect applause for slowly bringing the plates back to the table one at a time.

Deeper problem here is that this government wants credit for success it did not create, and it wants gratitude for reviving what it itself chose to cancel. That is the essence of this flip-flopping on this issue.

First, the projects were apparently not worthy of continuing, then as public pressure mounted and the undeniable need for personal-care-home capacity remained, those same projects became useful again, not because the facts had changed, but because the politics had.

This is not principled government. It is the political equivalent of arson followed by a photo opportunity with a bucket, Honourable Speaker. It's important that this House see plainly what has happened because only those serve responsible. These projects were greenlit. These projects were ready to go. These projects were supposed to be completed by 2025.

The NDP cancelled them, then rather than admit that it had put politics ahead of people, government

began—they rolled them back out in a manner so selective and self-serving that it became impossible not to see the pattern.

This was never about an urgent concern for seniors. If it had been, the original timelines would have been protected, continuity would have been preserved, Manitoba families would not have been left in this prolonged state of uncertainty.

So you can hear my passion, I'm sure, of the disappointment that there's no personal-care home being announced yet in my community that was many a few years back, along with daycare. Our colleague from Fort Garry mentioned the daycare spaces.

I had the Minister of Education tell me two years ago that it was going to be started and then again last year that it was going to begin and just a couple of weeks ago, the community heard from the department that it will be 2028 before it was built.

So a number of things in my 'community' that I'm very passionate about that are not mentioned in this budget, and again, 20 minutes isn't near enough time to talk about all the things that weren't in this budget, but I do thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): I've got to say, it is really, really difficult to sit in this Chamber and listen to members opposite drone on and on based on talking points that are right in front of them, mainly because it gets so repetitive, hearing the same thing over and over again. And the fact that they're heckling me right now, no—just, you know, it reinforces the fact that they think I'm right. Clearly they feel attacked by me clearly saying that it is boring to hear talking points over and over again.

Anyway, Honourable Speaker, I am so grateful to rise today to talk to Budget 2026, a budget that builds Manitoba in a way that only Manitobans know how to do best. And that is together. That is why this budget, after, you know, two years now of really focusing in on targeted investments and focusing in on repairing the damage done by the previous government, we're now at a place, as your Manitoba NDP government, where we can show the public glimpses of what we can do at our full capacity—glimpses like free transit for youth, glimpses like taking the PST off of grocery stores and cracking down on predatory pricing, glimpses like universal child care.

One day, we can get to that if we have an NDP government taking the critical steps that we are taking here in Budget 2026. And I find it comical listening to

the opposition, again, hearing them talk on and on about underfunding—quote, unquote, underfunding. Meanwhile, they are the masters of underfunding, Honourable Speaker.

You know, the things that they know how to do with jobs is cut them, Honourable Speaker. Here in Manitoba, we have a record number of apprentices, a record number of apprentices that sets a standard for years to come in Manitoba. It is a historical standard because young people know that they are needed in order to build Manitoba. Young people are stepping up in record numbers because they know that we need their help to get to where we need to be as a province.

And, you know, after seven and a half years of a government that only pit themselves against every single group imaginable in the province—teachers, public servants, you know, unions—that pit themselves against municipalities, institutions of education, students, folks of all walks of life. They even said no to a seniors' advocate office, Honourable Speaker.

And Budget 2026 is something that not only speaks to what Manitobans have been asking for for those seven and a half years, but the aspirations of Manitobans decades prior.

And so, Honourable Speaker, I am so excited that Budget 2026 includes investments that are very close to home for the great constituents of Radisson. And it is the honour of my life to represent them as their MLA.

Constituents of Radisson can look to recent announcements that we made as a full northeast team at Concordia Hospital, a \$2.7-million investment in advanced spinal technology that sees a same-day operation for patients that are able to climb mountains like Carol, our validator that day at that announcement, was able to remarkably share with all of Manitoba. Only months later, she was able to climb a mountain after getting, you know, a surgery that required a small, small incision for her sciatica. I think that stories like Carol's are incredibly inspiring. And as a young Manitoban, I know just how important it is that we really lean on technology and the capacity that it gives us here in our province.

And just this morning, Honourable Speaker, I was at the ACCESS Transcona in Radisson with the Transcona Community Network, and it was so, so encouraging to hear the positive response that is—that exists in our community for free transit for youth, namely, the Plessis community—or the Plessis family resource centre was at the table with us this morning.

And they were sharing how, for many, many years, they had a walking school bus that actually now River East Transcona School Division funds a position for, but a walking school bus that walks kids that live in the Manitoba developments along Plessis over to Bernie Wolfe for school after they receive some food from Plessis Resource Centre.

And now there's an opportunity in the snow, in any weather conditions that may arise or, frankly, any day that the kids choose, they may take the bus, take the bus for free straight to school, Honourable Speaker. And that takes a remarkable—or makes a remarkable impact for generations to come.

* (16:40)

Those kids are no longer going to be walking down the railroad path to get to Bernie Wolfe in the winter because that is the only place that they can set their feet on reliably. They can hop on a bus for free.

And not only that, we know just how busy times are for working families. That's why Budget 2026 focuses in on child care, focuses in on making—on lowering costs at the grocery store and at the pump and for folks who are also looking to make the transition over to electric vehicles as well. And so, Honourable Speaker, there's so many, so many great things that impact Manitoba broadly, but one of the biggest things in Budget 2026 that I am so profoundly grateful for is the Devonshire Park school.

So the Devonshire Park school, Honourable Speaker—I feel I would be able to paint a more fulsome picture, actually, by quoting from a letter that I sent to my constituents just recently, and I'll table this letter for the House as well.

Dear Neighbour: When I was a kid, my family made a choice many Manitoban families make to buy a home in a neighbourhood which would be close enough to school that the kids can walk. That neighbourhood was Harbour View South, and that school was nowhere to be seen for decades. Our family found ourselves stuck right in with other families in the bottleneck of Concordia, Peguis and Regent. My mom worked as a nurse at Concordia Hospital for over a dozen years. Growing up, the hospital and staff became chosen family. I killed time in the library, studied in the food court and volunteered in the old emergency room in 2016 as I was preparing to enter university.

My mom's job was cut along with many other health services province-wide. At the same time, the government removed the tuition freeze, raised costs

and stripped health-care coverage from my classmates. Nobody in my family saw the series of events coming, and to help my family, I turned down offers elsewhere and attended the University of Manitoba right here at home, which I am very proud of. I rode the 75 from Kildonan Place mall to campus for up to four hours a day. I picked up jobs and full-time work at the same time to help make ends meet.

I was in the Legislature protesting and defending my family and community before even attending my first class. The impact of government policies on my family, friends and community throughout my life have brought me here. When I was asked to run, I refused to represent anywhere but home, anywhere but Radisson, the community that raised us and the community that shares this story.

Coming up on three years since, I have a heart full of gratitude for those who've trusted me with their stories, from the local breast cancer survivors who helped us advocate to lower our breast cancer screening age in Manitoba to the local health-care workers who helped make the case for institutional safety officers. And to the next generation of those accessing health care that drove the creation of Medinav, thank you.

To my own parents who have gone above and beyond to give me and my little brother the absolute best despite falling through the cracks of the previous government, this new school in Devonshire Park—drive is for you and for all 800 students whose families will be right down the street. I look forward to the day that I can walk children of my own down to it, remembering the hours we once in traffic wishing for it to happen.

And so, Honourable Speaker, I am so proud that Devonshire Park school is not only getting a 600-student capacity, but we're adding another 200 students to that for Radisson.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I think I'd like to conclude my comments there. I'm so proud of—and I'll table this, right—I am so proud of bill—I mean Budget 2026. There is so much good work happening, and I look forward to the remainder of our sitting where we'll have the opportunity to pass some really meaningful legislation that supports it.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): Well, I do have my notes today because I think it's important for me to read and make sure I don't miss anything that's really important, especially to my constituents and to

the province of Manitoba, the people that I'm representing here today.

I am pleased to rise today, once again, to put my concerns on the record regarding the NDP's government budget and, more importantly, to speak for the people of Manitoba who are feeling the pressure every single day that they need to get through life, and we need to try to do what we can to make their lives easier.

As legislators, it's a big responsibility for all of us. When we collect taxes and fees and things that we do as government and opposition, we need to make sure we're good stewards of what we're given. And I'm disappointed in some of the things that are happening—that were talked about in the budget this—last few weeks ago.

First and foremost, it's an honour for me to stand here and represent the constituents of Morden-Winkler. They elected me to be here with that—for them and represent them today, and I'm honoured to be here on their behalf and also on behalf of all Manitobans across our province, from Winnipeg to rural and to northern communities. I take every responsibility that I've been given and I don't take it lightly. I don't take that responsibility lightly because I know it's important. Every decision that's made in this Chamber is important.

I hear every day from families, seniors, workers, small-business owners, large manufacturing companies, farmers, moms and dads and students alike what concerns they have, the things that are important to them, and that's what I'm here to represent is all of those people. And it's our responsibility in this House to speak for them.

When we talk about this budget, we are not just talking about numbers on a page; we're talking about real people, all of us and all of the people we represent; people who are working hard, doing everything right to their best of their abilities, and still they're falling behind.

I believe this budget fails them. I believe that when we don't budget for infrastructure, for example, and we raise water bills and hydro bills because we need to get money other ways, I think that we're failing them because they're the ones who are paying this extra money out of their own pockets.

Honourable Speaker, once again this NDP government has missed the mark at a time when affordability is the No. 1 issue facing Manitobans. Families are struggling every single day to make ends meet, living paycheque to paycheque with little or nothing left at

the end of the month, many that have to use the food banks because there's no extra money in the bank to buy the things that they really need.

Yet instead of providing relief, this government continues to tax more and spend more, leaving Manitobans to pick up the bill. At a time when Manitobans are facing a serious cost-of-living crisis, this government has chosen not to act in a meaningful way. Instead of easing the pressure, they're making life more expensive in so many other ways, ways that are trying—they're trying to hide. For example, property taxes because of school funding.

Let me put this into everyday terms: Think of a family in Winkler or Brandon or Winnipeg. Maybe they have two incomes. They budget carefully; they try to save a little each month, but grocery costs more than they ever have before; fuel costs are more than they've ever been before; housing costs, repairs, everything that they need costs more. And now, instead of getting relief, they're paying more in taxes—quietly, indirectly, but very real.

We've heard a lot of people coming forward and talking about how they can't believe the cost of their housing or their property taxes and how much that has really affected their budget. It puts people out of—it puts home ownership out of grasp for many people. By cancelling the index—indexation of income tax, for example, this government is taking more from Manitobans' paycheques without calling it what it is. This bracket creep is hidden tax increase that continues to grow every year.

That is not helping people get ahead; that is holding them back. That's taking money directly out of their pockets. And I've heard it from my constituents: they're overwhelmed. They're asking, how much more can we take?

* (16:50)

Manitobans are not asking for more announcements or more promises; we're asking for real, immediate relief. They're asking for a plan that recognizes the pressures they are under and takes meaningful steps to reduce them. This budget does not provide that plan.

In my community alone, in Morden-Winkler, I have three large employers that employ over 400 employees—and that means 400 families—and they're all in work-share right now because of the things that are happening to the south, across the border, to all the things that are happening. And we need to do better for them.

But this is a bad time to be raising taxes and not to be able to help people. It's a bad time. Families are going on work-share. A husband and wife are going out and having to shovel driveways to just make the extra money to buy groceries, on top of their jobs. It's not easy.

Facts are clear, Honourable Speaker. Manitoba's unemployment rate has risen 6.3 per cent, with youth unemployment climbing to 14 per cent. Inflation remains among the highest in the country, with food prices up nearly 6 per cent and housing costs rising as well.

And as a mom who shops groceries in her—for her family, I—every time I go to the grocery store, I can't believe how prices have increased yet again. And I can't imagine a single mom, how they can handle that—it's—they don't struggle with those things when they go to the store, and they have to put things back because they just don't have enough in their grocery money budget.

We need to get that under control. We need to do more than just sprinkle pennies. And I've heard that said from people in my constituency, from people in Winnipeg, who say, I buy groceries and the tax that I used to pay on the grocery bill was, like, maybe \$2 out of a \$120 bill, and you're saying \$2 is a big impact? It's not. We need to do more. We need to do much more.

Manitoba families are facing higher costs everywhere, with fewer opportunities compared to the rest of Canada. These are not just statistics; they are real reality that people are living every day.

The same time, property taxes, especially education property taxes, have risen dramatically, in some cases by nearly 20 per cent in just one year and even more in certain communities since 2023.

Imagine being a senior on a fixed income. Your pension hasn't gone up. Your property tax has just jumped significantly. And when they're on a very fixed income, \$1,200 a month or \$1,500 a month, and their property taxes jump, they don't have money to pay that.

Where is that money coming from? They're going to cut back on their groceries. They're going to delay repairs to their homes or their vehicles. They're going to dip into savings, just in case, so they can stay in their house. That savings was supposed to be for rainy days if something happens; now, it's everyday life is a rainy day.

That's the reality this budget ignores. I didn't see anything in the budget that would address situations like this. This budget does not reflect what Manitobans are going through.

Honourable Speaker, this amendment also speaks to education, and rightly so. We have seen 4,600 students and 500 staff affected by the defunding of major training institutions. These are not just numbers. These are young people trying to build a future. These are companies and businesses that don't have trained employees and staff coming out of these schools.

We already have a shortage of advanced training, people who have the advanced training skills in many areas and we're cutting technical spaces—spots for training. We're cutting institutions like MITT. It's disappointing.

Imagine being one of those students halfway through a program working toward a trade, counting on education to start their career, and suddenly the support is gone. What do you do? Where do you go? Nobody really knows what's happening right now. This government has no clear answer.

In a time when we need skilled workers more than ever, especially in the trades, this is exactly the wrong direction. When we need more health-care aides, we need front-line workers and we're cutting programs to train them. That makes zero sense to me. There's got to be a better way.

Honourable Speaker, let's also talk about agriculture, seeing as this budget completely forgot to mention anything about it. Farmers are the backbone of our province. Southern Manitoba is an economic driver, and a big part of that is agriculture. They help feed our communities and drive our economy, and yet this budget doesn't support them at all. When fuel prices rise, when input costs go up, when uncertainty grows, farmers feel it first and the hardest, and yet we expect them to just continue to function without any help or any kind of support or encouragement of any kind. When farmers struggle, food prices go up for everyone. This is something that affects every single person in our province. So when this government ignores agriculture, it is not just farmers who pay the price; it is every Manitoban that's shopping at the grocery store.

Another concern I continue to hear about is the rising cost of utilities. Hydro rates are expected to increase significantly over the next number of years, placing even more strain on households. MPI premiums are also rising. We'll go back to the whole property tax.

It's disturbing and discouraging. People cannot choose to stop heating their homes in winter. They cannot choose to uninsure their vehicles. They have to insure their vehicles and they have to use those vehicles to get around. It's very difficult.

And when we talk about making transit free for youth in Winnipeg, I think that's great, but we need to make sure we take care of youth across the whole province. What about every other kid and every other student who would really benefit by using transit—public transport? They're having to buy—rent taxis or walk through winter, -40°. This is not an even—this isn't—like, I would hate to use the word—it's not fair, but there's such a divide between Winnipeg and rural and city.

We need to make sure that we equalize everything. We need to make sure if we're doing something rurally, we need to do it in the city as well. Everybody is worth that effort. This government has failed to properly manage public utilities, and Manitobans are paying the price every single month. This is the result of mismanagement and Manitobans are paying the price.

Public safety is also a growing concern. People across Manitoba are seeing more crime, more repeat offenders and they're feeling less safe in their communities. This is happening everywhere, both in Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, rural areas, the North. It's happening everywhere. We hear more residents who have had their vehicles broken into, in multiple times, small-business owners dealing with theft, families who no longer feel safe in their own neighbourhoods. And yet there's no clear plan in this budget to address these issues. We need to do better. We need more strong action. People deserve to feel safe; that is a basic responsibility of government, and this budget does not deliver that.

Health care is another critical area where Manitobans are being let down. We see health care as a situation where we have so many front-line workers who need extra support and they're not getting it. We tried to bring forward legislation that will help keep accountability—

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

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