



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXX No. 41B – 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 14, 2026

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 235—The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Portage la Prairie, that Bill 235, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Stone:** Bill 235 strengthens Manitoba's taxpayer protection framework by maintaining the requirement for a referendum on major tax increases, while introducing clear consequences if that requirement is bypassed by the government. It preserves legislative authority but ensures accountability by making ministers responsible for their decisions to circumvent legislative referendum requirements with a meaningful reduction in ministerial salaries.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

No further introduction of bills? Committee reports?

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, in accordance with rule 77, I am tabling two copies of the sequence for the consideration of departmental Estimates. The first document is the permanent list for this session and the second one is a list to be in effect for April 15 and 16, 2026 only.

**The Speaker:** No further tabling of reports?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Holocaust Remembrance Day

**Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology):** Honourable Speaker, today we solemnly mark Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Yom HaShoah, which began at sundown last evening, calls on us to remember the more than 6 million Jewish children, women and men who were systematically murdered between 1933 and 1945, and the countless others persecuted and killed by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Their loss is not only measured in lives taken, but in generations of potential, of ideas, of culture, of love and of possibility, deliberately erased by hatred.

As Manitobans, we gather to remember the victims of the Shoah, to honour the countless acts of courage and resistance and to stand with the families and communities around the world whose lives were forever altered by this unimaginable tragedy. Jews, Roma, persons with disabilities, gay men and many others were targeted simply for who they were or what they believed. Their stories remind us of the devastating consequences of intolerance when it's left unchallenged.

The first commemoration of Yom HaShoah took place in 1951, only a few short years after the end of the Second World War, and marking the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, itself an enduring symbol of defiance, dignity and resistance in the face of annihilation. Thousands of survivors later found refuge in Canada, many choosing to build their lives right here in Manitoba, strengthening our province through their resilience, leadership and profound commitment to community.

That vibrant Jewish community has contributed immeasurably to our cultural, economic and civic life. Today, we pause not only to honour those who were lost but also those who rebuilt, bore witness and worked tirelessly to ensure that the horrors of the Holocaust were never forgotten.

Honourable Speaker, as Minister of Innovation and New Technology, I am acutely aware that the tools we create and the systems we build shape the world we live in. Technology holds immense power to connect us, to educate about the past and to preserve memory.

Yet that same power can be, and too often has been, distorted. Exploited to spread hate, accelerate disinformation and to legitimize denial. In our own lifetime, technology has both weaponized and anonymized intolerance, allowing it to travel faster,

reach farther and inflict greater harm than ever before, tearing at the fabric of our communities.

As the number of living survivors continues to decline, the responsibility to carry their stories forward rests with all of us. Through education, through digital preservation and through responsible innovation, we must ensure that the truth of the Holocaust is protected, that history is not distorted and that future generations understand both the costs of hatred and their duty to confront it.

Honourable Speaker, I have been honoured to take part in a number of Yom HaShoah commemorations over the past few days: a touching community service with survivors at Etz Chayim synagogue on Sunday; a beautiful interfaith service last night at Shaarey Zedek, in my own constituency of River Heights; the powerful commemoration on the Grand Staircase a short time ago; and the deeply moving reading of names of victims this morning, that other members of this Chamber also participated in.

That humble act of witness, reading those names aloud, one by one, reminds us that the number 6 million is not an abstraction. Each name is a life, a family and a future denied.

As it is written: Unto every person, there is a name. I ask that the names of the victims I read this morning be added to Hansard so they might become part of the permanent record of this Chamber, forever part of our province's story.

At a time when anti-Semitism and hate continues to rise, when division is amplified and misinformation spreads with alarming speed, Yom HaShoah demands that we recommit ourselves to empathy, to truth, to one another. By remembering the suffering of others, we not only embrace our shared humanity, we strengthen our resolve to build a more just and inclusive society.

Today we remember. Today we reflect. And today, we deepen our solemn pledge: Never again.

*Babich: Abrasha;*

*Bacharach: Dina, Mosheleh;*

*Bajgelmacher: Shaia;*

*Birnbaum: Ruchla–Auschwitz;*

*Blacharsky: Benjamin, Jacob, Joseph, Pescia–Majdanek*

*Blustein: Faiga, Salomon, Sosia, Zvi–Skala Forest, Borki;*

*Bluzer: Fela, Maria–Etlá–Warsaw.*

Honourable Speaker, I ask leave for a moment of silence for the victims of the Shoah.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Today marks Yom HaShoah, a solemn occasion to honour the memory of the 6 million murdered Jewish children, women and men during the Holocaust, and to remember the countless others who were persecuted and killed under the Nazi regime.

This year holds profound historical significance as we commemorate the 80th anniversary of Yom HaShoah. It is a moment not only of remembrance, but of reflection and responsibility.

The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2026 is Bridging Generations—calls on us to ensure that the memory of the Holocaust does not fade with the passing of survivors. As first-hand witnesses grow fewer, the responsibility to carry forward their stories, their truths and their warnings rests increasingly with younger generations.

\* (13:40)

I would like to take this time to thank Dr. Ruth Ashrafi and Adriana Glickman—Dr. Ruth is the regional director of B'nai Brith Canada—for having many of us in the Chamber read aloud names this morning. Unto every person there is a name. I'd like to thank Rob Berkowits, who is the chair of this morning's memorial. I'd like to say thank you to those survivors and family members who participated this morning in lighting of candles: Judith Levitt *[phonetic]*, Leonid Fiegelman *[phonetic]*, Carla Divinsky, Jeff Lieberman, Grayson Berkowits and Diana Metrik *[phonetic]*.

It was, as my colleague had mentioned, a very moving morning as you sit and watch the video of survivors telling their story of what they had seen and what they had, unfortunately, had to go through as young children ages 13 and 14.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the various people who brought greetings this afternoon. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition; Her Honour, Anita Neville, the Lieutenant Governor; Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage; and, of course, the mayor of the City of Winnipeg.

I would like to thank the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg for having us, once again, at the stairs of the Legislature this afternoon. I'd like to specifically thank Jeff Lieberman, president and chief executive officer, and Carrie Shenkarow, chair of the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, for bringing so many people together to commemorate and to remember.

I'd like to also thank other leaders that are here with us today, but also that have been with us for years and years, when we commemorate and remember Yom HaShoah, on a yearly basis. And this—much like we mentioned many other times throughout the year, this is not something that we should be remembering just once a year. This should be each and every day so then, again, things like this never happen again.

I would like to thank Brad Salyn, the director of the Manitoba region of CJFAC, which is the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee. I would also like to thank—who brought greetings in very wise words—Gustavo Zentner, who's the vice president of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. And I will say a quote from Gustavo in a little bit.

We'd like to remember also that today, this year, is 36 years since the Holocaust memorial has been put up in the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature in September of 1990. Very important that it was the first in Canada—in the—first province in Canada to do so.

So, in conclusion, Honourable Speaker, on this day, we honour the victims. We stand with the survivors and their families, and we renew our pledge to combat anti-Semitism, racism and all forms of hatred and intolerance.

Let us carry forward the lessons of the Holocaust, not only in memory, but in action, by building a future grounded in dignity, justice and human rights for all.

And as I had mentioned, Gustavo Zentner mentioned today on the steps of the Manitoba Legislature, never again is more than a slogan, but a responsibility. We will and we can do better.

Thank you. Merci. Dyakuyu. *[Thank you.]* Shalom.

**The Speaker:** All could rise for a moment of silence, please.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Prior to moving on to members' statements, there's some guests in the gallery I would like to introduce.

I draw attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today:

Rabbi Kliel Rose, Rabbi Carnie Rose, Rabbi Anibal Mas, Rabbi Myriam Saitman, Rabbi Matt Liebel *[phonetic]*, Rabbi Meachem *[phonetic]* Altein, Adam Levy, Adriana Glikman, Jeff Lieberman, Carrie Shenkarow, Jason Olin, Brad Salyn, Gustavo Zentner, Ruth Ashrafi, Ariel Ashrafi, Belle Jarniewski, James Christie, Jessica Cogan, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Innovation and New Technology (MLA Moroz).

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

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### Glenlawn Lions Hockey Champions

**Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change):** Today, I rise to celebrate a truly special group, the 2026 Manitoba Women's High School Hockey League champions, the Glenlawn Lions. Even though the final buzzer sounded on March 19, the pride this team has brought to Glenlawn and to our entire community is still ringing loud and clear.

The journey they took to get there makes this championship even more meaningful. For the past two years, the Lions reached the final only to fall just short. Eight players on this year's roster were there for both of those heartbreaks. They carried those memories, those lessons and that determination into this season. Instead of stepping back, they stepped forward and finished the story they started.

To the players and coaches: Your championship wasn't won in a single series, it was built not over months, but years of effort and commitment. You pushed through tough practices, long days and moments when giving up may have felt easier.

This moment arrives during a remarkable era for women's sports. Around the world we are witnessing a shift, a long overdue reconciliation of the talents, the dedication and the impact of women athletes. Young women are leading, they are inspiring and they are filling arenas.

We saw that first-hand here in Manitoba when the Professional Women's Hockey League brought games to Winnipeg. Sold-out crowds of thousands of fans packed the stands to watch the best women in the world compete, proving beyond any doubt that women's hockey is not just growing, it's thriving.

For the young women on this Glenlawn team, witnessing this in their own city wasn't just exciting, it was empowering. It shows them that their dreams

have a pathway and their sport has a future and that they belong in every arena, at every level.

This championship is more than a banner on the wall; it's a statement of what young women can achieve when they're supported, challenged and believed in.

I request to have the names of the players and coaches added into Hansard following my statement, and I invite all my colleagues to rise with me in recognizing the 2026 Manitoba Women's High School Hockey League champions, the Glenlawn Lions. You've made your school proud and your community proud.

*Glenlawn Collegiate women's hockey team: Ashley Antunes, Daisy Aseleine, Ariel Benci, Trinity Benci, Adriana Conrad, Violet Curtis, Jessie DeCraene, Kaitlynn Gluck, Neve Halpenny, Anya Perchaluk, Ava Price, Delainey Rigaux, Vayda Rigaux, Lara Stubbs, Heather Williams, Cavell Woroniak.*

*Courtney Cyrenne, assistant coach; Emily Deck, assistant coach; Brad Nechwediuk, co-head coach; Dean Rigaux, co-head coach.*

#### **Personal-Care Home for Stonewall**

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I rise today to speak on an issue of growing urgency for my constituents in Lakeside: the need for a personal-care home in Stonewall.

In 2023, the previous government recognized this need and announced plans for a new facility. That announcement brought hope to families across the Interlake. Yet today, we've heard nothing from the current government, leaving seniors and their loved ones in continued uncertainty.

Honourable Speaker, the IERHA has the greatest need for personal-care-home spaces anywhere in this province. At the same time, Stonewall is one of the fastest-growing communities in our province. This growth is something we celebrate but is also brings responsibility. We must ensure that our seniors can age with dignity, close to home and surrounded by their families. Right now, too many families are forced to look far outside their community for care. That's not good enough.

Honourable Speaker, if the current government had not recklessly paused the previous government's personal-care-home construction plans, Manitoba would have had 1,200 new personal-care-home beds by 2025, including two new centres in the Interlake.

Those projects had been approved, funded and were moving forward. Instead, they were halted.

To date, this government has not opened a single new personal-care-home bed.

While this government's inaction on senior's care is shameful, there is a bright spot. The people of Stonewall and surrounding area have banded together and stepped up in an extraordinary way by committing to raise \$10 million of community money. Through their tireless work, they are well on their way to achieving their goal. Their commitment is unwavering; their message is clear: They are ready; they are waiting.

\* (13:50)

As the MLA for Lakeside, I am proud to stand with them. I will continue to advocate, to push and to lobby this government to move forward with this much-needed personal-care home.

Our seniors built our communities. They deserve nothing less than our full support.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Vaisakhi**

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Honourable Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in celebration of Vaisakhi.

Earlier today I had the opportunity to join the Sikh community at City Hall for the annual Nishan Sahib raising, the flag raising. And for those who don't know, Winnipeg was the first city in all of North America to start this tradition decades ago.

Vaisakhi marks the founding of the Khals in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh-ji and is a defining moment that called on Sikhs to uphold the values of equality, courage, compassion and selfless service. It is a day of deep spiritual significance, but also one filled with joy.

Here in Manitoba, Vaisakhi is also an important opportunity to reflect on the growth of a vibrant Sikh community that has become an important part of our province. Sikhs have been calling Manitoba home since at least the 1960s, and what began as a small number of families has now grown into a strong and deeply rooted community.

And for earlier generations, building a life in this province came with its challenges. Many faced barriers in employment and were forced to choose between expressing their identity and making a living.

Despite this, they persevered with determination and resilience, laying the foundation for future generations.

Today, that legacy is reflected in a new generation that continues to knock it out of the park in every sector of society from business, education, health care and public service.

I'm deeply humbled to be the first Canadian-born and -raised Sikh MLA to serve in this Chamber, but I'm definitely not going to be the last one.

So as we celebrate a vibrant history, progress and a shared future, we continue to build together. I ask all my colleagues to join me in wishing the community here in Manitoba and around the world a very happy Vaisakhi.

Samooch Bhaichare nu Vaisakhi Diyan Lakh Lakh Vadhaiyan. *[Many, many congratulations to the entire community on Vaisakhi.]*

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

#### **Souris Curling Club 130th Anniversary**

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Souris Curling Club on the remarkable occasion of its 130th anniversary.

For over a century, the Souris Curling Club has been a heart-been at the heart of its community, bringing people together, fostering friendships and keeping alive one of Manitoba's most cherished traditions. From early mornings on the ice to lively 'bonspiels' and community events, the club has created generations of memories.

Honourable Speaker, 1896: the club was created and affiliated with the same year with the Manitoba Curling Association; 1948: Memorial Rink was officially opened with hockey ice and four sheets of curling ice; 1996: the club moved across the street, which is the current Souris and Glenwood complex; 1999: they held the Centennial Bonspiel with 144 rinks; the year 2000: the Y2K bonspiel with over 100 rinks, which followed with the Survivor Bonspiel that is held every spring, with five days of curling, with hockey ice and curling ice all in use. Lots of entertainment and lots of reunions from year to year.

This year the club celebrated, with a full house, the 130th anniversary. Colin Dunbar was recognized as he retired as the icemaker for over 54 years. The 1975 and '76 ladies bonspiel champs of Souris, the Mogk team: Joan Mogk, Jean Hunter, Betty Devins, Karen Anderson—and Joan has passed away since this, but the other three attended the ceremonies.

On behalf of this House, I extend my congratulations to the club volunteers and members, sporters from past and present. And I want to recognize in the gallery today: President Bill Scott, Secretary Cindy Scott. And in the gallery, also: Donna Devins, the daughter of Betty Devins.

Please have their names entered into Hansard.

Thank you.

#### **Minor Hockey in Brandon**

**Hon. Glen Simard (Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations):** Honourable Speaker, I rise to recognize an extraordinary season of success for minor hockey in Brandon. As a former coach within the system, I am proud of the standard they've set. Hockey in Brandon has risen to the very top of Manitoba minor hockey.

In the Winnipeg AAA league, the 17U team secured the championship. The 15U AAA team was led to a league title by former colleague, Head Coach Dave Lewis, and inspired by fallen teammate, Ryker Ethelston.

The 11U teams won all three medals at rural AA provincials. The 15U A Wheat Kings won the southwest league, and Vincent Massey, a team synonymous with winning, captured a third straight Westman High School title.

In four of the last five seasons, the 18U AAA team has been in the league final, and it was true again this year. At the 13U level, both the AA Black and Gold teams recorded strong regular seasons and the Black squad advanced to the provincial final.

House league teams excelled at provincials, proudly representing Brandon. The female Wheat Kings in the 13U AA and 15U AAA made deep playoff runs as did the male 15U AA team. Participation at the younger levels stayed strong, and the tournament champions over two weekings at the Keystone Centre was a success.

Individually, Kale Nicol of the champion 15U AAA team broke a points-per-game record previously held by Jonathan Toews with 86 goals and 55 assists in 32 games, and more importantly, according to his mom Kerri: is pretty down to earth, and he's got a good head on his shoulders.

And Saturday, Seattle Kraken prospect and Hockey Brandon alumni Clarke Caswell scored a big goal in the Frozen Four, as the Denver Pioneers secured a national championship in the NCAA.

To every player, coach, referee and volunteer watching online: Congratulations on a remarkable year. I'd be remiss if I didn't remind every player to take time away from hockey this summer. Play multiple sports and enjoy your time off the ice. Hockey will be there in the fall.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Affordability Measures for Manitobans Request to Remove Gas Tax

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Today, the Prime Minister announced the federal taxes on fuel are gone until Labour Day. He didn't need a study. He didn't need to wait a month. Turns out, when you are in government, you can use that power to help the public if you really want to. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** The first time the Premier (Mr. Kinew) touched the gas tax, PCs had to force the NDPs to stay until—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —midnight to change their weak legislation so many more Manitobans could have been helped by that.

Now Manitobans are shaking their heads in disappointment and dismay when this Premier stands up and says, I quote: The gas tax is the greatest thing a Manitoba government has ever done. End quote. Not the right for women to vote, not the floodway, not the provincial PNP program; the gas tax pause for one year.

Will the Premier stop waiting, stop ordering studies, stop grandstanding and start acting to make life more affordable for Manitobans today?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Honourable Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge that Manitobans right now, today, are mourning the passing of a great Manitoban. Tannis Richardson, who was the matriarch of her family, was a remarkable woman whose generosity and compassion helped shape our province for the better. Through her decades of service, including advancing diabetes research and strengthening different aspects of health care, the arts, community organizations, she showed what it means to turn privilege into purpose.

Tannis leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of giving that will inspire generations of Manitobans to come. And so, on behalf of all Manitobans, I'd like to

extend our deepest condolences to her family, to her friends, communities, and to the many, many—those—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Khan:** Driving in this morning, gas was \$1.79. There is your study, Premier. Gas is \$1.79. Only this NDP government will look at the global chaos right now and think, hey, Manitobans can afford to wait another month before we do anything.

\* (14:00)

We don't control what happens on a global stage, but the Premier and this NDP government can make life more affordable today for Manitobans. I know the Premier doesn't pump his own gas, but I do, and every other Manitoban that drives a car pumps their own gas and they feel the pinch at the pump every single time they go gas.

The Premier promised Manitobans—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Khan:** —that the gas tax would stay gone as long as gas prices are high—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Stop the clock.

The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) and quite a few other members of the government caucus need to tone it down a little.

**Mr. Khan:** The Premier promised Manitobans that that the gas tax would stay as long as gas prices are high. Well, gas prices are high right now.

Well, will the Premier commit today to making life more affordable and removing the gas tax today in Manitoba?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, I am, I have to say, pretty blown away by not only the hot air coming out of the Leader of the Opposition, but the fact that he is asking for our government to do more of what we've already done for Manitobans.

Our government did what the PCs refused to do for two terms of their failed administration. We came in after making a promise, and we froze—sorry—we gave Manitobans a gas tax holiday for a whole year in Manitoba. We got rid of the gas tax for an entire year, and then we permanently cut the gas tax for Manitobans.

So why didn't he do that when he was around the Cabinet table? He's sitting on a side of the House that

has never cared about affordability and they still don't to this day.

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

**Mr. Khan:** Gas prices are at a historical high under this NDP government. An increase in gas prices is no real difference than an increase of prices at the grocery store.

You don't need a study to know that grocery prices has gone up. You don't need a study to know that gas prices have gone up. You don't need a study to know that the average family is being pinched when they go buy groceries or fill up their car for gas. And you sure don't need a study to know that saving Manitobans 1 and a half cents, as this NDP government is doing on a litre of gas, is not making a difference. Gas prices are higher now than they've been in years. Life is more unaffordable under this NDP government than ever before.

Why does this Premier (Mr. Kinew) want to force Manitoba families to wait when he can act today to make life more affordable for Manitobans?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our Premier has been acting on behalf of Manitobans in making their lives more affordable from day one—from day one of being in government. Froze the gas tax, introduced a permanent cut, making life more affordable by making sure that Manitobans get rebates back on their property taxes—going up to \$1,700—thanks to the leadership of the best Finance Minister in all of Canada.

And, Honourable Speaker, this is after years of inaction by the previous PC government during a time where the Leader of the Opposition was around the Cabinet table. And not only did he do nothing to make life more affordable, he did everything he could to make life more expensive for Manitobans.

Shame on him. We'll take no lessons from the leader or anybody on that side of the House.

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

### **Mining Sector Investment Importance for Economic Growth**

**Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The greatest indicator of economic performance of a government is GDP growth, and this government—this NDP government—is failing miserably when it comes to economic growth.

When it comes to trusting industry, they are also failing on that. Recently, a survey of mining companies interested in doing business in Manitoba showed this clear as day, and I'll quote from them: Meanwhile, Manitoba is the worst performer with all of the respondents for the province claiming the time to permit approval had lengthened somewhat or considerably. End quote.

The only mining win this NDP government can point to is the ribbon cutting of a gold mine that was started under the previous PC government.

Will the minister of business, trade and job creation stand up, address these real concerns by industry experts instead of congratulating himself or taking credit for work that he did not do?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition would know a whole lot about work he didn't do. He didn't do anything when he was in the position to do so under the former failed PC administration.

We're talking about two terms—two terms—eight years almost of a PC government that did nothing to make life more affordable, to strengthen our economy.

And on this side of the House, from day one, we've been taking action on both. Just recently, just last week, our minister responsible announced that we're investing an additional 2 and a half million dollars into the Manitoba Mineral Development Fund. That's real action for Manitobans.

So we're going to keep focusing on Manitobans and delivering real results on affordability and a stronger economy for generations of Manitobans to come.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

In the Leader of the Official Opposition's last question, he was quoting from a document. Was it a public or private document?

**Mr. Khan:** Public document, Honourable Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Mr. Khan:** Minister of mining won't even stand up and answer a question when it comes specifically to mining. It's not just about industry, Honourable Speaker; it's about the entire economic future of this province.

Honourable Speaker, 40 per cent of those surveyed companies said this NDP government lacks transparency; lack of transparency was a deal breaker for them, that they would rather not do business in

Manitoba than have to deal with this NDP government. The other 60 per cent said it was a negative factor.

So the question for the minister, if he will stand up and answer a question on mining, is pretty straightforward: If not a single person surveyed thinks that this NDP government encourages exploration investment, does this minister believe that the industry is lying, or is he prepared to admit that he's failing miserably at his job and destroying Manitoba's economy?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, our minister is doing a phenomenal job on this file—an outstanding job on this file. And the action that he's taking is getting real results.

So the fund that has been announced as of last week, 2 and a half million dollars, has supported more than 130 projects across the province and has solely been the creator of over 1,300 jobs—that fund alone, that, in addition to our government leading the way for job creation in this province.

Manitoba was a follower and falling behind under the failed PCs. We are leading Canada in job creation. We are leading the way and setting the example. We've done that in just over two and a half years. Can you imagine 20 more years of an NDP government?

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

**Mr. Khan:** This is how out of touch this minister of mining is. Honourable Speaker, 2 and a half million dollars won't even buy one drilling string in Manitoba; 2 and a half million dollars won't do anything to move the needle.

This government must understand that they're leading the nation in a survey but in the wrong direction. Business industry leaders are packing up and leaving. But who can blame them when the Premier (Mr. Kinew) of Manitoba comes out and says he supports his federal NDP boss, Avi Lewis, and his NDP policies to stop all fossil fuel and mineral exploration?

So the question is simple to the minister or anyone on that side of the House: Will they stand up and go against the Premier and their federal NDP boss by saying they support fossil fuel and mineral exploration, or will they stand by their federal NDP leader and Premier and support these radical NDP policies that are destroying Manitoba and Canada's economy?

**MLA Asagwara:** Honourable Speaker, the only MLAs that are speaking up against their leader are on that side of the House, and on that side of the House they just lost a caucus member who voted in favour of our budget. That's how good our budget is. Our budget is investing in strengthening our economy, creating record numbers of jobs for Manitobans and making sure the future of mining in this province is as strong and as bright as it can possibly be.

Honourable Speaker, on that side of the House things are dark; they are dim; they are dismal. He should focus on fixing his own house and let us focus on helping Manitobans.

### **Affordability Pressures in Manitoba Concern for Labour Market Numbers**

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Honourable Speaker, yesterday I think the minister must have been looking at the graph upside down when he stood up and claimed that things are getting better in the Manitoba jobs market. Because when you actually look at the trend since 2023 when that government took office, what you see is not growth. We see stagnation and decline in the very age groups that drive our economy. Young Manitobans are falling behind and those aged 25 to 54 are not seeing meaningful job growth.

\* (14:10)

Why is this minister trying to spin a weakening labour market as a success?

**Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation):** Honourable Speaker, we're building a strong economy for all Manitobans, unlike members opposite, and we know that by the record that has shown us create over—almost 11,000 new jobs right here in Manitoba this past month.

But we know retaining people is very important—young people—that skill retention is 'insential' for our future of our economy. That's why it's so concerning to see a track record where 10,000 young Manitobans were fleeing under the former failed government.

Instead, we're reversing that trend by investing in them. That's why we spent \$7 million of net-new dollars to support our apprenticeship program right here, so more young people have opportunities to train here, gain their skills and become the workforce to power economic development and the—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

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

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, more hot air from that side of the Chamber. Prior to 2023, an incline; past 2023, we see a decline.

And another concerning statistic, and what the minister doesn't say, is that more Manitobans are now working multiple jobs. One third of those March job increases are people taking a second job. That's not because life's getting better; it's because life is getting more expensive. People are taking a second and even third job just to keep up with the cost of living.

Why is this minister celebrating numbers that show Manitobans are struggling just to get by?

**Mr. Moses:** Well, I want Manitobans to know our record: that we're No. 1 in the country for job growth. That's our record: 11,000 new jobs, nearly 40,000 created over the last two and a half years. That's real job growth. That's a great record, unlike what members opposite did, where their track record is thousands, tens of thousands, of Manitobans fleeing the province because they didn't want to work in a terrible environment created by the former failed PC government.

Instead, we're 'ingreasing' our investment in apprenticeships over \$7 million to train more apprentices here in Manitoba. In fact, we have a track record of training 25 per cent more apprentices in our government than in their failed term in office.

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

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

**Mr. Narth:** Honourable Speaker, the stats just don't support that. And while young people are falling behind, we're seeing more seniors going back to work—even more concerning—not because they want to but because they can't afford not to.

The average weekly earnings have only increased by 2.1 per cent year over year, and that's trailing the entire rest of the country, while food inflation, I must say, is at a 5.9 per cent increase and leading the entire nation. So I'll say it plainly for the minister: that the minister is celebrating a report that shows Manitobans are working more and getting ahead less.

Why won't this minister admit that this is an affordability crisis, not an economic success story?

**Mr. Moses:** Well, we've created 11,000 new jobs here in Manitoba, over 30,000 as part of our office.

We're developing our critical minerals as well: a billion-dollar gold mine; \$200 million invested into the Thompson mine; \$2 million into a Minago mine; 2.5 to unearth the next layer of mining projects right here in Manitoba, all to support our economic success that we know is powered by the Port of Churchill.

We're excited for the development of the Port of Churchill, something members opposite ignored. We know it's going to be part of our economic success well into the future right here in Manitoba.

### **Income Tax Relief for Manitobans Threshold Increases and Indexation**

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** A 2026 intercity tax comparison shows that a Manitoba family earning \$75,000 is paying near double in taxes compared to what families pay in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and almost triple what families are paying in Alberta. While other provinces have either maintained indexation or increased the basic personal amount, this NDP government has chosen to do neither. On top of that, they have increased education property taxes by 20 per cent since just last year.

Why is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) making Manitoba one of the highest taxed provinces west of the Maritimes?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Honourable Speaker, we cut personal income taxes for Manitobans, one of the first things we did.

We increased the basic personal exemption. We changed the brackets so more of your income is taxed at a lower rate. And, of course, with our most recent budget, we raised our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,700, lowering your education property tax bill even further.

And, in addition to that, Honourable Speaker, of course, we're making child care free for the lowest income families. We took all PST off all food in the grocery store.

This team's going to keep working hard every day to make life more affordable. They made it harder for seven years.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Stop the clock.

### **Introduction of Guests**

**The Speaker:** There's some guests in the gallery that have to leave before we're finished here.

So we have seated in the public gallery a group from Harvest Christian Fellowship under the direction

of Pastor Mike Giesbrecht. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter).

We welcome you all here today.

\* \* \*

**Mrs. Stone:** The numbers tell a very different speaker, Honourable Speaker. A family earning \$75,000 in Winnipeg faces higher provincial income taxes than Regina, Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

So let's break this down for the minister: in Vancouver, that family's paying \$1,500 in provincial income taxes; in Toronto, less than \$1,000; in Calgary, \$1,700. But what are families in Winnipeg paying? Over \$3,500 in provincial income taxes.

Why is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) choosing to cancel indexation, not raise the basic personal amount, when Winnipeg and Manitoba families are at a disadvantage compared to any other province west of the Maritimes?

**MLA Sala:** Honourable Speaker, instead of looking around Canada, why don't we look at Manitoba? In fact, why don't we look at the member's own seat, where nine out of 10 of residents in her community are better off because of our tax policy? That's the reality she ignores every time she comes in here today, along with all of her colleagues.

People from across the province are better off as a result of our Education Property Tax Credit. But, again, we're not stopping there. We took, of course, PST off all food in grocery stores. We're making child care free for the lowest income families and, of course, free transit for kids and youth in the province.

Targeted investments, making life more affordable, not absolutely out-of-control spending proposals that are going to send the Province into the fiscal ditch. No seriousness on that side—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mrs. Stone:** Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Yukon and Northwest Territories have all maintained indexation of income taxes. On top of that, many of those provinces are actually increasing the basic personal tax exemption for their people.

But what has this NDP done? They cancelled indexation and they haven't raised the basic personal amount. We are being shown by these statistics that Manitoba and Winnipeg families are some of the highest taxed families in income taxes west of the Maritimes.

So as a result of this NDP's decision by cancelling indexation, how many more Manitobans are being pushed into a higher tax bracket under this NDP? What is the number?

**MLA Sala:** Again, Honourable Speaker, for years, life continued to get more expensive under the members opposite. Whether it was on hydro rates, new taxes on renters, new costs on farmers, they made life more expensive.

For seven and a half years, all of you, you're responsible for driving costs up. On this side of the House, what do we do from the first moment?

And again, I want to join with the Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) in congratulating—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Sala:** —the Prime Minister for his work in eliminating the gas tax off Canadians. We know that that's obviously, I think, a call-out to the good work that our team did when we took the gas tax off for an entire year. We know how important that is. That's why we brought in a permanent 10 per cent cut that continues to bring savings to Manitobans during a challenging time.

We're doing the work of reducing costs, something they didn't do for—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

And I would remind all honourable members to direct their comments through the Chair at all times.

\* (14:20)

### **MITT Closure and Loss of Programs Impact on Staff and Students**

**Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler):** Honourable Speaker, Manitobans rely on practical, hands-on training, and M-I-T has been an essential—has been essential in providing those opportunities. This government is closing MITT and is cancelling over half its programs, leaving 4,000 students without a clear path.

What happens to those students, and why is this government taking the—away opportunities from families and students that need them most?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I'm pleased to stand up to answer a question finally about advanced education. I want to begin by thanking the leadership and the staff at both MITT and Red River College Polytechnic for their phenomenal leadership throughout this process. They have been fantastic partners and they have worked to

make sure that the south-end campus that was formerly MITT will be taken on by Red River College Polytechnic, and I look forward to answering more in my next response.

#### **Concern for Labour Market Shortages**

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, Manitoba is already facing critical labour shortages in many sectors, including health care and manufacturing.

Before deciding which programs to eliminate, did this government consult directly with employers who rely on these skilled trades, and if so, why are we still seeing training capacity reduced?

**MLA Cable:** Honourable Speaker, I want to set the record straight here. We are not losing capacity at all. In fact, we're enhancing the opportunities for young people and for folks that are re-skilling to be able to find a clear pathway through to training.

Again, I want to thank the folks at Red River and MITT. This transition, we all know, was a result of the federal government's cuts to international students. However, the end result is going to be great for Manitoba, and I look forward to the member getting on board.

**The Speaker:** The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary question.

#### **Impact on Staff and Students**

**Mrs. Hiebert:** Honourable Speaker, the minister has known for over two and a half years that these changes were coming. Yet, instead of strengthening MITT, the government has chosen to close a 40-year-old institution.

What have employees been told about the future of their jobs? What message does this minister have to say to the over 250 employees that are being laid off?

**MLA Cable:** Honourable Speaker, it's frankly very irresponsible for the member to put information like that on the record. It is—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Cable:**—not factual, and it is causing unnecessary unrest.

Honourable Speaker, we made a 'kitment' to Manitobans to balance a budget, to enhance services and to ensure that every Manitoban gets an opportunity. We're doing that. We are being financially responsible, and we're ensuring that the next generation of workers is taken care of.

Please, I implore you to stop putting false information on the record in this House.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

I would ask the honourable minister to please withdraw the last part of that.

**MLA Cable:** Withdrawn.

#### **Increase in Retail Theft in Brandon Request for Public Safety Measures**

**Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West):** After the Brandon Police Service reported a 40 per cent increase in retail theft this past year, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce has made it clear: Enough is enough.

As Chamber President Jennifer Ludwig said in a recent public release, retail theft is not just a business issue, it's a community issue. The chamber and BPS have called for a dedicated public safety unit. Unfortunately, this budget is Brandon-blind and doesn't provide for such measures.

When is this minister planning on fixing his errors and making public safety a Brandon priority?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Brandon-blind, Honourable Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. This year's budget, as well as Budget 2025 and Budget 2024, were chock full investments for Brandon, including in the realm of public safety.

Honourable Speaker, the truth is, when it comes to retail theft in Brandon, we have invested an additional \$13.7 million across Manitoba to police; \$500,000 in the member for Portage la Prairie's (MLA Bereza) riding; \$800,000 in the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) riding; and more than \$2 million in the city of Brandon.

And, Honourable Speaker, I remind the Chamber that members opposite voted against each one of those records. That is their record. On this side of the Chamber, we're doing things differently. We're working with Brandon—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** It's become quite comical, Honourable Speaker. It's a tale of two cities: millions and millions for Winnipeg and pittance for Brandon. This is the

NDP's way, pitting communities against each other, fighting over incredibly limited funding.

When the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) and the deputy minister's constituents are paying the price for crime, this government funds millions of dollars for pilot projects. But when it's happening in Brandon on count—and other countless communities, locals are on their own. Brandon is our province's second largest city.

So why, under this minister, is it paying second fiddle?

**MLA Schmidt:** I'd like to begin my answer by apologizing to this Chamber for repeating what was ableist language, and I regret using that language in this Chamber today, Honourable Speaker.

In 2025, the Brandon Police have reported a 24 per cent reduction in property-related offences thanks to the work of our incredible Minister of Justice. The 2025 Brandon Police report shows over 200 fewer calls for theft under \$5,000, Honourable Speaker, and a 40 per cent reduction in theft over \$5,000.

As I said earlier, we will take no lessons from the member opposite. We're doing things differently. We're working with the Brandon Police Service, the Winnipeg Police Service and police services across this great province to make sure that we are addressing public safety, something that members opposite—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

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

**Mr. Balcaen:** We're talking about a 40 per cent increase in retail theft here under this government's watch. And, as usual, this government and its—hard-working, everyday Manitobans are left holding the bag.

Small businesses are struggling and have to pass along some of the costs that they are incurring and families can't afford that during an affordability crisis.

Everyone except this minister and the criminals seem to be paying for the rising crime rates. Our chamber of commerce has, and I quote: taken a leadership role on this file because this minister has abandoned all responsibility.

Why is the minister forcing the chamber to do his job for him?

**MLA Schmidt:** It's not surprising that the member opposite gets up and puts this sort of information on

the record. The member opposite and his whole caucus, they have no idea what it is to work with other organizations like the Brandon Police Service, like the City of Brandon.

On this side of the House—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**MLA Schmidt:** It's true, Honourable Speaker. They have absolutely no idea—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Schmidt:** —how to work with the Brandon Police Service.

And our investments, Honourable Speaker, are paying off. The Brandon Police Service reported a decrease in crime in downtown Brandon, a 24 per cent reduction in properly—property-related crime, and that's thanks to our retail theft initiative under the leadership of the best Minister of Justice in Canada, the Attorney General (Mr. Wiebe), and the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Kinew).

You don't have to take our word for it, Honourable Speaker. This—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

### **National Silver Alert System Provincial Call to Establish**

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** Honourable Speaker, under the previous government, seniors and their families were left to deal with gaps in care and a lack of co-ordination with vulnerable loved ones when they went missing.

Unfortunately, the failed PC government thinks this is a laughing matter, and that's very disappointing, Honourable Speaker. It's simply not good enough. And that's why today I brought forward a resolution calling for a national silver alert system.

Can the best Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care in Canada please tell Manitobans more about how our government is taking action to better protect seniors in Manitoba?

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care):** I thank my good friend for that wonderful and important question.

Honourable Speaker, families deserve better than the patchwork system they were left with by the failed PC government. That's why today's resolution from

the member for—from Kildonan-River East is so important to Manitobans and Canadians.

\* (14:30)

When a senior goes missing, every minute, every second matters. And for too long, supports just weren't in place. We're fixing that by pushing for a national silver alert system, investing in dementia care and strengthening community supports by establishing an independent seniors advocate. We're focusing on protecting vulnerable Manitobans and making sure that families are not left on their own.

Our government has your back and the backs of the families who are navigating dementia and Alzheimer's care in this province—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

#### **Teacher Professional Conduct Commissioner Nature and Characterization of Departure**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Well, well, Honourable Speaker. Yesterday, I asked some questions in regards to: did the commissioner for the teacher registry get fired or did she resign?

Well, the truth came out today, and the former commissioner for the teacher registry said, and I quote: On April 8, I offered my resignation from the position, which was accepted by the Department of Education.

Will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning stand up and apologize today for misleading Manitobans—students, parents and guardians?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I would start by saying it's quite disappointing on a subject matter as serious as the safety and security of students in Manitoba, that we have the member opposite stand up and act so deeply unseriously. It's—thank goodness that Manitobans have selected a new government. The PCs are so deeply unserious.

I could ask the member opposite why he failed—why he failed miserably to implement a registry. There was no teacher registry under the previous government. It is our government that took the leadership and the action to bring in a registry to protect students and to create greater transparency and accountability for all Manitobans.

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** We're the ones who brought in the registry, Honourable Speaker.

So Mrs. Taillefer continues to say in her letter, and I quote: Subsequently, on April 10, my voluntary resignation was recharacterized as a termination with cause, the implication being that I had conducted myself in a manner justifying dismissal from employment. This implication is blatantly false and has caused substantial damage to my reputation. End quote.

I'm being serious, Honourable Speaker.

Will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning please stand in the House today and apologize, not only on behalf of herself, but also the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Kinew) for misleading Manitobans: parents, guardians and students, Honourable Speaker.

**MLA Schmidt:** Again, speaking directly to Manitobans: There is nothing more important for our government, for myself as minister, than the safety and security of every single student in the classroom here in Manitoba. That is exactly why it is our government that took the leadership to act and bring in the teacher registry. That is exactly why it is our government that took the leadership and took an action when we decided that we had to go in another route.

Our focus is on protecting Manitoba students. We are looking forward, Honourable Speaker. And you know what else keeps students safe here in Manitoba? More than 1,600 new educators that are working in our system so that students have the trusted, reliable educators that they can rely on.

We're going to keep continuing to make those investments—

**The Speaker:** Member's time is expired.

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

**Mr. Ewasko:** So, Honourable Speaker, it's obvious that no one, no Manitoban, can believe this Education Minister or the Premier of Manitoba. Matter of fact, the former commissioner for the treaty—or, for the teacher registry has recently signed another contract to help in the transition with the new commissioner from April 13 to July 13 of 2026.

So, if the Premier is correct and he actually fired the commissioner, why in the world would you then sign another contract with the same said person?

I think the Education Minister needs to come clean with Manitobans, apologize to Manitobans today, Honourable Speaker.

**Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier):** Honourable Speaker, our Minister of Education has the highest level of integrity. She stands with Manitobans each and every day, Manitoba students and families. This is the leadership on the Education file that did not exist for seven and a half years.

You want to see a failure on education? Take a look at the member for Lac du Bonnet, Honourable Speaker. An absolutely unserious—an embarrassment in terms of doing any work in this space. Our Minister of Education is prioritizing the safety of kids and families in this province. Our government stands with her every step of the way as she does the work they didn't bother to do for seven and a half years.

#### **Affordability Pressures in Manitoba Increase in Food Bank Usage**

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** It is really unfortunate that this NDP government is ignoring the reality of families. Since they took office, more and more families have had to rely on food banks to keep food on their table. While the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is studying grocery prices, we have families that used to get by who are now studying flyers to find savings to stretch their grocery budget.

If this government has done anything for affordability, why are more families than ever reliant on charity?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** I'm very pleased to put on the record some of our amazing investments for this budget: \$28.6 million more for Manitobans supported by EIA and MSPD so that Manitobans don't have to choose between rent and groceries.

As folks know, we've removed the PST from all food and grocery stores; \$16.9 million more for non-EIA rent assist, keeping the indexation at 80 per cent of the medium market rate.

We are making significant investments in families and in Manitobans to make sure that they know they have—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Agassiz, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Byram:** Food bank usage reports directly contradict everything this government says. The lived

experience of Manitoba families directly contradicts this government's talking points.

While the Premier bickers whether a bag of chips should be taxed at the gas station but not the grocery store, parents are choosing to go without to give their kids a stable base.

How can the minister be proud of that?

**The Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Families. *[interjection]*

Order.

**MLA Fontaine:** Honourable Speaker, \$18.6 million more for Community Living disABILITY Services, which also includes expanded supports for Manitobans impacted by FASD.

We are now going into our third year of our Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag strategy. We're investing \$16 million in the lives of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited.

And I'm very, very pleased to announce that just a little while ago, I've announced that we have also put in an additional \$29 million into Child and Family Services to support families where they're at and ensure that they know once again they have a government and a team here that supports them—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

And the time for oral questions has also expired.

Petitions? No petitions. Grievances?

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

*(Continued)*

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

#### **House Business**

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, pursuant to Rule 34(7), I am announcing the private members' resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott). The title of the resolution is National Strategy for Silver Alerts.

\* \* \*

**MLA Fontaine:** And also, Honourable Speaker, can you please call for the start of second reading of Bill 51, the public sector artificial intelligence and cybersecurity governments act; followed by Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; followed by

Bill 39, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act; followed by Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act; followed by Bill 14, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act.

\* (14:40)

### House Business

**The Speaker:** So it has been announced that the private member's resolution, pursuant to rule 34(7), the private member's resolution—be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott). The title of the resolution is National Strategy for Silver Alerts.

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**The Speaker:** So, then, for House business, it's been announced that we will now proceed to second reading of Bill 51, followed by second reading of Bill 20, Bill 39, Bill 46 and Bill 14.

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill 51—The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act

**The Speaker:** So second reading of Bill 51, The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act.

**Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (MLA Moyes), that Bill 51, The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act, now be read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

**MLA Moroz:** Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to rise to provide some comments on Bill 51, The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Governance Act. I want to begin my commentary about the importance of this bill by first putting the moment we are being called to into perspective for this Chamber.

In 1964, Kelvin High School and the University of Manitoba graduate, Marshall McLuhan, wrote in his landmark work, *Understanding Media*—he wrote, and I quote: During the mechanical ages, we extended our bodies into space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our

central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man, the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society. Unquote.

It's incredible that 1964, McLuhan understood the path that technology was travelling and the role it would play in shaping the world we live in today. He also understood, far ahead of his time, the role that governments must play to protect citizens from the unintended consequences of such technology. Honourable Speaker, that is the moment that Manitoba must meet, not years from now, not months from now, but today. Manitobans expect their provincial government to step up, to work with them to enhance the protections around AI governance and its usage, so that they might take full advantage of the opportunities it presents while protecting them from the harms it might inflict if left unchecked.

Bill 51 is the first step in doing exactly that. The bill will establish a modern framework to guide the responsible use of artificial intelligence and to strengthen cybersecurity across Manitoba's public sector. It provides government with the regulation-making tools and authorities necessary to respond rapidly to evolving digital risks, while at the same time supporting innovation in service delivery to improve the citizen experience with government.

Since the creation of the Ministry of Innovation and New Technology, we've been engaged in countless conversations with Manitobans, from Taché to Teulon, from Flin Flon to Fairford, from Carman to Churchill, and the potential impacts of AI on society have been a concern in many of those conversations.

People not only want to know that their data is secure; they want to know that we're thinking about protecting their privacy, that we're doing everything possible to protect their children and that we're looking at the impact that AI might have on the future of work. Bill 51 begins that work across the broad public sector. Our government believes that in matters like this, it's government itself that must step up and set an example for others to follow.

Through Bill 51, we'll be working closely with municipalities, with school boards, with health authorities, and with post-secondary institutions so that we can make Manitoba a leader in responsible AI use.

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated in our daily lives, it presents significant opportunities to improve efficiency and outcomes for Manitobans. But at the same time, it introduces new challenges related to data protection, cybersecurity and public trust.

Bill 51 recognizes that existing legislation such as The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and The Personal Health Information Act must continue to play key roles in protecting the personal information of Manitobans. But it also makes it clear that additional guardrails are needed to address the new and rapidly evolving digital landscape.

And in that evolving landscape, a nimbleness will be the key to protecting Manitobans. Rather than setting rigid legislation markers today, markers that, given the pace of change, are likely to be in the wrong spot a very short time from now, this legislation is enabling in nature. It establishes a high-level framework that allows government to develop regulations, set technical standards, accountability measures and cybersecurity best practices as the technologies and risks evolve in real time. And evolve they will. This flexibility ensures that Manitoba can respond quickly and effectively while maintaining both oversight and accountability.

Many of you will know that I was a classroom teacher prior to being called to a more public life. And during that time, I saw first-hand the results of the uncontrolled entry of new technology into the classroom. I saw the rise of social media, smartphones, of screens on every desk. And I saw the impact this technology had on our classrooms and in our society. And while much of it has been beneficial, there have also been profoundly troubling consequences: mental health issues amongst young people, online bullying, a disconnectedness in the face of a limitless community and a rapidly growing world of anonymous hate and anger—all unintended and all with lasting and dangerous legacies.

That experience has left me with the deeply held belief that we must ensure that society has the tools it needs to rapidly address the unforeseen impacts of technology as they unfold, because cleaning up the mess afterwards is always much more difficult.

Regulations developed under this framework will help ensure AI tools are used responsibly, with appropriate human oversight, along with risk and bias assessments for high-impact system uses and a clear public disclosure of where AI has been used. And in some circumstances, the bill will also allow for limits

or prohibitions on the use of certain AI applications where the risks outweigh the benefits.

And, importantly, this legislation strengthens Manitoba's cybersecurity resilience. It supports consistent cybersecurity programs, incident reporting and response measures across all departments, Crown corporations and other public sector organizations. Over time, this will improve co-ordination, reduce the severity of cyber incidents and better protect the personal and health data of Manitobans.

\* (14:50)

Data is power in 2026. It's the greatest currency we have as individuals, and it's why big tech companies spend so much effort attempting to collect it and it's why this is an essential issue today.

As we move towards the digitization of government services, we need to build trust across our province. Manitobans expect better, smarter, more efficient government, but that cannot come at the cost of leaving Manitobans behind. By aligning Manitoba with approaches taken in other jurisdictions, this bill positions our province to proactively manage digital risks while maintaining public confidence.

This legislation threads the needle between enabling innovation and safeguarding public trust, and I'm pleased to move it forward for the benefit of all Manitobans. As always, I'm looking forward to a vigorous debate on this issue, and I've said before my office is always open. I want to encourage all members of this House, indeed all Manitobans, to reach out and work with us as we develop the regulations. We want to hear your ideas. By working together, we can meet this moment.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I'm happy to take questions from members on this important bill.

### Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward, Bill 51, on this important issue, largely uncharted territory regarding AI.

But I'd like to ask the minister: The definition of AI in this bill is broad. What types of everyday software does the government expect will be captured?

**Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology):** I want to thank the member opposite for the question. We have intentionally had laid in a very broad definition of AI, simply because the technology is moving so quickly, so rapidly, it's important that, as we set down the regulatory enabling legislation, that we keep it broad to make sure that we're able to capture the full width and breadth of what's coming.

We want very much to work diligently with individuals, with public secondary institutions, with the broader community to make sure we get this right.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Thank you for bringing this bill forward.

And I'd like to ask the minister: Has the government assessed the risk that this definition could unintentionally include low risk or routine administrative tools?

**MLA Moroz:** Again, I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question.

What we're doing, again, in setting up a nimble piece of legislation by creating an opportunity for us to quickly move in response to issues that we see, that we have raised for us by the public, is that we're able to move. We're able to lay down some guardrails today and give ourselves the flexibility to move them, should we need to.

Should we put them down at the wrong spot in error where we're limiting some opportunities, we can move them then. Or, if in fact, we miss something that's quite dangerous, we're able to move them in that case as well.

**Mr. Guenter:** I was remiss in doing so in my first question, but I also want to thank the minister for the bill briefing that we had in his office. I always appreciate the opportunity to have a bill briefing and to talk to the minister, as well as deputy minister and department officials involved in drafting the legislation.

I have a question: I'm wondering what consultation has been done with municipalities, school divisions and universities about the potential administrative or financial burden of this bill.

**MLA Moroz:** Again, I want to thank the member from Borderland for that question, and as well, I want to extend the invitation. Any time that the member from Borderland wants to meet and talk about this issue or other issues in the portfolio, my door is always open for him to do that.

There have been a lot of informal conversations with a host of Manitoba stakeholders on this issue. The more formal process of public consultation is about to get under way. We're putting that pathway forward here in the next few days. We've got a lot—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** I'd like to ask the minister what consequences will there actually be if an institution or municipality fails to follow the rules set out under this framework?

**MLA Moroz:** I want to thank the member for the question.

I don't want to prejudge what comes out of the regulations. We're going to be working very closely with municipalities, with Crown corporations, with the public sector. We want to get the feedback from the public itself to make sure that the guide—guardrails we lay down are in the right places and that the consequences are at a level that the public and Crown corporations are able to appreciate. So I don't want to prejudge any of that work at this point before the consultations have occurred.

**Mr. Guenter:** I'd like to ask the minister whether significant cybersecurity breaches will be disclosed to the public or only reported internally to the government.

**MLA Moroz:** Again, getting into the fine details of what will be in the regulatory package after the consultations occur, it's a bit challenging for us at this point, obviously. But it certainly would be the intention that the document allows us the opportunity to be as transparent as the public demands.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** I'd also like to ask a follow-up on this. Will all ministerial directives be made public, and will they include justification?

**MLA Moroz:** It's a great question and I think it's an important one, given that this is enabling legislation as opposed to a firm line-by-line legislation as we often have in front of us. The intention is always, from my perspective, from the perspective of our government, to be transparent in the way that we function, transparent in the way that we ask that work be done on our behalf.

So that would be my expectation, that in fact it would be a transparent process.

**Mr. Guenter:** I wonder if the minister could speak to what timelines will apply for reporting cybersecurity incidents and whether he would consider including them in legislation.

**MLA Moroz:** I think it's an excellent question. We're anxious to make sure that the data of Manitobans, the data that we collect as a government, is protected thoroughly in Manitoba. And it is our expectation that when data breaches occur, that those that are impacted directly are told immediately about that.

But, again, specific timelines, what length of time is most appropriate in all cases is a little hard to determine in advance of the public consultation.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** One other question here I'd like to ask the minister. Why is there no independent oversight body identified in this legislation, which is a really important component of the early going of an undertaking something of this magnitude?

**MLA Moroz:** Again, an excellent question. This is a live conversation. This is enabling legislation that we're dealing with today that sets the framework that allows us to work together to come up with the best possible system for Manitoba.

All of those conversations, all of those options certainly are on the table. And I'm very much looking forward to the feedback I get from stakeholders across the province over the coming weeks.

**Mr. Guenter:** I wonder if the minister could speak to why the—given how quickly AI technology evolves, why the bill does not include a mandatory review of the act itself rather than just the regulations.

\* (15:00)

**MLA Moroz:** Again, there's certainly opportunities within the context of the bill to allow a review on a regular basis. I believe we had chatted previously, member, regarding a specific timeframe.

Again, this is a live conversation. Public consultation is going to inform what we do, the specifics of it. We want to make sure we're laying the guardrails down in the appropriate place. My temptation as minister might be to be much more hard line on these things than the public has the tolerance for. I need to know what their perspective is so we make sure we get it right.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Also, does the government plan to support smaller municipalities that may lack the

capacity to comply with complex AI and cybersecurity requirements?

**MLA Moroz:** I appreciate that question and it's a valid one. There are different capacities in municipalities and the public sector across the province. My department has responsibility for both cybersecurity and AI and we're looking at ways that we can be supportive in a broad array of ways.

And as I say, this is a live conversation. The public consultations we'll have over the next number of weeks will inform what else we might need to do in relation to this.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Also, a question here: Will significant cybersecurity breaches be discussed to the public, as the minister mentions about the openness and being able to work together and be—keep the public informed, or only will reported internally to—within government?

**MLA Moroz:** Again, the key to all of this is to ensure that the Manitobans' data is fully protected and that the work that we do in relation to that is transparent. Again, the specific timeframes around how we might do that, the pace at which that might be done, I don't want to prejudge prior to the public consultations.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

### Debate

**The Speaker:** The floor is then open for debate.

**Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland):** I appreciate the opportunity to rise this afternoon in debate on Bill 51. Again, I want to thank the Minister for Innovation and New Technology for bringing this legislation forward.

It's an important subject, artificial intelligence. It's something that I really hadn't heard about up until, you know, a few years ago and it's one of those things that I think the public is still trying to wrap their minds around and understand.

And so it's, you know, just thinking about this subject, and I recall Donald Rumsfeld in a press conference talking about there are known knowns, there are known unknowns and then there are unknown unknowns.

So that is to say that there are things we know we know, and there's things that we know we don't know, and then there's things we don't know that we don't know. And I think AI falls into that category, that it's kind of an unquantified, in some respects, territory.

And so the impacts that it has on our democracy and on institutions and the way we do life and so many elements of our daily life as we interact with various institutions of government, whether they're schools or universities or hospitals, you know, health-care system, insurance companies—I mean, I'm thinking of just a wide range, almost every institution, probably every one, that is impacted by AI, in which—and also these are areas where Manitobans divulge their personal data, their personal information, sensitive information, in order to do business. And so it is very important that we talk about the matter of cybersecurity and that we talk about the rapidly changing and developing world of AI.

So, again, my thanks to the minister on this bill. I would just add as well—and I understand the need to pass this legislation and develop the regulations—but, you know, I am somewhat troubled by a pattern by this NDP government where we seem to be passing bills that are quite vague and have very little detail but give considerable authority to the government in developing regulations.

*Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

And so my concern as a legislator is just that there's 57 of us in this esteemed body that were sent here by roughly 25,000 constituents each. And we have a job to do, and that is to represent our constituents and to vote yes or no on legislation and to have that debate.

And, you know, when we're not able to do that because the real teeth, the real—the meat of the bill, for lack of a better phrase, when that is developed by folks that we don't know their names and we're not able to interact with them and simply because that legislation, those regulations, don't come to the floor of this Chamber for further input by us legislators, then that does raise some concerns.

But, nevertheless, I think, you know, nominally, we support Bill 51. We have some questions, but it is an important area, obviously, of discussion. This bill establishes a regulatory framework to guide how public sector entities such as municipalities, education institutions and health authorities manage artificial intelligence and cybersecurity risks. The act enables the creation of regulations requiring these entities to adopt standardized practices for the responsible use of AI systems and the protection of digital infrastructure. Areas that may be regulated include a mandatory disclosure of AI systems being used, the development of internal accountability and oversight frameworks

and formal reporting processes for cybersecurity incidents—all great things—we can entirely get behind that as well.

And I would just say, I had a recent conversation with a constituent who called me up and said, you know, social media—he was so frustrated that you see all this stuff on social media, he was telling me, that is generated by AI and it's getting to be really sophisticated, really developed. And it's hard to identify what is artificial intelligence, what's actually true and what isn't. And there's no—there's no disclaimer or there's no—I guess the social media companies haven't gotten onto this this. I'm not much of a social media user myself. I only have a Facebook account with which I try to communicate with constituents.

So I—you know, it is surprising to me that that hasn't happened. We have rules around labels for the food that Canadians—that we buy. We want to know what's in our food. I think that's reasonable, and that's all well.

But when it comes to the information we digest, I also think that that's very important and that if something is generated by AI, well, then, you know, we should know about that beforehand, and there should be a disclaimer. So I think that that's something, and I understand, you know, perhaps this is something that requires a national effort. But I think it's probably a conversation that, if the minister hasn't had, I would encourage him to take up with his colleagues across the across the country.

So, you know, again, as Progressive Conservatives, we support transparency in how AI and cybersecurity systems are being used. And, you know, the public institutions such as municipalities, educational institutions and a wide array of institutions, as I talked about earlier, are already using these systems in many cases. And they should be disclosing their use of these systems and there should be rules around how they are used.

So with those few words, again, I'm just happy to put a few comments on the record. But I just want to say that we nominally support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

No more speakers, is the House ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 51, The Public Sector Artificial Intelligence and Cyber-security Governance Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

#### **Bill 20—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act**

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Now we would move to Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

\* (15:10)

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn), that Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**MLA Sala:** I'm very pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 20 and about Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro is our province's Crown jewel. Provides clean, reliable, affordable power to Manitobans and underpins our economic development.

As the world continues to electrify and demand for baseload power increases, Manitoba Hydro gives our province a real and lasting clean energy advantage.

But, honourable Speaker, that advantage depends on careful stewardship. It depends on planning ahead, managing demand responsibly and making sure that our system works first and foremost in the interests of Manitobans. And Bill 20 is about doing exactly that.

Honourable Speaker, crypto mining operations consume large amounts of electricity, often continuously and at times that hit peak demand. They draw invaluable megawatts that could otherwise support homes, hospitals, small businesses and industries that provide lasting value to our economy.

Bill 20 would allow Manitoba Hydro, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council, to establish a mandatory, curtailable power supply program for existing cryptocurrency mining operations. In simple terms, this legislation gives Hydro the authority to temporarily reduce power supply to those operations during periods of peak demand, system constraints or emergency conditions.

Last year, our government acted by putting in place a permanent ban on new impending cryptocurrency mining operations in Manitoba. Bill 20 builds on that action. It focuses on managing the reality of existing operations in a way that protects system reliability and affordability for everyone else.

The bill clearly outlines the purposes for which a curtailable power program may be established, including maintaining the reliability and adequacy of Manitoba's electricity system, managing peak demand, responding to emergencies and supporting the efficient and economic operation of Manitoba Hydro. It lays out clear terms and conditions, including how customers are designated, how curtailments are applied and how notice is to be provided. And, importantly, this bill does not affect customers participating in Manitoba Hydro's existing voluntary curtailable rate program.

Hydro's 2025 Integrated Resource Plan identifies demand response and curtailable rate programming as practical, cost-effective tools to manage peak demand. Within the IRP's development plan, Manitoba Hydro has identified approximately 310 megawatts of demand response and curtailable rate programming over the planning horizon. However, the mandatory curtailable power program enabled by Bill 20 would go beyond what is currently included in the IRP's planned megawatts, providing additional flexibility and capacity to help shave peak and demand needs.

Honourable Speaker, managing peak demand protects ratepayers. Every megawatt of peak demand we can reduce or better manage helps ease pressure on the system and helps keep rates more affordable for Manitobans. Bill 20 is a practical step towards doing just that.

This bill works hand-in-hand with Bill 39, which introduces a levy on cryptocurrency miners, large data centres and other energy-intensive users. Together, these bills show our government is taking action to manage high-demand and low-economic-value industries, ensuring grid reliability while making sure these users contribute their fair share.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 20 reflects a forward-looking, responsible approach to managing one of Manitoba's most important public assets. It ensures Hydro has the tools it needs to manage demand responsibly, and it keeps our focus where it belongs: on keeping rates affordable for Manitobans.

For those reasons, I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 20 at second reading and allow it to proceed to committee.

Thank you so much, honourable Speaker.

### Questions

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** As crypto mining has been, if you will, a challenge for governments since it's become more prevalent within provinces, within our country and across the world, I'm wondering if the minister could please confirm for the House whether he is continuing the moratorium on new crypto mining. This moratorium was brought in both by PC as well as NDP governments.

And, if that is the case, is he also contemplating a moratorium on other large energy users and future energy users within this province?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** The moratorium remains in place. And, no, we are not contemplating other moratoriums on other types of investment.

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** Can the minister tell us how many data centres and cryptocurrency miners are currently operating in the province and are supplied energy by Manitoba Hydro?

**MLA Sala:** Prior to the moratorium, approximately 48 operators of cryptocurrency were connected in Manitoba, and that total contracted amount is about 80 megawatts of energy capacity that are currently dedicated to that purpose.

**Mrs. Stone:** Did the minister do a cross-jurisdictional analysis of other curtailment programs that possibly exist, either in Canada or the United States? Thinking similar, does British Columbia, does Quebec hydro have similar programs? Crypto mining and the energy usage that crypto mining requires is not unique just to Manitoba, but this is also a challenge for other provinces across the country.

So do other provincial jurisdictions have similar pieces of legislation in place that this minister is bringing forward today?

**MLA Sala:** We're responding to a Manitoba issue. Each province has their own peaking—unique peaking signatures and challenges. We, of course, fake—face

ours for the most part at winter peak in January and February.

But this is, I think, a really creative, novel way of ultimately reducing the amount of pressure we're going to face and the need to develop new capacity as we go forward because this, again, introduces a curtailment program to cryptocurrency operations that will allow us to be able to turn down their energy consumption during peak periods, thereby deferring the need for new generation and ultimately helping us to keep rates low for Manitobans.

**Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North):** I'd like to ask the minister: Basically, we're suffering brownouts throughout the province now, particularly in the Capital Region that's in a massive expansion right now in growth sector.

Can the minister tell us how Manitobans can expect to see us building out more infrastructure but also taking care of 30 years of legacy work that needs to be done in a—in failing infrastructure across the province?

**MLA Sala:** I appreciate the question and the need to continue investing in our infrastructure and transmission distribution to ensure reliability for Manitobans. That—first and foremost, that's No. 1, especially in a province like Manitoba where, of course, people need energy in mid-January, especially if your home is heated through an electric furnace or a baseboard heater.

So proud to say that we are heading into a period, I think, of significant investment. The IRP that was recently submitted by Hydro to the Public Utilities Board outlines the broad strokes of that investment, including significant investment in bipole, a line that had not seen investment in many years that is critical and paramount to ensuring continued reliability.

So do appreciate the emphasis on, sort of, local reliability throughout our communities. That's, of course, important, and our government is going to continue to invest in ensuring—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

**Mrs. Stone:** In a previous answer, the minister had mentioned that there's 48 existing crypto-mining operations in the province. So I'm wondering if the minister has consulted with some of those crypter—crypto-mining operators to understand what a curtailment would mean for them and their operations: whether a complete turn-off-the-lights or a—just reduction in power for a temporary period of time?

\* (15:20)

**MLA Sala:** Again, we're working to try to ensure that we keep rates as low as possible for Manitobans. For years, that wasn't the case. We saw a lot of creative and novel approaches to raising hydro rates in Manitoba for seven and a half years.

As Manitobans can see, and I think this bill is evidence of that, we're trying to find ways to ensure that we reduce rate pressure.

And one way can—we can do that is by minimizing our peak energy pressures and crypto operations that got in under the moratorium will, as this bill gets put in place, be subject to that to ensure that Manitobans can pay less for their electricity.

**Mrs. Robbins:** The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has stated he sees this as our future as a province, but currently, this is not enough energy generated by Manitoba Hydro to meet the high demands of the industry, and it's unclear what the economic benefits are of this industry for the average Manitoban looking for a good job.

Can the minister tell us how he is going to balance all of the competing demands for Manitoba Hydro limited energy supplies and how he's going to grow that supply of energy for the future to meet this growing demand?

**MLA Sala:** That's a really good question, and our IRP that was recently again submitted to the PUB kind of outlines the answer to that in broad strokes. And I think what we're proud to say is that that plan balances the need for meeting new generation and ensuring we have the power that we need with affordability.

And so Manitobans will be happy to know that we're not only ensuring that we're going to have the energy we need to keep our homes powered and our businesses powered, but that we're going to do that in a way that ensures we preserve affordability.

In the specific plan outlined in that IRP, which includes 600 megawatts of wind, a lot of demand response programming along with investments in CT generators in Brandon is helping to find that balance, which is to ensure we have the energy we need while we keep rates as affordable as possible.

So I encourage the member, if they're interested, to take a deeper look at the IRP which spells that out in greater detail.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, can the minister just walk us through how this curtailment of power will work in operation? Does this bill enable Manitoba Hydro to completely

shut off existing crypto mining operations or reduction of power, and then how will it determine how much of a reduction of power is needed during those peak times?

**MLA Sala:** So this bill enables Hydro to go out and create power supply programs, so some of the details that are being requested here are yet to be worked out.

But, of course, again, the focus of this bill and the focus of this work is always keeping ratepayers top of mind and ensuring that we do what we can as government to ultimately reduce rate pressures.

And we know the former government clearly agreed that cryptocurrency operations were a low-value driver to the economy. That's why they brought in a moratorium, I assume. We've continued to—with that moratorium in agreement that that is a low-value driver to our economy, and what we recognize is that we've got 80 megs of our power currently allocated to this sector.

And, again, during those peak energy times, peak periods of peak demand, we're going to help to reduce rate pressure by ensuring that—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

**Mrs. Robbins:** Can the minister tell us how Manitoba Hydro will pay for the new energy generation projects while renewing all of its legacy infrastructure?

**MLA Sala:** Yes. Again, happy to get the question. I would say, again, this question is—the answer to this question is outlined in detail in our Integrated Resource Plan that was submitted, which effectively spells out the entire sort of forward-looking development plan for the next 10 years, along with the associated costs that are translated into rate pressures for Manitobans.

So I think, again, I've spoken to that in the last question. We're proud to be bringing forward a plan that I think responds to the urgency, the need that we have. We didn't see new energy—any new energy developed for seven and a half years; that put us in a challenging position.

But proud that our government has, in very short order, released an energy plan and has now put forward an IRP that is going to ensure Manitobans have access to the affordable reliable energy that they need.

**Mr. Wharton:** I guess a question I'll have for the Finance Minister and Hydro Minister is simply this: We know Budget 2026 relies heavily on Manitoba

Hydro ensuring that they show a profit in 2026-27 fiscal. We know that we've been running a drought season for about three to five years.

What is the backup plan for Manitobans? They want to hear this today from this government, particularly the minister, on what we'll do if we show another deficit in Manitoba Hydro's books because we run into another drought in 2026.

**MLA Sala:** Honourable Speaker, we've heard this claim a couple times from members opposite, and, just to be clear, there is no reliance on Manitoba Hydro's net income result to deliver on some kind of budgetary target. Very modest goal this year, I say to the member: \$140 million net income target at Hydro.

What was the net income target before they left government: \$500 million. I would say that is a sign of a reliance on an, I would say, overly rosy projection at Hydro; \$140 million net income target is very modest and, in fact, that's supported by work we've done to keep more money in Hydro through the elimination of a capital tax and a reduction of a debt guarantee fee.

So this government is doing the work to keep more money in Hydro's coffers, and we're taking a moderate approach to forecasting their net income. And, again, we've put together a solid budget plan which is very different than what we saw before the members opposite left government in 2023.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** No further questions? No further questions.

### Debate

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** The floor is now open for debate.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I rise today to speak on Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, which enables Manitoba Hydro to establish a curtailable power program for customers engaged in operations.

So, in essence, under this program a customer's supply of power may be temporarily reduced for the purposes of the program. It seems like there is still a lot of details to be worked out in terms of how this curtailment program will actually work in practice.

During the question and answer period, the minister did indicate that there's 48 existing crypto mining operations within the province of Manitoba. It's still unclear if he consulted with any of those operators to further understand what it would mean if

their power supply is either temporarily reduced or temporarily shut off completely, and those details are still being worked out.

He's leaving a lot to—whether it's regulation, as we've seen with other bills that this NDP has brought forward, or a lot of details to be worked out in practice.

So I do encourage the minister to sit down with some of these existing crypto mining operators to better understand what that means for their own operations, but also what it means for Manitoba's grid once the lights do come back on, and what that means for the grid in and of itself.

As the minister had mentioned, this bill does work in conjunction with Bill 39, which we will be speaking to later today, to impact—to limit the impact of cryptocurrency operations in Manitoba's power supply overall. So while that bill increases the rates that cryptocurrency operations would be charged for energy from Manitoba Hydro, this bill is specifically dealing with a curtailment program.

As I did mention during question and answer period, crypto mining has been a long challenge since its inception for not just Manitoba but other provinces across the country, as it does require a significant amount of energy; and, more recently, AI data centres as well that have started to come onto the grids, not just in Manitoba, but across the country as well.

So this is why the former PC government issued a directive to halt the further expansion of any Hydro customer hookups for crypto current generation, just due to the massive energy that these industries do consume that is not necessarily offset by additional economic activity, jobs, or tax revenues.

But the real question, and the question that my colleague, the member from Red River North, was trying to get an answer from, from the NDP government, is does Manitoba have enough energy to meet the existing demands of residential customers, institutions and a growing industry, all requiring more energy? And these are serious unanswered questions as to how growing demand will be met, what industries will be prioritized and what is the long-term plan? And that is—those are questions that this NDP government has been unable to answer.

It seems that since this NDP government has come into power, there's a lot of reactive legislation that's put forward, while at a certain point, as Manitoba's energy demand continues to increase, the answer is not going to be curtailing power from other users; it's

not going to be charging higher fees from users that we want to attract into the province of Manitoba.

So a fee and an energy curtailment program is not a long-term plan to deal with the energy and the growing energy demands of our province as a whole.

\* (15:30)

Manitoba Hydro has also predicted they won't have enough power to supply all customers as early as 2030, and we are seeing that requirement already during peak times and peak demand times. And the NDP, as well as Manitoba Hydro, need to be transparent in how they are going to meet that growing energy demand of consumers and the industries that also require a significant amount of energy but that provide good paying jobs for Manitoba.

So, as we've seen since this NDP government has taken office, is the minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) have consistently mismanaged Hydro since taking office. They made a phony rate freeze that didn't save Manitobans significant dollars while jacking up rates now and into the future, a political stunt that Manitobans are going to be paying for, for that bad fiscal policy for many years to come.

And at the same time, the Premier is regularly on the record flip-flopping on Manitoba Hydro while making policy on a whim. First, the Premier claimed Manitoba would be net-zero by 2030; then he flip-flopped and said that wasn't attainable.

Next, he fired former CEO Jay Grewal for saying Manitoba needs extra capacity. Then he concerted a \$1.3-billion natural gas plant. Then he said Manitoba does need extra capacity. Then he said he wants to export more to the US without any of the capacity to do so. Then, he actually announced he was cancelling US legacy contracts, redirecting some of that power to a Nunavut line that he has no plan to pay for.

So that's a lot of back and forth that we've heard from the Premier and this NDP government since they've taken office. So you can understand why Manitobans are confused that this government—this NDP—really has no plan for Manitoba Hydro in and of the future.

All the while, the corporation is projecting \$27 billion of debt and needs \$31 billion in infrastructure maintenance and capital upgrades while slowly creeping up to their debt wall of \$29 billion. So this has shown that this minister has completely lost the handle on Manitoba Hydro and that they do

not have a solid direction for Manitoba Hydro in and of itself.

While Manitoba Hydro is carrying over \$27 billion in debt, interest costs alone are in the hundreds of millions annually and domestic demand, as we're talking about today, is rising steadily.

So Hydro has been warning that Manitoba—that Manitobans could be facing capacity shortages as early as 2030. I am assuming that this is why this minister has brought forward this bill, is to try to curtail the amount of energy that is currently being used.

However, this is not a long-term solution. It's yet to be seen what this short-term solution will relate to in Manitoba and for those existing crypto mining operations. But that does mean that every megawatt matters and every decision about existing capacity does matter. The government needs to have a clear understanding of Manitoba's demand needs and how Manitoba Hydro expects to respond.

So, as I mentioned earlier in my comments, today it's about crypto mining, but what other industries are at risk of curtailment if this NDP government does not get its hands around Manitobans' existing and growing energy demand needs?

So what we need is—and Manitobans need—they need clear priorities. They need transparent planning and a commitment to put Manitoba ratepayers first. So we recognize that the challenges that crypto mining operations, both existing as well as any in the future, could have on Manitoba's energy grid currently and Manitoba Hydro's energy grid.

But this is part of a much bigger question as to why Manitoba cannot meet the needs of our existing population and our growing population, and the NDP needs to come forth with a serious plan.

Other provinces, as we've seen, are significantly looking into other opportunities of energy development. Manitoba Hydro is being left behind as they take a wait-and-see approach to what other provinces, as well as state jurisdictions down south are looking at as it relates to whether that be wind, solar, or nuclear. And when I asked during Manitoba Hydro committee what Manitoba Hydro's plan was, and in looking up those other options, they really didn't have one.

And so, when we talk about Manitoba Hydro and this NDP government, getting a true grasp of what our energy needs are but also what else might be out there so that we don't have to turn away opportunities for investment in this province.

And, you know, it's certainly unfortunate that Manitoba Hydro continues to take just a wait-and-see approach as opposed to really being a leader in energy development and not being left behind for what other provinces are doing.

So with that being said, deputy Speaker, I will close my comments and look forward to speaking on the next bill after this.

Thank you, deputy Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 20, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**Bill 39—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act**

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Now we will move to Bill 39, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** I move, seconded by the Minister for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, that Bill 39, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba et la Loi sur l'administration des impôts et des taxes et divers impôts et taxes, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her lieutenant—Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** It's been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn)—

**An Honourable Member:** Housing.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** —Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith), that Bill 39, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes

Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

**MLA Sala:** Thank you so much. Thank you. Very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 39.

As members of this House know, Manitoba's clean and affordable energy has long been a source of strength for our province, but as demand grows and our system faces new pressures it's essential that the cost of operating and expanding that system are shared fairly.

Bill 39 is about doing exactly that. Bill 39 establishes a forward-looking framework to raise additional revenue for Manitoba Hydro through the creation of separate classes of customers and a levy on electricity for certain intensive uses. Specifically, the bill requires Manitoba Hydro to establish and maintain separate customer classes for customers engaged in cryptocurrency mining operations, for large data centres and for other large power supply projects.

Honourable Speaker, I want to be clear this bill does not replace or diminish the role of the Public Utilities Board. Rates for these customer classes remain tied to existing general service rate schedules, and any higher rates must be approved by the Public Utilities Board; the PUB's oversight remains firmly in place.

What Bill 39 does provide is an additional and targeted tool—a levy—to help Manitoba Hydro recover the real costs associated with serving and expanding capacity for these large energy-intensive loads. The legislation provides flexibility through regulation to prescribe levy rates based on how electricity is used; however, where no levy rate is prescribed, the bill establishes a clear default.

The levy is set at 100 per cent of both the monthly energy charge and the monthly demand charge under the applicable general service rate schedule for an equivalent customer. In simple terms, if no alternative rate is set, these customers pay a levy equal to what they are already billed for power, ensuring their electricity use reflects the real cost they place on the system.

\* (15:40)

The bill also clearly sets out how the levy is applied and collected. Manitoba Hydro must bill and collect the levy at the same time it bills for electricity,

and any unpaid levy is treated as a debt owing to Hydro.

Importantly, Honourable Speaker, the legislation is explicit that all levy revenues belong to Manitoba Hydro. These are not government funds. They are retained by Hydro and used to support the operation, maintenance and long-term investment needs of Manitoba's electricity system.

Bill 39 supports the affordable energy plan by ensuring that new energy-intensive uses of electricity contribute to the cost of expanding generation and grid capacity. This approach helps Manitoba Hydro keep electricity affordable for existing households and businesses as demand continues to grow.

By establishing a levy that is retained by Manitoba Hydro, Bill 39 provides a practical funding tool to support ongoing investments, consistent with the affordable energy plan's focus on ensuring Manitobans get the best value for our clean baseload power. Simply put, Honourable Speaker, Bill 39 guarantees that high-demand users pay their fair share while protecting affordability for Manitoba families and businesses.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to present this bill for the House's consideration.

### Questions

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** In the minister's opening comments, he indicated that this bill is to help Manitoba Hydro's bottom line. So if the minister could please confirm for the House what he expects to receive in revenue from this new fee placed on crypto and data centres.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** Again, our focus is in ensuring rate affordability for Manitobans, and this bill will help support that. And so to help generate the new revenue, the estimated revenue that this would generate, is approximately \$20 million a year.

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli):** Yes, has there been consultations on this bill, and if so, with whom?

**MLA Sala:** So, again, our top focus here remains on reliability and affordability, and this bill, along with

the previous bill we just talked about, which will allow for curtailment for crypto operations, is going to help support increased affordability.

We know that crypto operations and data centres are at this point relatively low-value drivers here in our provincial economy. We want to ensure that the amount that they're paying for energy supports the costs of generation and ensures that we can keep to rates low—keep rates low on an ongoing basis to support Manitobans.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, obviously, with that answer it appears that there was no consultations. Can the minister assure us that he's at least consulted with the businesses that are currently being faced with this levy?

**MLA Sala:** We know that the members opposite weren't concerned about rate affordability. We saw that for seven and a half years. We saw that with them, for example, bringing in bill 36 that was a piece of legislation that was designed to take away rate setting from the Public Utilities Board and to set that at the Cabinet table.

I'd ask the member, did he consult with any Manitobans on their proposal to drive up hydro rates for every single Manitoban across the province? We know that didn't happen. We know that their focus was on finding new, creative ways of raising hydro rates.

This bill is focused on doing the opposite, and it's focused on ensuring that, again, those large users of power are paying rates that are fair relative to the value generation that they're creating for our province. This will help to ensure lower hydro rates for Manitobans across the entire province.

**Mrs. Stone:** Crypto mining operations and businesses that have set up or are in the midst of setting up here in Manitoba can spend millions of dollars before they even turn on their lights just to have access to the grid. With this bill that's being brought forward today, this could put many of those Manitoba local businesses in financial dire. So I'm wondering what the minister has to say to those Manitoba businesses that this fee is essentially going to put them in dire financial straits.

**MLA Sala:** Again, we're working to ensure that we keep hydro rates low for Manitobans. This is, I think, a very, very focused bill that's going to help to ensure that those organizations, those businesses that are a large draw on our power, are paying their fair share—ultimately will only impact those operations that are above five megawatts.

And, again, the member spoke to crypto operations that are currently being set up. That shouldn't be the case. Crypto operations are already under a moratorium. She should know that; it was their government that first brought that in. So we've continued that. There should be no new crypto operations coming into effect or into operation here in Manitoba. Again, that's one thing that our government agreed with in terms of actions by the former government.

This bill—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Johnson:** The minister says that this bill is specifically about raising revenue for Manitoba Hydro, and that's why he's picking winners and losers right now and attacking this specific industry.

So I guess the question is, what's next? Are manufacturers that use a lot of electricity due to welding or laser cutting or whatnot, are they the next ones that this minister will put a levy on?

**MLA Sala:** What's next is Manitobans and Manitoba businesses can expect continued access to affordable energy. Again, that's very different from what they saw for years under the members opposite.

Look, we're—we are the lowest industrial electricity rate in the entire continent, so we've got a really great value proposition right now for those who want to come in Manitoba to invest.

And it's going to stay that way thanks to the kinds of policies that we're bringing forward, thanks to bills like the last one we brought in that will support curtailment for crypto operations and thanks to bills like this. It's going to help to ensure Hydro remains financially healthy while those large users of our hydro pay their fair share.

And that's the work that Manitobans sent us here to do. They know that we're bringing great leadership to hydro and energy, and we're going to make sure that we continue to do—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, I'll give the minister one more opportunity to answer this question: Has he consulted with the local Manitoba businesses that have these operations and that this bill could potentially put them into bankruptcy? Has he consulted with them, yes or no? It's a simple question.

**MLA Sala:** Manitoba continues to have, again, the lowest industrial electricity rate in the continent. And so, this proposed levy, again, is something that we're going to bring in to ensure that we keep rates as low as possible for Manitobans across the province. This is about ensuring that those businesses that are relatively low-value drivers of our economy are paying their fair share.

And, again, you know, we, I think, are proceeding with this on the basis that we're focused on affordability. We're focused on reliability. This, paired with the other bill, shows our government's—the important work we're doing.

And I think—again, we know members opposite weren't interested in keeping rates under control under their tenure. That's why we're seeing our government bring in bills like this, because we actually care about rate pressure.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Johnson:** Yes, I think the minister forgot to clarify that he's focused on grabbing money from business owners in Manitoba.

So if there's a part of the grid that is not at its max capacity and there's a cryptocurrency there and it shuts down, then no power will be sold to replace that. So it's actually—has a potential of losing money from Manitoba Hydro if that business shuts down.

So, on areas where the grid is not overloaded, will these businesses be able to continue to operate without the levy?

**MLA Sala:** The member's getting really deep into hypotheticals there, and I don't quite understand what it is that he just outlined, but what—hopefully, he'll understand this: this bill is about ensuring we preserve rate affordability for Manitobans. It's about ensuring that we preserve reliability. It's a modest step forward in ensuring that those large users of energy that are, again, relatively low drivers—value drivers in our economy are paying their fair share.

And, ultimately, this is about ensuring sustainability at Manitoba Hydro, something the members opposite didn't worry about for seven and a half years.

**Mrs. Stone:** As this bill also will apply to large data centres, at the same time, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) is out there saying he wants to welcome data centres and investment into Manitoba.

So has—have any large-scale data centres pulled their applications from Manitoba Hydro as a result of this bill?

\* (15:50)

**MLA Sala:** Yes, this bill will ensure that, as we go forward, that those data centres that seek to move to Manitoba to take advantage of our incredibly affordable, clean, green power are able to do so and continue to be able to do so.

What we're proposing, again, still allows for a very competitive rate when it comes to accessing energy to support data centre investments. We welcome those types of investments in Manitoba, and for the users of that power, they'll be paying a fair rate that will be reflective of their usage and the relatively low value that's being created in terms of jobs and so forth.

So we know this is the right way forward to ensure continued rate affordability. It will ensure to—Manitoba will continue to be a very investable destination for data centres. We know that even with the proposed default 100 per cent levy rate, we're still—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

**Mr. Johnson:** As we try and attract business here in Manitoba, we, you know, we worked hard as a PC government to expand our movies industry here in the province. And as we well know, a lot of our new movies are animated, and those animated movies take up a lot of data.

Will they be affected with a levy? For example, the place in Niverville that has started up and doing a lot of animation there. Will that be affected by this bill?

**MLA Sala:** Those businesses that operate as data centres will be treated as data centres, and those businesses that operate as movie production businesses will be treated as movie production businesses. It's very simple, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Johnson:** In his, what he claims to be, vast consultations, which he hasn't been able to state a single person or business that he's consulted with: through those consultations, did he explore that there is a potential of grandfathering existing businesses so people don't lose millions and millions of dollars here in Manitoba?

**MLA Sala:** Again, this bill, along with the other bill, are two pieces of legislation that we're proud to bring forward, focused on setting the path forward for Manitoba Hydro among many other initiatives we've undertaken since coming into government.

You know, for years, there was absolutely no vision when it came to Manitoba Hydro. We didn't generate a single additional megawatt. The only focus they had, it seemed, for seven and a half years, was finding new and creative ways of raising your hydro rates as Manitoba consumers. That's not a plan. That's no vision. That was just sort of sitting on our hands for a very long time.

Finally, we've got a government here in Manitoba that has put forward an energy plan, make sure we have the energy we need. We're keeping more dollars in hydro to keep them more financially healthy, and we're doing the work, like bringing in legislation—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

Any further questions? No more questions.

### Debate

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** The floor is now open for debate.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I rise today to speak to bill 29, Manitoba Hydro amendment act, tax administration, 'miscellaneous' taxes amendment act.

So this legislation allows Manitoba Hydro to set much higher rates for energy supplied to cryptocurrency producers in the province or large-scale AI data centres, and this is being done by essentially increasing the rate charged as a default rate under this legislation. So, deputy Speaker, this isn't just a small shift; it's a significant adjustment in how Manitoba looks to price these centres.

So this does lead to a fundamental question on what the government is actually trying to accomplish with this bill. We know that Manitoba Hydro is \$27 billion in debt and, at the same time, requires billions of dollars in existing infrastructure upgrades. The minister, during question and answer, indicated that this would bring in approximately \$20 million annually into Manitoba Hydro's revenues, but then he's also mentioned that this is about protecting Manitoba's energy supply.

Despite the Premier (Mr. Kinew) flip-flopping regularly and claiming Manitoba has enough energy and he wants to export more, Manitoba Hydro has

obviously told a very different story, indicating that Manitoba needs additional energy capacity over the next five to 10 years, especially at peak times. So with this legislation, it appears the government is trying to tackle both major issues, but doing neither very clearly or very well.

So, as I've mentioned in earlier comments in the previous bill, that crypto mining, specifically, has been a challenge in Manitoba as well as—not just in Manitoba, but also across other provincial jurisdictions and, quite frankly, worldwide, as it requires a significant amount of energy usage. And the minister is correct that the former PC government did issue a moratorium and he has continued on with that moratorium while also introducing these two bills.

But that doesn't discount the fact that there are individuals where their—and businesses in Manitoba—where their applications have been approved. They've invested millions of dollars just to have access to the grid but they haven't even turned the lights on yet, so I'm assuming that the minister isn't going to shut those businesses down. So in my previous comments about looking to start up, that is what I was referring to: that they have yet to turn on the lights but their application has previously been accepted.

But, with that said, we do recognize the significant amount of energy that these operations do require and it does not necessarily offset with economic activity, tax revenues or jobs. And, in many cases, these are remote operations with very few workers on-site, although some exceptions do exist and it is important to recognize where those exceptions do exist, and I will get that later in my comments.

As I have mentioned earlier today, many jurisdictions are facing similar or the same pressures that Manitoba's facing: high electricity demand, grid reliability concerns and the rapid growth of AI and large data centres. And, as a result, several provinces have tightened the rules due to these electricity shortages. However, this bill does expand beyond just crypto mining, also including data centres, AI data centres as well.

And so this is where the NDP and the government really needs to be transparent on where they sit when it comes to attracting large-scale AI data centres, as Manitobans can see that they have flip-flopped quite drastically on this issue with comments that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) has made, that the minister of innovation has made while bringing forward bills like the one that we are speaking about right now.

The Premier has repeatedly stated that Manitoba is well positioned to host large-scale data centres because of its abundant low-carbon hydroelectricity and cold climate, and he went as far to describe data centre development as part of Manitoba's path to becoming a have province within five to 10 years. And then he went even further to say that Manitobans will see servers and data centres in Manitoba in the future.

But yet, this NDP government is now bringing forward legislation specifically targeting future data centres with significantly high fees and different pricing schedules than what otherwise would exist. So, in theory, this bill could act as a deterrent for what the Premier is actually trying to accomplish—accomplish, which is attracting large-scale data centres into this province.

I asked the question of the minister during the Q & A as to—as a result of this bill, whether any AI data centre applications have been pulled as a result of this bill coming forward, and he did not answer that question. So I look forward to asking that question again as we get into Estimates.

But what that does go to show is, what is this bill actually trying to accomplish? You cannot invite investment with one hand and then price it out of the market with the other. So it appears that this bill is being brought forward to help with Manitoba Hydro's bottom line but, at the same time, if that investment is not coming in to Manitoba, which could also help with Hydro's revenues, it's unclear as to why the member and the minister has actually brought forward this bill.

As we've seen, other jurisdictions across the world, predominantly the US and China, are fueling a surge in data-centre development and leading that capacity—global capacity growth, and they are reaping some economic rewards as a result of that. We've seen Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario all looking to attract major AI hyperscalers like Meta and Google, and I believe there is actually an application in Alberta currently in front of their regulator to approve and move forward with that exact thing.

\* (16:00)

So, recognizing that these industries do consume enormous amounts of energy, there are lessons that Manitoba can learn from from other applications that have been brought forward as Manitoba looks to, hopefully, attract those investments into the province. However, I would still like to know what sort of deterrent that this bill is, currently, with these

large-scale data centres, and if any applications have been pulled as a result of this significantly high fee schedule.

You know, but with that said, Manitoba can look to other jurisdictions, whether that's here in Canada or in the United States, for lessons on what can be done differently to ensure Manitoba ratepayers are not faced with higher electricity costs as a result of the energy usage from large-scale data centres while still attracting those data centres here to Manitoba.

As I've mentioned, this—these bills that have been brought forward today, the one we spoke about earlier as well as this one, does ask a much broader question as to the significant mismanagement of Manitoba Hydro that we have seen under this NDP government. As demand is rising, existing assets require billions of dollars of renewal or upgrades in their existing infrastructure. However, at the same time, the NDP has put Manitoba Hydro in a highly leveraged position where it's now \$27 billion in debt and—closely—and a couple projects away from approaching that debt wall.

So while other jurisdictions are looking at new and innovative ways to expand their energy development and energy production, such as nuclear or small-module reactors, Manitoba appears to again be waiting on the sidelines before even studying its feasibility, which could be a potential or an opportunity to look at for these large-scale data centres—some of that generation—so it is not taking away from Manitoba Hydro's electricity generation that Manitoba residents and Manitoba ratepayers rely on. So it's clear that Manitoba Hydro is just struggling to keep up with what other jurisdictions are currently doing, both in Canada as well as in the US.

So the NDP and Manitoba Hydro really need to be clear and transparent on what their direction and their plan is for Manitoba Hydro as a corporation as our energy demand continues to grow and as our population and industries grow, which we do want for Manitoba. And we do want to attract investment into Manitoba, and it's unfortunate that, you know, with this \$27-billion debt with Manitoba Hydro that the NDP created under this minister's former boss, that Manitoba is now in a unfortunate position of having to look at curtailment programs. They're having to look at different fee structures just to bring in a bit of revenue for Manitoba Hydro.

So back to the bill that's in front of us today, looking at increasing this rate charged as a default rate for crypto and data centres. As I mentioned earlier, it's not a small shift; it's a significant shift.

And as I mentioned earlier, that some exceptions do apply. I know the minister has stood up on the record and said that these centres provide little economic activity, few jobs. However, there are some exceptions, and with 48 crypto centres within Manitoba, many of them are owned by local Manitoba businesses. I've certainly heard from some of them since this bill has been introduced. And those families and businesses are now being faced with a significant cost. Some of them have already spent millions of dollars just to have access to the grid without even in full operation yet.

And so what this bill does is it could put those Manitoba businesses in financial straits, and some of them are worried that this could lead to bankruptcy altogether. And the minister, during the question and answer, really did not answer whether he has consulted with these local Manitoba businesses and what the impacts for these local Manitoba businesses could mean. You know, these are businesses that chose to set up these operations in Manitoba under vastly different rules.

And what does this significant shift in pricing mean for those local Manitoba businesses? With the stroke of a pen, this NDP is essentially doubling their energy costs, undermining their business models and putting them at real financial risk. And by the answers that the minister gave during the question and answer period, it's clear that he did not take into consideration what that financial risk would be for some of these local Manitoba businesses, and this could mean significant financial harm.

So this does deserve more consideration by this minister, this NDP government. Those Manitoba businesses that have set up those operations deserve to be consulted in terms of how both of these bills that he's brought forward today could impact not just their financial risk and the financial implications, but also the implications of their power supply when it comes to the curtailment of the bill that he brought forward earlier. And yet many of those details have yet to be worked out.

And, again, we're seeing the NDP bring forward legislation without having all the details worked out, without having due consultation, and that is unfortunate. And so I hope to hear from the minister once we get to committee and further throughout bill debates what this could mean for those local Manitoba businesses and whether, at that time, he finally does consult with them.

So those are all the comments I have to put on the record today, deputy Speaker, and I thank you for the time to put those words on the record.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Is it—is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 39, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment and Tax Administration and Miscellaneous Taxes Amendment Act.

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

#### **Bill 46—The Securities Amendment Act**

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** We would now move to Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, that Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

#### ***Motion presented.***

**MLA Sala:** I'm very pleased to present to you Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act. Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are navigating a financial landscape that is more complex and more uncertain than ever before. Manitobans today have more options than ever when it comes to financial services: banks, brokers, mutual fund dealers and a growing number of online fintech companies.

These providers offer a wide range of products. Some carry significant risk and, sadly, some offers are outright scams, leaving hard-working and trusting Manitobans vulnerable to fraud.

Honourable Speaker, that's why our government is stepping up. Last year, we took the first step to bring Manitoba into the modern world. We passed legislation to begin aligning Manitoba with every other province, changes those provinces made many years ago, changes the previous PC government neglected to make over seven and a half years.

Under this legislation, we reconstituted the Manitoba Financial Services Agency into an independent arms-linked entity, bringing Manitoba in line with national standards for fairness, transparency and accountability in financial oversight.

Honourable Speaker, Bill 46 is the next step in our commitment to modernizing Manitoba's financial regulatory framework. Through this legislation, we are granting the Manitoba Securities Commission new authority to regulate financial benchmarks, the reference rates that play a critical role in Canadian capital markets.

\* (16:10)

When benchmarks are reliable, markets work. When they're manipulated, the consequences can be severe, and we have seen this before in the LIBOR scandal, where major financial institutions manipulated benchmark rates for years, rigging the system for profit while everyday people paid the price.

Honourable Speaker, we will not allow Manitoba to be left exposed. We're bringing in these changes to ensure our regulators have the tools they need to keep our markets fair and transparent while bringing us in line with the rest of Canada.

These amendments will also take important steps to address the realities of the modern digital marketplace. It will prohibit false or misleading claims about securities on digital platforms such as Reddit and Twitter, where we are increasingly seeing improper and high-risk activity. It will introduce clear prohibitions against aiding and abetting violations of securities law, making it illegal to help someone else violate securities regulations while giving the Manitoba Securities Commission the tools to investigate and act in these cases. And it will bring in technical changes to civil liability provisions to better protect investors.

Honourable Speaker, these amendments provide the tools needed to effectively oversee and enforce Manitoba securities laws in a rapidly changing world. They respond to the new realities Manitobans are facing in our capital markets, correcting years of inaction from the previous government. Members opposite allowed the industry to go under-regulated, and they did put Manitobans at risk. Our government is doing the work. We're protecting Manitobans and we're strengthening trust in Manitoba's capital markets.

Honourable Speaker, I'm very pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration.

#### **Questions**

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Can the minister outline how Manitoba's new benchmark regulation framework, that's outlined in this bill, compares to other provinces, specifically to Ontario and British Columbia?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance):** Yes, I appreciate the question. I don't have a comparative analysis ready today, but I can share that this is—overall, it's consistent with securities regulation in other provinces.

We know how important these benchmarks are in protecting consumers and protecting investors within capital markets, and they will help to ensure that investors here in Manitoba are kept safer, and, again, much safer than they were for seven and a half years under the members opposite.

**Mrs. Stone:** Are there any benchmarks that have been included in this bill that the minister has brought forward today that are not applied in Ontario or other jurisdictions in Canada?

**MLA Sala:** Again, not to my knowledge. My understanding is that this will be consistent with the regulation used in other provinces.

And, again, this is about giving the MFSA the ability to set those benchmarks. So what we're bringing forward, I think, is a responsible next step in keeping investors safe here in Manitoba, and it is consistent with what we've seen in terms of changes to security regulations—securities regulations in other Canadian provinces.

**Mrs. Stone:** What consultation occurred with industry stakeholders regarding the new promotional activity prohibitions such as Manitoba credit unions, IBAM, other stakeholders within this province?

**MLA Sala:** We know there are real concerns about the use of, you know, online platforms to perhaps provide misleading information of prospective investors. This bill is really responding to a number of issues that were identified through the MFSA and through their good leadership, driven by concerns that they've identified in protecting investors in Manitoba.

So, again, we know that it's important that we protect a prospective investor from getting misleading information online, and this bill will help to keep them safer from losing those investment dollars.

**Mrs. Stone:** Can the minister explain why through this bill he is shifting the burden of proof from 'plaintants' to defendants in certain civil liability provisions?

**MLA Sala:** I'd ask for maybe clarity about the specific 'prison'—provision that the member is referencing, and just maybe offer a bit more information about the question.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, as it refers to the dispute resolution mechanism.

**MLA Sala:** I believe the question they're asking about the dispute resolution mechanism is relating to the other bill that we're going to be debating. Maybe just ask for clarity on that.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes. Apologies. This is the third bill I've spoken to today.

I'll move on to my next question: How will unfair practice be interpreted in practice and what guidance will be provided to industry participants?

**MLA Sala:** Again, I'm going to ask the member to maybe specifically identify which aspect of the bill she's referring to so I can answer her question clearly.

**Mrs. Stone:** Yes, thank you.

So in—I can't speak to the specific page currently, but within the bill they are changing the definitions of what practice is, and so I'm wondering just what guidance is going to be provided to those participants if this bill comes forward as a result of the definition changes.

**MLA Sala:** Not quite fully clear about what the question is, but what I can say is that we know that we've got wonderful leaders at the Manitoba Financial Services Agency. The individual who's been leading it for years, Dave Cheop, is actually—recently announced his retirement. He's moving on; still with us for the next while. We're really grateful to the leadership he's brought and I think his leadership can bring forward some of these initiatives here that are coming forward today in legislation.

We have full confidence that we'll ensure that the community, the investment community, has been duly engaged on these proposed changes, and I think this is about really bringing us up to speed and bringing us up to where other provinces have gone in terms of updating their legislation. Really it's about protecting investors and Manitobans and that's long overdue when it comes to securities legislation.

**Mrs. Stone:** Seeing as how this bill is following similar processes from what other jurisdictions have already implemented, are there any lessons from those other jurisdictions since Manitoba is playing a little bit

of catch-up when it comes to this bill that's being brought forward?

**MLA Sala:** I appreciate the question. I would say that, you know, today, again, is about taking the next step in modernizing the work that we do here and protecting investors. It's about ensuring that we have a securities and investment environment that creates confidence and ensures that when Manitobans step forward to make an investment, they know that they're doing it within a jurisdiction that has the governance and rule sets in place to keep them safe, keep them protected.

Manitoba's been counting on us to continue doing the work to modernize the Manitoba Financial Securities Agency and we're going to keep doing the work to protect investors in Manitoba.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** At a time when Manitoba is falling behind in growth and losing investment to other provinces, this bill fails to address the barriers that are holding our economy back.

So my question, honourable Speaker: Why has this government brought forward a bill focused on minor tax adjustments instead of real reforms to attract investment and create jobs?

**MLA Sala:** The premise of the question is wrong. This government is moving Manitoba forward in countless ways, ways that we didn't see happen for many years under the members opposite, whether it's building the infrastructure we need, our schools, NEWPCC and beyond, or whether it's investing adequately and finally in those important services that Manitobans expect, like having access to good quality health care and having access to good quality education for their kids.

We're doing that work. We're making those important investments while we drive the economy forward. We're very excited about the work that our Premier (Mr. Kinew) has done in putting the Churchill project on the map, very excited about the huge amount of economic growth we've seen under the leadership of our Premier and our incredible minister for jobs. We're going to keep doing that work.

This bill is about, again, taking the next steps forward to modernize the securities legislation in the act—

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** Minister's time has expired.

No further questions?

## Debate

**The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar):** The floor is now open for debate.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** Deputy Speaker, I'm sure many members of the House are sick of hearing me speak today. This is quite a number of bills that were being debated today, but I appreciate everyone here to listen to being able to put some words on the record as it relates to Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act.

So, first and foremost, I want to emphasize that it's important that we emphasize, as Manitobans and as a governing body, the protection of the public is of the utmost importance. And Manitoba has gone through a series of modernization in recent time of the financial services sector as the minister also spoke to in his opening comments.

\* (16:20)

We know that the financial services industry is a highly regulated industry at both the federal as well as the provincial levels, to ensure that financial services companies, agents, mutual funds are able to meet their financial obligations to their customers.

This bill that's been brought forward today makes a series of overdue updates to Manitoba's securities framework to reflect how modern financial markets already operate in today's day and age. And while investor protection measures are included, they largely codify expectations that are generally standard practice, rather than introducing any new or meaningful safeguards.

Customers, policy holders, Manitobans put their trust in these companies to provide important coverage in times of need such as protecting us and our families from financial risk or helping us cover costs if something unexpected happens, whether that be property, business, casualty, life insurance just to name a few. And, as a customer, the public has specific rights and responsibilities, and understanding those rights is incredibly important.

So, as mentioned, at its core, this legislation is really about catching up. It reflects how financial markets already do operate today and aligns Manitoba with standards that other jurisdictions already have in place for years. There's very little in this legislation that positions Manitoba as a leader, but rather it's just a series of updates, overdue updates.

As mentioned earlier, the financial services industry has gone through significant transition over

the years. We have seen significant technology advancements such as e-commerce make its way into the industry; it's made insurance more competitive; and consumers have more choice than they've ever had before, as is the case with other industries.

Insurance sector is no different. Customers are demanding quick access to information—click of a mouse, easy access to smartphones—thus leading to more consumer choice, which has essentially forced the financial services industry to modernize in order to keep up with those changing times.

The financial services industry has been faced and spoken about challenges that consumers have been faced with over the years and how that is impacting how they manage their own risk and protections. We've certainly seen extreme weather events, an aging boomer generation looking for expanded coverage or expanded insurance and market volatility and economics uncertainty that faces all Manitobans, just to name a few. We also know that AI, artificial intelligence, has recently entered the landscape in recent years with risk modelling and forecasting, and as this even continues to develop and expand, so will its capabilities and usage within the financial services sector as well.

So, more so than ever, is the emphasis and the need to protect the public as these types of new technologies continue to grow. As mentioned, the financial services industry is already a very highly regulated industry at both provincial and federal levels, and there are questions regarding the significant expansion of regulation making authority that is being proposed within this bill.

As we've seen numerous times since this NDP comes to power, they are leaving more and more up to regulation and leaving more details out of the bill and legislation that comes to the scrutiny of these Chambers and the Manitoba Legislature.

So this really leads questions on how will these powers be exercised, what safeguards are going to be in place and how will Manitobans know those decisions are being made fairly.

So, since so much is being left up to regulation, it does raise real questions about transparency and how those decisions will be made. So there are significant questions on who is governing these processes within this bill, what accountability 'mechanisms' are in place, how is fairness ensured.

So, with that said, I will want to—I do want to emphasize again that protection of the public is most important and what should be the overriding goal of

this legislation, this bill that we are speaking today with The Securities Amendment Act. But without clear guardrails, Manitobans are left wondering how fair, accountable and transparent these processes will actually be. They—Manitobans also need to understand if decisions are being made through binding processes, what rights do they retain as it pertains to courts or recourse if something does go wrong.

But, as mentioned earlier, that this legislation does largely reflect continuing the process of modernizing oversight over the financial services sector. This modernization did begin under the former PC government, and so this is the next step in what that modernization needs to look like and what that transformation—what that process of transformation from the past few years.

#### *The Speaker in the Chair*

So, as mentioned, this bill does make a series of overdue updates to Manitoba's securities framework to reflect how modern financial markets already operate. And while investor protection measures are included, they largely codify expectations that are and should already be part of standard practice.

So with those few remarks, Honourable Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to this bill and I look forward to speaking to the next bill.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** So the question before the House is second reading of Bill 46, The Securities Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

#### **Bill 14—The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act**

**The Speaker:** Now, as previously announced, we'll go on to Bill 14.

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for the Manitoba public service):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 14, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les divulgations faites dans l'intérêt public (protection des divulgateurs d'actes répréhensibles), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

**Motion presented.**

**MLA Sala:** Our government is committed to a strong, accountable public service, one where people can raise concerns and know they will be protected. When someone steps forward to report serious wrongdoing, whether it's harassment or a threat to our environment, they are doing the right thing. They deserve a system that protects their identity, shields them from retaliation and treats their concerns seriously. And that's exactly what Bill 14 delivers.

Last year, we undertook a comprehensive statutory review of Manitoba's Public Interest Disclosure Act, or PIDA, with the support of leading experts. I was pleased to table that report in December of 2024. It produced 19 clear recommendations to modernize and strengthen Manitoba's whistle-blower protections. And now, with Bill 14, we are acting on that advice.

At its core, PIDA provides a safe pathway for public servants to disclose serious wrongdoing and protects them from reprisals. Bill 14 strengthens that framework by improving how disclosures involving senior officials are handled, by expanding safeguards against reprisals, by reinforcing the role of the Ombudsman and by enhancing transparency across government.

First, we're tightening the rules for disclosures involving senior officials to prevent conflicts of interest. Under these amendments, if a disclosure touches the designated officer or another senior leader within a public body, the chief executive must take responsibility for receiving and handling that disclosure. And if the disclosure involves the chief executive, it must be referred outside the organization to the Ombudsman or to the Clerk of the Executive Council when the chief executive is a deputy minister. The chief executive will not be involved in any matter that concerns themselves.

Second, we're making it clear that employees can still make a protected disclosure even if an agreement attempts to restrict them. With these amendments, we're ensuring that NDAs, or confidentiality clauses, can never be used to silence people who come forward.

Third, we're expanding protections against reprisal. These amendments expand the circumstances in which reprisals are prohibited, including when an employee is suspected of making a disclosure, refuses to participate in wrongdoing or is otherwise complying with the act.

\* (16:30)

We're shifting the burden of proof in these cases, giving employees a fairer and more balanced system,

one where they're not left to carry the weight of proving what happened to them. And the Ombudsman will now have clear authority to help resolve reprisal complaints within public bodies, ensuring that concerns are addressed quickly and impartially.

Finally, the bill improves transparency across government by requiring public bodies to report annually on the number of disclosures they receive, including reporting when zero were received. Consistent public reporting helps us understand how the system is working, supports continuous improvement, and keeps the focus where it should be: on integrity and accountability.

Honourable Speaker, these changes enhance fairness and transparency in how concerns are handled and resolved. That is how we build confidence in the public service. And that's how we ensure people can come forward safely and without fear.

This bill reflects what experts told us. It reflects what employees told us. It reflects what Manitobans expect, a public service that is ethical, professional and worthy of their trust. We asked for advice, we listened and we're now taking action.

Bill 14 keeps Manitoba on a strong path, protecting those who speak up, ensuring that senior officials are accountable to a fair process and making sure that no agreement can be used to prevent someone from reporting wrongdoing. It strengthens our institutions and supports a culture where doing the right thing is supported by the law and backed by this House.

Honourable Speaker, I look forward to the support of all members and to further discussion of this bill at committee.

Thank you.

### Questions

**The Speaker:** A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed in the standard rotation and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is open for questions.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** As this bill is in response to recommendations and a review made by the Ombudsman, I'm wondering if the minister can speak to whether all recommendations have been— from the Ombudsman have been included in this legislation, and if not, which ones and why?

**Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister responsible for the Manitoba public service):** As I did mention earlier, we are really proud to have worked with a expert third party, which was Lynn Romeo, who did a lot of, I think, important work consulting not just here in Manitoba, with various organizations and entities, but across Canada.

As the member would know, a number of recommendations were brought forward, and this bill brings forward a number of those recommendations.

We do continue to work with the Ombudsman and meet them—with them regularly in relation to this bill at the officials level. We did consult with the Ombudsman throughout the development of this bill as well. And, again, we're proud to be taking important steps to ensure that whistle-blowers in Manitoba are given the protections that they deserve.

**Mrs. Stone:** The minister didn't exactly answer my question. I'm wondering which specific recommendations that the Manitoba Ombudsman outlined in their review were not enacted or included within this bill that we're speaking about today.

**MLA Sala:** Again, the bill brings forward a number of really important changes that are going to help ensure that whistle-blowers in Manitoba are protected when they come forward with information. We've outlined a number of those changes here today. Again, these are steps that hadn't been taken for many years under the members opposite. We saw those that were wanting to, perhaps, come forward with important information that weren't really in a position to do so or, perhaps, at too great a risk as a result of their failure to act to bring in these further protections that we've seen brought in in other jurisdictions.

This is about taking, again, that next step and encouraging those that have important information to share that information and to do that in a way that will ensure that they're—they don't have to fear reprisal and that they know that they can bring that information forward. That's important, again, to the functioning of public service and—

**The Speaker:** Member's time has expired.

**Mrs. Stone:** I asked this in bill briefing and didn't get a really clear answer, but what public bodies are covered by this legislation? Does it cover all special operating agencies, third parties that 'delivel'—deliver services, and does it include the Crown corporations like MPI and Manitoba Hydro?

**MLA Sala:** I appreciate the question.

So the change will affect all organizations that fall under the scope of PIDA. So that would include public sector organizations, government departments, Crown corporations, the independent offices of the Legislature and government bodies.

**Mrs. Stone:** Does this legislation also apply to public sector unions?

**MLA Sala:** Well, again, it impacts all those organizations that fall under the scope of PIDA, and I've outlined, the organizations that are impacted in my former answer, and happy to do that again if the member wishes.

**Mrs. Stone:** Referring to my previous question from the previous bill we are speaking about, this legislation does put the onus on the defendant to prove, essentially, wrongdoing rather than the complainant. Wondering if the minister could please explain why that shift is being brought forward within this legislation.

**MLA Sala:** Appreciate the question.

And that change reflects the power imbalance that often is in place when individuals come forward with information about leadership or individuals in organizations who are at higher levels of that organization. Often those individuals have way more information to substantiate a claim or to refute a claim and are in a much better position to provide the information necessary to speak to the concern brought forward.

So this is about ensuring that the onus is where it belongs, which is with those individuals who can bring forward, again, the information necessary to speak to a concern that might've been raised.

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** An employee can make a disclosure despite any agreement to the contrary, according to this bill. Can an independent contractor, someone who is not a direct employee of the government but is an agent or contractor for the government, also make a disclosure in the public interest despite any agreement or contract that says otherwise?

**MLA Sala:** Yes, this is about, again, taking the necessary steps forward after years of inaction to start modernizing to ensure that those individuals who bring forward concerns are protected and don't have to fear reprisal or, you know, being put in a position that would ultimately lead to their—the loss of their employment.

So we've got, I think, a very important set of changes we're proposing here, Honourable Speaker. These reflect a number of the recommendations that

were brought forward by Lynn Romeo, the expert third party that we brought in to do the important work of looking across Canada and engaging with Manitoba-based organizations to understand how we need to modernize, and, ultimately, this reflects the work that we're doing to do just that, to better protect whistle-blowers in Manitoba.

**The Speaker:** No further questions?

### Debate

**The Speaker:** Is—the floor is open for debate.

**Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland):** I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to put a few words on the record regarding The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, and I do want to start by saying and something I think that everyone on the—in this House agrees on, that Manitobans expect honesty and transparency from the government, and they expect that if something does go wrong, that there is a safe way to speak up. Accountability and transparency should be a priority for not just government but all members of this House.

Manitobans expect that public institutions operate with integrity, and they expect that when something does go wrong that there is a clear, safe and effective process in place for concerns to be raised and addressed in a timely manner.

So a strong whistle-blower protection framework is an important part of that system, and legislation like this is intended to provide public servants with that mechanism to disclose wrongdoing and ensure that those disclosures are properly reviewed and to protect individuals from reprisal when they do come forward. So when we debate legislation of this nature, it's important that we recognize both the intent as well as the impact of what's being proposed.

It's unclear why the minister, through this legislation, has not implemented every single one of the recommendations that the Ombudsman did put forward in their review, and we did not get a clear answer from the minister during that Q & A session as to why certain recommendations were left out of this bill that he has brought forward.

You know, in terms of history, Manitoba's Public Interest Disclosure Act was originally enacted in 2006 to encourage and protect individuals who report significant and serious wrongdoing within the public service. Throughout time, the legislation has been expanded to include more protections.

\* (16:40)

This is why, in 2018, the previous PC government brought forward amendments to strengthen that act, and those amendments were designed to modernize the legislation and respond to lessons learned over more than a decade.

So, again, we're being faced with a review, a five-year review for the Ombudsman of whistleblower protection and that's why this bill is being brought forward today, is to implement those recommendations that come from those five-year—regular five-year reviews.

And during that time, when the PCs did expand the legislation, expanded protections to include additional public sector entities such as school divisions, local government districts and ensuring broader coverage across the public sector, at the time it clarified the roles of designated officers and the Ombudsman in the disclosure and investigation process, helping to ensure greater consistency and accountability.

Again, through this bill, those—that clarification of roles is being clarified even further into what those designated roles and designated officers are within a certain department. At the time it strengthened investigatory powers and reinforced the confidentiality of whistle-blowers, which is essential to ensuring that individuals do feel safe coming forward.

So, on this side of the House, as history has shown with the protections and the strengthening that the former PC government did in 2018, that protections of public servants and their ability to come forward in a safe way and have their complaints dealt with in a timely matter is incredibly critical.

And with that said, Honourable Speaker, as I am slowly losing my voice, I will close my comments on this bill for today.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any further speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 14, The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

**The Speaker:** That concludes the business we had on order. What is the will of the House?

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, we are so efficient these last two days.

Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.?

**The Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

I'm not sure what the change is, but I'm rather enjoying you all getting along.

So, the hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.



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