



**Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature**

**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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

<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
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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

Thursday, April 16, 2026

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

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

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

Please be seated.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

##### House Business

**Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader):** Honourable Speaker, pursuant to rule 34(8), I am announcing the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. King). The title of the resolution is Streamlining Business Permitting and Investment Attraction by Establishing a Single-Desk Investment Office.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Johnson:** And to conclude House business, or continue House business, could you please call debate on Bill 211, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act.

##### House Business

**The Speaker:** It's been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Lakeside. The title of the resolution is Streamlining Business Permitting and Investment Attraction by Establishing a Single-Desk Investment Office.

#### DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

##### Bill 211—The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act

**The Speaker:** And, on further House business, we will now proceed to debate on second reading of Bill 211, The Budget Bill Public Accountability Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Tuxedo, who has one minute remaining.

**MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo):** Honourable Speaker, it is important to remember the financial situation our government inherited. The previous PC government left our province with a deficit of nearly \$2 billion, and our government is working to repair that damage. Through meaningful consultation and responsible planning, we've built Budget 2026 shaped by Manitobans' voices. We're rebuilding health care, lowering costs for families and making our communities safer.

Manitobans measure accountability in simple ways. Can they see a doctor when they need one? Do their children have the support they need in school? Do they feel safe in their communities? We listened to Manitobans before the budget was written, and we've listened—and we continue to listen to front-line workers. We've listened to communities across this province. Manitobans deserve results, and that is—

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

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** It is a pleasure to get up to put a few words on the record for Bill 211. I know that members who have spoken to this previously have noted that

part of being an effective government is not only come committee time having—Manitobans have the opportunity to have access to their government. And I know that Manitobans right now see and feel the difference that a listening government is making in our province, that a collaborative government is making in our province and that a government that really considers the needs of all Manitobans when making policy decisions; Manitobans are feeling the difference.

And, Honourable Speaker, Bill 211, while it does frame out something that, on paper, seems like it could be a valuable thing, it is entirely redundant. We have—for our budgeting purposes, we have prebudget consultations where we invite everyday Manitobans, each and every person, to come forward to name their priorities, but I will speak as a minister responsible for a portfolio as to the processes that exist already within government structures. And we work collaboratively every day with stakeholders, with institutions, with non-government organizations, with partners who ultimately help deliver the services that Manitobans rely on. We work collaboratively every day to make sure that those systems are strengthened, that there is a—effective feedback loop and that we are being as responsive as possible to the needs of Manitobans.

And, Honourable Speaker, Bill 211 would add unnecessary—an unnecessary framework into a system that has served us well for many, many, many years. There are many ways that governments are held to account, and, as we know, ultimately, the greatest test is at the ballot box. And, as we saw with the previous election in 2023, Manitobans held the previous government to account, and they voted on the decisions of the previous government with their ballots, and they showed the members opposite that the priorities that they had brought forward and the initiatives that they had prioritized were not in line with the will of Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, every government uses the words of enhanced transparency and creating more opportunities for people to engage, but I'm very proud to say that our government has done that: extensive budget consultations, open door policy for everyone. And I—in preparing for this morning, I was thinking about how could we possibly build policies or budget that is reflective of what Manitobans need without having those relationships and without having those opportunities for dialogue.

\* (10:10)

And, you know, perhaps in the past things were done differently, and I would say that the policies and

budgets that came forward in the past were reflective of perhaps a political ideology and not necessarily the needs of Manitobans. But I can say with confidence that our government is truly listening to Manitobans, and bringing forward initiatives like the universal meal program for students is a direct result of listening to Manitobans. Looking at things like the cost of groceries right now, directly a result of listening to Manitobans.

And, Honourable Speaker, while Bill 211 feels like, you know, another opportunity, perhaps, for the opposition to get in the way of us doing the good work for Manitobans, it is not. When we look at what can actually change the well-being of Manitobans across the province, this isn't it.

For an opposition that spends a lot of time talking about red tape and bureaucracy and streamlining systems, Honourable Speaker, this does exactly the opposite. And I hope that the members opposite know that they have opportunities each and every day to have conversations with their constituents and with businesses, with institutions in their areas, educators, folks who are providing social services, folks in the health-care profession—they have opportunities each and every day to talk to those Manitobans about their priorities. And it's their role to bring those priorities here to this House.

We each have an obligation to a collection of citizens that are all very diverse in their needs, in their ethnicity, in culture, in education levels. And our role here as legislators is to ensure that all of those diverse needs and opinions are reflected in the work that we do here. That's the job. And Bill 211 just adds an unnecessary layer of process to the work that is already being done here.

And I sincerely hope that when members go back to their communities, when they're speaking to folks who reach out to them, that they relay with confidence that their job is to represent those views here. You know, as I go door to door, Honourable Speaker, to talk to neighbours—who, to be very frank, don't agree with everything that we're doing and haven't agreed with everything the previous administration has done—but when I explain to folks that our role here as legislators is to ensure that we are making the decisions that set the tone, that create the legal framework, that assert budget priorities for the entirety of Manitoba, people start to understand that and can appreciate that while government can do a lot of things, government can't do everything, and that we as legislators are here to make sure that as many people

as possible do better under the rules that we create and the priorities that we set forward.

And, Honourable Speaker, 211—Bill 211 doesn't necessarily point towards any specific enhancements to any particular policy or budget item overall. And so when we're thinking about the priorities of Manitobans, which we know are health care, affordability, education. We—*[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Cable:** The members opposite are having a hard time with me, and this is not new or different in this Chamber. And I know it's difficult because maybe there hasn't—it's hard to be in a room with this many women, because the tables that he's been around haven't included them. *[interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Cable:** But, Honourable Speaker, we know that the processes that exist in this Chamber exist to ensure that there is accountability. They exist to ensure that there are opportunities for debate, there are opportunities for the public to engage.

And, specifically around budget, we do have the prebudget consultations but, more importantly, Honourable Speaker, we have every single day in our roles as elected officials to engage with Manitobans, to ensure that we are having conversations that allow us to know what the priorities are, that we are responsive when a Manitoban reaches out and says, I don't know how to navigate this system or I have a loved one who I'm concerned about. That is—I hope that everybody in this Chamber understands that that is the deep consultative process that happens each and every day.

And, Honourable Speaker, I just want to thank the minister—pardon me—the Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and his team for doing such a phenomenal job with the budget this year. I'm proud to stand here and in full support of the initiatives that we've brought forward.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park):** Bill 211, it claims to deliver budget accountability, but, coming from the PCs, the audacity is stunning. Unlike our listening government, our listening NDP government, with prebudget consultations across the province, we've done online surveys for our budget, the health-care listening tour, hearing hundreds of front-liners and public safety summits, you know, we're tackling

the root causes of crime and they—that they ignored for seven and a half years.

We brought an independent auditor to clean up their 1.97 million-billion-dollar deficit mess. The auditor called their spending reckless, noting they bet on one-time revenues that won't repeat. They cut health, education, raised costs, skyrocketed crime. Now they want mandatory committee hearings after silencing voices.

This bill is performative fear from a party that never listened in the first place. Their hypocrisy, it starts there. Health care, well, they left us with an overwhelmed system: ER closures, nursing shortages, a billion dollars underspent, rural ERs shuttered despite pleas from communities and front-liners.

We heard those voices on our listening tour and we delivered reinforcements. They ignored them. They cut positions. They misled on ICU capacity during COVID. The auditor exposed their fiscal fantasy.

Bill 211 would delay our urgent staffing and investments with red tape, Honourable Speaker; 10 hours of hearings per budget bill, adding taxpayer costs, for what? Duplicating our proactive consultations? They had years to engage. Instead, they devastated care. Now, they pose as accountability champions. Manitobans remember who broke the health-care system.

Education—they gutted funding. We remember bill 71, borrowed \$720 million for corporate rebates while schools lost one in five operating dollars, Honourable Speaker; sold off social housing, ignored residents who ended up homeless. Parents and students begged for support, but they tuned them out.

Honourable Speaker, we listen; prebudget input that has shaped Budget 2026 for classrooms and for families. Their deficit, they left us picking up the pieces.

\* (10:20)

And a huge shout-out to both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education, who have really done such heavy lifting for folks in our province to get our health-care system and our education system back on track. And we know there's a lot of work to do, but we're doing that work, Honourable Speaker.

And, you know, we—this bill really risks stalling the fixes that we've been doing, Honourable Speaker. It's—the partisan hearings, and it turns real engagements into checkboxes, and they mismanaged these

systems for years and now they want to slow us down even more. So I just think the gall, after failing kids and vulnerable Manitobans for so long, and they have the audacity to come in here and say this.

So crime, costs and deficit hypocrisy—crime skyrocketed under them. I worked as a correctional officer; I saw folks coming into the system more and more and more, and it was very disheartening because as folks were piling into the jails, we were not reinforcing our staffing complement, so it put a lot of staff at risk. And, you know, we were public servants, and the government at the time was not a very friendly government to workers. So our calls to government for staffing reinforcements just were not heard, and it was very frustrating.

So, thankfully, there's a government now who is making up for that lost time and the underinvestment. The cuts and inaction, it really left communities unsafe, Honourable Speaker. And I'm so proud that we held public safety summits with law enforcement and families to really hit the true root causes of crime. And they blamed victims, they ignored the rising rates of crime and the costs, hydro hikes after bill 36, renters' tax credit they axed, corporate welfare, like a million bucks to Polo Park owners. Like, just baffles me that they put this forward.

Their \$1.97-billion deficit was no accident. Reckless bets, as the auditor said. We're rebuilding and we are listening and we are taking action; the gas tax cut, PST off groceries, the hydro bill freeze. Bill 211, it adds more bureaucracy, it delays affordability, it costs taxpayers more. They never consulted meaningfully, which tracks, and now they demand rigid processes. Accountability, Honourable Speaker? They fled it.

Our results, Honourable Speaker, we listen before we make decisions. We have—we do have consultations. I'm proud to consult with constituents before making, you know, important decisions that affect the community. It's essential, and it's important to have meaningful consultations with all stakeholders, you know. Folks who are for what you're proposing, and also to hear the voices who are against, and it provides an opportunity to maybe come together and find a way through the issue that you're facing. It's remarkable how progress is made that way.

And—but this bill, it really, you know, it's redundant, and which would delay even further folks getting access to the meaningful care and the meaningful services that they so desperately are asking for. Honourable Speaker, we really do listen, and this

informed Budget 2026 for the health rebuild, lower costs, safer streets. Bill 211, it's just a partisan trap. Extra expense, it's slowing what Manitobans need right now.

The PCs, Honourable Speaker, they lost trust. Ignoring voices, leaving messes. Why trust them on budgets after their deficit disaster? Why ignore rural ER pleas? Why cut school nutrition? Why sell housing, dooming residents? Why do those things, and then come in here claiming to be champions of these things? It's just mind-boggling to me.

Honourable Speaker, we deliver results. It is an honour to work with this great team here, and I wholeheartedly reject this symbolic stunt of a bill. Manitobans deserve a listening government, not PC hypocrisy.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

### *French spoken*

**MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface):** Toujours être un plaisir d'avoir Saint-Boniface reconnu dans la Chambre ici ce matin. Et c'est un honneur d'avoir la chance de discuter avec tous ceux présents ce projet de loi deux-milles-onze.

Mais je crois que c'est encore un plus grand honneur de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui est d'ailleurs déjà à l'écoute des Manitobains et des Manitobaines, un gouvernement qui déjà consulte la population en français comme en anglais.

Et je reviens toujours au rêve de Louis Riel, de créer une province qui est bilingue, autochtone et multiculturelle. Et quand on parle de consultation tangible, le projet de loi deux-milles-onze manque vraiment son coup. Encore une fois, les Conservateurs présentent un projet de loi qui est un peu ridicule, surtout quand on prend compte — c'est leur passé de sept années et demie de manque de consultation, manque d'action, de coupures dans plusieurs domaines.

Le Projet de loi 211, il faut dire et je vais continuer à le dire, manque son coup.

Et contrairement à l'ancien gouvernement pitoyable progressiste-conservateur, notre gouvernement néo-démocrate est à l'écoute. C'est important de noter qu'un gouvernement qui est prêt à agir doit être à l'écoute des Manitobains et des Manitobaines, de façon réaliste et de façon tangible. Le Projet de loi 211 n'est simplement pas réaliste.

Pendant des années, nous avons rencontré et entendu des Manitobains lors de plusieurs consultations prébudgétaires à travers la province. Grâce à ces consultations, nous avons éclairé le Budget 2026.

Nous avons également invité les Manitobains à participer à un sondage en ligne sur le Budget 2026, rendant la participation plus facile et accessible. Et c'est important de noter que le Manitoba est une grande province. Le Projet de loi 211 voudrait voir 10 heures de consultation par projet de loi, mais comment effectuer ces consultations avec une province qui est d'ailleurs si géographiquement étendue ? Il faut absolument le faire, des fois, de façon en ligne comme on l'a déjà fait.

D'ailleurs, nous avons entrepris une tournée d'écoute en matière de soins de santé en 2023 et 2024, comme à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface, au cours de laquelle nous avons entendu des centaines de travailleurs de première ligne parler de leurs expériences et préoccupations.

Nous avons réuni des membres de la communauté des forces de l'ordre et d'autres organismes lors d'un sommet sur la sécurité publique. Et nous avons discuté des priorités communes et des causes profondes de la criminalité.

Le Projet de loi 211 ne prend pas en compte tous ces domaines importants.

Notre gouvernement d'ailleurs a fait appel à un vérificateur indépendant pour nous aider à redresser la situation après les dépenses imprudentes et la mauvaise gestion du gouvernement progressiste-conservateur précédent.

Et donc, en revenant au Projet de loi 211, nous avons déjà en place plusieurs consultations tangibles avec les Manitobains. Et j'aimerais revenir sur le mot tangible. De mettre en place des consultations noir et blanc, sans vrai objectif, et juste dire qu'on va le faire pendant 10 ans de n'importe quelle façon, ce n'est pas réaliste. Les Manitobains s'attendent à de la transparence et de la reddition des comptes dans la gestion des finances publiques.

\* (10:30)

Le Projet de loi 211 prétend offrir cela en exigeant des audiences en comité pour chaque projet de loi d'exécution du budget. Soyons clairs, la reddition des comptes repose sur un engagement réel et des actions rapides. Ce projet de loi risque de ralentir des mesures urgentes et de faire double emploi avec des processus déjà en place.

Premièrement, j'aimerais être plus spécifique : le Projet de loi 211 est redondant. Notre gouvernement consulte déjà largement les Manitobains avant la présentation du budget. Nous avons tenu des consultations prébudgétaires à travers la province, donnant à des milliers de Manitobains l'occasion de contribuer à l'élaboration du Budget 2026.

Les Manitobains ont également été invités à faire part de leurs priorités au moyen d'un sondage en ligne, rendant la participation plus simple et accessible sur l'étendue de la géographie de la province du Manitoba. Nous avons aussi lancé la tournée d'écoute sur les soins de santé, rencontrant des centaines de travailleurs de première ligne pour comprendre leurs défis et leurs priorités.

Nos vastes consultations – et j'aime beaucoup dire le mot vaste – ont mené à de véritables décisions politiques, et non à des gestes symboliques.

Deuxièmement, le Projet de loi 211 entraîne des retards – ou pourrait entraîner des retards que les Manitobains ne peuvent pas se permettre. Des délais obligatoires et un nombre minimal d'heures en comité peuvent sembler anodins jusqu'à ce qu'on considère ce qui est en jeu.

Le projet de loi budgétaire comprend souvent des mesures essentielles pour maintenir le personnel dans les hôpitaux, financer les salles de classe et soutenir nos familles. Ajouter des obstacles 'préciduraux' signifie ralentir des investissements cruciaux en santé et en paperasse inutile, ce qu'on appelle en anglais souvent du « red tape ». On n'en a pas besoin de plus.

Alors, les Manitobains ne veulent pas des – de paperasse inutile. Ils veulent des actions rapides et tangibles.

Troisièmement, ce projet de loi entraîne des coûts sans valeur ajoutée. Dix heures – 10 heures – d'audiences publiques obligatoires en comité pour chaque projet de loi budgétaire signifient des coûts supplémentaires en personnel, en logistique et en administration, tous assumés par les contribuables. Et pour quoi faire ? Pour quoi faire ? Pour répéter des discussions qui ont déjà eu lieu dans le cadre de consultations, de sondages et d'échanges sectoriels. La véritable reddition de comptes repose sur une écoute précoce et continue, et non sur l'imposition d'un processus rigide, uniforme et redondant.

Le Projet de loi 211 risque également de transformer des audiences en comité en champs de bataille partisans, ce qu'on aimerait éviter, plutôt qu'en véritable espace d'échange. Lorsque la participation

du public est limitée à une seule étape du processus législatif, elle peut devenir symbolique, une simple formalité plutôt qu'un dialogue réel. Notre approche est différente. Nous écoutons avant de prendre des décisions, et non après.

L'Honorable Président, nous intégrons les commentaires dans les politiques, pas dans les éléments de langage. Prenons l'exemple des soins de santé. Après des années de compressions et de fermetures des services d'urgence sous le gouvernement antécédent, nous avons promis de renforcer le système, et nous avons tenu parole. C'est grâce à une écoute proactive et non redondante.

Ces décisions ont été façonnées par des échanges avec le personnel de première ligne lors de tournées d'écoute en santé. Alors, un exemple tangible de vraie consultation.

En comparaison, le Projet de loi 211 ne garantit pas de meilleur budget ; il garantit des délais plus longs, ce qu'on n'a pas de besoin. Grâce à nos consultations significatives, nous avons veillé à ce que le Budget 2026 reflète les priorités des Manitobains et des Manitobaines.

Alors, pour suivre la consultation d'un gouvernement qui écoute de manière proactive – c'est ce que nous faisons – le choix est clair : nous mobilisons largement et nous agissons avec détermination. Et nous ne comptons pas adopter ce Projet de loi 211, qui est redondant, ridicule, et si j'ose le dire, loufoque.

Merci, l'Honorable Président.

### **Translation**

*It is always a pleasure to see St. Boniface recognized in the House here this morning, and it is an honour to have the opportunity to discuss bill 2011 with everyone present.*

*But I believe it is an even greater honour to be part of a government that is already listening to the people of Manitoba, a government that is already consulting the public in both French and English.*

*I always come back to Louis Riel's dream of creating a province that is bilingual, Indigenous and multi-cultural. When it comes to tangible consultation, bill 2011 really misses the mark. Once again, the Conservatives are presenting a bill that is somewhat ridiculous, especially when one considers their track record of seven and a half years of a lack of consultation, a lack of action, and cuts across many sectors.*

*Bill 211, it must be said and I will continue to say so, falls short.*

*Unlike the pitiful former Progressive Conservative government, our New Democratic government is listening. It is important to note that a government ready to act must listen to Manitobans in a realistic and tangible way. Bill 211 is simply not realistic.*

*For years, we have met with and listened to Manitobans during numerous pre-budget consultations across the province. Thanks to these consultations, we have informed Budget 2026.*

*We also invited Manitobans to take part in an online survey on the 2026 budget, making participation easier and more accessible. It is important to note that Manitoba is a large province. Bill 211 would require 10 hours of consultation per bill, but how can we carry out these consultations in a province that is so geographically vast? It is absolutely essential to do so online, at times, as we have already done.*

*In fact, we undertook a listening tour on health care in 2023 and 2024, including at St. Boniface Hospital, during which we heard from hundreds of front-line workers about their experiences and concerns.*

*We brought together members of the law enforcement community and other organizations at a public safety summit. We discussed shared priorities and the root causes of crime.*

*Bill 211 does not address all these important areas.*

*Our government has, in fact, engaged an independent auditor to help us rectify the situation following the reckless spending and mismanagement of the previous Progressive Conservative government.*

*Returning to Bill 211, we already have several tangible consultations with Manitobans in place. And I'd like to come back to the word tangible. Setting up consultations that are merely for show, with no real objective, and simply saying we'll do it for 10 years regardless, is not realistic. Manitobans expect transparency and accountability in the management of public finances.*

*\* (10:30)*

*Bill 211 claims to offer this by requiring accountability hearings for every budget implementation bill. Let's be clear: accountability relies on a genuine commitment and swift action. This bill risks slowing down urgent measures and duplicating processes already in place.*

Firstly, I would like to be more specific: Bill 211 is redundant. Our government already consults extensively with Manitobans prior to presenting the budget. We held pre-budget consultations across the province, giving thousands of Manitobans the opportunity to contribute to the development of the 2026 budget.

Manitobans were also invited to share their priorities via an online survey, making participation simpler and more accessible across the vast geography of the province of Manitoba. We also launched the health-care listening tour, meeting hundreds of front-line workers to understand their challenges and priorities.

Our extensive consultations—and I really do like the word extensive—have led to real policy decisions, not just symbolic gestures.

Secondly, Bill 211 causes delays—or could cause delays—that Manitobans cannot afford. Mandatory time limits and a minimum number of committee hours may seem trivial until one considers what is at stake.

The budget bill often includes measures essential for retaining hospital staff, funding classrooms and supporting our families. Adding procedural hurdles means slowing down crucial investments in health care and creating unnecessary paperwork, or as we say in English: red tape. We don't need any more of that.

Manitobans don't want unnecessary red tape. They want swift and tangible action.

Thirdly, this bill entails costs with no added value. Ten hours—10 hours—of mandatory public hearings in committee for every budget bill means additional costs for staff, logistics and administration, all borne by taxpayers. And for what purpose? For what purpose? To repeat discussions that have already taken place through consultations, surveys and sector-specific exchanges. True accountability rests on early and ongoing engagement, not on the imposition of a rigid, uniform and redundant process.

Bill 211 also risks turning committee hearings into partisan battlegrounds—something we would like to avoid—rather than genuine forums for discussion. When public participation is limited to a single stage of the legislative process, it can become symbolic, a mere formality rather than a real dialogue. Our approach is different. We listen before making decisions, not after.

Honourable Speaker, we incorporate feedback into policies, we do not just use it for talking points. Take health care, for example. After years of cuts and emergency department closures under the previous government, we promised to strengthen the system, and we kept our word. This was achieved through proactive, meaningful listening.

These decisions were shaped by discussions with front-line staff during health-care listening tours. This is a tangible example of genuine consultation.

By comparison, Bill 211 does not guarantee a better budget; it guarantees longer delays, which we do not need. Thanks to our meaningful consultations, we have ensured that the 2026 budget reflects the priorities of Manitobans.

So, when it comes to following the consultation process of a government that listens proactively—which is what we do—the choice is clear: we engage widely and act with determination. And we have no intention of passing Bill 211, which is redundant, ridiculous and, if I may say so, silly.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

**Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods):** The public deserve an opportunity to present and make representations to all legislation, including any measure the NDP choose to paper-clip to their budget at the last minute.

This public budget accountability bill will help hold governments and the NDP accountable to Manitobans for the spending of taxpayer dollars and all legislative changes undertaken in the budget bill each year. For too long, the NDP have been unaccountable and tried to hide their legislative agendas in the budgetary bills.

Once this legislation passes, the public will get to have their say on the record before any legislative measures can be passed through a budget bill. This will be 'disinc' to the NDP to append non-budgetary items to the bill.

The bill will add a minimum of 10 hours for public consultation at a legislative committee. Accountability is what we are asking for in this budget committee. My constituents in Spruce Woods, I know, want this, and I know every Manitoban wants accountability.

So, like the M-G-A, millions of dollars with no transparency, this is wrong. Manitobans deserve to know where their taxpayers' money goes, and that is why this bill matters.

Thank you.

**MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 211 today, and, you know, we have to understand what this is all about. I mean, we're talking about a bill being introduced here, public accountability act. The bill implements the budget, must be referred to—that's the BITSA bill—must be referred to a standing committee that allows members of the public to speak.

Now, you know, we have committees for all the bills that are brought into the Legislature. And Manitoba is the only province in Canada that has the system that we have right now. If you go to Ottawa, they don't have open representation for bills. They have experts only, and a limited number of them who make a presentation on a bill.

Manitoba is the only province, for the last 150 years, that allows an open hearing on all bills, where people can just walk off the street, essentially—

**An Honourable Member:** Except BITSA.

**MLA Maloway:** —and make a presentation. And the member says, well, except BITSA.

Fact of the matter is that the rules have changed over the years. When I first got here, we were making 40-minute speeches. And then, after 10 years or so, the parties agreed that we would reduce them to 20. Now we've got them down to 10. The rules change.

And we used to sit here all summer long. We used to sit here all night long. And that was not good for people's health. And all members came around to that understanding that we had—we should change all of this stuff. And we did. And we did it just before, you know, the year before the election in 2016, when—that's the time rules were changed here, because nobody knows who's actually going to win the election.

\* (10:40)

And the last rule changes in '16 basically came up with the system we have today. There's really no changes. And it was accepted that it's more favorable to the government. But the rule system in Ottawa is very favourable to the government. It's got limitations on how long you can speak to bills, when bills have to be dealt with—it's very arbitrary.

We are about as loose as you could—we were. We had a situation here where one MLA—and, in fact, it happened, and the members know this—one MLA could shut this whole place down—and did, routinely.

So, in the interest of having a more livable system, we developed a system that we have today. And, generally speaking, nobody really wants to change this when the chips are down.

Now, let's talk about the BITSA bill and the omnibus bills that we've seen. Like, one of the worst I've ever seen is Stephen Harper back 15 years ago in Ottawa; a 700-page bill—BITSA bill—an implementation bill adding all sorts of stuff—unbelievable stuff. We spent hours looking for all the hidden gems in that bill. And it was a minority government. And the bill passed at the end of the day.

Going back even further, in 1988, we had a minority government here. And Gary Filmon put all kinds of stuff into that budget bill. And, you know, we didn't like it—but as a minority government, and our survivability depended on it—and we voted for it.

But these are all kinds of things—there's things around here that we don't like but we put up with. And the opposition should understand that—that there have been occasions where both parties have introduced items that are not really properly put into the budget implementation. But let's not be so pure about it that we're going to somehow bite around the edge here and say that introducing this little bill is somehow going to change the world here.

I think the proper course of action here—then the Conservative House leader knows this—is to go to the Rules committee and make a suggestion that we make this change. This could have been done. We have the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who was essentially the architect of the current rules. He and Dave Chomiak did this a year before the 2016 election. They set up the rules we have right now, not knowing who was actually going to win. And the rules have been operating just fine for all these years since then. If anyone—either side—wants to make a change, then make the suggestion to the Rules committee. Go to your House leader—the House leader is, you know, paying great attention to this and can take it up with the Government House Leader (MLA Fontaine) and we can negotiate this process through here.

But this is just an additional committee hearing on the BITSA bill. That's what it is. And if it was such an important issue, then why wasn't this resolved back in 2016? Why wasn't it resolved there? Why did the member for Steinbach not bring this up as some, like—I think he's a bit clairvoyant. I know him well. He can see the future. He should have been able to foresee this. The architect of the rules should know that in the

future, this was going to become the issue of the day—that here we are in a Thursday morning, debating something that should have been foreseen, that should have been put in the rules. It wouldn't have been a problem. Dave Chomiak wouldn't have been opposed to this. The Liberal member wouldn't have been opposed to this, and this would have been put in the rules.

So what are we doing here 15 years later—10 years later, I guess—talking about what should have been resolved then? And can be resolved. And can be resolved just by a rule change. Like, let's get it done. You can do it today. Just get together, pass the rule and by the end of the day, poof, we've got ourselves a committee. But that isn't what's going on here.

The opposition have to fill the time. So what are we going to do? Well, let's have a bill. Let's have hearings on BITSA. Why do we want to hear on—have hearings on BITSA? Well, we don't like BITSA. We want to slow things down.

But, fundamentally, we've all agreed that we're going to pass bills by certain dates. We have, like, a deadline day, I think, maybe even today.

**An Honourable Member:** Monday.

**MLA Maloway:** Yes.

But if you don't like these rules, then let's just go back to the old rules. Let's sit here all summer. Let's sit here all night. Let's here—be here all night. Oh, we had great parties here in those days. We want to get back to that? Let's be—let's go back to that, right?

So, you know, I just think that it's fine, we've got—we all have our roles on each side of the House. We have our roles to play here and we will complain about the situation as it stands right now. We don't like it, we want to introduce a bill, we want to make this change. But there's more fundamental things we could be doing than chasing an issue like this, I would think.

And, you know, do I agree that we should be having omnibus bills when it comes to BITSA? No, I don't. I didn't like it in Ottawa with that 700-page bill. That was not really a fair thing to do. And I didn't like it when Gary Filmon did it in '89, '88, even though I went and voted with the caucus for it. We didn't like it. And so I understand, the opposition don't like this. This is not, like, making them happy.

So, you introduce a bill, you feel good about it. We spend another hour of legislative time and staff time on this issue. And to resolve what? So, if the opposition is going to be the government someday,

they're going to go and change this, right? I hope to be around to see all this happening.

Anyway, thank you, Mr.—Honourable Speaker.

**Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families):** I'm pleased to put a couple of words on the record today in respect to Bill 211, the budget bill accountability act.

The honourable member from Kirkfield, in his address, talked about the audacity of members opposite. And I want to echo that, the audacity of the Manitoba PC caucus to waste everybody's time in the Chamber today, debating Bill 211, you know, under the guise of transparency and accountability on BITSA.

I'll remind folks watching our esteemed debate this morning, but, more importantly, I'll remind all of the new folks in the PC caucus, the class of 2023—because they don't have the unfortunate privilege of having participated in their failed, callous, uncaring, couth, inept, ridiculous, previous failed government, so they don't know. So they're reading from their notes and they're like, yes, this seems like a really good idea. Let's put this on the legislative agenda for the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, not knowing that they themselves, while they were in that miserable seven and a half years, not once called BITSA to committee—not once.

So it is, you know, an incredible amount of audacity for members now to stand up and start feigning like, we want transparency, we want accountability, when they failed to do it themselves. That's not the only thing that they failed to do, I mean, you know, I only have eight minutes left. We could be here, like the member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway) saying, you know, talking for 40 minutes on what the Manitoba PCs failed to do during their reign of seven and a half years of a failed government.

\* (10:50)

But one of the things that they did, and I say this because I know that the member for Spruce Woods (Mrs. Robbins) just gave, in her address, for a couple of minutes, she talked about, like, that they're there to hold the government accountable and try and make sure that they're transparent. Here's what her failed government did, and I know that the member for Spruce Woods is just new, so she doesn't have the benefit of knowing what her colleagues did previously. In the spring session of 2021, the PC government, the failed PC government at the time, introduced—I can't remember, and, you know,

somebody can correct me, I think it was like 71 or 72 bills at the time.

And it was quite a heavy legislative agenda; you know, there was all kinds of things in that. There was bill 64, there was, you know, all kinds of things. There was the ag gag bill that they put forward. And—what they did was they didn't distribute 19 bills for months. So as the Government House Leader here, as you know—no, I'm sorry, as the Opposition House Leader, we were trying to map out government House schedules and looking at bills. But I had no bills to offer any of my caucus because they hid those bills; not for a mere couple of days, because I know members are going to say, oh, you didn't distribute bills. Literally, there's a fundamental difference between not distributing bills for one or two days versus weeks on end.

And again, as the Opposition House Leader, I would have to go outside and do media scrums day in and day out saying like, where are these bills? Why aren't the, you know, Manitoba PCs, why aren't they sharing these bills?

So, you know, I appreciate that the member for Spruce Woods (Mrs. Robbins) is getting up and demanding accountability and transparency from our government. We are so transparent and accountable to Manitobans. There's never been a more transparent and accountable government to Manitobans than this government right here, than these amazing folks that sit on this side of the House, led by our Premier (Mr. Kinew) who, I'll remind everybody, is the most popular Premier in all of Canada for like, what are we, almost three years now, he's the most popular Premier.

And I know that members opposite get themselves all riled up when we talk about the Premier's popularity and then they start to throw out personal attacks to the Premier, to an Indigenous man, to a Manitoban in this Chamber. It's because they could never, they literally could never be what the Premier is. They could literally never be what the Deputy Premier (MLA Asagwara) and the Health Minister is. They're literally—they could never be any single member of our caucus on this side. They wish that they were even a half percentage of what we are on this side of the Chamber.

We are a listening government, we are a capable government, we are a caring government, we're an understanding government, we are a transparent government and we are an accountable government. And so I want to just put on the record as well, you know, it's unfortunate that members forget their time in

office, or don't know about their time in office and so get up in the Chamber and put erroneous facts on the record.

But I will also share that, you know, the BITSA, these are the rules of the House. These are the rules of BITSA. We are allowed to do it, just in the same way that they did it when Brian Pallister was premier and Heather Stefanson was premier.

And luckily those are the rules of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, because one of the things that members opposite were trying to do, and I'll remind folks, was they were trying to block our bills, if folks will remember that. And in that mix was try—an attempt to try and block the establishment of a Seniors' Advocate. That's what members opposite were trying to do. So when they get up in the Chamber this morning and they start talking about accountability and transparency, where is the accountability and transparency at trying to block the establishment of an independent office, the independent officer, a Seniors' Advocate? Where is the transparency and accountability on that?

Luckily, because the rules of the House are what they are, we were allowed to establish the Seniors' Advocate in BITSA. Because again, members opposite clearly showed that they don't care about seniors, they don't care about Manitobans who had been advocating for years under their failed government to establish a Seniors' Advocate.

And I know one of them, I don't know which one that is, talked about how they had a minister dedicated to seniors. Let's be honest, whoever said that, he was a disaster. Come on. Let's be honest. If we're going to be transparent and accountable to Manitobans, let's all just be honest and say that that minister was an utter disaster. He couldn't string two sentences together. He did absolutely nothing when he was in that ministry—nothing. There's nothing that we can see that he actually did when he was that minister. He was a—you know, a fairly nice guy as far as the Manitoba PCs go. He was just a vanilla, pedestrian, uninspiring man in the Chamber, I suppose. But to say that he did anything when he was the minister, come on. My good colleague across the way knows that that's not true.

Even himself, he's smiling right now because he's sitting there thinking: the Minister of Families is right, the Government House Leader is right. That wasn't what Manitobans needed because he didn't do anything. And while he was the minister for seniors, there were Manitobans advocating for a Seniors' Advocate, which just goes to show he wasn't very good.

So, again, luckily, the rules are what they are. We have the ability to put things when you have members opposite that are trying to thwart the government legislative agenda and trying to make Manitoba into a province that serves and is accountable for all Manitobans, including seniors and whatever it may be.

I will just end with this. Again, the audacity of the members, because they may not know that one of the things that Brian Pallister did in 2019-2020 in BITSA was he tried to hide in BITSA taking away the constitutional and legislative rights of children in care to sue the government for the children's special allowances.

So I would encourage members opposite that if they want to talk about accountability and transparency, they might want to start by apologizing for Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson and the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) and all of those failed individuals when they were in government. Because the very thing they're asking us to do today, they did, exponentially and multiple—

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

**Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery):** It is an honour to rise today to put a few comments on Bill 211, the budget bill accountability act.

Honourable Speaker, Manitobans want accountability and transparency in how their government manages public finances. Bill 211 claimed to deliver that by mandating committee hearings for every budget implementation bill. But let's be clear: Accountability comes from meaningful engagement and timely action.

Honourable Speaker, this bill risks slowing down urgent measures and duplicating processes that already exist.

First, Bill 211 is redundant. Our government already engaged Manitobans extensively before the budget is introduced. We held prebudget consultation across the province, giving thousands of Manitobans a voice in shaping Budget 2026.

Manitobans were also invited to share their priorities through an online Budget 2026 survey, making participation easier and more accessible. We launched the health-care listening tour, meeting hundreds of front-line workers to understand their challenges and priorities. We conveyed a public safety summit with the law enforcement, community leaders

and agencies to address crime at its roots. Our extensive consultation informed real policy decision instead of symbolic gestures.

\* (11:00)

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

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

## DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

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

**The Speaker:** The hour is now 11 a.m. and the time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution No. 5, and the—brought forward by the honourable member—oh, sorry—is resolution No. 5, calling on the provincial government to increase personal tax exemption.

The debate is standing in the name of the honourable member for McPhillips, who has nine minutes remaining.

**MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips):** Thank you to my wonderful colleagues for that warm, warm welcome. I think the last time I spoke to this resolution, we were still debating Budget 2026 in this Chamber, and obviously since then, that vote has happened.

And a lot of meaningful measures to help Manitobans with affordability, particularly at this time of increased pressures, that those measures are going to be helping Manitobans feel a little bit better about their day-to-day lives and the expenses that they incur, including at the grocery store, where I believe as of Canada Day, I think the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was saying Manitobans will no longer be paying any PST on groceries at—[interjection] That's right—which is very significant.

And we saw earlier this week, and that I had this—I'm assuming that this resolution here is with the intent of talking about affordability for Manitobans and keeping more money in the pockets of Manitobans. But we saw earlier this week, the federal government, Mark Carney—Prime Minister Mark Carney, announcing a federal relief on the gas tax. And I wonder who did that first? Where'd he get that idea from?

You know, it's like all good things come from Manitoba, and truly Manitoba is leading the way, head and shoulders above any other jurisdiction and

it's very nice to see the federal government take Manitoba's lead in removing the excise tax from fuel.

So in layman's terms, you know, when you're going to the pump, you're not going to be paying the taxes that I think will help Manitobans feel a little bit more relief. Particularly given, I'm going to use unparliamentary language here, but Donald Trump's stupid war in Iran and the impact that that's having on everyday Canadians, everyday Manitobans, a very real impact.

And our government obviously campaigned on removing the gas tax for Manitobans and that was a promise made and promise kept. And that had a very meaningful and significant impact in Manitobans—in Manitoba, in reducing the costs for everyday drivers, but not only that, it had a measurable impact on inflation in Manitoba; a measurable impact on inflation during a time of very high inflation and the pressure that was putting on Manitoban families. So these measures have real meaningful impacts on the day-to-day lives of Manitobans. The gas tax relief did, the permanent cut—the Manitoba's permanent gas tax cut also has a meaningful, measurable impact.

Despite what the members opposite might feel, I know maybe that they are a little bit more fortunate than maybe others to not notice that impact, but I can assure you that working Manitobans in my constituency and constituencies across Manitoba do feel the impact and the benefits of those relief measures.

And so with the PST being removed from groceries, that's just another step and another way that this government is responding to affordability in Manitoba. And I think I said this the last time I stood up here and I believe the Premier (Mr. Kinew) alluded to this in one of his speeches, but oftentimes governments will say, well, there's not very much that you can do on groceries.

But this government has been elbows up and kicking and punching and finding every way possible to try to fight food inflation and the prices that we're paying at the grocery stores, whether it's the bill introduced to increase competition in the grocery sector, which I believe, and I'm assuming some members opposite would believe, that more competition is a good thing.

And I believe that's true for the grocery sector as well. So increasing more competition between grocers to ultimately lead to better prices for consumers. That's one step that our government has taken, and the other step here is removing the PST from groceries.

So, you know, like the saying is, where there's a will, there's a way, and I think Manitobans can be—rest assured that this government is always looking for ways to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

And it doesn't just stop there. An NDP government cut the payroll tax for businesses, right? And I've heard the opposition, even when they were in government, talk a lot of good game about doing that. But it was actually our government that delivered on that. And I had lunch with a business leader two weeks ago, and we were talking about that. And they said, you know what? This government is really pleasantly surprising the business community here in its response to the needs of the business community, taking a measured approach.

And I think that is something that can be said about Budget 2026. It really was a budget for everybody. There was something in the budget for everyone: obviously, more jobs, lower costs for Manitobans and better health care I think are, obviously, the pillars of the budget. But it does come down to trying to make life more affordable for everyday Manitobans and trying to find ways to respond to the needs of the electorate.

And we talk about a whole host of measures to help reduce the impacts or the pressures on Manitobans, but you also have to grow the economy. Which is why I'm always super excited to hear about Churchill and super excited to talk about Churchill and was very excited to see Prime Minister Carney and our Premier meet earlier this week and have substantive, good conversations about the future of Churchill. Which, I don't think it's—I don't think it would be hyperbole to say, but it is generational, the potential of Churchill and what it could mean for Manitobans. Really unlocking this potential for economic growth right here in Manitoba and creating access to global markets from right here in Manitoba. And we know how important the ports of Vancouver, Rupert and Montreal are for those respective jurisdictions. And how important—and the very high potential of Churchill for Manitoba. So it's incredibly important that the Premier is obviously prioritizing Churchill for Manitoba because, as the Premier says, the economic horse pulls the social cart. And so that work continues.

I could tell you what isn't responsible, and that is trying to put a—almost a billion-dollar hole into Manitoba's finances here and ballooning the deficit here, which is, in effect, what this resolution is calling for. And I said this the last time I stood up here, but

this really feels like something that was cooked up by a political hack, apparently an Alberta Liberal political hack, but really with no regard for Manitoba's fiscal health. And it deserves mentioning that Manitoba has the lowest deficit number in any jurisdiction in the entire country here, which is a remarkable feat. That is a remarkable feat, and shout-out to the Finance Minister of getting there without making deep and disturbing cuts to public services that we saw on the other side during their tenure in government. So to be able to manage our finances here in Manitoba responsibly but also deliver measurable policy for Manitobans, to help Manitobans with affordability and continue making investments in health care, I really think that this government's got its finger on the pulse, is heading in the right direction, but doing it responsibly.

And I'm going to say again that this PMR is not responsible. And we're hearing a lot of this come from the opposition—is irresponsible policy propositions to try to get attention in the media. And it just lacks any sort of seriousness, I think. Which is—it is a little bit sad because ostensibly, as fiscal conservatives, you would imagine that more thought would be given to this. But I guess fiscal conservatism does not exist on the opposite side of the House. But I can tell you this government is very responsible with Manitoba's finances and will continue to be.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

\* (11:10)

**Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz):** I want to start off by thanking the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) for bringing this important—introducing this important resolution here, calling on the provincial government to increase personal tax exemption.

This resolution could have a big impact right across our province. It can hit families right at their own kitchen table. When it comes to the affordability crisis, this can touch every corner of our province, and we all know that the affordability is hitting everyone, every demographic, in some capacity.

We see people that are working hard in our province. We have a—Manitoba is a province that, you know, we work hard here in many of our constituencies and still fall behind. People are struggling to put food on the table, struggling to pay heating bills, struggling to pay property taxes. Despite all of that, the provincial government has made life more expensive for most families, if not all families here in Manitoba. They were promised relief by this

NDP government, and instead what they've got are higher taxes and higher payments and an affordability crisis; that's what this government has delivered.

They, the NDP, cancelled the indexation of the basic personal tax amount and income tax brackets. This is sort of a quiet but very real tax increase that will cost every Manitoban more and more each year. This NDP government—again, this isn't unusual, but they broke their promise in—not to raise taxes. We've seen that. They've increased school taxes, they've increased property tax. By ending the indexation they're pushing more Manitobans into higher tax brackets without those Manitobans actually earning more in real terms. And that is not fairness, that is called bracket creep, and the consequences are real and these consequences hit real families in our province.

We have over 55 per cent of Winnipeg families and property owners—that's more than 130,000 households here—are now paying more. Property taxes and other taxes have risen by nearly 20 per cent since this NDP government took office. At the same time, Manitobans are now facing some of the highest taxes in western Canada, while also dealing with the highest inflation across the country. Grocery prices alone have risen by nearly 6 per cent. Families are being squeezed from every direction and we see this at the grocery store. We're all grocery shopping, we all see that price increase.

*Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Just, you know, recently as within the last couple of weeks I was out grocery shopping and there was a family ahead of me who went to pay for it—there was just a small amount of groceries, but unfortunately they weren't able to take care of that bill at the end of it. So the family was on their way out and I decided to pay it forward so that this family could have something to go home with rather than leave the grocery store empty-handed. So that was first-hand experience in seeing how this is hitting real people, real families. And I know sometimes we often pay it forward, maybe when the—in the drive-through where we pay you know for the Tim Hortons coffees, so to speak.

But this is grocery, this isn't just a cup of coffee. This is what is feeding a family in our province here, and honourable Deputy Speaker, this is—actually it's getting worse. According to the 2026 MNP Consumer Debt Index, half of Manitoba families are just \$200 away each month from not being able to pay their bills. Think about that: \$200 a month from

insolvency. You know, this can happen when we have simple car repair; maybe the month of January cost you a higher heating bill. These are all unexpected expenses that Manitobans often feel in our province, and it only takes one of those to push a family over the edge. That is not sustainability here for Manitoba.

Now contrast that with all that was done previously, when our PC government in the past took real action to help families. We left families with more on their kitchen table so that they could buy and afford the groceries. We raised the basic personal tax amount from \$9,134 in 2016 and to \$15,000 in 2023. That single change removed over 75,000 lower income family households from paying provincial income tax entirely. That is a significant, significant savings for a lot of these individuals and these families.

We also indexed the personal—the basic personal amount and tax brackets every single year, ensuring that Manitobans weren't punished by inflation. We believed then but we also believe now that government should take less so that families can have more and keep more on their tables. This leaves more for their groceries. It leaves more for their home utilities. It means more for their growing families. It means more for maybe extracurricular activities to keep their children busy and active.

Today, we're putting forward a bold and practical solution to help Manitobans get ahead, and thanks to the member of Midland, again, for bringing forward this important resolution. And we are calling on this government to raise the basic personal amount to \$30,000, meaning that every Manitoban can earn \$30,000 before making—paying a single dollar in provincial tax. That would mean more than 350,000 Manitobans would pay no income tax at all.

Everyone earning under \$30,000 would keep every dollar they earn. And for those earning between thirty and forty, they would pay very little. That means they are keeping more money on the table for their family, making a real difference in families' lives.

A two-income family earning \$40,000 could save \$3,000 a year. That is real money going back to the families, the real families living here in our province, and that is not an insignificant amount to many families. That would allow them to get ahead rather than falling behind.

By raising the basic personal amount to \$30,000, Manitoba would become one of the most competitive places in the country to live, work and start a business. It would put more money back into the pockets of the

people who have earned it here in our province, keeping that money here in our Province of Manitoba.

So here today we urge the NDP government to support a meaningful and impact change to raise the basic personal amount to \$30,000 and give Manitobans the relief that they need here today in our province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** I want to take a moment to thank all my colleagues for the support that I got for the Turban Day and wish everybody a happy Sikh Heritage Month. And I want to special mention the Speaker's staff, yourself, for your support for letting me deliver my member statement in my mother tongue, Punjabi language. That created history in Manitoba. I'm honoured to do that.

And I want to mention this, that at the moment when I'm speaking, children in schools in Punjab, many private schools and other schools, are fined for speaking their own language. So we are creating history. Let's keep working together to create an inclusive society, honourable Speaker. Thank you so much.

I'm here to debate the PMR brought forward by the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), and I want to say thank you for creating this opportunity to debate this important matter. This PMR actually is calling on the provincial government to increase the personal tax exemption.

\* (11:20)

I disagree to this proposal, and my colleagues join me disagreeing to this proposal because this is not well thought. It's brought forward by the member for Midland, but it lands nowhere. It lands in the middle. It's not well researched. It's not well thought. It's not visionary. And it does not help those who need help in our province.

The idea is that let's increase the personal tax exemption to \$30,000. To all Manitobans listening, I want to simplify the idea. The PCs are asking that let's spend \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' money and distribute it among all taxpayers.

So why this idea is not great is because it does not help those who need the help. PCs have tried in the past to do the same when they increased the personal tax exemption from \$10,000 to \$15,000. That was a little jump.

So how did it impact the taxpayers? It did not help, actually, those who needed help. The top 10 per cent of taxpayers in Manitoba received an

average tax savings of 1,300-plus dollars. As compared to the bottom 20 per cent, how much would they save? They just saved \$37. What does that mean? That means that we are stealing money from regular Manitobans and giving it to those who don't need it.

There are better progressive tax policies that we are adopting. And this \$1.1 billion could be used to do many, many more things.

And when I look at the way this PMR is being presented, I think this is on the floor for the third time. I think this is for the second or third time. So, actually, they're not calling or urging on the provincial government to do this. They're actually insisting.

And when they insist on a policy that is not well thought, it reminds me about my childhood. I want to share this story with you all. My colleagues might be listening. This is an interesting one. I was in grade 12, and my parents had saved some money for my university education. But I was a child at that time. I was irrational. I was demanding irresponsible spending. What I was demanding for at that time was a motorcycle. A motorcycle—Hero Honda motorcycle was very, very famous in India at that time. And I demanded that motorcycle. Why? Because friends in my school had motorcycles. Their parents could afford it. And my parents said: Look, kid, we have saved this money for your university education.

This is a real story. And if you want us to spend this money on Hero Honda motorcycle, we can do that. But then you won't have access to university education. We don't have more money. So the better spending would be to invest in your education, so when you grow up, you can buy a car.

I was—you know, now I feel that I was bringing a PMR to the floor, and my parents were a government. But my parents were a government like NDP government. They were a responsible government, and they sent me to the university. And I spent years in the university learning, developing myself, growing as a responsible citizen and got selected as assistant professor in the same university. That's when I realized that the spending plan that my parents, like the NDP, had was the better plan.

But the thing is, I was not visionary enough, like the PCs now, to think 35 years ahead of time. If my parents bought me a Hero Honda motorcycle, I wouldn't be the first turbaned MLA to sit in the Speaker's chair. And I wouldn't be debating this bill, because I would be depreciating that machine and just sitting there where I was.

So we need a vision. We need a vision to spend responsibly, right? So now, think: the PCs are insisting us to spend \$1.1 billion on this flat tax cut. We are building four schools. The Education Minister is sitting here, the Education Minister is leading the way to build our education department. Four new schools. I think it's \$118 million. Imagine how many schools can we build spending \$1.1 billion; how many bursaries can we give to university students; how many social programs we can run for that \$1.1 billion; how many health-care aides, home-care workers, doctors and nurses can we hire spending that money.

And when I was listening to members opposite talking about this resolution, I listened—a few things that I have a problem with. When they talk about high earners in Manitoba, they term them as successful people and hard-working people. I'm offended. I'm offended because that means that those who are working on minimum wages, a single mom working minimum wage, two jobs at a time, supporting her family, isn't she successful? Isn't she hard-working?

Why are we dividing Manitobans like this? Doctors working in Manitoba, doctors working in Canada, they are not working for money. They are working to serve Canadians. Their salary and benefits is a by-product of that kindness. So I think the way members opposite think about success and progress and hard work needs to change. We need to bring people up. We need to, you know, fill the gap between rich and poor.

But this policy does just opposite, stealing money from regular Manitobans and filling the pockets of rich people, which is a PC policy. I strongly disagree to it and I reject this idea.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

**Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside):** I want to thank the member from Midland for bringing this common sense resolution forward, something that I think this side of the House has a lot more of than the government side of the House. And, you know, if you sit down at a kitchen table almost anywhere right now in this province, the conversation sounds pretty much the same. It doesn't matter whether it's a young couple starting out, single parent trying to make it work or a senior watching every dollar. People are doing the math in their heads and we know the numbers just aren't adding up.

We've got both parents working, some of them working two jobs, two or three incomes in a family, and they're still fighting to get ahead. We know groceries are higher than they used to be, rent and mortgage payments keep creeping up, fuel costs more, utilities cost more, everything's costing more, and yet at the end of the month there never seems to be quite enough left over. People are working hard, doing everything right, and still feel like they're stuck in place.

\* (11:30)

So here's the part that really sticks with people, honourable Deputy Speaker: just when they think they might be getting a little bit ahead, this government reaches a little deeper into their pockets.

This conversation matters in a real, everyday, practical sense. At its core, this is about a simple idea: people should be able to keep more of what they earn in the first place. Not take it off them, run it through a government program and then send a small portion back later with a press release attached to it. People see through that. They know the difference between real affordability and something that just looks good on paper.

Right now, the basic personal amount in Manitoba sits at about \$15,780. That is the amount someone can earn before the province starts taking any tax. We are saying that needs to change. We're saying it should be raised to \$30,000. And let's just speak plainly about what that means. It means if you are working a minimum wage job or close to it, you should not be paying provincial income tax at all. Not a little bit. Not through bracket creep. Not quietly through the back door. None. Because if someone is earning at that level, every dollar matters. This is grocery money. It's gas money. It's the difference between making rent or falling behind.

This is not complicated. It is about fairness. Right now, what is happening is that people are getting small wage increases just to keep up with the inflation. Because indexation has been removed, they're just getting pushed into a higher tax bracket anyway. They're not better off in real terms. They're paying more tax. That is not a policy people can see, but they feel it. They feel it every time their paycheque doesn't go quite as far.

When you combine that with rising property taxes, rising costs across the board and all other pressures families are facing, it adds up. You start to hear people say things like, I'm doing everything right,

so why am I falling behind? That's the question in front of us, and the answer, at least in part, is what we're asking too much from people who are already stretched thin.

Look, governments like to talk about affordability programs. They like rebates, credits, one-time measures. And sure, those things can help at the margins. But there's a better way to approach it. Instead of taking the money first and giving it back—a bit back later, why not just leave it in people's pockets to begin with? Why not let someone see that extra money on every single paycheque, week after week, month after month, instead of waiting for a cheque or a credit down the road?

Because when money stays with the person who earned it, it gets used where it's actually needed. It goes to groceries, goes to our kids' activities, goes to paying down debt, goes to real priorities that families are juggling every day. It gives people something that is in a—that is in very short supply right now: a bit of breathing room.

We have seen this approach work before. When the basic personal amount was increased by the PC government in 2023, more than 75,000 Manitobans were taken off the provincial tax rolls entirely. And I know my colleague from Agassiz had mentioned a lot of this earlier, but it's common sense. It's statistics. It's—just think about it: 75,000 people who no longer had to pay income tax. It actually happened, honourable Deputy Speaker.

And what we're talking about now is building on that success. Doubling the basic personal amount to \$30,000 would extend that relief even further. It would make sure that low-income earners, minimum wage workers and many seniors are not taxed on income that they need just to get by. And it would do something else that matters just as much: it would send a signal about what we believe, that work should be rewarded. That if you get up every day, go to your job, do your part, the system should not make it harder for you to get ahead. That government should take what it needs to provide essential services, but no more than that, especially when people are struggling.

Because at the end of the day, it is not about numbers on a page or lines in a budget. It's about that kitchen table conversation again. It's about whether there's enough money to cover the basics without stress. It's about whether a parent can say yes to a school trip instead of no. It's about whether a senior can turn the heat up without worrying about the bill.

And it's about whether people feel like they're moving forward instead of treading water.

If we are serious about affordability here in this House, then we have to start there. Not with short-term fixes that are going to end and make things worse when they do, but with something simple, direct, meaningful: letting people get more of what they earn in the first place. Honourable Deputy Speaker, that's what this resolution does, a common sense resolution in an—at a time of an affordability crisis, where people are struggling to get ahead.

I have a young family at home, two trades workers, one in plumbing and the other in heating and air conditioning, and they make what I would think was a decent wage when I was their age, but it's not enough for them to get ahead. It's hard for them to make their mortgage, to make their car payments.

As I said, my youngest boy turns 17 today and he doesn't know whether he'll ever be able to afford to buy his own car. And, you know, this generation seems to depend on their parents a lot more nowadays than we ever did growing up, financially.

And the bank of mom and dad is starting to get a little tighter nowadays too. So we need to come up with more ways to make life more affordable for people here in Manitoba and keep the money, hard-earned money that they earn in their pockets.

And, you know, growing up on the farm, dad always said, as farmers, and I think most farmers would say the same thing: The more money you make, the more you spend. And all that money goes back into our economy. It helps our small businesses, our local businesses.

So keeping that money in Manitobans' pockets, they're going to spend it in their communities. They're going to spend it on their kids' activities like hockey and baseball and volleyball and basketball. Whereas, right now, there's so many parents that can't—that don't have a choice. They can't put their kids in those activities.

So I want to thank you for the opportunity to put some words on the record today for this, again, common sense resolution brought forward by the MLA from Midland. And I would encourage this whole House to support it.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** It's really ironic that we're getting some advice from members opposite. After seven and a half years of a

government left a \$2-billion deficit that we, as government, had to deal with and we see the importance of cost of living continuing to rise, and we're all for it, and being an individual who comes from the rural perspective and I understand these guys want to come out with rules and regulations that they feel is the appropriate thing moving forward.

I want to emphasize the seven and a half years of that failed government, what they've done in a number of areas that made life challenging financially for those people to continue. *[interjection]* That's one coming up.

But the first one I want to acknowledge is the fact the jail closure that happened in Dauphin, Manitoba. And let me describe how that came about. I was very good friends with the mayor of Dauphin. He called me up, as I was a reeve in the Mossey River municipality. He says, Ron, please come out because the Justice minister from the Conservative Party is coming out, making an announcement and we need the support of the rural municipal governments—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I'll just remind the member that, even in referring to yourself, you have to refer to yourself by your ministerial portfolio or constituency.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I apologize for that mistake and I'll try not to make it happen again.

But the point I'm trying to make here is that we're listening to the importance of being conscientious using the money wisely. But I'll tell you, that day, what happened in Dauphin, Manitoba, of the announcement of the Justice minister that showed up in Dauphin, sat at the city hall table, says, we're closing the jail and 80 jobs are gone, along with spouses and businesses.

\* (11:40)

And he didn't even have the audacity to come to a public meeting that night that I attended and I listened to 250 people at that meeting, saying, why can we not have an opportunity to make life more affordable in a transition of building a new facility. But no—showed up in town, got in the car fast enough, almost got a speeding ticket leaving Dauphin because he was in such a rush to get out of Dauphin, Manitoba.

And I want to say to members opposite, do you think that was appropriate of being conscientious as government helping out the rural communities? And maybe let's talk a little bit about the Crown lands. And let me tell—

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

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** I know. I know it's been a long-awaited discussion and I'm really pleased that I have the attention of members opposite because obviously they weren't at a meeting. Same scenario—there's a common denominator in the subject here. They had a—Ste. Rose, Manitoba—they had a meeting, Crown lands representatives, no Ag minister—I forget who that was, but there was two of them—they were flip-flopping back and forth trying to take a headache away from the decisions that the Ag ministers were making that time from that government.

So there was 250-plus producers in Ste. Rose, Manitoba. I have to—I think I have to really be sympathetic to the Crown land representative that maybe has a stake in the political warfare moving forward that was attending this meeting. And he took a lot of heat, unfortunately, because of the fact that the decision that that government made—and the point I'm trying to make here, Deputy Speaker—has been 'deprimental' to the young family farms that exist today.

And you want to talk about making life affordable? It became—the size of the cheque gave the opportunity of some large individual corps coming in and taking away future reality of young producers in our province, in Manitoba, to expand to make a living at it is. And we continue to work backwards on that philosophy.

But the basic point here, Deputy Speaker, if they are here saying today, let's make life more affordable, what happened seven and a half years ago, that same template of an idea was not used to look after the rural opportunities of rural economic development. And I often say, they sit back here and they're kind of chattering, trying to make a big spectacle out of it. I take those two subjects very seriously, based on the subject of economic growth, making life affordable for what it is today.

And now they turn around—honourable Deputy Speaker, let's go back on some of the records of—since I'm on a bit of a rant about what they brag about. Seven and a half years of their government was a pure spectacle of being the right type of an accounting firm that they brag themselves to be. So \$2 billion is a challenge that we as government inherited from them and we continue to deal with those opportunities and we want to work with those people.

Also, I want to say that definitely their association with the member—or probably the president—often makes things a little bit more challenging for us as

well. And I know, being an Agriculture Minister, I can relate to the fact that we continue to work with our neighbours to the south for the betterment of our government and our province in Manitoba.

But I want to share some of the latest opportunities. What we did in our budget of 2025 was—obviously, members opposite don't want to hear all the great things that we are planning to do, introducing probably the largest capital investment in Manitoba's history of highways of \$3.7 billion towards Manitoba. But also, more importantly, providing unemployment opportunities for those people that choose to not have—more than ever before.

So we're investing private sector through the Port of Churchill. And I want to tell you, Deputy Speaker, the opportunity—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** —of the Port of Churchill—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** —is unbelievable. In my previous time as Agriculture Minister—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I—thank you, I appreciate it. I would welcome the minister to bring comments back to the PMR around personal tax exemptions.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** My apologies, Deputy Speaker.

Well, there is no doubt that these—our government is working with the individuals that are in tough situations. Obviously, as I said early, grocery prices, price of fuel, but you know what? That is what this government, the Province of Manitoba, was the first province to have a reduction of the fuel prices of 10 cents a litre or 12 cents a litre.

And we are very proud, and, obviously, as mentioned by the previous speaker, we had, you know, the federal government actually felt that that was a great opportunity and they're almost bringing it into fruition as well. But you know what? At the end of the day, we continue to work with the people and we know the importance of housing. *[interjection]* Obviously, the members opposite are heckling and feel like they've done nothing wrong, but maybe it's a bit unfortunate.

I think it is a very serious situation, not only in the city, but also in the rural. The Province of Manitoba, and we are a responsible—*[interjection]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** –government. We will work with everyone to make it more affordable as best as we can.

And I think, at the end of the day, Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand up and talk about what historical, what that government did for seven and a half years—or better said, maybe, what they haven't done for seven and a half years, to make things more affordable for us in this province of Manitoba.

And I'm very proud to say, as Agriculture Minister, I'm here standing up for rural Manitoba and all of Manitoba, first and foremost.

Thank you for the time, Deputy Speaker.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I move on to the next speaker, I'd just like to welcome 21 students from Iqra Islamic School, accompanied by Mrs. Ojo and Mrs. Shukri. They are—their school is based in the constituency of Union Station.

Welcome.

\* \* \*

**MLA David Pankratz (Waverley):** I am really honoured to stand up again and, you know, I want to just give another shout-out to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) for putting some really strong words on the record here today that particularly seem to rile up the opposition.

I don't know why they were calling relevance on the cost of living for farmers in this province over and over again. I know that the Minister of Agriculture takes care of them. I'm sure that their constituents would be fairly disappointed with that behaviour when he was talking about Crown lands, for example, specifically.

So I'm really honoured to be able to stand up and speak today on this policy. You know, I was thinking as we were coming in here, it feels a little bit like 2022 all over again this morning. Unfortunately, the Jets are going to miss the playoffs for the first time since 2022, and, once again, the PCs are bringing forward reckless financial policy into this Chamber.

Now, fortunately, they're on the opposition benches this time so that they can't do as much damage, but we are here to have a great conversation about the importance of responsible fiscal policy to take care of affordability for Manitobans across the province.

And one of the things that I was thinking that was really glossed over, you know, the PCs, they really glossed over it, they have no clue or no idea what it would cost or how they would pay for it with this policy, right? And the Leader of the Opposition actually said that. And when he actually was speaking about this stuff publicly—that quote that I just read, by the way, was Tom Brodbeck, that wasn't even me, that was a journalist that was speaking about this policy being brought forward by the PCs. And, ultimately, what it would do is it would add an extraordinary amount of debt to our Province.

And this actually brings me to another conversation I recently just had with a constituent, who is new to Manitoba, new to Canada, but quite politically astute, quite involved, pays attention to what's happening here in the province. And, from the recent history and from looking at some of the policy ideas, we were chatting, and I hadn't really given him one direction or another at this point, but he said to me, you know, David, it seems that in every country that I've lived in there sort of seems to be a government that wants to just sort of spend all the money and then someone that sort of tries to fix it, and it seems to me like it's the PCs right now who just kind of want to spend recklessly in this province and then let somebody else clean up the mess later. And we certainly saw that with the deficit that we inherited when we came into government.

So this tax issue that they are bringing forward, or the increase to \$30,000, would ultimately saddle the Province with a billion dollars, maybe more, of debt, which would be taking away from services like health care, like education, like social services.

\* (11:50)

And so the question that I have, which still has not been answered by any member opposite in their words so far, is: What would they cut? Would it be another ER, a Victoria ER, as was in the constituency that I represent in south Winnipeg? Would it would it be nurses and doctor positions across the province? I know the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) wants more and more physicians and nurses here in the province. Unfortunately, the previous governments cut a lot of those positions, and we've hired more than 4,000 at this point.

But, you know, we're going to continue to do that work to make sure that we can staff it up. But we can only do that if we are fiscally responsible, and I'm really proud that we have a Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) here in the province now who is doing

that good work and is being careful with the public purse, and people are appreciative of that. We've lowered our lending costs, which means more money can go towards health care and towards education. We've been able to provide tax relief for homeowners with our homeowners tax—or affordability tax credit, which is going to be going up to \$1,700, which is a significant savings for families on their tax bill at the end of the year.

We also just recently announced that we are going to be making transit free for families across the province as part of this budget, which has been incredibly well received by so many constituents in Waverley that I've spoken to, and across the province, frankly. You know, when young people are going out to work jobs, summer jobs, or trying to make some extra money so they can do the things that they want to do here in Winnipeg, that free transit is going to make a huge difference in their bottom line.

You know, I had a conversation recently with a constituent I sat down with for coffee, just about cost of living in general, and they are—they're renting an apartment. And one of the things that I do want to mention is that there's been a lot of stigmatizing language coming from the opposition when it comes to people who are just sort of trying to get by, by taking shots at people who would find it really meaningful to save a couple of hundred dollars in a month. That is a significant amount of money.

And so, I was speaking to this constituent about the tax credit for renters, and how much of a difference that made for them last year in terms of their ability to get by, to get their groceries, to be able to pay for the things in life. Maybe that little bit of extra amount of money so that they could get their kid into a dance lesson, right? And so these things might be small, and we may be chipping away at them, coming from the opposition, talking about some of these initiatives. But when you start to add this up as a larger picture, what it means is that people from all sorts of walks of life—doesn't matter if you're making a ton of money or you've been really successful and you're really enjoying that now, or if you're really just coming up in the world and you're trying to build up a new small business, or beginning your career as a teacher, right—we want to make sure that you have what you need to thrive in this province.

And so, if we're talking about an over \$1-billion tax plan from this government—and frankly, they still don't know actually how much it would cost. They haven't told us what they think it would cost, or what

it might cost Manitoba—the question always has to come back to: What will that mean for Manitobans as a whole, and what do we lose when we bring an idea like that forward?

You know—so we've talked about the budget a little bit, and my colleague from McPhillips had a really, really strong set of words here, just speaking about the importance of Churchill, because ultimately, this resolution is specifically talking about cost of living and how we can save more money for Manitobans and how we can lift more Manitobans up. And I do just want to briefly mention that this meeting between the Prime Minister and the Premier (Mr. Kinew) was so meaningful on so many different levels for the development of this incredibly important project in Churchill.

It means that we would have access to global markets. We would be building up our economy here in Manitoba. We would have strong new Manitoba jobs for Manitobans. There would be more opportunity and more money going into the system. We could get more health-care aides, we could get more nurses, more physicians, more hospitals, more clinics, better resources for education, making sure that we can continue that good work of supporting the Manitobans who need it the most. And so I was absolutely thrilled to see the agreement that was made between the Prime Minister and the Premier speaking about the future of Churchill and the ports here in Manitoba.

You know, we also know that housing costs are a big pressure for families, and that is exactly why we added things like the home affordability tax credit and the renters tax credit. But it's also about the families who are living in those spaces making sure that they can get to work, right? So when we talk about this affordability issue, child care is a huge piece of that.

And as a part of the budget—which unfortunately, and you know, when I talk about some of these individual policy ideas and the things that we're bringing forward in the budget, it's incredibly disappointing because you start getting down to the details and you realize members opposite voted against this. They said no to the idea of free child care for the people who need it most in Manitoba. Now that is just astounding to me. It blows my mind, honestly, that they would be able to sit there and then vote against getting child care for families and making sure that they have access to that resource so that they can get to a good job and make a good living for their family.

It's also about lowering taxes though, which is something that we have also done, right? We increased the payroll tax exemption threshold, which was really well received from small businesses across the province. And we also did introduce a large middle-class tax cut to help more Manitobans get ahead.

But we also made sure that we did it with the public purse being carefully minded. We're not going to go and spend a ton of money on projects that are going to end up putting us in debt and saddling future generations with that problem for many years to come. We're going to continue to provide support for Manitobans across the board in every way that we can, and we'll keep communicating with you every single day.

**Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East):** I just want to echo some of the comments from our amazing government-side colleagues.

You know, Manitobans are feeling the pressure of rising everyday costs. I know in my own community of Kildonan-River East, that's what folks are expressing to our local team each and every day, and they're so grateful to our Manitoba NDP caucus government team for the best Budget 2026 in all of Canada. A huge shout-out to our Finance Minister and our Premier (Mr. Kinew) and our whole team who works collaboratively across all departments for the work. *[interjection]*

Yes, you had your turn, boys. It's not your turn right now. That's why the Manitobans—

**An Honourable Member:** Boys? Isn't that insulting?

**Mrs. Schott:** —put you in the opposition benches.

Our government has made a permanent cut to the provincial fuel tax. You know, since January 1, 2025, the drivers are saving with a reduced rate of 12.5 cents per litre.

I'll have the public who doesn't actually get to a grasp of, like, the big picture of what's going on in this bizarre Chamber, but the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) has the audacity to, at this moment, imply that me saying boys for folks that identify as that gender is unparliamentary language. While yesterday in committee, he was using the most horrific, destructive, shameful language when referring to folks that are struggling with addiction and homelessness. So really, do not lecture me about unparliamentary language.

So we all took action on our government side to keep essential grocery items affordable. Earlier this year, we froze the wholesale price of certain milk products. And, you know, honourable Speaker, families deserve stability at the checkout and we are acting, we are supporting them.

Each of our government side members is in constant communication with our staff teams that are, you know, the first line of contact for our community members; when we are here, physically showing up each and every day at the Legislature, unlike some members opposite, where their constituents are still looking high and low for them every day and they're coming to our government side offices instead for support.

Whether it's fuel, groceries, housing or child-rearing costs, our government is lowering everyday expenses and strengthening tax credits when return money—and returning that money directly to Manitobans. You know, these measures are part of a broader, responsible plan to ensure Manitobans can afford the essentials.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

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

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 16, 2026**

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