



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 11, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 300—The Winnipeg Foundation
Amendment Act**

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): Honourable Speaker, I present Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation », be now read a first time.

Take two. I move that Bill 300—seconded by the MLA for Transcona—The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation », be read a first time.

Motion presented.

MLA Loiselle: L'Honorable Président [*Honourable Speaker*], today I'm proud to introduce Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act.

For more than 100 years, The Winnipeg Foundation has helped build stronger communities by supporting families, creating partnerships and investing in organizations that improve the well-being of Manitobans. The foundation has always believed in creating a community for all, where every person feels they belong and can thrive.

This legislation will help ensure the foundation continues to reflect the needs of all Winnipeggers and Manitobans by supporting its modernization and accessibility efforts. By digitizing audit reporting, financial information will become more accessible and transparent for the people of Winnipeg. This bill will also remove the requirements for the mayor to sit on the board, supporting the foundation in its goal of remaining as apolitical, inclusive and diverse as possible while continuing its important community-focused work.

Thank you, miigwech, merci, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Further introduction of bills?

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the MLA for Kirkfield Park—

The Speaker: Order, please.

My mistake. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the previous bill? [*Agreed*]

The motion is accordingly carried.

**Bill 301—The Westminster United Church
Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act**

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the MLA for Kirkfield Park, that Bill 301, the Westminster act—church foundation incorporation amendment act, be read for the first time.

The Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo, seconded by the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham), that Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

MLA Compton: Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

For more than a century, Westminster United Church has been an important part of Winnipeg's community life, bringing people together through cultural programming, charitable work and support for families. This legislation makes practical updates to the governance structure of the Westminster United Church Foundation, ensuring continuity and strong accountability moving forward. It also ensures that should the foundation ever be dissolved, its assets will continue to serve the public good through registered charitable organizations.

This bill is about respecting the legacy of a long-standing Manitoba institution while ensuring it has the modern governance tools needed to continue serving the community for generations to come. Our government believes strong community organizations help build stronger communities, and we are proud to support legislation that helps ensure that this important work continues.

Thank you.

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

The motion is accordingly passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Sixth Report

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Your Standing Committee on—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Sixth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 7, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*

- **Bill (No. 41)** – *The Promoting Inclusion in Amateur Sport Act / Loi sur la promotion de l'inclusion dans le sport amateur*
- **Bill (No. 43)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment and Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules*

Committee Membership

- Mr. EWASKO
- Hon. Min. KENNEDY
- Mr. KING
- MLA MALOWAY
- Mr. OXENHAM
- Hon. Mr. SIMARD

Your Committee elected Mr. OXENHAM as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA REDHEAD as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received during Committee proceedings:

- MLA REDHEAD for MLA MALOWAY
- Hon. Min. NAYLOR for Hon. Mr. SIMARD

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg:**

David Grant, Fort Richmond University Heights Neighbourhood Association

Cory Rybuck, Manitoba Egg Farmers

Tim Comack, Private Citizen

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 41)** – *The Promoting Inclusion in Amateur Sport Act / Loi sur la promotion de l'inclusion dans le sport amateur:**

Glen Wintrup, Private citizen

*Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 43)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment and Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules:**

David Grant, Private citizen

Steven Stairs, Private citizen

Dominic Lloyd, Private citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 43)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment and Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities
Lanny McInnes, Urban Development Institute of Manitoba

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 33)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 41)** – *The Promoting Inclusion in Amateur Sport Act / Loi sur la promotion de l'inclusion dans le sport amateur*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 43)** – *The Highway Traffic Amendment and Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act / Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les conducteurs et les véhicules*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Oxenham: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Social
and Economic Development
Fourth Report**

MLA Carla Compton (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 7, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Sign Languages Recognition Act / Loi sur la reconnaissance des langues des signes*
- **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Child and Family Services Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille*

Committee Membership

- Ms. BYRAM
- MLA COMPTON
- Hon. Min. FONTAINE
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- MLA LOISELLE
- MLA REDHEAD

Your Committee elected MLA COMPTON as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA LOISELLE as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received during Committee proceedings:

- MLA MALOWAY for MLA REDHEAD

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- Mr. SCHULER

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 6)** – *The Sign Languages Recognition Act / Loi sur la reconnaissance des langues des signes*:

Fernanda Vallejo, Latinas Manitoba Inc.
Andrew Stadnicki, Private Citizen
Tricia Amaro, Canada Deaf Grassroots Movement
Richard Zimmer, Private Citizen
Doug Momotiuk, Manitoba Deaf Association
Erika Duguay, Resource Centre for Manitobans who are Deaf-Blind

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 36) – The Child and Family Services Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille:***

Bert Crocker, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 6) – The Sign Languages Recognition Act / Loi sur la reconnaissance des langues des signes:***

Cheryl Smukowich, Manitoba School Boards Association

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 36) – The Child and Family Services Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille:***

Colin Kinsella, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 6) – The Sign Languages Recognition Act / Loi sur la reconnaissance des langues des signes**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 36) – The Child and Family Services Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

MLA Compton: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz), that the report of the committee be received.

* (13:40)

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Supporting Indigenous Girls in Sports

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): Honourable Speaker, sport has the power to build confidence, strengthen identity and create a deep sense of belonging for girls.

Our government knows the impact of sport on healthy outcomes for children and youth. In fact,

increasing access to sport, particularly for low income and marginalized groups, is one of the priority outcomes for our re-established Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.

And a recent report by the Women's Sports Foundation found girls who participate in sports are more likely to take on leadership roles as adults, and the longer girls stay in sport, the more likely they are to lead.

Yet Indigenous girls continue to face systemic barriers to participation, including racism, discrimination, poverty, lack of safe facilities and limited access to programs reflecting Indigenous cultures, teachings and ways of knowing. And our government is committed to changing that.

One of the pillars of our Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag strategy is building healthy communities. Supporting Indigenous girls in sport is more—far more than just participation; it's about dignity, empowerment, confidence and giving young girls the opportunity to dream bigger, thrive fully and build the futures that they deserve and want.

I'm proud to share, through Mino'Ayaawag Ikwewag, we have recently invested two incredible initiatives that are uplifting young athletes and empowering the next generation of Matriarchs.

We are providing funding to Blue Thunderbird Family Care for their building the love of the game, ourselves and each other basketball program. This investment supports gym time, transportation, equipment, games, tournaments and the resources needed for these young girls to succeed. Blue Thunderbird is not just developing athletes; they are nurturing confidence in young leaders who will strengthen families, uplift communities and carry culture, traditions and responsibility for generations.

We are also proud to support Sagkeeng's girls U-15 volleyball team as they prepare to compete at a national volleyball tournament later this month in Calgary. Made up of 11 dedicated student-athletes from Sagkeeng junior high school and Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School, these young girls are excelling not only in sport but in their schools and communities as well. They are already role models for the next generation of athletes that will be coming behind them.

I also want to acknowledge the Winnipeg Falcons football team, over 80 per cent of whom are young girls from Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School. These athletes travel three to four hours, three times a week,

to pursue the sport that they love while continuing to succeed academically.

Their dedication was recently recognized with a \$25,000 grant from the National Football League to help upgrade equipment and support their program. Their resilience, discipline and determination are inspiring girls across Manitoba and showing what is possible when we believe in young girls.

When girls find belonging in sport, they also find mentors, friendships, confidence and leadership. They learn resilience, teamwork and self-belief, skills that stay with them for the rest of their lives.

To their parents and the coaches and principals, I say miigwech for all of your commitment to sport for girls in sports. And to all of these incredible girls: We are so proud of you. Congratulations, and keep shining.

And because, Honourable Speaker, I have more than 50 guests, I ask for leave to have the names of my guests included in Hansard, and I ask my colleagues to help me in recognizing our guests today.

Sagkeeng 15U Girls Volleyball Team: Romi Berthelette, Shaneen Bird, Elena Bruyere, Stevie Bruyere, Kenadee Canard, Athena Curchene, Ariana Fontaine, Hailey Henderson, Mackenzie Hildebrand, Adrienne Laforte, Deston Swampy.

Winnipeg Falcons Football Team: Layla Bruyere; Rori Bruyere; Kathy Calancia, coach; Hayden Curchene; Sharrah Curchene; Surayah Curchene; Tandra Curchene; Ziigwan Curchene; Bella Coutu; Rilee Durand; Ezra Hasting; Miley Montour; Destiny Moose; Louise Moose; Raeleen Scott; Rhilynn Smith; Saphira Twoheart; Shaylynn Twoheart; Hailey Whitesell.

Blue Thunderbird and Dynasty Basketball Club: Houston Arabe, Myla Arabe, Mia Cabungal, Emily Cadieux, Jordyn Castres, Kaley Castres, Laila Castres, Maria Clou, Ophelie Cyr, Summer Gatpayat, Stella Gutierrez, Freya Koschik, Jonna Kysiliuk, Soha Marr, Emily Mckay, Nina Pfaff, Hailey Pinkerton, Lexie Polvorosa, Christa Rajot, Kaelyn Smith, Cassidy Wood.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Is there leave for their names to be recognized in Hansard as requested? *[Agreed]*

Their names will therefore be attached at the end of the ministerial statement.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: And before we move on, there's some guests in the gallery that—they're rotating through the gallery because we have limited number of seats today.

So I want to take a moment to introduce: in the public gallery from South Pointe School we have 70 grade 6 students under the direction of Jock MacGillivray. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz).

One group has already gone through, and unfortunately, we didn't get to recognize them while they were here.

But we welcome you here today.

* * *

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Today I rise to recognize the importance of supporting Indigenous girls in sport and to celebrate the young leaders, athletes and role models who are helping strengthen communities all across this great province of ours.

Sport has the power to change lives. It teaches discipline, confidence, teamwork and resilience. It creates opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, build lifelong friendships and pursue their goals both on and off the field for court.

For Indigenous girls, participation in sport can also be a powerful source of connection to culture, to community and to personal identity. Programs that encourage participation in athletics help build confidence, improve physical and mental well-being and create positive pathways for future success.

Every young person deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. That means ensuring girls and young women across Manitoba have access to safe, inclusive and supportive spaces to participate in sport and recreation.

To the Sagkeeng volleyball team: Good luck in Calgary. We used to spend a whole lot of time competing and—with the various different high schools in the area, and Sagkeeng was always gracious and great hosts and visitors to the various different schools within the Sunrise School Division.

Also to the Winnipeg Falcons: Good luck to you and to your upcoming football season. And, of course, that's just to name a couple in this great province of ours.

We also recognize the importance of representation. Indigenous athletes and leaders continue to inspire the next generation through their dedication, perseverance and achievements. Their success demonstrates what is possible when young people are given encouragement and opportunity.

Sport is about more than competition. When young people succeed, Manitoba succeeds.

To all the coaches, parents, guardians mentors and volunteers who dedicate their time to supporting Indigenous girls in sport: Thank you. Your commitment is helping shape a stronger and healthier future to the next—for the next generation.

And to the Indigenous girls and young women participating in sports across Manitoba: Your determination, leadership and achievements inspire us all. We are proud of what you contribute to your communities and to our province.

Thank you, merci and miigwech.

Jewish Heritage Month

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate May as Jewish Heritage Month here in Manitoba.

Jewish heritage in our province is a story of strength, of perseverance and of community. Jewish families who came here seeking refuge and opportunity helped build Manitoba's social, cultural and economic life, strengthening our schools and universities, our arts and culture, our businesses and professions and our public institutions.

Manitoba's vibrant Jewish community, whose ongoing leadership and volunteerism helped make our neighbourhoods more welcoming, more inclusive and more connected, also helped make our province a better place for all.

* (13:50)

Honourable Speaker, Jewish Heritage Month is a tapestry of celebration, but it is also a testament to resilience in the face of terrible loss. And we must speak plainly about a hard truth: as much as we wish it to be, anti-Semitism is not confined to the past. We still see it today in stereotypes, in online hate, in vandalism, in threats and in violence. It changes its language, and it sometimes hides in plain sight. That is why awareness matters. That is why education matters, and that is why celebrations like this matter.

When a community is targeted because of who they are, it is an affront to the values Manitobans hold dear: respect, equality, diversity and dignity.

Here in Manitoba, we share a responsibility to confront hate and discrimination in all its forms. Awareness is more than just knowing; it's listening, learning and acting. It means challenging misinformation. It means speaking up when we hear harmful language, no matter where we are, and it means standing with our neighbours when they feel—when they are made to feel unsafe in our communities because silence allows prejudice to grow.

So Jewish Heritage Month, then, is an invitation to learn, to reflect and to celebrate. It's a chance to recognize the traditions, stories and values that have enriched Manitoba for generations and to renew our commitment to the kind of province we want to build together: one that is strong because of its inclusivity.

It captures the spirit of tikkun olam: repairing the world. It reminds us that improving society is not someone else's job; it's work we all share through kindness, through justice and through service to others. It is a simple yet powerful call to action. Its message resonates far beyond the Jewish community because it is, at its heart, Manitoba's message: one Manitoba.

So, as we mark Jewish Heritage Month, let us commit to more than commemoration. Let us commit to action. As a teacher, I know the fight against hate in all its forms begins with what we choose to teach and what we choose to learn.

By understanding the experiences of others, we move forward as a community. Let us choose words that unite, not divide. Let our actions strengthen, not weaken, our communities, and let's ensure this is a burden we shoulder not for one day or for one month, but is our responsibility to carry it forward each and every day.

Honourable Speaker, I ask all Manitobans to join me in recognizing and celebrating Jewish Heritage Month. To our Jewish friends and neighbours: Thank you for what you contribute to our province and for the ways you strengthen our communities, generation after generation.

Thank you and shalom.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'd like to just take a moment and welcome our guests to the gallery. I recognize folks here today from the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada.

Welcome to the Manitoba Legislature. Thanks for being here.

I rise today to celebrate Jewish Heritage Month and to honour the rich history and invaluable contributions of Jewish Manitobans to our province.

This month, Jewish Manitobans are recognized and celebrated, and it is an opportunity for all Manitobans to learn more about Jewish heritage and everything that the Jewish community has done for our province.

And I'd also like to take a moment and commend my colleague, the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot, for championing the legislation that established Jewish Heritage Month in Manitoba back in 2022.

For over two centuries, Jewish people have made Manitoba their home. The 1881 census indicated Manitoba's Jewish population was approximately 100 people. It was the Russian pogroms of 1881 and 1882 that brought some 350 Jewish immigrants to Manitoba.

And then, through various waves of settlement and immigration, a strong and vibrant Jewish community has emerged across Canada which, as of 2021, is nearly 400,000 people strong, the fourth largest Jewish community in the world. Manitoba is currently home to nearly 3 per cent of Canada's total Jewish population and the Manitoba Jewish community is a vital contributor to the cultural landscape of Manitoba.

However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that Manitobans are deeply concerned with the increasing rise in anti-Semitism within our communities and across the country. While we recognize Jewish communities for their resilience, we must do more than expect people to be resilient in the face of hate. We must combat hate itself.

In 2022, our PC team was proud to join hundreds of members of the Jewish community to officially adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism in Manitoba. The rise of anti-Semitism in Manitoba and across the country is very troubling, and it must be universally condemned. We stand with the Jewish community against hate, discrimination and extremism in all its forms.

I also wanted to mention one of the many important Jewish cultural institutions in Manitoba, and that's the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada, a cornerstone of the Asper Jewish Community Campus, located right here in Winnipeg. The purpose of this

vibrant centre is to interpret and disseminate information on the history and culture of Jewish people in western Canada and to develop awareness of the history and the moral and ethical implications of the Holocaust and other human rights violations.

The engagement of Jewish Manitobans in the arts, sports, business, medicine, education, the trades, politics, public service, volunteerism and so much more makes our province a better place to live.

Jewish Manitobans comprise a vital, varied and diverse community, who have and will continue to make a stronger, more diverse and welcoming Manitoba for all.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Stephen Hua

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I rise today to recognize a man, a legend, whose lifelong passion has been to bring our community together through the power of music and celebration.

Stephen Hua is a proud Winnipegger and a versatile entrepreneur who has spent over 25 years creating vibrant, world-class experiences where our city comes together.

Many know Stephen through the diverse culture he has cultivated here, from the culinary excellence of Point Douglas favorites like Deer + Almond, Commonwealth, to the electrifying energy of his block parties and massive music festivals like Summer of Sound.

Throughout his career, he has also brought world-renowned icons like Drake and Lady Gaga to our city, while his Together Again concert series has grown into a cornerstone of Manitoba's event calendar, even bringing artists like Steven Aoki and Deadmau5 to help us celebrate our shared love of music.

But, Honourable Speaker, Stephen's work goes far beyond just entertainment. Inspired by a family legacy of entrepreneurship and a deep love for people, his true mission is to remove the barriers and awkwardness that often keep us isolated in a digital age. With the new social connection app, Hostly, he is utilizing technology to help folks push past their comfort zone by finding common-ground interests that make building new friendships easier from the start.

What is even more touching is that Stephen's journey has not been driven by profit, but by relentless, heart-led belief in our city's potential. Even though difficult financial moments, he has—he was—he has remained committed to making Winnipeg a place where everyone feels seen, valued and at home here in Winnipeg.

I ask that the House join me in saying thank you to Stephen Hua for his leadership, his vision—he's joined us in the gallery—and his unwavering love for our community and province, and that his work reminds us that real change starts with human connection.

Thank you, Stephen, for your work.

Graduating Class of 2026

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Congratulations to the graduating class of 2026. This special time in your lives is an opportunity to celebrate with a sense of pride and accomplishment that belongs to you on reaching this important milestone.

* (14:00)

You've put in the hours and navigated your way through 13 years of friendships, extracurricular activities, classes, assignments and tests. And, as you look forward, many of you are likely feeling a mix of emotions, ranging from excitement to apprehension, as you think about what to do next.

Thirteen years of school has equipped you with some of the basics of life and perhaps provided a springboard for further education or training in an interest you wish to pursue.

The critical thing is to make good decisions, and you'll find yourself making some big ones in just the next few years.

It seems the world isn't short on people trying to change it, and in my humble opinion, I wouldn't worry too much about that. Better to focus on what you see around you, on building up and supporting those around you and developing good personal character, and you'll find that's a project far more difficult and much more important.

As you look forward to the next phase of life, maybe wondering what to do or where to go next, I'm reminded of the words of Booker T. Washington, who said: Cast down your bucket where you are.

While not perfect, we do live in a great area, in a great province; and your staying and building a life here, raising a family, pursuing opportunities and, in turn, making opportunities available to others

strengthens all of us and represents the hope of our future.

And, finally, I want to thank all the parents and teachers who've invested in the lives of this year's graduating class. Thank you for the sacrifices you've made and for everything you do.

Thank you and congratulations.

Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Honourable Speaker, I am so very proud to recognize an organization in my constituency that reflects the absolute best of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter.

Founded in 1999, this organization became Manitoba's first registered charity no-kill animal shelter. For more than two decades, they have helped thousands of animals, offering not just care but safety, dignity and a second chance to those who need it most.

What makes their work even more remarkable is that they receive no government funding. They rely entirely on donations and the dedication of staff and volunteers who show up every single day with compassion and commitment, doing the quiet, often unseen work that changes lives.

Their reach extends far beyond Winnipeg. Over 80 per cent of the animals they care for come from northern Manitoba, and the shelter regularly supports remote communities by delivering food, supplies and vital services like spaying and neutering to help prevent overpopulation.

And what strikes me the most, Honourable Speaker, is that their work is rooted in something powerful: the belief that those too often overlooked still matter; that with care, patience and community, even the most vulnerable can find stability, belonging and a place to call home.

This work, it changes lives, both for the animals who are rescued and for the families who welcome them in.

I ask that my guests' names please be entered into Hansard, and I invite all members in the Chamber to join me in thanking the Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter, their staff, volunteers and the supporters for the incredible difference that they continue to make across Manitoba.

Thank you.

Marcus Hoch, Rob Irvine, Carla Martinelli-Irvine, Paula Painchaud, Christa Richard.

Spring Seeding

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Well, every spring, Manitobans undertake one of its largest and most 'consequential' national projects—megaproject—and almost nobody notices. There is no ribbon cutting, no news conference, no prime ministerial announcement.

Yet, in a matter of weeks, thousands of Manitoba farmers and ranchers deploy billions of dollars, put enormous personal and financial capital at risk and set in motion the production of food that Canadians and much of the world depend on.

This annual event is so familiar that we rarely stop to think about it. But spring in Manitoba agriculture is a national-scale renewable megaproject, repeated every year, with no second chances.

Spring seeding is often described as a high-stake investment of billions spent. It captures what flows through agriculture retailers each spring: seed, fertilizer, crop protection products and fuel.

And in most industries, investment unfolds gradually. Projects are phased. Costs are—can be adjusted. Mistakes can sometimes be corrected. Agriculture doesn't work that way. Manitoba has one primary growing season. Nearly all critical decisions and much financial risk are concentrated in the spring. Seed goes in the ground. Calves and lambs are born. Operating loans are drawn, and equipments run day and night. The weather turns, markets shift or disease strikes, there's no pause button, no redo. Farmers live with the outcome for a full year.

From a risk perspective, this is 'extranordinary.' Every spring, family farms across the country make the largest co-ordinated, high-risk private investment in the Canadian economy, and they do so independently, quietly and remarkable competence.

Spring is not just the season, it's when Manitobans quietly goes to the work, feeding itself and the world.

So today I'd like to thank all the farmers for their hard work and risk and for feeding Manitobans, Canadians and the world. And on behalf of Spruce Woods and fellow PC team, we wish you a safe and profitable season.

Stephen Andrushko

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): I rise today to recognize a remarkable member of my community, Stephen Andrushko, a true Transconian.

Stephen was born on July 11, 1925, in his family home on Pandora Avenue, and has called Transcona

home for nearly his entire life. He attended school in Transcona, and at the age of 18, made the decision to enlist in the army.

During the Second World War, Stephen served overseas in England, the Netherlands and Germany as a wireless operator in the cipher section. Following the war, he continued supporting others by working in communications with soldiers who were returning home, helping them reconnect as they transitioned back to civilian life.

Following his service, Stephen returned home to Transcona and began his work with the Canadian National Railway, where he spent 14 years. At the same time, he committed himself to further his education by attending Red River College in the evenings, earning his certification as a building construction technician. He later went on to work for Air Canada, where he built his 25-year career before retiring.

After returning to Transcona after the war, Stephen's dedication to service continued at home. He's been a member of the Transcona Legion for 79 years and is its longest serving member.

He is also the last living Second World War veteran in Transcona.

This July, Stephen celebrates his 101st birthday, surrounded by the community he has always called home. It's not every day that we get the opportunity to recognize someone reaching such an incredible milestone.

Stephen is listening from home today with friends, and I ask my colleagues to please join me in recognizing him for his extraordinary life and service.

Thank you, Stephen, and thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Prior to moving on, there are several guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce.

In the public gallery we have Tim Schindel from Leading Influence; Renée Bordclay [*phonetic*] from Bardal Funeral Home; Ronald Klassen from Bardal Funeral Home; James Paulson, Jose Noriega, Vernadette Viray, Jolina [*phonetic*] Corrales, Jimmy Bourllette [*phonetic*], Evelyn Nakamura and Andres Smith from Salvation Army. And they're guests of the honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen).

We welcome you here today.

Further, we have in the public gallery Carla Martinelli-Irvine, Rob Irvine, Christa Richard, Marcus Hoch, Marie France Reid, Bob Ricard [*phonetic*], who are guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham).

And we welcome them here today.

And we also had in the public gallery from the association of regulated nurses Joyce Kisjansson [*phonetic*], Kahla Shea, Justin Woodcock, Naomi Armah, Amy "AC" McLocklin, Tracey McCullough, Shirley Forsyth, who are guests of the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara).

And we welcome them all here today as well.

* (14:10)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Unionized Worker Preference Concerns

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Last week, the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba raised the alarm once again about this NDP's job-killing agreement. Experts in the 'industry' identified specifically how this NDP government policies are making it harder for Manitobans to do their jobs and jeopardizing projects.

Shawn Woods [*phonetic*], the association's executive director, put it bluntly: This policy is going to increase the cost of building the Brandon school by 20 per cent.

This government is more concerned with lining the pockets of their NDP union supporters than they are sticking up for all Manitobans. To quote from the Premier's NDP job-killing agreement, quote: Residents that are members of a union will be given preference over Manitoba residents that are not members of a union. End quote.

Why is the Premier picking union members over 88 per cent of Manitobans who choose to be non-unionized?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): How are you doing?

Honourable Speaker, Pum-pum-pum, pa-rum-pum-pum-pa-rum. And another one bites, and another one bites, and another one bites the dust. I want to take this moment to acknowledge the member—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I'd just remind the honourable First Minister that singing in the Chamber is against the rules.

Mr. Kinew: I just want to acknowledge the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) who's growing a list that we can no longer count on one hand of PC MLAs who are heading for the exit—heading for the exit.

This one, of course—even though I'm acknowledging him—we also need to acknowledge the fact that he broke the law after the last election and made history by being the first MLA alongside Heather Stefanson and Cliff Cullen, being fined for breaking the conflict of interest law.

What were they doing? That's what they were doing last election. What did we do? We promised the Manitoba jobs agreement to put more Manitobans to work.

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

Mr. Khan: More jokes and terrible singing by the Premier when I'm standing up and asking about 88 per cent of Manitobans that are negatively affected by this NDP's job-killing agreement.

Local Brandon companies told media that they did not even bid on the schools because of this NDP's job-killing agreement. The increase in red tape, bureaucracy and increased costs were all factors while—why local Manitoba companies did not bid on projects in their own backyard. This Premier once again is choosing winners and losers, and he has decided that 88 per cent of Manitobans who decide to be open-shop, non-unionized, are losers. That's what the Premier is saying to you.

I'll ask the Premier once again if he can answer without making a joke: Why is he choosing to support his union buddies and line their paycheques; over 88 per cent of Manitobans that need the jobs—

The Speaker: The member's time is expired.

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, I love unions. They're the best. I love hard-working Manitobans, and I want them to make more money.

Not them; they like the rich people. They want to pay people less money; that's the PC plan. Not us: more money, cheaper groceries, cheaper gas. Let's go to the polls.

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

Mr. Khan: This NDP government and Premier are choosing once again to negotiate behind closed doors and only with their friends. Shawn Woods [*phonetic*],

the executive director of the construction association of Manitoba, once again puts it best, and I quote when he says: I think the most important part of this is the current Manitoba government didn't consult with the industry before they applied this. End quote.

The NDP went to a select group of unions—of union bosses to line their pockets and denied, dismissed and removed 88 per cent of Manitobans from having a say in this NDP job-killing agreement. The Premier is choosing to attack you, the 88 per cent of Manitobans that have chosen to work in a non-union shop.

When will the Premier do the right thing and support all Manitobans, not just his union buddies?

The Speaker: The honourable First Minister—*[interjection]*

Order.

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, do you know who we consulted about the Manitoba jobs agreement? You. Everyone in Manitoba. This is the first press conference that we held in the last election come-in—the first one, No. 1. We went out and we said we're going to do Manitoba jobs agreement to put more Manitobans to work to end the years of cuts under the PCs.

And you know what they were doing? They were on vacation in August 2023, except for the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton), who was out there breaking the law for a big business.

That's what they do; they stand up for the rich. We stand up for everybody else. Let's go to the polls.

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

Basic Personal Tax Rate—Exemption Increase Request for Government to Support Resolution

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Not one serious answer by this Premier.

To the Premier, a union card matters more than years of experience—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —and how this ridiculous idea is going to make projects more expensive. Honourable Speaker, 20 per cent more of your taxpayer dollars are going to be spent on building a school because this Premier wants to line the pockets of unions.

Under this government, everything is getting more expensive. Under this government, they're offering

you pennies when, on this side of the House, we're offering you hundreds and thousands of dollars.

The Premier stands in this place and pretends he needs to pass BITSAs, but in reality he can do it today if he wants to. Where is the will for this Premier to do it? He doesn't want to do it. He wants to stand up, make jokes, divide Manitobans and line his union buddies' pockets.

So I'll ask the Premier: Why is the Premier playing political games instead of doing the right things and putting—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Oh, Honourable Speaker, we'll be very chastened because the member opposite doesn't know to—how to have a good time while his caucus flees and runs for the hills. That's what you have on offer in the PCs. They were so completely divided in the last election that they decided to continue for three more years and come back into the Chamber.

And even Red River North is sick of it. He's leaving. How bad of a leader do you have to be for Red River North to say that he's had enough? He's the guy that broke the law and ignored the Constitution.

On this side of the House, what do we want you to have? Cheaper groceries. That's why our budget bill must pass today. They have the opportunity to debate, put their little words on the record, and then let's get to the grocery stores and save you money.

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

Mr. Khan: The Premier is so disingenuous when it comes to the problems facing families in Manitoba. The Premier can pass his PST junk food tax if he wants to. The Premier can remove the provincial tax on gas if he wants to. He's choosing not to. He's choosing to play political games with your life. The Premier's offering you pennies.

On this side of the House, we are—*[interjection]* You can hear the Premier heckling me right now and laughing at you. He's offering you pennies; we're offering you hundreds of dollars a month and thousands of dollars a year in savings.

Will the Premier do the right thing today and stop playing political games and support our call to make life more affordable for Manitobans by giving them back \$3,000 a year, yes or no? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would just caution members that sometimes the language is getting borderline. Disingenuous describes behaviour or speech that is insincere, and while it's not suggesting that someone is lying, it's getting dangerously close. So I'd caution members.

* (14:20)

Mr. Kinew: You've got to take a look at the overall budget we're bringing forward. Of course, not only is there a tax cut on groceries, there's a lower gas tax, there's more help with your property taxes, and, of course, when it comes to renters, cheques. We also know that there's investments in adult literacy, and in schools, free transit for youth. We've got the lowest deficit in all of the country.

So when you look at the overall budget, it's pretty good. And I wouldn't mind going to the people of Manitoba with that document.

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

Mr. Khan: Only the NDP would applaud a \$500-million deficit. It is embarrassing how far this government and this province has fallen under this NDP government. The NDP are offering you \$100 a year of savings with their PST junk food tax.

On this side of the House, the PCs are offering you up to \$3,000 a year. By increasing the basic personal exemption, by allowing families to keep more of their paycheque, we can help families make the healthy choice for their families. We can help families pay their bills, put gas in their car by increasing their basic personal exemption, not by removing 7 cents on—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —a can of pop.

The question, again, is simple for the Premier: Will the Premier do the right thing today and support a call for an increase of basic personal exemption to \$30,000 and give Manitobans \$3,000 a year? Yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: All joking aside, we tabled a document that proves we need BITSA to pass in order for your groceries to get cheaper. Let's have that vote today. If not, they'll find out what happens.

Basic Personal Tax Rate Call to Index to Inflation

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Manitobans are struggling under the weight of rising costs while this

Premier (Mr. Kinew) has failed to offer any real—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stone: —meaningful tax relief. Families are struggling to pay for groceries, they're struggling to pay for gas and they're struggling to pay for this NDP's rising education property taxes. These are some of the highest costs that families in recent memory have ever experienced, while every other province has indexed income taxes to inflation or increased the basic personal exemption. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia this year all indexed to inflation.

And what has this NDP done? They've cancelled it, pushing more Manitobans into higher tax—

The Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, under our government, Manitobans are getting more help than they've ever received when it comes to their education property tax bill, more than ever before.

Again, we know the member opposite doesn't support this, but nine out of 10 people in her community are better off as a result of our education property tax credit. So what does she say to those members of her community that she wants to go back to an approach where nine out of 10 of them were worse off? It's not clear to me how successful a communications plan that's going to be.

What we do know is that we're going to keep doing this work each and every day. We brought in gas tax cuts for a full year, now a permanent 10 per cent cut. We're lowering our education property tax bill. We're restoring renters' tax credits that they took away to raise taxes on renters. And now, if they support, we're going to take the PST—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Basic Personal Tax Rate—Exemption Increase Request for Government to Support Resolution

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): While Winnipeggers opened their tax bills this weekend, they were shocked at again the increasing and skyrocketing education taxes.

I would like to ask the member what his colleagues, the MLA for Lagimodière, the MLA for Southdale,

the MLA for Waverley and the MLA for Kildonan-River East what their constituents say about those skyrocketing education taxes that have been a result of this NDP government. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stone: Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting they're within \$200 of insolvency. That's why we want to give families back \$3,000 a year. Every other province is increasing the basic personal exemption.

So will this Premier (Mr. Kinew) stand up, co-operate with our PC team to increase the basic personal exemption, which he can do today—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, again, the members opposite don't even know what it is they're proposing. It is a billion-dollar cost, is it \$10 billion? Nobody knows.

Here's what we know: If we went back to them, we know that what Manitobans would face would be more cuts across the board, or another \$2-billion deficit hole that they left us on their way out the door. That's their record: terrible fiscal management and cuts across the board.

What is this team doing? Every single day Manitobans know we're showing up for them and we're working to lower their costs. And this BITSA bill will help to do that.

Why will they not get on board, Honourable Speaker? Why don't they want to support PST off all groceries or raising the renters' tax credit or creating more help for homeowners with their education property tax bills?

Will she stand up in this House today and actually come out in support of our bill that will bring more dollars—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Stone: The answer is very simple, Honourable Speaker. Do Manitobans want \$100 in tax savings per year or \$3,000 in tax savings per year? Because that's what our PC team has proposed.

So let's look at this record that this minister is talking about since he came into office: highest property taxes than ever before, highest food inflation in the country, highest inflation in the country, high

fuel costs, rising utility rates and the lowest economic growth in the entire country. That's his record and that's the record of this Premier.

Increasing the basic personal exemption will put more money into the pockets of Manitobans, more money that Manitobans desperately need. They can do this today.

Will they at the very least come to the table and work with our PC—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, Manitobans remember what life was like under the members opposite when they raised costs for renters, when they jacked up hydro rates again in new and novel ways that we've never seen before, undermining the role of the Public Utilities Board and, of course, raising costs on producers, trying to jack up the costs of Crown lands, which we've done important work to keep their costs low.

What is our team doing, and what did this last budget promise? No PST on groceries; of course, in addition to that, free child care for the lowest income families in Manitoba, free transit for kids in Manitoba.

This team is helping Manitobans across the province. We don't want to go back to the way things were. We know how tough life was. We know how bad of a fiscal set of managers they were. Manitobans know they can trust this team, make life more affordable—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Basic Personal Tax Rate Call for Indexation to Inflation

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, last week this Premier threatened that if their weak budget bill didn't pass, this House could sit all summer. Well, on this side of the House, we're not afraid of hard work. We are prepared—I'll let the Premier listen to this. We are prepared to stay here working for Manitoba families because we understand how important affordability is.

Instead of political threats, will the Premier commit today to raising the basic personal exemption so that we can pass BITSA and let Manitoba's struggling families keep more of their hard-earned money?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Again, Honourable Speaker, it's make-believe time with these proposals. They don't even know if they are coming or going. What number is it? We don't know. Manitobans don't know.

What they do know is that this team has been doing a lot of work to make their lives more affordable, whether it's a broad, middle-class tax cut, whether it's reducing the costs of their gas, whether it's reducing the cost of their electricity, whether it's reducing the cost of rent. This team has done that work since we got in. They know that the other side made life more expensive. They know—they didn't focus on their day-to-day needs.

This team is going to keep doing the work.

I ask the member: Will he support our BITSA bill to bring savings to Manitobans, yes or no?

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

Investment in Economic Development Call to Address Cost-of-Living Challenges

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, what we do know are the facts. Manitoba families are falling further behind. They're paying higher school taxes—that's a fact—higher hydro bills, higher fuel costs, and they are also paying more income tax because this government cancelled indexation, saving pennies of—saving pennies on Slurpees is what this government has to offer, and that's not a serious solution. Affordability starts with a strong economy.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) finally stop the slogans and political threats and take serious action to unleash our economy, support private sector jobs and job creations and make Manitoba competitive and affordable again?

* (14:30)

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, this team is bringing in the biggest education property tax rebates Manitobans have ever seen. He says fuel costs are going up. We got some of the lowest prices in the country, and that's thanks to the work we're doing to reduce them with our permanent 10 per cent fuel tax cut.

Of course, on other parts of energy—electricity—what did we do? We froze them for an entire year. What happened under the members opposite? Again, new and creative ways to find new ways of jacking up electricity costs on Manitobans.

We know their record. We saw what happened for seven and a half years. And now, again, what are they doing? They're standing in the way of savings for Manitobans. They're standing in the way of a \$1,700 education property tax rebate. They're standing

in the way of us raising the renters tax credit, which they cut to make life more—or, less affordable for renters. And they're standing in the way of a PST cut on all groceries.

Will they get out of the way? Will they stand up today and—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Business Development and Licensing Request for Single-Desk Model

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, those are just slogans and empty promises.

After nearly three years in office, Manitobans are still waiting for a real plan for economic growth from this NDP government.

Private investment is weak and weakening. Agriculture producers face more costs and more regulations each and every day, and young Manitobans are struggling to find opportunity and affordability within our province.

Will the Premier commit today to real economic action by reducing regulations, speeding up approvals and creating a single-desk model for business development and licensing?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Well, Honourable Speaker, we continue to build a strong economy here in Manitoba by making sure we take the tax off of all equipment for manufacturers, by creating a \$50-million trade investment financing program, investing in new critical mineral projects like the gold mine in Lynn Lake, a billion-dollar investment.

These are all strong projects that help to move our economy forward, not even talking about the amazing project in the Port of Churchill.

But the matter for today that questions have—members opposite have to answer: Will they support our budget which will make life more affordable for Manitobans? Taking the tax off of groceries, ensuring we have a large affordability measure for homeowners and for renters. It's up to them. Are—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Education System New Funding Model

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Manitobans last week in Estimates found out that this Kinew government has no plan for a fair funding model for education.

Instead, this Kinew government is forcing double-digit education tax increases on all Manitobans.

Will this minister commit to reverse course, listen to educators and families and finally introduce a sustainable funding model for education in this great province of ours?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It was a pleasure to sit with the member opposite in committee last week where I shared with him the great news of the new funding model here in Manitoba which is that Manitobans have elected a government that is finally funding education. That's our model, Honourable Speaker.

Our model, Honourable Speaker, is stable and predictable funding. It is a fact that since this NDP government was elected, every single school division, every single year, has seen their budgets increase.

What was their record, Honourable Speaker? Cuts, cuts.

The question of the day is, Honourable Speaker: Will the member for Lac du Bonnet be supporting our budget and making Manitobans save money, making sure that Manitobans save money on child care, making—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

River East Transcona School Division Funding Level Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Honourable Speaker, Manitoba Teachers' Society said, education funding announcement falls—fails students yet again. End quote.

Honourable Speaker, the PCs, in our last three years, had increased funding to the River East Transcona School Division by \$25.3 million. Under the last three years of this NDP Kinew government, they've only increased to River East Transcona by \$12.4 million.

Will the minister please reverse course, because Manitobans cannot afford this Kinew government?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): I'm so glad, Honourable Speaker, that the member opposite brings up the River East Transcona School Division so that I can share with this House some of the incredible work that

River East Transcona School Division is doing thanks to increased funding by our government.

So, in order to improve attendance, Honourable Speaker—something that our government and our school division partners are working so closely and so carefully on—thanks to the increased funding by our government, River East Transcona School Division has been able to hire nine attendance youth-care workers embedded in their schools to support students experiencing absenteeism. They're going to help those students get back to the classroom, Honourable Speaker.

With our support, River East Transcona has also hired an additional social work clinician with the responsibility to support attendance in the early—in the ear—pardon me, in the early years levels. They've also been able to hire more dedicated—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Louis Riel School Division Funding Level Concerns

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): The facts are, Honourable Speaker, that River East Transcona, in the last three years, have raised their taxes by 36 per cent.

Another point: Louis Riel School Division said, and I quote: Our financial position has eroded. End quote.

So Louis Riel School Division: in the last three years of PC government, \$23.2 million went to them; under the last three years of this Kinew government, \$12.2 million, Honourable Speaker.

Will this minister reverse course? Because, obviously, Manitobans cannot afford this Kinew government, as they're seeing Louis Riel School Division in the last three years raise their taxes by 43 per cent. Shame on this minister.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Honourable Speaker, on this side of the House, we understand the value of investing in education, and that's what we're doing. That's what Manitobans elected us to do.

After years of cuts and chaos, teachers losing their jobs, teachers and EAs, clinicians running from the public education system because they could not get the support or the resources or, quite frankly, even the respect that they deserve from the previous failed PC government, it is our government that has come in with increased funding every single year. It is our

government that stood with the MTS, with the Manitoba School Boards Association, and fought bill 64—which was, again, the worst piece of legislation ever introduced in Manitoba.

It's our team that's going to continue working with school divisions, more than 800 more teachers here in Manitoba. That's a school funding model—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Cost of Living in Manitoba Request to Address Affordability Challenges

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): The No. 1 issue we're hearing about from Manitobans is affordability. Manitoba leads the country in food inflation. Grocery staples like meat, fruit and vegetables have all gotten more expensive. Gas prices have gone up. Hydro rates have gone up. Pharmacare deductibles have gone up. And this NDP government's only response, the only cost relief they will provide is to save Manitobans a few pennies on chips and pop.

Why is this NDP government failing Manitobans so miserably when it comes to making life more affordable for families?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Manitobans do continue to face challenges when it comes to the affordability of food. And that's why our government is taking steps no government has taken in the entire country to respond to that, starting with, of course, freezing the price of a one-litre jug of milk.

We brought in more competition into our communities to make sure that more grocery stores are present, to ensure that we can see lower prices through more competition. We're taking action when it comes to some of the exploitative practices we've seen with online grocery shopping. We're going to put an end to predatory pricing here in Manitoba—again, something Manitoba is doing that no other province is doing in the entire country.

In addition to that, of course, we're doing the food study. And then, should the member actually care about the price of food for her constituents and Manitobans across this province, let's see her stand up today and stand in support of our move to take the PST off all groceries in Manitoba.

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

Mrs. Cook: This NDP government needs a reminder that Manitobans' hard-earned dollars are not actually the NDP's money. It's Manitobans' money, and on this

side of the House, we believe that Manitobans know best how to spend it.

The most effective way to provide cost relief for Manitobans is to allow them to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. We know they'll spend that money right here in Manitoba on things like groceries, on their kids' sports and activities and maybe have enough money left over to enjoy a meal at one of Manitoba's great restaurants with their families.

Why is this NDP government so ideologically opposed to allowing Manitobans to keep more of their own hard-earned money?

* (14:40)

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, this team is working to put more money in Manitobans' pockets to give them the capacity to make those decisions. We're doing that, whether it's through gas tax cuts—again, permanent 10 per cent cut, something they never did for seven and a half years. They never took any action of any kind when it came to reducing energy costs for Manitobans. In fact, we know that they seem to have worked very hard to lift them up when it came to their hydro costs.

Middle-class tax cut: we're putting thousands dollars more—of dollars more in Manitobans' pockets through changes to the basic personal exemption and changes to the brackets. We put more money in renters' pockets through our increase to the renters' tax credit—again, something that they cut. They brought it from \$700 to \$525 during their tenure. That's shameful, Honourable Speaker. Those are some of the Manitobans who are facing, we know, some of those greatest struggles. So when we look—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Basic Personal Income Tax Call to Increase the Exemption

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Families are struggling, but this NDP government is actively working against them by raising income taxes, allowing inflation to soar unchecked and refusing to let Manitobans keep more of their own hard-earned dollars. Every other province is indexing its income tax brackets to inflation or raising their basic personal exemption, and this NDP government refuses to do either. Manitoba families are falling behind and being forced to do more with less.

Will the NDP government finally get on the side of Manitobans, raise the basic personal exemption so that Manitoba families could keep more of their own hard-earned money?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Again, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans don't even know what that proposal is; they didn't cost it; we have no idea what the impacts of that would be, except we do know, if history is any judge, that if we listen to what they wanted to see us do, we know where that takes us. It takes us where the PCs went during their last year: a \$2-billion deficit hole.

They're bringing forward proposals that they haven't even costed. They still don't know what it is they're bringing forward. What we know is this: we're focused on the needs of Manitobans.

I ask the member, in all honesty: Will she stand up today and stand behind this BITSA bill, which we know is going to bring savings directly to Manitobans pockets at a time that they need it?

Let's work together; let's raise that education property tax credit; let's raise that renters' tax credit; let's take the PST off all food in Manitoba. We know that we have this work to do. Will they get on board, yes or no?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact Manitoba Supports Neighbouring Jurisdictions

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): Honourable Speaker, when people are in need, Manitobans step up. We are one Manitoba. From flood prevention this spring to an unprecedented wildland firefighting operation last summer, Manitoba front-line crews, you know, they've proven that they're always there to get the job done.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures please tell this House more about how Manitobans are stepping up to help those in need?

Hon. Ian Bushie (Minister of Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures): It gives me a chance to talk about the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact. It's an agreement where neighbourhood jurisdictions can share shared resources on forest fire support.

We, unfortunately, last year had a devastating wildfire season, so we count on this compact to be able to step up and called on our neighbouring

jurisdictions to step up and support. And we got that support from Minnesota.

So it gives me my pleasure today to stand up and talk about us being able to return that favour to our neighbouring jurisdiction in Minnesota, to say that we've sent wildfire firefighters to assist in their time of need, as they did for us. So as we stand up—and I could look to our neighbouring jurisdictions and say to them specifically, you were there for us; we will be there for you. And for all the Manitobans that stepped up and being able to get out there and support our neighbouring jurisdictions, that is what it's like to live as one Manitoba.

Seniors Housing Resident Safety Concerns

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): This government's housing strategy has failed miserably, and impacted Manitobans are now worse off than they were before they started. As one senior told media, quote: it's got to be more thought-out and planned, because right now it is chaos. End quote.

Right now, seniors are afraid to leave their units and worried about being robbed of their prescription drugs in their own apartment buildings. There are concerns about open drug use, strangers getting into the building, assaults on residents and more. That is all under the golden years of this NDP government, a province where seniors needing home care have to go off-site to get home care. This NDP government has said overly that they—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —are not tenanting folks in senior housing, while the seniors are saying something different.

What does the minister have to say to them who are fearing their lives every single day?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): We are working hard on this side of the House every day to make sure that Manitobans are safe and secure in our housing. We're going to continue to do that work, something that members opposite didn't do. They fired security officers in the buildings.

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

Mr. Khan: Seniors are afraid to go home because of this NDP government. In a province of 1.5 million, this—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—minister has the full power of the government behind her; yet, she manages to only house 15 people a month.

At this rate, it's going to take 300 months to house the current homeless population in Manitoba. Under this NDP government, only would they call 25 years to fix the homeless strategy in this province a success. The minister can read whatever canned lines she wants, but the reality is, it's her—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—choices that have made seniors feel unsafe and keeping their grandchildren away from safety concerns.

Why is the minister disrespecting seniors by ignoring their calls for safety and saying they simply don't understand?

Ms. Smith: They sold off housing; we're building housing. We're going to continue to support Manitobans in ensuring they have safe and secure housing, unlike members opposite, who left them out on the street in tents with no support.

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

Hamper Delivery Programs for Seniors Funding Commitment Inquiry

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): You heard it right there from the minister herself: she said they're going to continue doing what they're doing, which means it's going to take 300 months—25 years—under the continued path that they are going on to—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan:—solve the homeless issue in this province. That is sheer disrespect for Manitobans, homelessness and the seniors. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: The seniors in this province are asking for help. The Minister of—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Stop the clock, please.

I ask the honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) to come to order.

Mr. Khan: I will table a letter from my office, received from one senior who says they have no idea how they will get the needed food supplies they need to survive. It's not just physical security that is in jeopardy because of the failures of this NDP government; it is

food security. Manitobans are visiting food banks at record numbers because of the failures of this NDP government.

Will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) commit today to fully funding the continuation of hamper delivery programs for seniors—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): I can tell you, on this side of the House, we will stand up and support seniors each and every day, something members opposite didn't do.

When Lions Manor was asking and begging for their support, they didn't get—they didn't support them. We—on this side of the House, we'll stand with seniors each and every day, unlike members opposite, who don't support Manitobans.

Leader of the Official Opposition Female Staff—Retention Concerns

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Honourable Speaker, I had a question that I was going to direct towards government today, but since the opposition has decided they want to fool around a bit today, my question is going to go to them.

I'm curious how the Leader of the Opposition feels about the mass exodus of female staff since he's become the leader of the party.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Honourable Speaker, you know, with humility, I do rise with respect for the member. I would say that we take workplace respect and health and safety very, very seriously. We'd be very supportive of anything that needs to be brought forward through official channels, and, of course, we would respect confidentiality to the utmost.

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

Provincial Roads 210, 206 and 207 Timeline for Speed Limit Review

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): So I'll shift away from that one and I'll go to the question regarding highways and speed limits.

I have several constituents in Lorette that are concerned about the speed limit, as we've discussed, along the highway, and I have local councillors

asking, when can we expect a review of the speed limits along the PR 210 and 206, as well as 207.

* (14:50)

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I thank the member opposite for that question. And I'm sure he can appreciate, because he has clearly lost any faith in the opposition, that a lot of the challenges to the speed limit reviews became as a part of the previous government. They cancelled the Highway Traffic Board who had significant responsibility in reviewing highway speeds. When I came into this role, the backlog was anywhere from two to five years for reviews of speed limits.

So I'm really excited to let this House know that, as of the beginning of this year, we stood up a new unit within the department with dedicated engineers who are clearing that backlog. Everything in that backlog should be cleared by the end of the year, and all municipalities have to do is—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for oral questions has also expired.

PETITIONS

Funding Crime Cost Mitigation for Small Business

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

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

(1) Small businesses are vital in supporting their local economy and the provincial government has a responsibility to act and support them.

(2) The recent increase in vigilantism shows that Manitobans do not trust this provincial government to fulfill its responsibility.

(3) More than half—54 per cent—of small businesses in Manitoba are impacted by crime. Property damage, theft, littering and public intoxication are some of the crimes that affect most businesses, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. There has been a 44 per cent increase in shoplifting incidences over the last year.

(4) In order to combat this rise of crime, small businesses try, unaided, to implement various out-of-pocket security measures and safety training for their staff and they face increasing costs when they incur property damage or theft.

(5) Vandalism, break-ins and other senseless acts cannot be accepted as a cost of doing business for businesses throughout Manitoba, and the provincial government must do more to ease the burdens small businesses are carrying with its catch-and-release justice system.

(6) Failing to support small businesses is failing the Manitoba economy, failing Manitoba families and failing Manitobans' dreams.

(7) The security rebate program in place for homeowners and small businesses does not cover the real costs impacting businesses, such as vandalism, property damage and repairs.

We urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support Manitoba businesses through specific funding to reimburse the expenses and insurance deductibles that they incur as a result of a crime.

This petition is signed by Reed Sutherland, Gerald Sawatsky, Luke Lovenjak and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (15:00)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Murray McIntyre, Carolyn Whitfield and Ken Wettlaufer and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction of the new Portage regional health facility is well under way.

The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit—be benefited from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of an MRI machine.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by Aiden Mekkes, Tori Nabess, Maiyahk Likely-Walder [*phonetic*] and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Trunk Highway 34

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by Kylan Cemystruck [*phonetic*], Hailey Hildebrand, Mackenzie Couling and many, many more Manitobans.

Provincial Road 482

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Upgrading Provincial Road 482 will accelerate economic development as it will enhance connectivity, facilitate efficient transportation and promote economic growth in the region.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to take the necessary steps to upgrade Provincial Road 482 to meet RTAC standards.

* (15:10)

This petition has been signed by Melissa Wilson, Anna Oliver, Jim Kennedy and many, many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Road 210

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 210, PR 210, is a 117.3 kilometre–72.8 mile–highway in the Eastman region of Manitoba that connects the towns and communities of Woodridge, Marchand, La Broquerie, Ste. Anne, Landmark, Linden, Île des Chênes and St. Adolphe.

(2) A significant portion of PR 210 also runs through the constituency of La Vérendrye.

(3) PR 210 is a significant commuting route for Eastman families and is also notably used by those in the agriculture, tourism, trade and commerce industries.

(4) The condition of PR 210, Woodridge to Highway 12, is in an unacceptable state of disrepair.

(5) The planned pavement upgrade was promised more than 20 years ago when it was constructed with a flat surface suitable for pavement but has yet to be completed.

(6) The condition of PR 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 is in such bad shape that firefighters, police and paramedic services are severely delayed when responding to emergencies.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure as well as the Premier have a duty to respond to infrastructure needs identified by rural communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize the reconstruction of Provincial Road 210; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to include the stretch of Provincial Road 210 from Woodridge to Highway 12 in its reconstruction plans.

This petition has been signed by Dan Barius [*phonetic*], Tim Hamm, Fredd Shastid and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Road 227

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) As part of ongoing strategic infrastructure investments to the provincial highway network, it was announced in August 2022 that almost \$70 million would be spent on upgrades to provincial road PR 227.

(2) Over 72 kilometres of PR 227 were to be paved along with the repair or replacement of three bridges and multiple drainage works.

(3) Mayors, reeves, councillors and residents of the surrounding municipalities, cities, towns and villages were ecstatic and overwhelmingly supportive of this plan.

(4) The planned PR 227 was to connect Highway 16 with Highway 6, thus creating an alternative route to Highway 1.

(5) PR 227 was to be part of Manitoba's trade and commerce grid initiative, an expanded grid of highways that can accommodate heavy commercial loading that will attract new industrial activity, reduce transportation costs and optimize supply chain efficiency, which will benefit all Manitobans.

(6) The 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy is a five-year, \$4.1-billion investment in Manitoba's roads, highways, bridges, airports and flood protection. The paving of PR 227 was part of this strategy.

(7) The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has cut the PR 227 project, notwithstanding that the project appears in the multi-year investment–infrastructure investment strategy and listed on the Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure website as an active project.

(8) Additional keystone projects in the 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy were the Winnipeg One Million Perimeter Freeway Initiative, the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba outlet channels and the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway to the Ontario border. The actions of the NDP government now bring into question whether any of these projects will be completed as planned.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to immediately restore funding to the PR 227 paving project; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to commitment to Manitobans to carry out all of the projects as outlined in the 2023 multi-year infrastructure investment strategy in their totality, to the same scope and in accordance with already stated timelines.

This petition is signed by Daniel Schott, Karen Madden and Shelley Krause, and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The intersection of Provincial Trunk Highway 75 and Provincial Road 305 at Ste. Agathe, has become increasingly dangerous for motorists and pedestrians.

(2) Over the past seven years there have been at least 20 accidents at this location resulting in injuries and fatalities.

(3) This intersection is heavily used by community members, commuters and commercial traffic, making safety improvements critical.

* (15:20)

(4) Immediate action is needed to mitigate accidents and prevent further loss of life.

(5) An in-service road safety review was completed in 2022, which included recommended improvements but no action plan.

(6) Immediate action and implementation on the maintenance issues and short-term strategies identified in the 2022 study are needed.

(7) Development of an action plan with timelines for medium-term strategies identified in the 2022 study is required.

(8) Installation of traffic lights or a controlled signal system will make the intersection safer.

(9) Additional strategies, such as reduced speed limits approaching the intersection and the addition of rumble strips to alert drivers of the upcoming intersection, will save lives.

(10) Construction of dedicated turning lanes to reduce collision risk and other traffic calming designs will help reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities at the intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to undertake safety improvements at the

intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305 at Ste. Agathe; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize measures that will reduce accidents and fatalities, including but not limited to those outlined in the 2022 in-service road safety review.

This petition has been signed by Cori Shaw, Rachel King, Lori Simpson and many, many Manitobans.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to take immediate and decisive action on bail reform to address serious deficits in enforcement by utilizing all available provincial mechanisms to strengthen warrant enforcement, increasing bail supervision and

opposing release of offenders, thus ensuring that repeat violent offenders are held accountable and that public safety is prioritized over leniency; and

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

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition was signed by Nicole Nickels, Scott Millenburg [*phonetic*], Shawn Eaton and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Children with disabilities often require child care beyond the age of 12. Children with disabilities aged 12 to 17 face a gap in publicly available care programs.

(2) The current adolescent-care service model creates undue hardship on caregivers.

(3) While developing children may be entering into extracurricular activities, school clubs or spending time with friends independently, children with disabilities have reduced opportunities for such social and recreational opportunities due to the lack of spaces.

(4) The current self-managed adolescent-care models place additional workloads onto already stressed families, requiring parents to seek all alternative options and prove their need for care.

(5) The current adolescent-care system, as part of overall respite and support available to families, is failing families of children with disabilities, as identified in the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth's Bridging the Gaps report.

(6) To date, none of the nine recommendations it contains have been completed beyond 50 per cent.

(7) The recommendations in this report touch on many of the issues facing families, with adolescent care being but a small component of their overall needs.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to fully implement recommendations in the Bridging the Gaps report.

(2) To urge the provincial government to immediately implement official policies and procedures that are more respectful and collaborative, which also minimize harm faced by families seeking help from Children's disABILITY Services; and

(3) To urge the Minister of Families to arrange for a full review of employment supports provided by Children's disABILITY Services for children with disabilities aged 12 to 17, including direct consultation with impacted families and to explore a full spectrum of options to support families, empowering them to choose solutions that best fit their needs.

* (15:30)

This petition is signed by Lindsay Nelson, Tiffany Easton, Maryse Catagas and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Phoenix School

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

There are currently hundreds of children on a wait-list for child care in Headingley. The daycare

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by Sarah Oliver, Margo Price, Rachel DeCorby and many, many other Manitobans.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Lynda Tunny, Dick Tunny, Bernice Radomski and many, many more Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Pat Williams, Wendell Williams, Jody Williams and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

* (15:40)

The Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further petitions, grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Can you please call all stages of Bill 53.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 53—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Deputy Speaker: We will now move on to all stages of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), that Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2026 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Families, that Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026; Loi 'd'exucation' du budget de 2026 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Administrator has been advised, and the message has been tabled.

The Speaker in the Chair

MLA Sala: It gives me great pride to rise today and move second reading of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. This legislation implements key measures from Budget 2026: our plan to deliver good jobs, lower costs and better health care for Manitobans.

I do want to begin by thanking the incredible team in the public service and across government for all the work that went into developing this budget and the legislation that's before us today, which helps to deliver on the commitment we brought forward to Manitobans in Budget 2026.

And when we talk about those commitments, Honourable Speaker, there's one issue Manitobans have raised more than any other when it comes to affordability, and that is the cost of groceries. We've heard it everywhere. Manitobans are stretching every dollar. They're clipping coupons, buying fewer fresh fruits and vegetables and skipping brands they used to buy. And despite doing everything they can, many families still feel like they're falling behind. Families are feeling squeezed at the grocery store in a very real way.

So the question we asked ourselves, as a government, was a simple one: What can we do to help bring those costs down? The members opposite said there was nothing a provincial government could do, but on this side of the House, we reject that view. We believe that when families are struggling with the cost of essentials like food, government has a responsibility to step up and help, and that's exactly what Bill 53 does.

The centrepiece of this legislation removes the PST from food—all food sold at the grocery store, effective July 1. And timing matters here, Honourable Speaker. These savings are tied directly to this legislation. Passing this bill means Manitobans start saving money on July 1. It means that on Canada Day, families across this province could walk into a grocery

store and immediately see a lower total at the check-out. Not months later, not after filing taxes—right away.

We know what that looks like in real life. It's a parent picking up a rotisserie chicken after hockey practice, it's a worker grabbing a pre-made salad at lunch, a family trying to make sure there's enough food on the table for the week ahead. These aren't luxuries; these are everyday essentials, and this bill would lower the cost of those essentials.

Honourable Speaker, this bill also takes important steps to make housing more affordable. It increases the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit from \$1,600 to \$1,700 for 2027, and for the first time, we are asking the top 1 per cent to give back a little bit more by reducing the credit for high-value homes and eliminating it entirely for homes over \$1.5 million, because we believe support should go to where it's needed most. This legislation also supports renters by increasing the Renters Affordability Tax Credit to \$675 and helping seniors with an increased top up.

Of course, this work does not stop here. Our government is also increasing grocery competition. We're banning grocery pricing practices—predatory 'priceces'—and we're taking action against restrictive property controls that drive up food costs and limit competition. We are tackling affordability from every angle because Manitobans need relief now.

But the immediate relief in front of this House today is Bill 53. And the reality is this: Delaying the bill means delaying the savings. Every single day this legislation is stalled is another day Manitobans continue paying more at the checkout. Families shouldn't have to wait for relief on something as essential as food. Manitobans have been clear about their priorities, Honourable Speaker. They want help with the cost of groceries. They want help with the cost of living. And they want a government that listens and takes action, and that's exactly what this legislation is about.

Let me clear, Honourable Speaker. Members opposite cannot continue to hold hostage real affordability relief for Manitobans. This bill will lower grocery costs, increase supports for renters and homeowners, put money back in people's pockets, starting July 1. These are practical measures that Manitobans need right now, measures the members opposite are blocking.

We're committed to doing whatever it takes to pass this legislation because we know it will help Manitobans, and we're committed to ensuring families can start seeing those savings as soon as possible.

We expect every member of this House to help move this bill forward so Manitobans can start saving on July 1.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

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

The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Last year, this NDP government made the damaging decision to cancel indexation on income taxes. Now we're in 2026 and Manitoba remains the last jurisdiction to not index income taxes to inflation. Every other province now has some kind of indexation of income tax thresholds. We are seeing again in BITSA that indexation was not brought back, so now that Manitoba is the last jurisdiction in Canada to not have this, I wonder if the minister can speak to why that rationale to not bring back indexation in Manitoba, leaving it the last jurisdiction not to have it.

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, we've been doing a lot of work to lower personal income taxes for Manitobans. Whether that's increasing our basic personal exemption, whether that's making changes to the brackets, the reality is Manitobans have thousands dollars more in their pockets thanks to those changes.

But, of course, we didn't stop there. We brought in a full-year gas tax holiday, now a permanent gas tax cut going forward. And this bill brings forward more tax relief.

I ask the member opposite, will she support those changes?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): In section 3(4.3)(b) of this bill, it defines a bakery as a restaurant. Does this apply to in-store bakeries? I mean, members opposite, they are falsely claiming to be cutting taxes for Manitobans, and then something essential as bread is going to be taxed.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, we know Manitobans are facing those food affordability challenges, and that's why we're so proud to bringing forward with this bill a means of taking the PST off all groceries in

grocery stores and convenience stores in Manitoba. This means that those prepared salads, rotisserie chickens, all those healthy items and things across the grocery store that previously had tax applied to them are now tax free.

So we're doing that work of lowering costs for Manitobans; we know how important that is, and we ask the members opposite to get on board.

Mr. Johnson: Pretty simple question, Honourable Speaker. Will goods from a bakery be tax free, such as bread?

MLA Sala: Again, we're doing that work, that important work, of reducing the costs of groceries everywhere where Manitobans buy their groceries. So we're very excited, again, to be bringing this forward. We know for years the members opposite weren't interested in bringing forward real relief for Manitobans where it counted. That's exactly what we're doing with this bill. We're responding to those challenges that Manitobans are facing, we're proud to be reducing their costs, and, again, the only people in the entire province that don't seem to be in support are sitting across from us.

* (15:50)

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I didn't quite seem to get that answer from the minister, the question put forward by my good friend and colleague. So I'll re-ask the very first question that my friend from Midland had asked.

So removing the indexation of tax brackets by this Kinew government and the basic personal exemption—the basic personal amount over the past two years, how does this minister square that circle that this is actually going to save people money? You get a raise, you get into a different tax bracket and you get charged more money; you get taxed more.

So can the minister explain the Kinew government's rationale for getting rid of indexing tax brackets to inflation—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: I'm proud of the work that our government has done to reduce costs for Manitobans and, ultimately, to reduce their personal income taxes. When we got in, we made bracket changes. We lifted the basic personal exemption. And we've made tax cuts across the board. We're looking at—whether it's for renters, whether it's for homeowners, we're making life more affordable.

Again, for years, Manitobans had a government that wasn't focused on that, and now they do. And not only do they have a government focused on making life more affordable, we're doing that in a fiscally sustainable way, bringing those savings while we have the lowest deficit in the entire country.

Mrs. Stone: The minister in one of his previous responses indicated that they have increased the basic personal exemption.

So can the minister please point to in what section of the BITSA bill he's brought forward today—or this week—that has increased the basic personal exemption for Manitobans in the 2026-2027 budget year?

MLA Sala: There was never any comment about doing it this year; that was done two years ago.

So we're proud to have raised that basic personal exemption two years ago, again, bringing more savings to Manitobans' pockets, including changes we made to brackets. We're putting thousands of dollars more in the wallets of Manitobans, again, after years of the PCs doing nothing.

Mr. Johnson: Seniors that have just received a cost-of-living increase in their CPP—Canada Pension Plan—and Old Age Security are now having the benefits clawed back, but not by the federal government; it's by this Kinew NDP government with bracket creep.

Will the minister increase the bracket so at least seniors that are receiving OAS and CPP aren't being clawed back from the Kinew government?

MLA Sala: Well, Honourable Speaker, we know one of the areas where the PCs did raise taxes was on renters—by \$175. Who's often in the rental units? Seniors, people on fixed incomes. That's their record.

What are we doing? We're increasing the Renters Affordability Tax Credit to \$675 in this budget. And, of course, this BITSA bill—it will not go up to \$675 as we've committed without their support, at least not in the time frame we want to see it be brought in. And then, beyond that, we're also increasing the seniors top-up, bringing it to a maximum of \$385.71.

We're doing the work to lower costs for Manitobans after years of neglect from the members opposite.

Mrs. Stone: In the BITSA bill, under part 2, section 18, 3(4.2), part C, it indicates that an exemption for the PST cut does not include those ordered by telephone, through an online sales platform or by—through other

electronic means and are delivered or picked up from any of the premises referred to in clause (a).

So if a senior with mobility issues calls their local Co-op and orders a rotisserie chicken, do they not get their PST decrease because they've ordered through the telephone?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, there was a long period there—about seven and a half years—where Manitobans had a government that was not acting to respond to their affordability challenges. We're proud to be responding to that.

Again, in very short order, we got in, we cut the gas tax entirely for a year. We brought in middle-class tax cuts across the board. We're raising renters tax credit to put more money in renters' pockets. We're raising education property taxes to put more—education property tax credits to put more money in Manitobans' wallets. And now, with this BITSA bill, we're looking to take the PST off all groceries across the province.

We ask the members opposite, if they really want to help Manitobans, they want to do something productive or useful for once, here's an opportunity. Stand up today and say, I will support taking the PST off all groceries. We look forward to seeing them do that today.

Mrs. Stone: Sorry, so if the minister could please clarify: If a senior calls their local grocery store, local Co-op and orders a rotisserie chicken and a bottle of pop, do they have to pay the full PST, or does the PST cut apply for those online and telephone orders?

MLA Sala: If ordered from a grocery store, they'll benefit from the PST elimination.

Mr. Johnson: Manitobans are disappointed, not just in this NDP government, but in this BITSA. I'm shocked there isn't more, Manitobans are shocked there isn't more and I'm surprised by the lack of a serious plan to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

Where is the affordability life—relief so many Manitoba families were looking for? It's not here.

Will the minister go back to the drawing board and bring forward a BITSA with meaningful savings for Manitoba families?

MLA Sala: Again, the member is in one of the communities where we're seeing the vast, vast majority of people doing much better under our approach than theirs.

Again, does he want to go back to his community and tell them about how he's advocating to reduce the amount of money they have in their pockets? That's essentially what he's arguing here today.

We know they want to go back to the way things were—again, higher education property taxes, tax on gasoline back to the full 14 cents. They want to change the approaches that we brought forward when it comes to renters tax credits. We know they want to make life more expensive.

Manitobans reject that. They support the work we're doing and they want to see this BITSA bill passed so we can bring those PST savings for July 1.

Mr. Ewasko: So it's interesting that the minister brings up education property taxes, because I would like to ask the minister, how is BITSA going to benefit those that have seasonal cottages everywhere in Manitoba? I think that they're absolutely going to be paying more, not less. And so I'd like the minister to explain how the taxes that he is imposing on property owners in seasonal properties are actually paying less in his world.

MLA Sala: Well, first of all, this BITSA would bring forward \$1,700 in savings on your education property tax bill. That's a huge move forward to ensure that, again, the costs of operating a home go down. And then you bring in our middle-class tax cuts, our cuts for renters and increases to the tax credit for renters, the important work we've done in removing the tax off gas, the 10 per cent cut.

We're bringing a package of savings that exceeds anything that the members opposite ever considered bringing forward. That's important, Honourable Speaker. We know Manitobans continue to face those affordability challenges.

And that's why it's so surprising to see them standing in this House today, fighting against a government that's finally doing that work to lower costs. We're proud to be doing the work and we're going to keep working to lower education property tax bills for Manitobans as we bring forward the \$1,700—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Last year, according to the City of Winnipeg taxation and assessment branch, 55 per cent of Winnipeg properties were worse off under this government's affordability tax credit than they would have otherwise been under the PC's 50 per cent rebate. So, for the average home, say assessed at \$450,000 in Lagimodière, what would be the increase in taxes

even with the NDP's \$1,600 rebate or \$1,700 rebate that they've proposed today?

MLA Sala: We're bringing forward really, really, really important measures here, Honourable Speaker. And we're not—again, we're—no surprise, we're not seeing support from the members opposite. We know where they want to take us: backwards. They don't want to support any of the affordability measures that we brought forward.

But, again, what does this bill contain? A \$1,700 education property tax rebate. That means that in her community, again, nine out of 10 people are doing better off than under their plan that they brought forward. So, again, she stands in the House today and argues against our \$1,700 credit. How do you square that with her constituents? What does she say when she goes to the grocery store, the hockey arena, and she says, guys, I'm fighting against more savings for you?

I don't know how that goes or how that's going to go during the next election. But what we do know is this: This bill is incredibly important. We know that these savings are needed now. And we urge the members opposite to get on board: \$1,700 education property tax rebate, \$675 renter tax credit and no PST on—

* (16:00)

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Can the minister just please walk the House through how the clawback of the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit will work for those homes assessed over \$1 million? Is it \$100 every extra \$100,000? Or can the minister just please walk us through kind of at what levels that clawback will kick in at?

MLA Sala: So 'anendments'—amendments will enable the reduction of HATC on properties with assessed values over \$1 million; that's starting in 2027. The formula reduces the maximum tax credit by \$3.40 per \$1,000 of assessed value until the tax credit is reduced to zero at \$1.5 million in assessed value.

Mr. Johnson: The minister confirmed earlier that they are clawing back Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security and don't intend it—to give it back to Manitobans with increasing the basic personal exemption.

Will the minister please just apologize to the seniors in my community and across Manitoba?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, that's not a reasonable perspective to put forward and we know that that's not playing honestly with Manitobans.

Manitobans are smarter than that. And what they see with this bill is the government focused on responding to their affordability challenges.

Again, what does this bill do? Mainly, it's looking to take the PST off all groceries and grocery stores and convenience stores. We know that families across the province are looking forward to that. We know that for renters, many of whom are seniors that the member alludes to—who had their taxes increased by \$175 thanks to his team and the decisions they made—this bill will raise that to \$675. Those are much needed dollars we need to put in the pockets of seniors.

Again, will they do the work? Will they stand up today and actually take positive action to support more affordability for Manitobans—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: I have a very simple question for the minister. Does he think that Manitobans would rather save \$100 at the end of the year under his plan, or \$3,000 at the end of the year under the PCs' plan? The answer is very simple.

Does the minister think Manitobans need \$3,000 this year, or his inadequate \$100?

MLA Sala: What we know is Manitobans want to see their government bring them affordability relief while we do the work of managing our finances sustainably. The member opposite brought this forward the first day that they were asked about this. They didn't even know what it cost. They're bouncing between different proposals. It's not serious, Honourable Speaker. The proposal is not serious.

They have no idea about the consequences of the proposal they've outlined there. They're just throwing numbers out there in hopes of gaining one or two additional supporters.

Here's what we know: Manitobans see us doing the work. We're bringing in focused, targeted savings where it counts, like food, like rent, like your education property tax bill. Manitobans stand behind that. We ask the members opposite to do the same.

The Speaker: Just before moving on, I would caution members once again about the language they sometimes choose. Suggesting that someone is not playing honestly with Manitobans could be interpreted as perhaps lying.

So I would caution members to be more circumspect. And if the honourable Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) wanted to withdraw that, that'd be a good thing.

MLA Sala: I withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: So the time for questions has now expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is open for debate.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I rise today to speak to The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, commonly, as we all know it, as BITSA.

And let me say this clearly from the outset: The Progressive Conservative team will not be lifting a finger to pass this legislation in its current form. We are here to stand up for real affordability relief for Manitobans.

However, should this government choose to step up with meaningful action on affordability by increasing the basic personal exemption, then our PC team will act quickly to ensure BITSA comes to a vote this spring session.

And the reason for this is simple: Manitobans are struggling to afford the basic necessities. Manitoba has the highest food inflation in the country at 4.9 per cent. Gas is at its almost highest in recent memory; property taxes, specifically education and school taxes, are at unprecedented historical highs; and over 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting that they are within \$200 of insolvency.

The current budget bill, as presented by this NDP, simply does not meet the very real and significant challenges that Manitoba families are facing. Families across Manitoba are struggling under the weight of rising costs, rising taxes, rising mortgage payments, rising utility bills, rising grocery prices and rising uncertainty. And what does this NDP government have to offer them in response? Pennies. BITSA only offers very small changes to relief when families need a great deal more of meaningful support.

We all know costs of living, affordability, is the No. 1 issue facing Manitobans today. And yet there was no significant or long-term relief for Manitoba families who are struggling every day to make ends meet. It's clear that affordability, the economy and families are not a priority for this NDP government. Since coming into office, all they have offered are temporary measures, ad hoc policies or tax relief that

end and pennies sprinkled when Manitobans need hundreds and thousands of dollars more just to afford the basic necessities.

This is why our PC team cannot support BITSA in its current form.

But, Honourable Speaker, let me be completely clear. If this government is willing to co-operate, if they're willing to step up and provide meaningful relief by significantly increasing the basic personal exemption, at the very least, to bring us in line with Alberta and Saskatchewan today—which is \$21,000—then our caucus is prepared to work to bring BITSA to a vote this spring session.

So this is a test for this NDP as to whether they truly care about affordability relief for Manitobans. If our PC team is elected, we will double the basic personal exemption. We have said that. We have made that clear. Our commitment, if elected, will be to increase the basic personal exemption to \$30,000, and we will make that happen. We did it before under the previous PC government, and we will do it again.

So what are we asking for today? We're asking for the government, this NDP, to at the very least catch up to the other provinces. Every other province has indexed income taxes to inflation. Nova Scotia did it this year. British Columbia does it. Alberta does it. Saskatchewan does it. Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, PEI and Nova Scotia all index income taxes to inflation. The only province missing from this best practice—this is standard practice across Canada, and the only province missing is Manitoba.

Other provinces are going one step further. They're increasing their basic personal exemptions. But what did this NDP do? They froze them. For two years, this has been frozen. This NDP cancelled indexation. What does that mean? It's pushing more Manitobans into a higher tax bracket.

So any wages that Manitobans might receive will not truly be felt because of inflation and being pushed into a higher tax bracket. So of all years, when Manitoba families are struggling deeply, when costs of living is at its highest, when we're in an affordability crisis and every other province has responded to this moment by increasing basic personal exemptions and indexing to income—to inflation. But what did this NDP do? They did neither.

When every other province has recognized that this is what needs to be done, and this NDP government has chosen to go in the opposite direction. Manitoba is the only province that actually cancelled

indexation, while other provinces were bringing it in. Indexation is best standard practice to ensure that Manitobans and Canadians who are struggling can keep up with inflation costs. In fact, the federal government has even indexed to inflation.

* (16:10)

This just leaves Manitoba. This minister and this NDP government is putting Manitoba and Manitoba families further behind as a result of these decisions.

This is what's happening under this NDP government: it's called bracket creep. It's a hidden tax hike. Workers receiving modest wage increases to keep up with inflation are now paying more tax despite actually not being financially ahead. The NDP is pushing Manitobans further and further behind families in other provinces, and we do have a significant amount of catch-up to other provinces as a result of these decisions that this minister and this NDP government made.

Manitobans need real relief that they can actually feel, that they can actually have in their pockets, those extra dollars that can go a very long way. And we're not talking about a dollar to two dollars a week like this NDP is proposing. We're talking about hundreds and thousands of dollars of relief at the end of the day. Manitobans would be tax free for their first \$30,000 of income. That's huge. A dual-income household earning \$80,000 will get an extra \$3,000 back in their pockets.

We believe that Manitobans know best how to spend their hard-earned dollars. We know every single Manitoba household budget is different. While one family might not be able to afford healthy, wholesome food at the grocery store, another family is struggling to decide if they can afford to put their kids into camp this summer, while another family is struggling to decide whether they can put their kids into sports throughout the spring or the fall. Sports are expensive.

And that doesn't even leave extra dollars for a family outing that families need and want and deserve, that extra pizza night or movie night out as a family, those things that really, truly make a difference in people's lives. And this NDP government has laughed, has failed to recognize the true challenges that Manitoba families are facing, because if they really realized and recognized that Manitobans are in an affordability crisis, then they would have included much more significant tax relief for those very struggling Manitobans, and they didn't.

And we saw that in this BITSA bill that they've brought forward. There was no meaningful tax relief. As I've mentioned time and time again in these Chambers and in question period today, the NDP has proposed \$100 a year and we've proposed \$1,000 in tax savings a year. What do you think Manitobans would rather have? Three thousand dollars goes a lot further than \$100. Their hundred-dollar proposal accounts for less than two dollars a week in savings. You ask a Manitoba family who has a grocery shop how much they're actually saving on their PST cut, because the reality is, and Manitobans know this, healthy food is already exempt from the PST.

Ground beef—which has soared—lettuce, pork, vegetables, fruits, those are the foods Manitobans are buying that they're not getting relief on because the PST exemption is already there. Manitobans already don't pay PST on those items. So, despite all the announcements and the celebrations, Manitobans are not saving significant dollars.

And this was their only affordability measure in this budget. There was no other tax relief for Manitobans. And I know the minister stands up and wants to celebrate his 16 or 17 hundred dollar affordability credit, but—yes. *[interjection]*

You know, Honourable Speaker, I love that they're clapping, because right now, Manitobans and Winnipeggers are opening up their tax bill to see thousands of dollars of increases directly as a result of the decisions this NDP government made.

They are trying to implement something because they screwed up last year when they removed the 50 per cent education property tax rebate and removed the 2 per cent cap on school divisions and failed to fund school divisions to inflation. They removed all those guardrails, and then they realized they had a problem, because property taxes skyrocketed. In fact, the City of Winnipeg was so embarrassed they had to distance themselves by including an insert explaining that there are actually two bills in one and that 54 per cent of a property tax bill accounts is going to education taxes—54 per cent of property tax bill in Winnipeg is now going to an NDP property—NDP education tax. And they didn't offer any meaningful relief for that, and we've seen this for a second year in a row.

The NDP had an entire year and a half to fix the problem that they created. Last year we saw the issues that happened: thousands of dollars in additional education property taxes on homes; missing credits because the NDP screwed up the rollout so badly they

had to backtrack on that and put the brunt on municipalities to fix their problem for them.

So they had a year. They had a year to realize that this isn't sustainable, that school divisions and school taxes are going to increase at an unsustainable rate, especially if the NDP is not funding them to inflation or to the needs that the student population now requires. And yet they still didn't fix their problem.

And so here we are, a second year. I'm already receiving calls from many of the members opposite's constituents, letting me know what their property tax bills actually are. And I'm assuming the MLA for Lagimodière, MLA for Southdale, MLA for Waverley, MLA for Kildonan-River East are all hearing those exact same concerns because what the NDP did last year is not sustainable.

And we're not even talking about a general assessment year; that comes next year. And maybe the members opposite don't realize this, but an assessment actually lags behind property values. So as property values continue to increase, which we know they are, then the general assessment is going to reflect that and property taxes are going to be even higher next year.

And this \$1,700 is not even going to cover those increases. It doesn't even cover the increases for this year and Manitobans and Winnipeggers will not see that \$1,700 until next year. And until the NDP fixes this problem, it is going to continue to land on families to pay for their mistakes. And the fact that we're two years into this and they haven't realized this is deeply concerning. And unfortunately, for Manitobans and Manitoba families, they're the ones paying the price.

Manitobans, as we've said it many times in these Chambers, are reporting that they are within \$200 of insolvency. Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are within \$200 of not being able to pay off their debt. And how did this Premier (Mr. Kinew) and this minister respond to that crisis? Pennies. Not thousands of dollars, not hundreds of dollars. Pennies. This is the NDP's third budget and cost of living continues to be the number one issue facing Manitobans right now.

This NDP did not respond to the affordability crisis with long-term or meaningful tax relief. And what we're seeing once again is this NDP government deferring and delaying the very real challenges that are facing Manitobans. This NDP is ignoring the most pressing challenges that Manitobans and Manitoba families are facing at the end of the day when they look at their household budgets. There is no serious

affordability plan by this Premier and NDP government to truly address this crisis that's facing Manitobans.

So again, I ask Manitobans: Would you rather have \$100 from the NDP under their proposal or \$3,000 from the PC proposal? The answer is very simple: Manitobans want more and they desperately need more and this NDP failed to provide any of that meaningful relief. Because we know that that's relief that people will actually notice—more money at the end of the day directly on their paycheques. That's real money, real affordability, which in turn means real economic stimulus. And Manitoba desperately needs economic growth right now because under this NDP, Manitoba's economy is stagnant.

* (16:20)

Deloitte, in fact, has downgraded Manitoba's GDP growth forecast to just 1 per cent for 2026—1 per cent—and that's after Manitoba recorded one of the weakest growths in the entire country last year as well. CFIB came out with a report a few weeks ago showing that Manitoba has had six consecutive quarters where more businesses are exiting than entering. Entrepreneurs are giving up, investment is fleeing and young workers are leaving because youth unemployment is a growing concern as broader economic growth slows and businesses continue to exit the province.

Labour force data shows that Manitoba's youth unemployment rate hit as high as 14.1 per cent in January. Young workers often struggle when business investment slows because hiring freezes occur and entry-level opportunities disappear. So let's look at that economic reality that Manitoba's facing: one of the lowest economic GDP growths in the entire country, just a shameful, embarrassing 1.1 per cent, with a downgrade of a 1 per cent projection by one of the largest financial giants in the entire world.

And then how does this NDP respond? By bringing in a job-killing Manitoba jobs agreement that actually shuts out workers, not encourages them into the workforce; 88 per cent of construction workers are being left out of bidding and participating on major public projects.

And let's remind this NDP government: This is taxpayers' dollars for public projects. It's not their money to do what they wish; that's Manitobans' hard-earned dollars, and they're deciding to pick and choose winners and losers with their job-killing jobs agreement. And an agreement that the industry does not want, that they don't like, that they don't support.

And had the NDP actually consulted with the construction industry as to what this job agreement would mean, then a—possibly a very, very different situation would be in front of us, unlike the one that we're seeing right now in Brandon, where the construction industry has calculated that it would cost an extra 20 per cent more to build a school, 20 per cent more of taxpayers' dollars just because this NDP government is leaving out 88 per cent of construction workers in this province. They are providing benefits to 12 per cent over 88 per cent, and all they're doing is putting in a slush fund for their union friends while leaving out Manitobans and picking and choosing winners and losers.

And the problems don't stop there, Honourable Speaker, because companies aren't even bidding on these projects because of this agreement. We saw that from the construction industry in their response. They are not getting the bids. So that is a much bigger problem, when companies are not bidding on public projects, and that is happening as a direct result of the job-killing Manitoba jobs agreement. There is no consultation with industry. No bids. Every industry in the construction sector is against this agreement. And with unemployment rate—with the unemployment rate rising to 6.3 per cent, youth unemployment having climbed to over 14 per cent, Manitoba cannot afford to be shutting out workers right now.

And the fact that the NDP government doesn't understand this is deeply problematic. It's problematic for the future of our province, it's problematic currently for our province, as major infrastructure projects need to take place and it's a major problem because it limits—not spurs, it limits economic growth potential within our province.

At the same time, as I've talked significantly about, affordability pressures continue to climb. Manitoba has the second-highest inflation rate in the country, highest food inflation rates and the numbers are already confirming what Manitobans feel every single day as they face higher costs, fewer opportunities and increasing financial pressure compared to the rest of the provinces.

And these are not just statistics, but they are warning signs, and they're a warning sign for an NDP government that chooses to ignore what those realities really are for Manitobans and Manitoba families.

The economic reality for Manitoba is that we are stagnating compared to other provinces. A good indication is competitiveness. And when we are less competitive with our neighbouring provinces,

investment flees, workers flee and Manitobans look for other opportunities elsewhere. And, yes, I recognize that other provinces are facing challenges too, but Manitoba's the worst, and that shows something. That's an indication that Manitoba and this NDP government is not doing what it needs to do to get our economy moving.

While other provinces are attracting investment and major investment, Canada is competing against those other jurisdictions. We're competing for workers. We're competing for highly skilled professionals, skilled professionals that Manitoba desperately needs: doctors, engineers, nurses, veterinarians. Those are the skills that Manitoba needs to attract.

And we're competing for dollars being invested here in this province because that's what grows our economy, and that's what's being invested outside of our province because of decisions and bad tax competitiveness that Manitoba now has because of this NDP government, because of decisions and policies like the job-killing Manitoba jobs agreement that they're implementing. That's pushing business out, pushing workers out. It's pushing investment out of this province—is exactly the opposite of what Manitoba needs right now.

We're seeing investment left, right and centre in Saskatchewan and Alberta and Ontario. They're attracting investment. The only thing this NDP government has done is cut ribbons for projects that the PCs have started. They haven't done anything on their own. They haven't attracted that investment into the province.

But yet there is nothing in BITSA, nothing in this budget document, that even recognizes or supports our business community, and we heard that in response from the chambers in response to this budget. The business community is disappointed that there wasn't any support for businesses in this province.

This NDP doesn't even have a strategy to attract business in Manitoba, and that's a problem. They had an opportunity to bring forward meaningful supports for businesses, just like they had an opportunity to bring forward meaningful supports for Manitoba families. They failed on both accounts.

Businesses have been under extreme difficult circumstances over the past couple of years: trade wars from two fronts that's not letting up any time soon. In fact, Trump actually extended tariffs on April 1 where Manitoba manufacturers are now struggling; higher cost tariffs on final products, not just an input cost but a final product.

Manitoba predominantly exports final goods and final products, and that is an increased tariff on those Manitoba manufacturers who are already struggling just to keep up with other global jurisdictions.

The NDP didn't even recognize this. They didn't even pay attention to this. Manufacturing is the second largest economic driver in Manitoba, and there was not even a statement, not even a recognition, as what these changes in section 232 mean for Manitoba businesses. And as someone who has worked in the manufacturing industry, that was deeply disappointing, and I'm hearing from manufacturers across the entire province about what this means for them and their bottom line, and it's a challenge and it's not good.

And the uncertainty is going to continue. Businesses are saying that tariffs, they're not going to go away any time soon. In fact, they're probably going to be living under this for a very long time. And while the minister and the NDP just wanted to talk in hypotheticals last year, they didn't even want to acknowledge that a tariff war was happening; the minister said that on the record. He said, we're not going to talk in hypotheticals, when our team asked what their plan was to deal with US tariffs. So we're two years into it; it seems like they're still operating in hypotheticals because they haven't done anything to support the business community in Manitoba.

* (16:30)

And this is all at a time when Manitoba's economy is already struggling; it's already stagnant. Moody's credit-rating agency has warned this NDP that their budget projections do not line up with economic realities. Deloitte has downgraded Manitoba's economic growth projections to 1 per cent. That's two of the largest financial giants in the world that have issued warnings that this NDP government's projections are rosy and that they're not realistic and they don't line up with the economic realities that are facing Manitoba as a province.

And the NDP are not taking this seriously. They've had no response to these warnings. That is deeply concerning because, as Conservatives, we know that when a credit rating agency or investor indicates a warning to a government, that needs to be taken seriously, because this could mean—and I'm not saying it's going to happen or will happen soon, but it could—higher borrowing costs, more pressure on taxpayers and fewer opportunities for Manitoba families at the end of the day.

This NDP government's fiscal mismanagement is pushing more and more Manitobans toward food

banks, temporary shelters. In their last three budgets, they have shown that they are not listening to Manitobans. The NDP government has shown that they cannot budget. They have missed every single budget projection that they have ever made for themselves, and not by a little, but by a lot. This is just pushing more onto the backs of future generations as our debt is increasing, and this is not sustainable.

So, over the past three years—and this BITSA bill is no different—this is clearly an NDP government that does not know how to budget and has poorly planned for today's fiscal realities. Cost-of-living crisis is a very real challenge facing Manitoba families, and Manitoba families are feeling it: higher income taxes, skyrocketing education and property taxes, rising energy costs, all as a result of decisions that this NDP government made.

This isn't just financial mismanagement, but it's economic mismanagement, and what we saw last week with the introduction of BITSA was an NDP government who's not listening to the very real struggles that Manitoba families are facing. Again, increasing income taxes, increasing school division and education property taxes to historic, unprecedented levels that have never been seen before.

Increasing grocery prices—healthy food, beef, lettuce, vegetables, fruit, pork—highest food inflation in the province, 4.9 per cent. Increasing utility rates. The NDP's fake freeze last year just led to over 12 per cent of increasing hydro rates over the next three years. Their freeze yesterday meant higher rates today and tomorrow. That is not fiscally responsible and is not fair to Manitoba families.

This Premier (Mr. Kinew) refuses to stand up for struggling Manitobans. They refuse to support our proposal to increase the basic personal exemption, which would save families \$3,000 a year at the end of the day, more money in their pocket, while every other province has responded to this need by indexing income taxes to inflation and increasing the basic personal exemption. Manitoba, being the only province under this NDP government, has failed to do so while every other province is well ahead.

So, after almost three years in office, the NDP is clearly not listening to the real challenges facing Manitoba. We are here, however, and willing to co-operate. If the NDP increases the basic personal exemption, we'll ensure BITSA comes to a vote this spring. Will they do it?

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No one else in debate?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Yes, there's—obviously, there's no NDP members that want to get up and put a word on the record about this failing BITSA, failing minister, failing government, as a matter of fact. But I am going to rise today to put some words on the record about Bill 53, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, 2026; or, as we know it, BITSA.

So let me just start out from the beginning. Manitoba population was told that this budget would deliver their affordability. They were promised relief; they were promised action. What they received instead was another NDP budget built of higher taxes, higher debt, higher costs and lower expectations. This legislation does not meet the moment that Manitoba families are facing. Again, the failing NDP government is letting Manitobans down.

Families across our province is under enormous pressure. Those of you that are watching today, you know: grocery bills are up; mortgage payments are up; rent is up; hydro is up; insurance is up; fuel is up; education property taxes are skyrocketing.

Manitobans are doing everything right. You're working hard. You're raising your families. You're contributing to your communities. And you're still falling behind under this NDP government.

And after two and a half years of this NDP government, what's being offered for legislation? This legislation is offering pennies—pennies in your front pocket while they're pulling \$20 bills out of your back pocket. Pennies will be—the pennies, while this government quietly takes hundreds and thousands of dollars out of your pockets.

Manitobans understand that through bracket creep, you're paying more. You look at our seniors who are collecting Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security. The meagre increase that they got from the federal government, their cost-of-living increase, has been eroded by this provincial government and their bracket creep. Every penny that they're receiving has been clawed back by this provincial government, the Kinew government. They are taking the money right out of seniors' pockets that have historically not had to pay provincial income tax, but are now being taken away.

Honourable Speaker, this government once again is putting pennies in your front pocket and taking \$20 bills out of your back. That's exactly what Manitobans are experiencing every single month

when they sit down at the kitchen table to pay their bills.

This bill simply does not provide meaningful affordability relief. That is why our caucus will not be lifting a finger to pass BITSA in its current form.

But let's be clear: We are not here simply to oppose for the sake of opposing. We are here to improve this legislation. Let me say that again. We are here debating this to improve this legislation for you, the Manitoban family. And we're here to stand up for you as well, standing up for Manitoba families. And we're here to demand better.

If this government is serious about affordability, this is the test. Right here, the Progressive Conservative caucus has put forward a practical, achievable, common sense proposal to significantly increase the basic personal exemption so Manitobans—Manitobans can keep more money in their pocket.

When you increase the basic personal exemption, that's more money on every single paycheque, not a cheque once a year on your inflated school property taxes. It is every single paycheque. You have a larger paycheque that stays in your pocket. Our proposal moves toward a \$30,000 basic personal exemption, and it would put real money back in all Manitobans' pockets—up to \$1,535 for individuals or up to \$3,000 for a two-income family. And we know, those of you that are watching from Interlake-Gimli today, we know that the average household income, according to Stats Canada, is \$62,500 in Interlake-Gimli. This would almost alleviate you from paying taxes.

* (16:40)

This is real relief that would actually be felt by the people of Interlake-Gimli and all Manitobans. This is money for groceries; it's money for your rent; it's money for your hydro bills. Members opposite don't realize that a huge 'partion' of rural Manitoba doesn't have gas. Everything is heated by electricity, and that is substantially more expensive than what these city NDP MLAs experience right here in the city. Their bills are a fraction to start off with.

But this would put more money in your pocket so you can choose how to spend it. There—this would not force you to spend it on anything. You choose as a family whether you want to get more groceries, healthier food or maybe even take your—enroll your kids in that sports program that you haven't been able to over the last few years. It's also money for your kids clothing. I know kids and—well, my grandkids tear

through the clothes pretty quickly. They don't seem like they're made how they used to be made.

This is money to help families make it to the end of every month. And I think we know that each family—not each family, but families in Manitoba, a lot of them are \$200 from bankruptcy at the end of every month. This would put means on the table to pay those bills and buy those groceries.

When families have more money in their pockets, they spend it in the local communities. That's so important in rural Manitoba, and we know that's where this NDP government fails. They just stay inside the Perimeter—they got perimeteritis—and don't experience what actually happens in rural Manitoba.

And when they spend that money, it supports their small businesses, that creates more jobs; they support restaurants, creates more jobs for that. And that economic activity generates additional revenue for the province, not by punishing the taxpayers.

That is the difference between our vision and the NDP's vision. We believe Manitobans know how to spend their money better than government does. And this is your money, Manitobans. The NDP believe government should take more and then boast about giving you a couple pennies back in your front pocket. Again, a couple pennies in your front pocket while they're taking twenties out of your back pocket.

Honourable Speaker, the government likes to talk about affordability, but let's talk and let us look at what Manitobans are actually experiencing under this NDP government. The NDP cancelled 'indexation' of tax brackets for the basic personal exemption. This is a tax increase. That is what we refer to as bracket creep. This means inflation pushes Manitobans into paying more taxes each and every single year and their purchasing power is decreasing, and that's why you're feeling the pinch.

Low-income Manitobans pay more. That little bit extra that was increased in your CPP and Old Age Security, it's now gone. It's not being clawed back by the federal government, it's been taken by the NDP Kinew government. Middle-income Manitobans, you're paying more. Seniors on fixed income, you're paying more. Young families, you're paying more.

And now, after creating the problem themselves, the government expects applause for—because they are removing the PST on a few groceries that'll amount to 100 bucks a year. Manitoba families in the Interlake, would you rather have a \$100 a year under the

NDP plan or \$3,000 a year under the PC plan? I think we know what that answer is, and that's basic math.

They know that saving a few cents on a rotisserie chicken does not offset the hundreds of dollars that you are paying in—well, name the tax. Education tax, income tax, property tax. It does not offset higher hydro bills—I think we all know how much they've crept up—crept up in the last few years under this government—and it obviously does not offset higher fuel prices. It does not offset higher MPI costs. And it does not offset the hidden tax hikes that are caused by bracket creep.

This legislation does not meet the moment for Manitoba families. Honourable Speaker, even the City of Winnipeg is now effectively sounding the alarm over education property tax. Property tax bills that were mailed out this month clearly show that Manitobans will have to pay more under this NDP government. And what are they experiencing? Higher taxes.

And here's some of the ones and some of the increases that Winnipeggers have experienced. And rural Manitoba, your tax bills are yet to come. You will face the exact same thing. School divisions across Winnipeg increased their tax requirements between 5.1 per cent and 11.7 per cent in a single year. Did your income go up that much? Is there that much less coming off of your income to cover that? The answer is no.

Pembina Trails, up 11.6 per cent; Louis Riel, 11.7; Winnipeg School Division, up 9.5 per cent; Seine River, mill rates up 10.9 per cent; Interlake school taxes, they are up 10.6 per cent. Families are opening their property tax bills and seeing massive increases.

Now, the City of Winnipeg, they're—don't want to take the heat for this, for the NDP mismanagement and mistakes that they've done. So the City have now included inserts explaining that the education taxes make up the bulk of the property tax bill that they receive and the increase that they receive. And Manitobans are frustrated.

Why are they frustrated? Because this government keeps pretending a \$100 increase in the rebate—and it's not even this year; it's next year. They keep pretending that this rebate increase that's arriving a few years from now will somehow make up for the massive tax increases that you as a Manitoban are receiving this year. And we all know it doesn't.

This government—they—their own numbers show education property tax revenues have exploded from

approximately \$667 million in 2023 to nearly \$1.1 billion in 2026. Over \$400 million more every single year is being collected from Manitobans. That money's not falling from the sky; it's coming out of your pocket. It's coming from seniors. It's coming from homeowners. It's coming from working families already struggling with affordability. The NDP are raising education property taxes and then trying to distract Manitobans with tiny rebates years down the road—again, holding up a hundred dollars years down the road and pulling thousands out of your back pocket.

Honourable Speaker, unlike the NDP, we respect the intelligence of the Manitoba voter. Manitobans know the difference between relief—real relief and tax gimmicks, political propaganda. They know that \$3,000 back for a working family matters far more than pennies at a grocery store checkout.

Now let us also discuss the broader fiscal picture, because this legislation exists within the context of another NDP budget built on debt and deficits. The Finance Minister forecasts a \$498-million deficit this year. But Manitobans have heard these projections before, and they, well, have missed their target ever since being elected.

* (16:50)

Last year, the deficit was supposed to be approximately \$800 million. A couple strokes of the pen, it became \$1.6 billion. The year before that, the NDP projected a \$363-million deficit. The actual result was nearly \$2 billion, with a B, \$2 billion. This government misses its own targets repeatedly, and not by a little amount—by massive, massive margins. Since taking office, the NDP have increased Manitoba's debt by approximately \$5 billion in less than three years.

I have this little game I play when—the students that are watching today, when you come into the Legislature, I may have met some of you, often it's the grade 9 class that come in and learn here, and they have questions, and they ask: Well, what happens with the money that the government takes in? So I explain, you know, how the budgeting process works—they've obviously heard their parents complain about the high taxes under this NDP government—and explain to them that, you know, that money is spent on stuff like health care, education, infrastructure. All the kids in rural Manitoba giggle that this government has even considered spending money on fixing roads.

But when I first started here years ago, it starts with health care; that's the highest budget line item that there is. Then it was family, education and the

fourth one was interest—interest. Interest on Manitoba's credit card that the NDP is borrowing against. And that interest has now moved from fourth under the NDP government up to the third highest line item. And that's why it's important to balance the budget and then eventually pay off the money you owe.

Since taking office, this NDP has increased by \$5 billion the amount of debt that you owe as a Manitoban.

It's not government's debt; it's Manitobans' debt. And what do you have to show for it? Are wait times any better? No. Are hydro rates frozen as promised? No. Is life more affordable? Absolutely not.

Private capital investment is down. Confidence in the province is down under this NDP government. Business organizations are openly expressing disappointment. Stakeholders across the province are warning that this budget fails to address growth and affordability.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce said they were looking for more measures to support businesses. The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses stated practical measures to support investments and growth remain absent. Restaurants Canada warned that this government's PST changes unfairly punish restaurants while favouring grocery and convenience chains selling the identical products. Honourable Speaker, think of that. Identical products sold in two different stores in the province of Manitoba: one is taxed under their tax gimmick, one is not. The government claims this is affordability; it's favouritism.

But if a family buys a prepared chicken at a grocery store, one tax treatment applies. If they buy the—essentially the same meal from a restaurant that's also employing local workers, another—a separate tax treatment applies. That's not fairness. That's government continuing to pick winners and losers.

Restaurants Canada warned this could cost jobs in a sector employing more than 42,000 Manitobans. I'm sure you guys that are watching here today know somebody in that industry. Honourable Speaker, 40 per cent of those jobs now are held by youth: your kids, your grandkids, and yet this government moved ahead anyway. No regard. This is what happens when policy is rushed through without proper scrutiny and consultation.

Honourable Speaker, there are many concerning provisions through this bill that is beyond taxation alone. The government is now giving itself authority

related to the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology after effectively allowing the institution to collapse. First they failed the institution; now they want to expand powers over its administration and assets.

The government is also reducing annual appropriations for the Leg. building, this beautiful building that you, the students of Manitoba, come with your teachers and tour. They are dropping the restoration of this building from \$10 million a year to \$8 million, despite the ongoing infrastructure needs in this historic building. As we stand here and I talk here, the paint's peeling off the ceiling. Mmm, okay, maybe that's not something that needs to be addressed today. But bet your bottom dollar, those foundations that are failing outside continue to need to be addressed.

At the same time, they're streamlining borrowing authorities for school divisions. Manitobans deserve answers about what this means for the future debt and liabilities. And they're not small matters. These are serious public policy decisions deserving serious public examination. This bill, with these measures in it, should go to committee to be discussed there and hear from Manitobans.

And that brings me to a fundamental issue with this government's handling of BITSA legislation. I can see my time's running short here, Honourable Speaker. So this government continues increasing taxes while offering symbolic gestures in return. Manitobans deserve better than symbolic gestures. They deserve a government focused on growth, focused on affordability, focused on competitiveness, focused on keeping more money in the pockets of working families.

The Progressive Conservative caucus has brought forward a serious proposal, a proposal that would provide immediate and meaningful affordability relief, a proposal that would stimulate the Manitoba economy, a proposal that would help every working Manitoban. The question is now is whether the government is prepared to listen, whether they are prepared to improve

this legislation, whether they are prepared to finally acknowledge that families need relief, not political talking points.

And because Manitobans deserve transparency, accountability and meaningful public input into legislation that affects every taxpayer in this province, I move, seconded by the MLA for Midland,

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and substituting the following:

Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, be not now read a second time, but that the order for second reading be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

The Speaker: So it's been moved by the honourable member from Interlake-Gimli, seconded by the honourable member for Midland (Mrs. Stone),

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and substituting the following: bill 35, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, be not now read a second time, but that the order for second reading be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper and the subject of the matter thereof be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

The amendment is in order.

The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, thank you.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 30 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 11, 2026

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