



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

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Speaker's Statement

The Speaker: Before we begin, I do have a statement for the House.

Today, Tuesday, May 12, 2026, marks the 156th anniversary of the day the Manitoba Act received royal assent in the Canadian Parliament. This act created the Province of Manitoba and, accordingly, May 12 has been designated as Manitoba Day.

Members may recall that in recent years we had featured several Indigenous cultural items in the Chamber on Manitoba Day. As of March 3, 2026, however, these items are now on permanent display in the Chamber as one small step in the Assembly's ongoing journey towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities in Manitoba. The beaded mace runner hangs over the Speaker's throne, while the star blanket cushion is displayed on the case to my left.

The mace runner depicts the imagery found on the treaty medal gifted during the making of the numbered treaties and symbolizes the relationship between First Nations and the Crown, and the sacred promises made during treaty making.

In the spirit of reconciliation, the star blanket is recognized as a gift to mark the beginning of partnerships and goodwill between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The star blanket cushion is a symbol of honour, respect and connection and is presented to mark significant life events, offering warmth, comfort and spiritual protection to the recipient.

Also in the display case is a polar bear carving, which was presented to us in 2023 by the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.

Along with the carving is a Métis sash, presented to our Assembly in 2023 by the Manitoba Métis Federation. Initially created as a multi-purpose tool, the sash has become a fundamental symbol of Métis people, representing their unique identity and preserving their history in each interwoven thread.

These items are displayed in the Chamber today and every day to recognize and pay tribute to the

Indigenous peoples of Manitoba. They serve as a reminder that this Chamber and our Legislative Building reside on the traditional lands of Indigenous people, as we recognize each day in our land acknowledgement.

In addition to these items, as we have done for many years now, featured in today's Speaker's parade is our original Manitoba mace, carried by our Acting Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Sukhmanson Singh Chohan. And I am pleased to note that Sukhmanson is the first turban-wearing person to carry the mace in the history of our Legislature, as an example of the modern Assembly's commitment to diversity.

Our original mace made its first formal appearance on May 15, 1871, on the first sitting day of the first session of the first Manitoba Legislature, held in the home of A.G.B. Bannatyne in the Red River Settlement. The Bannatyne home was destroyed by fire in December 1873, but the mace survived.

After 13 years of service, our original mace was retired in 1884 when our current mace debuted. The original mace has a permanent home on display outside the Speaker's office, coming out of retirement annually to mark this day and other special events.

In honour of Manitoba Day, and with this rich history in mind, I encourage all of us to remember that our work in this place is part of a very long legacy of service to the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, and happy Manitoba Day to everyone.

And now on to routine proceedings.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Nursing Week

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): This week is allied health-care professionals week, and it is also national nurses week.

This is a week where we get to recognize and celebrate the incredible work and contributions of allied health-care professionals across Manitoba and nurses across Manitoba. Our government cannot

thank these folks enough for everything they do for Manitobans in every corner of our province.

Today, I'd like to take a moment, however, to especially recognize and reflect on national nurses week and, in particular, Indigenous Nurses Day—which is today—and to celebrate these incredible nurses who are the backbone of our health-care system.

This year's Nursing Week theme, Honourable Speaker, is The Power of Nurses to Transform Health. That reflects what Manitobans already know: that nurses change our lives on a daily basis across Manitoba. They provide skilled, compassionate care in our hospitals, personal-care homes, clinics and communities across Manitoba. And our government is proud to support these nurses and strengthen their profession here in our province.

Since coming into office, we have hired more than 1,400 net-new nurses across Manitoba. That is the direct results of working with nurses, listening to nurses and working to expand nursing education and training seats to help grow the workforce of the future. And we are taking real action to improve the working conditions that nurses are in every single day by introducing legislation to end mandatory overtime and establish safer nurse-to-patient ratios. We are the only jurisdiction in the entire country to take that step, Honourable Speaker.

And today I want to recognize an extraordinary Indigenous nurse who joins us in the gallery: Joshua Monias. Joshua is a proud member of Garden Hill Anisininew Nation, and before becoming a nurse, he worked for 13 years as a health-care aide at Seven Oaks hospital while pursuing his dream of nursing.

Through the PINE program at the University of Manitoba, he earned his bachelor of nursing degree, and now works with the Manitoba Anisininew Mobile Addictions Network at Four Arrows Regional Health Authority. Joshua provides addictions medicine, harm reduction supports, STBBI testing and screening and pathways to treatment for Island Lake members in Winnipeg and in northern communities.

What makes his story especially powerful, Honourable Speaker, is that one of his first jobs as a teenager was cleaning the nursing station in his home community. Today, he returns to those same communities as a nurse caring for his own people.

Joshua's story is one of perseverance, compassion and giving back to his community. His role—he is,

rather, a role model for Indigenous youth, for men in nursing and for all Manitobans.

As a nurse myself, I know first-hand the skill, compassion and resilience that nurses require across our health-care system. The system demands that of them every single day. Joshua, as an incredible example of not only excellence of nurses, but of allied health-care professionals too. A two-in-one this week is pretty special, and, Joshua, we thank you so much for everything you do for Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, all nurses carry experience with them into their roles, lived experience, their whole identities that contribute to making our province a better place and our health-care system better for all Manitobans.

* (13:40)

And so today, as a nurse, and on behalf of myself and the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton), we stand alongside nurses in this province proudly as, again, the backbone of our health-care system, but working together to make it better for generations of Manitobans to come.

Over the past year, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) and myself have had the privilege of visiting nurses in hospitals, clinics, personal-care homes, in communities in coffee shops and at events across Manitoba to hear directly about their experiences and ideas. Just recently, at the Grace Hospital, the Premier and I spent more than two and a half hours listening directly to nurses about the challenges they face and the solutions they want to see.

Those conversations continue to shape our work as a government. Nurses are experts in patient care, and it's critical their voices are heard and respected in decisions about our health-care system.

We celebrate nurses this week, but the truth, Honourable Speaker, is that Manitobans rely on and appreciate nurses every single day of the year. Every day, nurses provide Manitobans with expert, compassionate care during some of the most difficult and vulnerable moments of their lives. From emergency rooms to northern nursing stations, from mental health care to home care, nurses are there for Manitobans at every stage of life.

Nurses have helped carry our health-care system through some of its most difficult moments and Manitoba is stronger because of their dedication. So I want every nurse in Manitoba to know that your

work matters, your expertise matters and that your government sees and values your contributions.

Joshua is joined in the gallery by Kiki Muller, Heather Monias and Candace Champagne, who all work for Four Arrows Regional Health Authority.

I'd ask all members of our House to join me in recognizing all of these incredible nurses, to join me in celebrating and recognizing national nurses week, Indigenous Nurses Day and in thanking nurses across Manitoba for the incredible work they do every day.

Happy national nurses week.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Certainly, we have a lot to celebrate in Manitoba today, it being Manitoba Day, allied health professionals week, National Nursing Week and Indigenous Nurses Day as well. And I rise today to pay particular respects to National Nursing Week and extend our sincere appreciation to the nurses who are the backbone of Manitoba's health-care system.

Nurses are more than health-care professionals; they are caregivers, advocates, educators and leaders in our communities. Every day they provide compassionate, patient-centred care in hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community clinics and remote settings across our province. Their work saves lives, supports families and strengthens our entire health-care system.

I also want to acknowledge the important role of organizations like the Association of Regulated Nurses of Manitoba, the Manitoba Nurses Union and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Manitoba, who continue to advocate for nurses and bring forward thoughtful, practical solutions to improve both working conditions and patient care. Nurses understand the realities of our health-care system better than anyone, and their voices are essential to shaping policies that deliver real results for patients.

And while this week is about recognition, it must also be about action. Nurses deserve safe workplaces, manageable workloads and the respect that comes with the critical work that they do. No nurse should face violence or abuse while caring for patients. Ensuring their safety in their workplaces must always be a priority.

And I do want to take this opportunity, this National Nursing Week, to personally thank some nurses that I have had occasion to meet recently. And that's the incredible pediatric nurses working on the CH3 inpatient unit at Children's Hospital. To Julia, Lara, Paige, Jennifer, Ericka, Danielle, Joey and the many

others whose names I regrettably did not write down, thank you from my heart and my family to yours, and I know I speak on behalf of all Manitobans who have visited Children's, whose families have been cared for at that facility. It was very eye-opening and I learned a lot about the work that you do and I have an entirely new respect for the work of pediatric nurses in particular. Thank you for everything that you do.

And to all of the nurses working in emergency rooms, intensive-care units, long-term care, public health, community care, education and remote nursing stations: Thank you. Your dedication does not go unnoticed, and the sacrifices you and your families make are deeply appreciated.

On behalf of our team, I want to thank the nurses that show up every day, serving patients with the utmost skill and professionalism.

Happy national nurses week.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

National Police Week

MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond): Honourable Speaker, it is my honour to recognize all of the brave police officers serving Manitobans during National Police Week, a vital tradition established in 1970 to build deeper connections between law enforcement and the diversities they proudly serve.

This year's theme, Committed to Serve Together, resonates deeply here in Fort Richmond and across our province. The safety of our families is built on a foundation of mutual trust and collective effort. Our officers do not simply enforce the law; they demonstrate a 24-7 commitment to ensuring every resident feels safe and supported in their community.

Recently, one officer came by to protect our annual general meeting in Fort Richmond. I also had the opportunity to join officers from the West District Station on a patrol ride-along. I witnessed first-hand the high-level teamwork and co-ordination required to keep our rapidly growing community safe. With great respect, I watched as officers moved seamlessly from high-alert navigation to providing calm, expert judgment, a true testament to the training and character of the Winnipeg Police Service. In every situation, they acted with empathy, patience and professionalism.

Our government and our Justice Minister has provided record funding to law enforcement across

Manitoba and were committed to supporting their well-being as they do their—this important work.

I also want to take a moment to commend the Winnipeg Police Association, the dedicated union that advocates tirelessly for the well-being, rights and working conditions for our officers. Strong officers mean safe communities, and the association plays an essential role in making that possible.

Please join me in thanking all police officers across Manitoba and the police—Winnipeg Police Service for their sacrifice and their unwavering commitment, and congratulate the Winnipeg Police Association on the successful 99th police charity ball.

I would ask the names of my guests be entered into Hansard.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Aaron Bourque, Robin Kipling, Phil Neyron, Darryl Ramkissoon, Pat Reaume, Cory Wiles.

Bison Regional Science Fair Students

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I rise today to recognize some of Manitoba's brightest young scientific minds.

This year, for the first time, all five students selected from the Bison Regional Science Fair to represent Manitoba at the Canada-Wide Science Fair are women: an extraordinary milestone that reflects excellence, innovation and the growing leadership of women in STEM.

The Bison Regional Science Fair has quickly become one of Canada's largest regional science fairs, engaging hundreds of Manitoba students in hands-on research, experimentation and innovation.

I would particularly like to recognize my constituent, Maria Farkas Freitas, a grade 8 student at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate.

Maria's project, called superfuel on a schedule: the effects of glucose during the menstrual cycle, explore how hormonal cycles influence glucose responses and contributes to a greater understanding of women's health research.

Joining Maria on Team Bison Manitoba are Gian Monique Cabacungan of Holy Ghost School, who studied corrosion and infrastructure durability; Ramneek Kaur Rai of Dasmesh School, Winnipeg, who investigated the environmental impacts of road salt on oxygen movement in ecosystems; Amy Clark of Sanford Collegiate, whose focus—who focused on

improving sustainable energy harvesting systems, and Kavishi Udumullage of Fort Richmond Collegiate, who researched innovative drug combinations for small-cell lung cancer treatment.

Together, these students represent the very best of Manitoba's future: curious, innovative and determined to make a difference in the world around them. Their accomplishments are a source of pride for our province.

I would also like to recognize Dr. Anju Bajaj, STEM Advisor for Manitoba Catholic Schools and founder of the Bison Regional Science Fair, whose vision and leadership have helped create opportunities for young Manitobans to pursue excellence in science and innovation.

* (13:50)

And I'd also like to commend Mr. Euan Burton and the others on the Bison leadership team, the volunteer judges, classroom teachers, professional mentors and everyone involved in this very successful annual event.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating all of Team Bison Manitoba as they represent Manitoba on the national stage at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Edmonton later this month.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: There's some guests in the gallery that may have to leave before we're done members' statements, so I'd like to draw members' attention to the public gallery where we have with us, from Edmund Partridge school, 23 grade 6 students under the direction of Erica Guenther. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine).

We welcome you here today.

* * *

The Speaker: Now, back to members' statements.

Small Business Month

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I rise today to recognize May as Small Business Month in Manitoba.

This month's recognition reflects bill 208, The Manitoba Small Business Month Act. I want to thank Chuck Davidson, president and CEO of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, for his partnership in helping me shape and advance this legislation.

Small businesses make up over 97 per cent of Manitoba's business sector, with more than 44,000 operating across our province. They create jobs, they deliver essential services and help drive industries that keep Manitoba moving forward.

Choosing to shop locally has a direct impact on our communities. When Manitobans spend their dollars at local businesses, that money stays here at home, supporting jobs, strengthening our economy and helping our communities grow and thrive.

At the same time, we know that many small-business owners face significant barriers. Trailblazing entrepreneurs continue to succeed despite systemic challenges. Their success speaks to their resilience and their deep commitment to their communities.

That is why we must continue to take action to support them. Through Budget 2026, our government is helping lower costs and support growth through targeted measures like the small-business security rebate and workforce training initiatives.

Small Business Month is a chance to recognize the hard work and resilience of small-business owners across this province and to encourage all Manitobans to support local, not just this month, but all year long.

I want to note that May 12 is Manitoba Day, a time to reflect on our province's history and the people who continue to shape it. Supporting local small businesses one of—is one of the most meaningful ways we can honour that legacy and invest in Manitoba's future.

I want to recognize the many chambers of commerce branches from across Manitoba who are here with us today, and I ask my colleagues to please rise and join me in celebrating all of them and Manitoba Small Business Month.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Shoal Lake Station 100th Anniversary

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize a remarkable milestone in the community of Shoal Lake: the 100th anniversary of a historic building that has become a cherished family home for Jim and Eugene Kennedy.

Built in 1926 as a Canadian Pacific Railway station, the Shoal Lake depot once stood as a vital hub of activity in the community. In those early days, trains carried passengers, mail, freight and opportunity across the Prairies, helping to build and connect communities like Shoal Lake. Stations such as this

one were the lifeblood of rural Manitoba, linking families, farmers and businesses to the rest of the country.

In 1974, the station was carefully moved from its original location, and, a few years later, in 1978, Jim and Eugene purchased the property. What was once a bustling railway station soon became a warm and welcoming family home.

Over the past nearly five decades, Jim and Eugene have preserved much of the station's original character while adapting it for family life. Within its historic walls, they raised four children—two sons and two daughters—and created a home filled with memories while maintaining an important piece of Shoal Lake's heritage.

Mr. Kennedy has long held a passion for railways, reflected not only in the preservation of the former station but also in the beautiful railway-themed features on the property, including a garden railway that continues to delight visitors and neighbours alike.

Their dedication to maintaining the home and grounds has ensured that this unique structure remains a proud reminder of Manitoba's railway history. As we know, the expansion of railways played a crucial role in opening the west, supporting agriculture, commerce and settlement across our province.

Today, as this historic building marks its 100th year, we celebrate not only the station itself but also the Kennedy family's stewardship of this important landmark.

On behalf of all members of the Manitoba Legislature, I extend sincere congratulations to Jim and Eugene Kennedy on this wonderful milestone and thank them for preserving a special part of Shoal Lake's history.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Further members' statements?

Dr. Zita Somakoko

Mrs. Rachelle Schott (Kildonan-River East): I rise today to recognize an incredible leader in our province, Dr. Zita Somakoko, and many of her team members who join us today in the gallery. I ask for leave to have my guests' names entered into Hansard.

Zita is the chair, president and founder of the Black Manitobans Chamber of Commerce, an organization that is creating opportunities for Black entrepreneurs to thrive right here in Manitoba. Through advocacy, mentorship and connection, the chamber is helping

business leaders navigate systems, access opportunities and grow their ideas into successful enterprises.

She is also the chief executive officer of StratHR Solutions Inc., where she brings decades of experience in HR and labour relations to support organizations and workers alike. Her work is grounded in the belief that when we invest in people, we build stronger workplaces and stronger communities. That commitment shows up in life-changing ways, including, Honourable Speaker, when she provides child care for her adult education students.

This year, she was named a 2026 honouree among the 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women. One of Manitoban's own, recognized nationally for her impact and leadership. Zita also represented our great province on the global stage, speaking at the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. There, Dr. Zita spoke about systemic barriers, equity and the need to move from conversation to real, measurable change.

I know Zita well. I am honoured to call her my friend. She often confuses people by calling me her sister and my children her niece and nephew. While we are not blood related, Honourable Speaker, this sentiment touches my heart and speaks to the strong bond we've created over motherhood, faith, family and community commitment.

Today I thank God for bringing Zita into my life. We celebrate you, my sister.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Christian Boisjoli, Cecile Ladouce Kamdem, Laura Megne, Mr. Megne, Michel Ondo Ayissi, Ekam Partap Singh, Dr. Zita Somakoko.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: So just before moving on, I've got a few introductions here that I would like to do.

Draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Uriel Amy Clark, Anna Mae Clark, Gian Monique Carbucan [*phonetic*], Melanie Torre-Carbucan [*phonetic*], Maria Farkas Freitas, Trisha [*phonetic*]-Trish Farkas, Carlos Freitas, Ramneek Kaur, Gurvinder Kaur and Dr. Anju Bajaj, who are guests of the honourable member for Roblin (Mrs. Cook).

And we welcome you here today.

Also in this public gallery, we have with us today Cory Wiles, president of Winnipeg Police Association; Phil Neyron, vice-president of the Winnipeg

Police Association; superintendent Darryl Ramkinsson [*phonetic*]; executive officers Sergeant Aaron Bourque, division 51; Patrol Sergeant Pat Reaume, division 51 and his family; Patrol Sergeant Robin Kipling, division 51. And they're guests of the honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen).

And we welcome you here today as well.

* (14:00)

We'd also draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Dr. Rita Somakoko and her team, who are guests of the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott), and we welcome you all here today as well.

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us today Rob Price-Lewis, Jennifer Ludwig, Claire Agnew, Shaun Harbottle, Amanda Gibson, Tessa Masi, Stefanie Dunn, Samantha Hampton, Gwen Black, Stephan [*phonetic*] Chychota, Elisabeth Staftiuk [*phonetic*], Jody Winkler, Adam Nepon, Brian Kelly, Chuck Davidson, Sarah Duval, Waverley Dovey, Bre-Ann Boulet, who are guests of the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross).

And we welcome you all here today as well.

And now, some sad news. Josie Auch is—will be graduating from École Saint-Joachim this June. Her hard work and dedication to her studies have led her to the next chapter of her academic journey. As she prepares to attend the Université de Saint-Boniface in—this fall in the Baccalauréat ès arts, général program, she hopes to continue her education beyond this degree with the goal of pursuing a career in politics and law.

As a page from a rural community, Josie is especially grateful for the opportunity to serve in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. This experience has given her a unique and meaningful insight into the inner workings of government and has broadened her understanding of the important role this institution plays in shaping the lives of Manitobans.

She would like to express her sincere gratitude to all members of the Assembly, staff and fellow pages who have made her time here so memorable. The friendships she has formed and the lessons she has learned will stay with her for years to come. She is particularly thankful to those who offered their guidance, encouragement and support throughout her time in this role.

Josie is committed to sharing her experience with other youth, especially those from rural communities, and to encourage greater awareness of the opportunities available to become involved in government. She hopes to inspire others to engage, learn and take part in shaping the future of Manitoba.

Serving as a page has been an incredible honour, one that she will carry with her for the rest of her life. And I will say, she's done it with a certain amount of joie de vivre. She's been very bright and cheerful throughout her time here. She hopes to return one day and thanks the Assembly once again.

Good luck on your future.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Safe Consumption Site Location Community Safety Meeting

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Manitobans will all agree that safety in your home, community, schoolyards and place of work must be taken very seriously. Sorry, let me set the record straight. Everybody except for the MLA for Point Douglas, the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) would take safety seriously.

Tonight, north Logan residents are hosting their second self-run and self-organized community town hall to discuss safety concerns related to this NDP government and them imposing a drug consumption site in their neighbourhood. You would think that the MLA representing those constituents would want to hear what they are saying, but not this NDP government. A community safety meeting related to people who have been assaulted outside of a mobile drug consumption site, and this minister refuses to attend.

Why is the minister afraid of her own constituents?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Actually, the member opposite is the only one who's not concerned with safety. As we'll see today, he's not concerned with the safety of LGBT kids in our communities.

When it comes to the Minister for Housing, Addictions and Homelessness, she's doing an amazing job. She's bringing people together. She's making the community safer. She's creating more opportunities for healing and recovery but also harm-reduction and evidence-based strategies to respond to HIV and congenital STBIs, which, just a moment ago, the member opposite clapped for a nurse who is doing the exact same work.

So I don't know how you clap for the nurse one second and then take shots at somebody who's leading the way in the other. But that's the approach of the PCs.

The minister will be in committee tonight here at the Legislature, and I fully support her work.

The Speaker: Just before we move on, I'd remind members to make sure they're always directing their comments through the Chair.

Mr. Khan: So much for a listening government. The MLA from Point Douglas won't even show up to a meeting hosted by her own constituents to address safety concerns about a drug consumption site that this NDP government is forcing onto the residents of Point Douglas. The minister has an ideology set, and she would not listen to anything that Manitobans have to say that might contradict that.

There'll be representation from every stakeholder tonight—city councillors, chief of police, Aboriginal Health and Wellness—and the PC MLAs will be there to listen to the residents of Point Douglas and their concerns. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: The NDP have actively opted not to engage with these citizens.

Why is the minister so afraid to attend? Is it because she knows she's wrong? Is it because she knows that opening a drug consumption site is the wrong thing to do? Is it because she is afraid to listen to her constituents who are begging—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: Honourable Speaker, I want to inform the House that today, the government of Manitoba intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada. We did so in the matter of Saskatchewan v. UR Pride and in support of members of the LGBTQ community here in Manitoba and across Canada. I'll table for the House the factum that we filed by way of our representatives there, and we look forward to arguing in front of the Supreme Court justices.

Our point is this: Democracy should prevail. Equality should prevail. And we are going to stand up among all Canadians to ensure that those rights are respected.

On the other side of the House, will the member be filing as an intervenor to back up the hateful rhetoric he was the poster boy for in the last election campaign?

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

Mr. Khan: Democracy, like listening to people, like listening to your constituents, like listening to people who have concerns about crime and safety; democracy—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —that this MLA from Point Douglas, this minister of addictions, is denying their democracy. The Premier should speak to his own team and get them to listen to their own constituents when it comes to their democratic right.

The minister won't be there tonight, so will the Premier be there tonight? Will the Premier have the courage to go out and tell residents of north Logan and Point Douglas that he is going to force a drug consumption site in their neighbourhood? Maybe the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will be there. Will the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) be there?

The answer is no. Not one of them will show up tonight because they are afraid of the truth. And the truth is that this NDP is misguided by their ideology to jam a drug consumption site in their neighbourhood.

So will the Premier do the right thing, listen to the residents of—

The Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Kinew: The truth is that, just a few short months ago, this member was sitting in committee room 254 and begging for forgiveness and saying drug consumption site was the wrong term; supervised consumption sites were a good idea. And then now here he is; he's trying to run to the front of the Conservative attack on this thing.

We all know that he's a phony Conservative, anyways. That's why he's blocking the cut to the grocery tax. But is he a phony hater of LGBT folks, or does he actually hate LGBT folks? I would like to know the answer to this. *[interjection]*

* (14:10)

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: We have intervened at the Supreme Court of Canada because our position is clear: equality before the law, equality before government, equality when you go to vote. You only have to look at the member for Red River North (Mr. Wharton) to know that they don't take your votes seriously.

But will the member opposite address our position? Can we say that all of this Chamber supports the government of Canada and equality for all Canadians?

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

Basic Personal Tax Exemption Call for Increase

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): When our PC government increased the basic personal exemption in 2022, tens of thousands of Manitobans got to keep more of their hard-earned money. We are proposing that same thing today. Let Manitobans keep more of their money.

Now, seniors, one of the most vulnerable groups in our society; seniors on a limited income were protected when we increased the basic personal exemption. Now under this NDP government, they are taking money away from seniors. They are increasing the taxes on seniors. The NDP removed the tax indexation. So as inflation grows, you are losing more of your money.

Will the NDP do the right thing today: reverse their decision, let Manitobans keep more of their money and support our call for the increase of the basic personal exemption today, yes or no?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): Quick reality check: Our budget bill will take all the food off of all food and drink at grocery stores in Manitoba.

Now, do you know who disagrees with what—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the member just said? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: Do you know who disagrees with what the member just said? It's a former PC Cabinet minister who said, quote: We could've done more in the way of tax relief for Manitobans. I still have that feeling after you leave office. Could've done more for tax relief.

You know who that was? Former premier Heather Stefanson this past Saturday.

So don't argue with us about cutting taxes. We cut the gas tax. We're cutting food tax. We're saving you money on your mortgage payments. We're saving you money on your rent payments, too.

We are the party of affordability. They're the party of hating on vulnerable minorities. Will he address the Supreme Court intervention and tell us whether or not he supports equality for all Manitobans?

The Speaker: Stop the clock, please.

If I could ask the honourable First Minister, was what he was quoting from, was that a public document?

Mr. Kinew: The statement, and I quote, we could have done more in the way of tax relief for Manitobans, end quote, by Heather Stefanson, was from May 8, 2026, in a comment made at a panel at the Canada strong and free networking conference. So it was a public statement. If you would like the documents proving that there was no tax relief under the Tories, I'd be happy to bring that in so that all the House could see.

Mr. Khan: The Premier can stand up and laugh all he wants, make jokes all he wants, but the reality is, life in Manitoba is harder now than it's ever been. Taxes are higher now than they've ever been. And what does he—this Premier offer you? Pennies. Sprinkles pennies at your feet and wants you to be grateful.

On our side of the House, we're calling for real affordable measures giving Manitobans thousands of dollars back on their taxes, increasing your basic personal tax exemption.

Under this NDP government, they have only increased your taxes and given you less. Seniors living on a fixed income are struggling now under this NDP government. The Premier has actively chosen to target and discriminate against seniors when he removed the tax indexation of your income.

So will the Premier do the right thing today and reverse his decision, support Manitoba families and seniors, yes or no?

Mr. Kinew: The member targeted and discriminated against LGBT people in the last election. Call me crazy, call me a wild man, but I don't have to attack any minorities in order for me to win an election, and it will stay that way.

I also wanted to share for the House a consumer price index—which I will table—report showing that inflation in 2022 was at 8 per cent. I'll ask the member opposite to reflect on who was in power during 2022 when inflation hit a record high.

Again, we're bringing a cut to groceries. We're cutting the fuel tax. We're saving you money on your housing costs: \$50 million—page 144 in this year's

budget—\$50 million is how much taxes are going down in this province this year.

Left unaddressed by this member, however, is his silence when it comes to standing up for freedom and equality and human rights at the Supreme—

The Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Khan: The Premier might have forgotten: In 2022, there was a worldwide pandemic. But in 2026, what is there? Just this—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —failing NDP government.

This Premier broke his promise from 2023 when he said, and I quote: We will offer a broad middle tax cut by indexing tax brackets. End quote.

Well, the Kinew government has broken that promise. One of the first things they did was to remove indexation because the NDP want more of your money.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier if he would commit to ensuring funding was available to keep a program open that delivers food hampers to seniors. He wouldn't even answer the question. He stood up, he made jokes and he laughed. He laughed at seniors who are struggling to get by. He continues to stand up in this Chamber and laugh at Manitobans who are struggling.

Premier, three years into your mandate, will you finally do something to help Manitobans today, yes or no? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

The honourable member's time has expired, and I would remind members to always direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr. Kinew: You know, he's just saying it that way for the social media clip later on, so I hope he puts this in the social media clip also: Taxes are going down in Manitoba this year by \$50 million. Check page 144 in Budget 2026. It's taking tax off of fuel. We're taking the tax off of groceries. Oh, wait. Unless, of course, they block our budget bill, so go ask the PCs why they want you to pay more when you go to the grocery store.

At the same time, we've intervened on behalf of LGBT folks at the Supreme Court, because we have a

simple proposition on this side of the House: You shouldn't have to want to hate gay people in order to also want a more affordable cost of living. On that side of the House, they always marry those two lightning rods.

On this side of the House, we say we can have a better economy and a more inclusive society at the same time.

Manitoba's Economic Performance Inflation Rate and Export Numbers

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, the economy's shrinking; that's why tax revenue is decreasing. For months, we have warned Manitobans about the slowing economy that this government has brought forward. Now the numbers are in.

Inflation in Manitoba rose another 2.5 per cent while Manitoba exports have collapsed by 27.2 per cent compared to just last year. That's more than a quarter of our exports vanished in a year. That's \$1.6 billion. I don't know how many different ways to frame this before the minister's going to wake up, but that means fewer dollars flowing into our economy, less investment and more pressure on already struggling Manitoba families.

If this government isn't able to build our economy, why has this government failed to at least protect Manitoba's economy?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable Speaker, first, I want to take this opportunity to thank all small businesses here, right across Manitoba, this being Small Business Month.

Second, Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Chambers of Commerce right across the province who do incredible work. Thank you for the work you're doing to bring the business community together, support 'smocal'—small local businesses and help to grow our economy in every corner of the province.

Now, we know that we're setting a platform, an environment for economic success. And how do I know that? Well, I'm happy to let this House know that we have the lowest unemployment rate in the entire country right here in Manitoba. We'll keep working to grow our economy stronger for workers and businesses right across the province.

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

Export and Trade Agreements Minister's Record to Date

* (14:20)

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, small businesses are building our economy, but they need the support of this minister, and we're seeing a 27 per cent decrease in exports. And the minister—next, he'll blame tariffs, but non-US trade is up eight point—or is down 8.7 per cent, so that means that this problem is far larger than the tariffs.

Other provinces are fighting for investment, expanding trade relationships and growing their economies while Manitoba continues to fall further behind.

So, Honourable Speaker, can the minister name a single major new export opportunity or trade agreement he has successfully delivered for Manitoba producers and the businesses?

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Well, we know that what member opposite knows about exports are exporting members of his caucus who seem to be fleeing day in and day out. That's their record.

And so while member opposite focuses on the dwindling members of his own party and trying to keep the ragtag group together, we'll focus on actually building an economy that works here.

We know that exports play an important role, and that's why we're supporting manufacturers and their efforts to make products built here in Manitoba to reach global markets. That's why we took the tax off of equipment for manufacturers. That's why we're investing in the Port of Churchill, to make sure we provide those export infrastructure tools for—reach global markets for Manitoba producers, and that's why we're doubling our Export Support Program, so we can reach new markets and make new business deals.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Narth: There you have it, Honourable Speaker: not a single new export opportunity for Manitoba. Couldn't name a single one.

It gets worse. Last week in Estimates, when I asked about trade deals, this minister said, and I quote:

It's not our role necessarily to be making trade deals. And I'll table those comments.

Well, if the Minister of Trade does not believe trade is his job, Manitobans are left wondering: What exactly does he do—or his half-million-dollar trade representative—all day long when Manitobans are desperate for expanding our economy? Exports are collapsing, affordability is worsening, and Manitoba families are paying the price.

How much longer will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) tolerate—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Moses: Honourable Speaker, let me be clear with Manitobans that members opposite narrative is completely off base. They're the ones who, in fact, in their old, former failed government, closed the office with our largest trading partner in the United States. They're the ones who actually thanked Donald Trump for bringing the tariffs on to Canadian businesses. That's not an approach that we want to replicate, not something we want to duplicate.

And, in fact, we're going to take the approach of working with businesses right across our province and ensuring that we have the business leadership to deliver on those success. Whether that's come from supporting our NFI Group with the new Canadian all-build program for their electric bus fleet. Whether that is supporting the aerospace sector with hiring hundreds of new people or mining sector with new billion-dollar projects going right across northern—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Changes to Home-Care Services Client Concerns About Safety and Service Delivery

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Home care in Winnipeg is falling apart because of changes made by the NDP government last year.

Home-care clients, their families and home-care workers themselves are speaking out about the issues that continue to plague the system: missed and cancelled visits, rushed appointments, different workers coming every day, not to mention staff challenges with impossible scheduling assignments and workloads.

One of those Manitobans is Ms. Marlene Bertrand, a member of both the Order of Manitoba and the Order of Canada, who joins us in the gallery today.

Since the minister insisted as recently as last week that the problems they caused in home care have been solved, can the minister now explain to Ms. Bertrand

why she continues to suffer at the hands of a home-care system that is not putting client needs first?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I welcome the question from the critic on home care.

Home care in Manitoba is a top priority for our government for many reasons, none of them—none of least is the fact that we used to have the gold standard of home care across Canada right here in our province. And, unfortunately, for many years, home care was cut by the previous government.

We're doing the work of not only restoring those cuts and fixing that damage, but also getting a deep understanding of how we move home care into the future of this province. So we've added dozens and dozens of additional staff, we've set up committees that are directed by the folks who deliver health care to Manitobans, but we know there's much more work to do.

Anybody who has challenges with home care, it's so important they reach out so—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Cook: Ms. Bertrand has tried getting a meeting with the Minister of Health to discuss these concerns on a number of occasions, and her experiences with home care point to a system in total disarray. Sometimes she gets a new and different worker every day. Sometimes multiple workers show up at one time. But on more occasions they show up early, late or not at all, often with little to no notice. Her home-care services have become extremely unreliable.

She also told me—and she's told the minister—about a number of concerning incidents involving home-care staff where she was made to feel unsafe in her own home, but when she tried to communicate those concerns, she was ignored. Ms. Bertrand did everything right. She took her concerns up the chain, she reached out to the government and to the minister, and yet no action has been taken.

Why do Manitobans have to come to the Legislature—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: I want to thank Marlene for her service to Manitobans. She is an outstanding Manitoban, an outstanding Canadian and has been duly recognized as such.

The member opposite is engaging in behaviour on the floor of this House that is incredibly unbecoming and irresponsible. First she says that I've never met with this person, then she says that I have met with her but haven't addressed her concerns.

Honourable Speaker, I take very seriously this responsibility. I meet with folks on a regular basis. I am always happy to meet with Manitobans who are having challenges.

I will meet with you today, of course. And it's disappointing that the member opposite chose to do this instead of simply connecting me to you so that I can address those concerns.

I will have that meeting today, Honourable Speaker, and I will not take the approach that the critic is taking, which is incredibly harmful to Manitobans.

The Speaker: Just to remind members to always make sure they're directing comments through the Chair.

Mrs. Cook: My job as Health critic is to bring the concerns of Manitobans to the floor of this Legislature, particularly when those Manitobans have already reached out to the minister's office to no avail.

Ms. Bertrand has had a long and accomplished career in public service and advocacy for women and some of Manitoba's most vulnerable populations. She told me that she's dealt with many agencies where there have been problems, but never in her life has she seen anything like this.

And when a home-care client like Ms. Bertrand is made to feel unsafe in her own home and yet that same worker is sent back to her, that's unacceptable. When home-care clients rely on the home-care program to maintain their independence and dignity and the home-care program doesn't deliver, that's unacceptable. And when this Minister of Health refuses to acknowledge and address these problems, that's unacceptable.

What specific actions will the minister—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, my office has been in contact with Marlene since February. As I stated, I look forward to meeting with her directly myself.

I want to say again, when the critic says that I have not spoken to a Manitoban and then says that I have spoken to a Manitoban and is putting words on the record that are clearly not aligned with reality, I am going to stand up and name that because that

does real harm to Manitobans. I will always meet with Manitobans who have concerns, as will my office, and I will ensure that this is addressed immediately.

But we've done the work of making sure that we're improving those very concerns. The cancellation rate while she was advising Heather Stefanson to cut health care was 3.2 per cent; now it's under—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Education Property Tax Concerns Call for a New Education Funding Model

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Families in Winnipeg are opening up their tax bills wondering how life has become so unaffordable under this NDP. Families are being hammered by skyrocketing property taxes, increasing assessments and higher utility rates.

While the previous PC government increased education funding to historic levels while keeping taxes low, this NDP has done the exact opposite. They removed all the guardrails protecting Manitoba homeowners and have failed to fund education adequately.

Why has this NDP chosen tax hikes over a proper and adequate education funding model for Manitobans?

* (14:30)

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are getting bigger education property tax rebates than ever before.

In that member's own community, nine out of 10 people in her community are better off under the approach we brought forward than was in place under their government. So, again, it's confusing to me what the message is when she goes back to her home constituency. What is she fighting for? To raise nine out of 10 people's costs? That's probably not a winning formula, Honourable Speaker.

What we know is that for years, Manitobans had a government that was not focused on reducing their costs. Finally they do.

Of course, there's only one group of people in this province fighting against lowering costs. That's the members opposite. They don't seem to want to support our BITSA bill that will take PST off all groceries in Manitoba. The question is—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Midland, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Stone: Honourable Speaker, 55 per cent of Winnipeg property owners were worse off under this NDP system than they were under the PC rebate.

The NDP affordability credit at \$1,500 didn't cover those increased property taxes. The NDP credit at \$1,600 isn't covering the increased taxes. And the \$1,700 credit won't even cover the increases that families are seeing this year because Louis Riel School Division has been hiked by 43 per cent since this NDP came into office; 38 per cent in Seven Oaks and 37 per cent in Pembina Trails, all since this NDP was elected.

It got so bad this year, the City of Winnipeg had to include an insert distancing themselves from this NDP's decisions to hike school taxes.

The NDP proved—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, nobody in Manitoba was better off under the PCs. No one. Closing three emergency rooms in Winnipeg, creating health-care chaos, sending Manitobans across North America for surgeries: they have a horrible record that they've left behind. Manitobans know what they did.

When it comes to supporting Manitobans on affordability, the record is clear: gas tax cuts, hydro rate freezes. We're lowering your education property tax bill; we're lowering costs to renters. Across the board, we're lowering costs.

And this last budget and this BITSA bill seek to go further. The only people in Manitoba standing between savings and that—and us getting to where we need to get are the Manitoba PCs. Will they get on board—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mrs. Stone: Property tax bills are telling a very different story because the \$1,600 credit this year isn't even accounting for the drastic increases that Winnipeggers are—Winnipeggers are seeing through their school division tax increases.

The previous PC government was able to fund education to historic highs while ensuring that property taxes remained low. The NDP has failed—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stone: —on all accounts. They removed guardrails for homeowners. They removed the 2 per cent cap

on school divisions. And they have not funded education to inflation.

School divisions themselves are coming out and saying that the funding is not—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stone: —adequate.

Life is becoming increasingly unaffordable under this NDP.

When will they stand up and admit that they made a mistake and revert back to the 50 per cent—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, there's only one party in this province that's actually funding education the way it needs to be funded, and that's on this side of the House.

It is absolutely ludicrous for the members opposite to stand in this House and suggest that they were supporting education in the way it needed to be supported.

And we know that, of course, they also didn't the work—do the work when it comes to affordability. And, finally, Manitobans have a government that's actually trying to do that work. Not only are we proposing to raise education property tax credits to \$1,700, not only we proposing to raise the renter's tax credit, which they cut—we're raising that to \$675—we're proposing to take the PST off of all groceries in the province.

And, again, there's only one group in this whole province standing against that. It's the members opposite. Will they stand—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

School Division Taxes Education Funding Levels

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): The last three years under the PC government, River East Transcona School Division received \$25.3 million of funding. Under the last three years, under the failed Kinew government, they have received \$12.4 million. Their taxes this year—or, over the last three years—are going up by 36 per cent.

Manitobans just cannot afford this Kinew government.

Will the minister reverse course and fund education fairly?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Today, on Manitoba Day, it gives me great pride to get up as the Minister of Education and talk a little about how we are funding education, finally, at the way it's supposed to be funded: stable, predictable funding.

If the member recalls, just yesterday, he asked a similar line of questioning about the River East Transcona School Division, and I got up and shared about the many, many clinicians, teachers and other support workers that the River East Transcona School Division has been able to add to their complement just this year. And that's just this year, Honourable Speaker. And that's just River East Transcona School Division.

The fact of the matter is the truth—and Manitobans know the truth—every single school division in Manitoba, every single year since we've been elected, has had—seen a stable and predictable increase to their funding.

What was his record, Honourable Speaker?

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So the facts are, to all Manitobans, is that this failed Kinew government has actually funded education less to various different school divisions all across—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —this great province. The Progressive Conservatives funded Louis Riel School Division in their last three years to the tune of \$23.2 million. Under the last three years of this failed Kinew government, received \$12.2 million—to Louis Riel.

Louis Riel, over the last three years, have raised taxes by 43 per cent. Again, Manitobans can't afford this Kinew government.

Will this minister reverse course and finally start funding education fairly?

MLA Schmidt: What Manitobans couldn't afford, Honourable Speaker—what teachers and what families and what students couldn't afford any longer was another term of this failed, callous PC government.

And just listen to them; I hope Manitobans are listening. I hope Manitobans are listening because this is their education plan, Honourable Speaker: cuts.

That's what they're talking about. We know what their health-care plan was: closing emergency rooms.

The member from Lac du Bonnet gets up today, and I hope Manitobans are listening. What is his education plan? Cuts. That's what he did when he was minister, and that's his plan here today.

So I ask the member, what school would he like us to close? Like the three emergency rows that were closed under his watch that caused—continue to cause the health-care chaos in this system, what—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mr. Ewasko: The numbers don't lie, Honourable Speaker. Matter of fact, the only government that's cutting education funding is this failed Kinew government.

Pembina Trails School Division, in the last three years of the PCs, were—received \$26.2 million in funding. The last three years under this failed Kinew government, they received \$4.9 million.

Pembina school division, raising taxes by 37 per cent in the last three years. Again, Manitobans cannot afford this failed Kinew government.

When will this minister finally start funding education fairly in this great province of ours?

MLA Schmidt: The member opposite is right about one thing: that numbers don't lie. So let's talk about some numbers. Let's talk about his record.

So, in the Free Press, what they reported, and I'll quote, Honourable Speaker: In 2021, a few weeks after the Tories introduced their rebate—so we're juxtaposing the incredible Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit designed by the best Finance Minister in the country against theirs.

What did the Free Press have to say about it? In 2021, a 'frew'—a few weeks after the Tories introduced their rebate, we learned Pallister was due to receive a \$4,000 discount on his 9,000 square foot, \$2.4-million Wellington Crescent mansion.

We do things differently, Honourable Speaker. We work for Manitobans. Our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

National Nursing Week Acknowledging the Work of Nurses

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): Honourable Speaker, this week is National Nursing Week, a great time to recognize the compassion, professionalism and dedication of nurses in Manitoba. In every community across our province, nurses provide expert care to patients, support families through difficult moments and help keep our health-care system resilient and reliable.

* (14:40)

Can the Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans more about the incredible work that nurses do each and every day?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I thank my nurse friend and MLA colleague, the MLA for Tuxedo, for that excellent question.

Honourable Speaker, during national nurses week, we profoundly thank every single nurse across Manitoba for the incredible care they provide to Manitobans in our hospitals, personal-care homes, clinics and in our communities.

Nurses are the backbone of our health-care system, and Manitobans count on them each and every day. This is why our government is taking real action to support and retain nurses, including hiring more than 1,400 net-new nurses across Manitoba since coming into government.

We deeply value nurses in everything that they do. We are working with nurses to rebuild health care. We're going to keep listening to nurses every single day.

Much done. More to do.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Manitoba Jobs Agreement Impact of Provisions for Unionized Workers

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): In this NDP government's Manitoba jobs agreement, in section 20.2—point 3.2, we find the following, and I quote: Manitoba residents that are members of a union will be given preference over Manitoba residents that are not members of a union. End quote.

Clearly, this is blatant discrimination. The Construction Association of Rural Manitoba says that rural Manitoba workers stand to lose jobs because of this NDP policy, because 95 per cent of the construction workforce in rural Manitoba is non-unionized.

So why is this NDP government putting rural Manitobans out of work?

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): I want to thank the member for that question. Honourable Speaker, we are listening to Manitobans and we are listening to Manitoba workers.

Every person who works on MJA is better off. They are making more money, Honourable Speaker—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Sandhu: They are more safer at those work sites. They have a more benefited work site, Honourable Speaker.

We will continue to listen to Manitoba workers, unlike members opposite who only care about the rich people, who only care about the millionaire people. He only cares about the people who works—who comes to Manitoba who are from other provinces like Saskatchewan, from Alberta.

I will—not going to listen to that member at all, Honourable Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Request to Cancel

Mr. Guenter: Well, the minister needs to refresh his talking points.

But if he says he's listening, he can listen to Evan Keller, president of Keller Developments in Brandon, who said that the Manitoba jobs agreement is, quote, clearly driven by our current government's connection to the unions. That's all it is. It absolutely makes no sense. End quote.

But for this NDP government, it's clear that there is one disturbing way in which this does make sense for them, and that's because it allows them to skim a little off the top of public projects, to grease their political fortunes and enrich their political friends.

When will this NDP minister do the right thing and end this corruption?

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Public Service Delivery. *[interjection]*

Order. Order.

MLA Sandhu: Honourable Speaker, if they're talking about the corruption, they don't have to go far. Just look to his left and they'll—he will see it right there.

Honourable Speaker, every single worker who works on MJA is better off. MJA is about safer work sites, better benefits and fair wages. I have never met a worker who doesn't want to make more money, who doesn't want to be safe at the work site.

We are turning the construction site into a training site, Honourable Speaker, unlike the member opposite who only care about his only rich friends.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Guenter: The Manitoba jobs agreement is putting rural Manitoba workers out of work at the same time that it's driving up the costs of building roads, schools and hospitals.

In fact, the new Brandon school is expected to cost 20 per cent more to build because this NDP government is chasing away competition, killing Manitoba jobs and enriching themselves with their slush-fund fees.

Shawn Wood said three local companies in the Brandon area would have bid on earthwork at the new Brandon school site, but they stayed away because of the complications and risks introduced by the MJA.

So why won't the minister cancel this job-killing—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —policy today?

MLA Sandhu: I don't know why the member hates Manitoba workers, Honourable Speaker.

Conservatives don't listen to Manitoba workers; they only care about people who bring workforce into Manitoba. They only listen to the lobbyists.

I have asked the member, has he gone out to the work site? Has he listened, ever, to a person who doesn't want to make more money, Honourable Speaker? He have no answer for that.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

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

Thanks to investments 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, diagnoses 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.

An MRI machine—oh, sorry—(4)—thank you.

(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.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

* (14:50)

(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 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.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Jeanna Emms, Lorna Anderson and Chris Everett, along with many, many other Manitobans.

Phoenix School

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

And 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, 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 Ken Rempel, Travis Berry, Heather Bilesky and many, many other 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.

And 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.

(3) To urge the Minister of Families to arrange for a full review of employment supports provided by Children's disABILITY Services for children and 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.

This petition is signed by Angelina Cissé, Abdov [*phonetic*] Cissé, Allyson Fedar [*phonetic*] and many, many more fine Manitobans.

New Neepawa Health Centre

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): 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, a part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Neepawa Health Centre is well under way. The facility and surrounding community will greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of a CT scanner.

(2) The new hospital is being built east of Neepawa, on the north side of the Yellowhead Highway, PTH 16. It will be nearly double the size of the existing hospital and will better serve patients from this broader, western Manitoba geographic area.

(3) CT scanners are standard equipment that combine X-ray images from several angles to create detailed, three-dimensional models of structures inside the body. They perform critical diagnostic procedures that support the diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of injuries and diseases, and the new equipment will be able to complete these important scans faster and with sharper and cleaner images.

(4) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive a CT scan is currently seven weeks, and there

are over 14,000 patients on the wait-list to receive the diagnostic imaging procedure.

* (15:00)

(5) The new CT scanner will reduce these wait times as it would decrease the need for patients to travel long distances, sometimes involving overnight stays, to access the care they need.

(6) The new scanner will reduce pressure on emergency response services, who would no longer have to transport these patients, opening up appointments in other communities and allowing more people to get the care they need sooner.

(7) A CT scanner in the Neepawa Health Centre will enable further treatment and diagnosis to take place in community, reducing wait times for patients in surrounding areas and reducing the burden of travel to other facilities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of a CT scanner machine in the Neepawa Health Centre in Neepawa, Manitoba.

This petition has been signed by Marion Lebedynski, Carol Wallum [*phonetic*] and Ann Nielsen and many other fine Manitobans.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The intersection of Provincial Trunk Highway 75, PTH 75, and Provincial Road 305, PR 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.

(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 the 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.

(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.

And, honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by many, many fine Manitobans.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): I am pleased to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

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

(1) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine or other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) They are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop to get it to market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating of a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agriculture producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Barry Hawrysh, Rick Rivers, Bill Mollard and many more fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Honourable Speaker, 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, PTH 75, and Provincial Road 305, PR 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.

* (15:10)

(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 the 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.

And this petition has been signed by Meaghan Brazier, Heather Beauleau [*phonetic*] and Sheila Keys, along with many, many, many Manitobans.

911 Services in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Thank you, honourable Speaker—sorry, I guess that would be honourable—thank you, honourable—[*interjection*] Deputy Speaker.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

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

(1) Reliable access to emergency services, including 911, is a fundamental public safety necessity and can mean the difference between life and death.

(2) On March 23 of 2025, a resident in the rural municipality of Fisher tragically passed away after family and friends were unable to reach 911, despite making numerous attempts, due to an internal 911 routing malfunction at a major cellular provider.

(3) During the emergency, loved ones attempted to provide CPR while frantically trying to connect with emergency medical services, EMS, ultimately only reaching help by contacting a local RCMP officer directly.

(4) The March 2025 tragedy is not an isolated incident, as there have been other reports of failed 911 cellular calls in neighbouring rural municipalities.

(5) In April 2024, the provincial government indicated that it was undertaking a review of 911 services, with a final report expected in the following months.

(6) In August 2024, following another 911 service failure, a provincial representative repeated the same assurances that were previously made, but as of March 2025, no report has been released.

(7) Rural Manitobans continue to face challenges accessing emergency services due to unreliable cell service and gaps in the ability of some providers to connect to emergency telecommunications infrastructure, particularly in regions like the Interlake.

(8) The 911 dispatch centre serving rural and northern Manitoba, located in Brandon, was not made aware of the March 2025 service interruption, raising concerns about the lack of real-time monitoring and co-ordination between telecommunications providers and emergency response systems.

(9) Local officials, including representatives from the RM of Fisher, have previously raised concerns with the Province and the RCMP regarding the reliability of 911 services in rural areas, calling for immediate action.

(10) The public has a right to expect that 911 service will be accessible during an emergency, regardless of the location or mobile service provider.

(11) The provincial government must ensure that emergency communication systems are adequately staffed and resourced, particularly for rural and northern regions.

(12) Access to 911 must not be compromised by infrastructure failures or private service providers.

(13) Timely and transparent communication between telecommunications companies and emergency service providers is essential to protect public safety.

(14) Effective government oversight and accountability are necessary to ensure public confidence in emergency response systems.

(15) Failure to invest in resilient, province-wide emergency response systems and telecommunications infrastructure puts rural lives at risk and undermines public trust in essential services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to investigate the 911 network failures that contributed to the March 2025 tragedy in the Interlake region and to publicize those findings.

* (15:20)

(2) To urge the provincial government to work with municipalities, telecommunications providers and first—and first responders to strengthen 911 reliability and ensure uninterrupted access to emergency services for all Manitobans, especially those living in rural and northern communities.

Honourable deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Kaitlyn Lindquist [*phonetic*], Stuart Gard, Stuart Letellier [*phonetic*] and many, many fine—other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Teaching Certification

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) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for a teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major

and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early- to middle-years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed are (1) seniors credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; early- to middle-years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early- to middle-years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or biological science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Sandy Scott, Murray Scott, Trey King and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

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) The intersection of Provincial Trunk Highway 75, PTH 75, and Provincial Road 305, PR 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.

(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 the 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.

(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.

* (15:30)

This petition has been signed by Anna [*phonetic*] Lam, Sarah Duval, Sheldon Goulet and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Trunk Highway 45

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

(2) Economic development will be further enhanced as improved road infrastructure attracts businesses, encourages 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 Trunk Highway 45 from Russell to Provincial Trunk Highway 10 to meet RTAC standards.

This petition has been signed by many, many, many fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

(3) There are—there have been reports of unsolicited introduction to medical assisted by dying to non-seeking persons, including Canadian veterans, as a solution for their medical and mental health issues.

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

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

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

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

(8) The federal government would focus on increasing mental health supports to provinces and improve access to these supports, instead of offering mental—medical assisted dying for these of mental health illnesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of medical assisted in dying to those who—mental illnesses is a sole condition.

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

This has been signed by Scott Samberg [*phonetic*], Garry Serruys and Glenn Vercaigne and many other Manitobans.

Carbon Tax and Rising Food Prices

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) In 2022, according to Statistics Canada, there was an 11.4 per cent increase in food prices.

(2) Staple food products such as baked goods, margarine and other oils, dairy products and eggs have seen some of the largest price increases.

(3) Agriculture and the agri-food sectors contribute close to 10 per cent of Manitoba's GDP.

(4) There are increased costs added at every step of the process for Manitoba's agriculture producers. In order to make 18 cents from one bread loaf worth of wheat, farmers are paying carbon tax at every stage of production to grow the crop and get it to the market.

(5) Grain drying, fertilizer and chemical production, mushroom farming, hog operations, the cost of heating a livestock barn, machine shops and utility buildings are all examples of how the carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels cost farmers and consumers more each year.

(6) In food production there are currently no viable alternatives to natural gas and propane. The carbon tax takes money away from farmers, making them less profitable and hindering rural agricultural producers' ability to invest in upgrades and improve efficiency while reducing emissions.

The Speaker in the Chair

(7) The provincial government neglected farmers for—in the six-month fuel tax holiday until the opposition critic and local stakeholder groups called for their inclusion.

(8) Other provincial jurisdictions and leaders have taken action on calling on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax and/or stop collecting the carbon tax altogether.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to call on the federal government to remove the punishing carbon tax on natural gas and other fuels and farm inputs for Manitoba agriculture producers and the agri-food sector to decrease the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition has been signed by Cathy Phair, Kate Druwe, Cyril Druwe and many, many more Manitobans.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): 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, PTH 75, and the Provincial Road 305, PR 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.

* (15:40)

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

(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 the medium-term strategies identified in the 2022 study is required.

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

(9) Additional strategies, such as reduced speed limits approaching the intersection and the addition of rumble strips will 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.

(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 is signed by Brendan Christian, Scott Patsger [*phonetic*], Guy St. Hilaire and many, many other Manitobans.

Teaching Certification

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) Ensuring that teachers have a robust background in the subjects they teach is essential for maintaining high-quality education and fostering well-rounded learning experiences for all Manitoba students.

(2) The recent amendments by the Province of Manitoba to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation under The Education Administration Act have significantly lowered the standards for subject-area expertise required for teacher certification.

(3) These amendments eliminated all subject-area requirements for teacher certification, including major and minor teachable subjects and subject-specific requirements for early/middle years streams.

(4) Specifically, the amendments removed: senior years credit requirements in an approved teachable major or minor; and early/middle years credit requirements in an approved teachable major and minor; and early/middle years credit requirements for specific subjects, including: math; physical or 'biogeological' science; English or French; and history and/or geography.

(5) Key stakeholders, such as parents, post-secondary educators outside the faculties of education and business partners were not consulted about the changes.

(6) The removal of subject-specific requirements undermines the educational quality in Manitoba schools by permitting teachers to enter the classroom without sufficient training in core academic areas, thereby compromising the education that Manitoba students receive.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to reverse recent amendments to the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation that weaken subject-area requirements for teacher certification and to reinstate teachable majors and minors and early/middle years requirements which are essential for ensuring teachers have strong knowledge in core subject areas.

(2) To urge the provincial government to address teacher shortages through alternative measures that uphold rigorous subject-area standards, which are critical for providing quality education to all Manitoba students.

This is signed by Glen Irving, Michael Doyle, Rick Giesbrecht and many, many more Manitobans.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Red River west.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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 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 or Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently is only one MRI—there's 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 the Portage la Prairie area are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay, Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples in Canada disproportionately face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located in the Portage regional health facility will bring care closer to their 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.

* (15:50)

(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.

Honourable Speaker, 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 petition is signed by Pat Norrow [*phonetic*], Catherine Sullivan, Peggy Moon and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Placement Vetting for Elderly Persons Housing

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba Housing will be placing homeless people and people with multi-layered mental illnesses and addictions into what has always been known as seniors housing.

Manitoba Housing is placing people in elderly persons housing, EPH, buildings without vetting them.

(3) There is no minimum age limit stated on the Manitoba Housing information page for elderly persons housing buildings.

(4) The tenant service co-ordinator and/or the building manager of elderly persons housing buildings should be given the right to deny applicants based on their first-hand knowledge of the applicant being homeless, having multi-layered mental illnesses and/or addictions or any other reason that they are aware of that could cause potential harm to residents.

(5) Proper vetting should include a criminal record check, a vulnerable persons record check and the consent of the tenant service co-ordinator and/or the building manager of elderly persons housing building.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness to use seniors housing for what it was intended: the seniors.

(2) To urge the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness to require a minimum age of 55 years for residence in all elderly persons housing, EPH, buildings; and

(3) To urge the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness to engage in proper vetting of all applications of people desiring to live in elderly persons housing, or EPH, buildings.

This petition has been signed by Kari Stilborn, Michelle Eisner and Natasha Hrappstead and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I'm wondering if you could canvass the House to see if there's leave to allow me to read the petition for the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mrs. Hiebert).

The Speaker: Is there leave to allow the honourable member for Brandon West to read the petition from the honourable member for Morden-Winkler?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) Other provinces have taken proactive steps to strengthen bail enforcement, but Manitoba has not used all 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 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 Speaker, this petition was signed by Alana McAuley, Bernadette Garnham, Kim Tooth and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

* (16:00)

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. The 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) Our 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 allows for continued victimization of law-abiding Manitobans while granting repeat offenders additional rights.

This is signed by Karla Gurke, Jim Klywerk, Vanessa Schurko and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: No more petitions?
Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): Okay, Honourable Speaker.

Pursuant to rule 34(7), I am announcing the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Schott). The title of the resolution is National Strategy for Silver Alerts.

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

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, could you please canvass the House for leave to waive rule 150 to allow Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act, and Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, to be referred to a standing committee today without the required two days' notice.

The Speaker: Is there leave to waive rule 150 to allow Bill 300 and Bill 301 to be referred to a standing committee today without the required two days' notice?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

MLA Fontaine: I'm announcing that in addition to bills previously referred, Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act; and Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, will also be considered by the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6 p.m.

The Speaker: Been announced that in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 300, The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act; and Bill 301, The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, will also be considered by the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6 p.m.

* * *

MLA Fontaine: Honourable Speaker, can you please call all stages of Bill 53.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

The Speaker: We will now resume all stages of Bill 53. So right now the debate is on second reading of the referral amendment of Bill 53, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Debate is standing in the name of the honourable member for La Vérendrye, who has 30 minutes remaining.

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the referral amendment to Bill 53, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act of this year.

And I want to begin by saying this very clearly: This bill does not meet the moment. Manitobans, as we know, are struggling. Families are paying more for groceries, more for gas, more for hydro, more for MPI to insure their vehicle to drive on the road, more for rent, more for their mortgages and more for education and property tax.

And what does this government offer them? Pennies on a Slurpee. Pennies on a Slurpee, pennies on their rotisserie chicken, pennies on a handful of prepared grocery items.

But, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are smarter than that. They know the difference between real affordability relief and political spin. This government wants Manitobans to focus on the few cents they might save at the till while ignoring the hundreds and thousands of dollars being taken from them through higher taxes, higher utility costs, higher school taxes and higher debt that this government plans to carry. That's not affordability; that's a shell game.

And when it comes to agriculture, economic development and job creation, this budget is even worse. It has no serious plan to grow our economy, no serious plan to support those producers and no serious plan to attract investment, no serious plan to make Manitoba the competitive place that we can be.

Honourable Speaker, agriculture is one of the foundations of Manitoba's economy. It feeds our families, supports our rural communities, creates jobs, drives exports and keeps this province moving.

That's why we've brought forward this amendment. But under this NDP government, agriculture producers are seeing more regulations, more red tape,

higher costs and very little to no support. That support is diminishing in front of their eyes. Producers are facing high fuel costs, record high fertilizer costs, high equipment costs, higher interest rates and the global uncertainty that we all face. They're being asked to produce more, compete even harder and carry more risk while this government makes it harder, not easier, to do business for those producers.

* (16:10)

So I ask, Honourable Speaker: Where is the plan to support value-added agriculture in this BITSA bill? Where is the plan to help those producers expand? Where is the plan to get approvals moving faster so that we can attract the investment we so desperately need in this province? Where is the plan to make Manitoba the best place in Canada [*phonetic*] to invest in food production?

I'll tell you, Honourable Speaker, it's not in this bill. It's not in this budget as a whole. And it certainly is not in the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) speeches.

Instead, this government talks about affordability while making food production more expensive. They talk about growth while slowing approvals. They talk about jobs while creating uncertainty for the employers. He cannot make food more affordable by making it harder and more expensive to grow, process, transport and sell that food. That's simply basic economics, and this government should understand that.

In my part of the province in southeastern Manitoba, we have some of the most productive agriculture land in the country. We have livestock operations, grain farms, dairy farms, processors, manufacturers, trucking companies, equipment dealers and entrepreneurs who are ready to grow this province into the best province in our country. They do not need government to get in the way; they need government to get the basics right. They need drainage maintenance, they need road upgrades and they need reliable permitting. They need competitive taxes and they need access to labour. They need rules that are predictable, not increased regulation.

But time and time again, this government chooses regulation over results. And that, Honourable Speaker, is why we bring forward this amendment.

I'll give you an example: Look at Bill 21. Rural Manitobans have raised serious concerns about the government's approach to community wells, bulk water access, agriculture water access and long-standing rural water systems.

Instead of listening first, this government moved ahead with a one-size-fits-all approach that risks forcing costly requirements on communities that have safely managed their water systems for decades.

That is the problem with this government, and that's just one example. They do not understand rural Manitoba. They do not understand how agriculture works. They do not understand the practical realities, the people who actually produce the food ends up on our Manitoba tables. And then they have the nerve to stand up and say that they're concerned about food affordability. They don't even understand where it starts.

Honourable Speaker, if this government was serious about food affordability, it would start by supporting the people who grow the food, transport that food, process the food and sell it. Instead, they're offering pennies on grocery items and pretending that that's going to be enough to make a difference. The real solution is to let Manitobans keep more of their own money. This isn't government's money; this is the hard-earned money from those entrepreneurs, those trained tradespeople, the people that are really growing our province.

That is why our caucus has called for a major increase to the basic personal exemption. A \$30,000 basic personal exemption would put up to roughly \$1,500 back into the pockets of individuals. For a two-income household, that would be over \$3,000 a year. That, Honourable Speaker, is real money. That is real noticeable money. You know what that is? That's groceries; that's fuel; that is kids' clothes; that is their rent; that is hydro bills; that is car payments. That is simply giving Manitobans some breathing room. And unlike this government's tiny PST gimmick, it would help working Manitobans every single paycheque, and that is why we bring forward this amendment.

Honourable Speaker, the fastest way to fight inflation is to let Manitobans keep more of their own money. But instead of doing that, this government cancelled indexation on tax brackets and the basic personal exemption. That means every year inflation quietly pushes Manitobans into paying more and more taxes. That is a tax increase. The government can dress it up however they want, but Manitobans know the truth. When their paycheque does not go as far, when their bills go up and when government takes more, each and every Manitoban feels it month after month after month and that's what they're getting with this government.

And now the same government that raised taxes through bracket creep wants credit for taking PST off a few small grocery items. Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are smart. They won't be fooled. These are the same Manitobans, these are the same people that have led not only our province but our country and around the world. These are the entrepreneurs. These are the tradespeople. These are the trained professionals that have been recognized for over a century. They know that if government takes hundreds of dollars from one pocket and gives them pennies back in the other, they are still worse off.

And on economic development, this bill has missed an opportunity. Manitoba should be growing. We have resources. We have agriculture; we have manufacturing; we have transportation advantages that don't exist anywhere else in our country; we have mining potential; we have hard-working people. We have entrepreneurs who simply want to build.

But this government has no growth plan. They talk about Churchill like it's a magic answer to every economic problem that Manitoba has ever faced. Churchill matters and I've said that time and time again. I've said it in Estimates; I've said it in question period, I've said it in debate in this House. Northern development matters and trade corridors are essential to our economic growth.

But one project, years down the road, cannot be the entire economic strategy for this province. Where is the mining plan? Where is the permitting plan? Where is the plan for value-added agriculture? We haven't seen any of those, Honourable Speaker. Those are things that, each and every time we ask the question, we're told that there's a plan. There is a plan to reduce red tape. There's a plan to expand mineral extraction in our province.

But we haven't seen this plan. We haven't seen the plan for manufacturing. We haven't seen a plan for rural economic development. We haven't seen a plan to make Manitoba competitive—make it competitive with our neighboring provinces like Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario, who clearly understand what it takes to grow a province.

* (16:20)

Honourable Speaker, we hear the talk, we hear the political ploys and stunts outside of this Legislature, inside this Legislature, but we need to see the action. Again, we've brought forward ideas, ideas that have been set into action in other provinces. We've seen in

those other provinces the results that are obtained through those plans.

One of those is a single-desk business model approach for major projects. We've seen it in other provinces, we've seen the action that they're taking to break down the silos of regulation; provinces like Saskatchewan that are absolutely booming in economic growth.

In these models, we see clear timelines. We need this for our investors. We need a government that says yes to responsible development instead of sending businesses through a maze of departments, delays and uncertainty.

Honourable Speaker, these are the things that businesses recognize in a province. These are the things that'll attract investment so that we can stop seeing the exodus of investment in our province, of trade potential in our province.

Honourable Speaker, this Province's very own report has just come out saying that exports for our province—Manitoba, we definitely can realize, is export-dependent, we've got relatively low population for the massive potential that we have—27.3 per cent decrease in exports in one year. We're not talking over a decade. We're not—this isn't a slow decline or a slippery slope. Like, this is as severe and slick of a slope as we get. We've lost more than a quarter of our exports in one year.

And I've asked the minister—I've had opportunities to ask this minister responsible for economic development as to what the reason is and what is going to be done to actually build and develop the export potential of our province. And what do we get? We get the blame game that our neighboring country, the United States, is to blame for the drastic decline.

Well, Honourable Speaker, we break that further down and we look at the numbers and we continue to ask the minister, where exactly has the decline been seen? And where can we improve?

Well, we're told that it's the tariffs with the United States that's causing all this uncertainty, and that's what's stopping the trade. And that's the reduction of the trade that we're seeing.

Honourable Speaker, outside of US trade, we have seen a 9 per cent decrease in trade to all other trade partners in one year. You know, we're pushing 10 per cent outside of the United States. That's concerning. That is extremely concerning, because if we say we need to diversify our trade markets, we all

agree. We can all come—both sides of the House can come together and say, we need to diversify our trade markets. Everyone agrees. We need to realize that something needs to be done to expand markets outside of the US trade.

But, Honourable Speaker, we're not seeing that happen. We've got a trade representative specifically—specifically—dedicated to the United States, which we're saying, you know, there's no hope there. We need to give up on the United States trade. We need to spend billions of dollars. And the answer is going to be building the Port of Churchill. And, once we build the Port of Churchill, then we're going to be able to expand to new markets. We've got all these customers around the world. That's great. It's necessary. It needs to be done. But where is the action?

The minister responsible hasn't delivered on a single new trade deal. Today, in question period, I asked the minister, simply tell Manitobans one new trade deal. They're starting to get real concerned that they see, you know, nearly 30 per cent decrease in trade for our province. Like, we're talking \$2 billion. Like, this NDP government talks about a \$500,000 potential deficit, and then it turns into—\$500 million, I should say—potential deficit that then turns into \$1 billion, then turns into \$1.6 billion. The amount of trade that this province has lost in the last year amounts to \$1.6 billion of loss. Just imagine what's going to need to be—you know, when the NDP talk about cuts, just imagine what that is going to lead to.

And the Agriculture Minister, who should be leading the province in expanding trade deals, because guess where most of that trade decline comes from? It comes from agriculture. And the minister responsible is sitting here in the Chamber instead of being up in his office doing the hard work to build new trade deals, we've got—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would remind all honourable members that—
[interjection]

Order.

I'd remind all honourable members that stating whether a member is present or not is not allowed by the rules.

Mr. Narth: Thank you for that guidance, Honourable Speaker, and I apologize for that misstep.

Honourable Speaker, the same Agriculture Minister, who is currently failing Manitoba's agriculture industry on developing any new trade, should also just

sign on to the provincial website to find these statistics and these facts that he's concerned about wanting to see tabled. I think, during the time here in debate, it's easy enough to dial up the good old data cell phone and search it, and he can find \$1.6 billion—and that's a billion with a B—that we have lost in trade just in one year with no plan whatsoever on how we're going to change that in the years to come.

Honourable Speaker, businesses do not invest where they cannot get answers. Capital does not wait forever, and that's what we're starting to see. I've given many examples in the past, both in bill debate, in question period and in committee. Jobs don't appear by accident. Economic growth requires a plan, and this government does not have one of those.

And we see that in our job growth as well. Manitobans do not just need government announcements. They need private-sector jobs. They need careers. They need opportunities that allow them to raise a family, buy a home and stay in this province. But under this government, we're seeing too much reliance on public spending and not enough focus on private-sector growth.

Government cannot tax, borrow and spend its way into prosperity. You cannot build a strong economy by making it harder for employers to hire, harder for farmers to produce, harder for processors to expand and harder for those investors to get the approvals they need to unleash our potential. That is exactly why we are moving in the wrong direction. And, Honourable Speaker, that is why we bring this amendment forward.

This budget continues on the government's growing dependency on federal transfers. It's shocking, Honourable Speaker: more than a third of provincial revenues now come from federal transfers. That should concern every member of this House, and I know that it concerns every Manitoban in the public.

A province that wants to be strong cannot simply depend on Ottawa forever. We need to grow our economy, we need to develop our resources and we need to create our own jobs. We need to build our own tax base. But this government is not doing that. Instead, they are running deficits, growing debt, increasing taxes and offering Manitobans tiny savings while the cost of government keeps rising.

* (16:30)

The Finance Minister says the deficit will be approximately \$500 million. But why should Manitobans believe that? This government has missed its deficit

targets before. Last year's deficit was projected at roughly \$800 million and came in far worse. Manitobans have seen this move before. The NDP announce one number, spend far beyond it and then ask Manitobans to pick up the tab.

And who pays? Families pay. Farmers pay. Those small businesses that we are recognizing today, they pay. Young people pay. Our future generations pay. Honourable Speaker, that is why Bill 53 needs real changes.

If this government wants our support, it should bring forward meaningful affordability relief. Honourable Speaker, we've given the recommendations, we've given the suggestions. We're here, elected by our communities, because we want to see a better Manitoba for everybody.

Honourable Speaker, we say bring everybody up to equality. The NDP's approach is bring everybody down to equality. It's the easier approach. It's much easier if everybody's struggling than it is to bring everybody up to a state of flourishing. That's why we need to increase the basic personal exemption. Let Manitobans earn more, tax free. Put real money back into the paycheques of Manitobans. Do something that families will actually feel. Because right now, this bill does not do that.

Honourable Speaker, as a once—as a wise premier once said, we need to put more money on the kitchen table of Manitobans. Right now, this bill, this BITSA bill, does not do that. It tinkers around the edges. It offers these small, tiny savings that accomplish absolutely nothing. They come with big talking points, and it tries to distract Manitobans from the fact that their overall tax burden is going up, and going up substantially.

And I want to speak directly about education property taxes. This government is collecting hundreds of millions of dollars more in education and school property taxes. Homeowners are being squeezed. Seniors on fixed incomes are being squeezed even more. Seniors are now selling their homes because they can't afford the property taxes. And what does this government offer? A delayed increase to the homeowners' rebate. Delayed relief is not relief at all. A promise for later does not help Manitoba families paying their bills today.

Honourable Speaker, this government wants credit for affordability while making life more expensive. That is the core problem of this budget. They say one thing and do another. They say they support workers, but

they cancelled indexation. They say they support families, but taxes keep rising. They say they support farmers, but regulations keep increasing. They say they support economic development, but investment confidence is walking out the door. They say they support jobs, but they have no private-sector growth plan. And they say they support affordability, but their big answer is PST on grocery store chips. That is not a serious plan.

Manitoba needs better. Manitoba needs a government that understands agriculture is not an after-thought; it is the cornerstone of our economy. Manitoba needs a government that understands rural communities are not a problem to regulate; they are the partners in growth. Manitoba needs a government that understands entrepreneurs are not endless sources of tax revenue; they are job creators. Manitoba needs a government that understands affordability is not about press releases; it is about paycheques.

Honourable Speaker, the people I represent are practical people. They know the value of a dollar. They know what it means to work hard. They know what it means to plan for a crop, manage risk, repair equipment, hire staff, pay bills and make their payroll. They do not need a government that is overreaching their limits.

What they do expect of government is to not make things worse, and right now this government is making things worse. It is making it more expensive to live here, it is making it harder to invest here and it is making it harder to grow here. That is what this bill is about.

Honourable Speaker, that is what this bill should have done, and that is what this government has failed to do. Manitobans do not need pennies and slogans. They need a government with a plan: a plan for affordability, a plan for agriculture, a plan for economic development and a plan to build jobs. A plan to grow Manitoba into a stronger, more competitive province, the province we know it can be.

Bill 53 does not provide that plan. And until this government is prepared to deliver real relief and real growth, this legislation—

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

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): I just want to put a couple of words on the record in support of Bill 53, which has amazing things in this bill and in our budget to be able to support Manitoba families right now.

As usual, the Manitoba PCs are delaying, with a variety of different tactics, the passage of our bill. Why are they doing that? Because they don't care about Manitobans. They have proved over and over and over again that this crop of PCs don't care about Manitoba families. They don't care about Manitobans that are struggling. All they care about is themselves. They want to collect their base salary of \$112,000 a year to sit on their hands and do nothing but delay, delay, delay and make things more harder for Manitobans.

So my message is for Manitobans. I want you to know what the Manitoba PCs are doing right now as we speak. So for those folks that may not know, Bill 53 would allow us, starting July 1, to remove all PST on groceries in the store. *[interjection]*

Thank you, yes. The good work of our Minister of Finance (MLA Sala) and our Premier (Mr. Kinew) who, since we formed government, have tried to make life more affordable for Manitobans, including cutting taxes.

And what I will say, the difference between us on this side of the House and that get-along gang over there, is that they cut taxes for the very rich, for the folks that they care about. We cut taxes and make sure that life is affordable for all Manitobans.

And so starting July 1—if the PCs stop delaying Bill 53—starting July 1, there will be no PST on groceries. But on top of that, Bill 53 also strengthens affordability in housing. Everybody knows that Manitobans are struggling in respect of housing costs. We know that as a government, and that's why we are making things better and more affordable. We are increasing to—the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit to \$1,700 for Manitobans to be able to get that money back right now.

So I just wanted to get up here to tell Manitobans that the Manitoba PCs, of which you pay their salaries in your taxes, are sitting on their hands doing nothing but delaying Bill 53 and delaying the affordability measures that we, our government who cares for Manitobans, are trying to put in place.

* (16:40)

So I encourage Manitobans. I'm going to post this video. I'm going to have everybody's contact information in there, including the Leader—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Fontaine: —the Leader of the Opposition, all of his contact information.

I encourage Manitobans to fall—to call them, to email, to DM and ask them what they're doing with their \$112,000-a-year job that they're just delaying everything on behalf of all Manitobans. So I encourage you to reach out to them.

Our government cares for Manitobans. That is what Bill 53 is about, and we are looking forward to this bill passing as soon as members opposite decide to get off their hands and do what is in the best interest of Manitobans.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): So much to respond to. So much to respond to from the minister's comments just now. And I don't know why she's yelling.

The fact of the matter is, they're playing games. She asks what we're doing with our salaries; what is she doing with her 170,000-odd-dollar salary other than slandering—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —ASL interpreters. I don't know, Honourable Speaker.

The fact of the matter is, that very member could have ensured that BITSA was introduced before the backstop and had guaranteed its passage. She failed to do that.

The second thing she left out of her tirade is that that government does not need anybody on this side of the House to do anything in order to pass their junk food tax cut. They can do that all on their own. They want you, Manitobans, to believe them when they say that we're standing in the way. Let me tell you, we are not standing in the way. We are standing up for real affordability measures for Manitobans.

So she may want to post that clip. That's fine. I'll post my clip with her contact information, and I'll encourage Manitobans to reach out to her and ask why she—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —failed to introduce BITSA before the backstop to guarantee its passage, to ask why she's so inept with her job as House leader that she can't manage to introduce legislation in time to get it passed. [*interjection*]

The Minister of Education loves to stand in their place and heckle. I'd encourage them—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Education needs to come to order.

Mrs. Cook: Instead of heckling me, maybe the Minister of Education would like to go and build some child-care spaces in my constituency. Get on with the job of renovating Phoenix School.

They're applauding, but the very funniest thing is they haven't opened a single new child-care space in Charleswood or Headingley since taking office. Maybe they'd like to go back to their office and do that instead of standing in here and heckling me.

Now, the one thing I will speak in favour of today is the motion from my colleague, the member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), who yesterday introduced a motion calling for this bill to be brought to committee. Now, I can't understand why members of the NDP wouldn't want this bill brought to committee. If they believe in it so strongly, they should bring it to committee today. But they won't.

For the past two years, the NDP have jammed everything but the kitchen sink into their BITSA bills by tacking on other pieces of legislation as schedules as a means to circumvent the democratic process and to circumvent the means by which members of the public have a say on the legislation.

So we, on this side of the House, have called for all budget implementation bills such as BITSA to be taken to a legislative committee for at least 10 hours for presentations and to hear from the public and stakeholders on the measures being taken each year. That provision was brought forward in a bill last year from my colleague, the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone), but it was not supported by the government. No surprise, they didn't allow that bill to pass. And that's because they don't favour accountability or transparency when it's about them or their government.

Even while that bill—bill 224—was being debated, the Government House Leader, the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine), the one who just treated us to that yelling tirade, refused to bring back Committee of Supply or BITSA for debate later in the fall and just allowed it to hit the backstop with almost no debate at all and no opportunity for the public to have their say in the legislative process.

And the lack of transparency by the NDP is one reason why my colleague, the member for Interlake-Gimli, moved that motion yesterday, because we need more transparency from this government.

But since they're not going to allow that, I want to put on the record today some of the reasons that we need this bill to go to committee, some of the reasons why Bill 53 is so problematic and some of the concerns

that have been raised with me by constituents and other Manitobans.

This BITSA bill does not meaningfully address affordability concerns for Manitobans; I think we've established that. It doesn't do anything to address the skyrocketing property taxes that are occurring under this NDP government. Their failure to properly fund education has left it to school divisions to raise property taxes in the city of Winnipeg to unprecedented levels, and I'll just—I want to read these into the record. I'm quoting now from the insert that I received with my property tax bill, so—it's a public document. It's an insert from the City of Winnipeg that they felt necessary to include with property tax bills this year because they're tired of taking the heat for the provincial government's inability to properly fund education.

And according to the City of Winnipeg—who's a pretty reliable source, I would say—since this government took office, Louis Riel School Division has raised taxes by 43.1 per cent. In Seven Oaks, they've raised property taxes by 37.7 per cent—

An Honourable Member: Blame the school trustees.

Mrs. Cook: —in just two and a half years.

I hear the member—the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), saying that I should blame this on school trustees. I won't. This is a—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —failure of the current government to properly fund education.

In Pembina Trails, the school division where I represent a great number of property owners, property taxes have increased by 37.3 per cent, and I can tell you, based on the number of constituents who have reached out to me, they are not better off under this government's property tax plan. River East Transcona has increased property taxes by 36.2 per cent.

And, again, Honourable Speaker, the reason I'm reading these into the record is because these have very real impacts on affordability for Manitobans, and the NDP purports that Bill 53 addresses affordability, but it does nothing to address this. It does nothing to address skyrocketing property taxes that are occurring under this government because of their failure to properly fund education.

Moving on, Winnipeg School Division has increased taxes by 29 per cent; Interlake School Division, 28.8 per cent; St. James-Assiniboia School

Division—my constituents in Headingley fall within that school division—has increased property taxes by 26.2 per cent; and Seine River has increased property taxes by 24.2 per cent.

Those are astounding numbers, Honourable Speaker, and I think they speak to a very serious affordability concern, and, you know, repeatedly we see this government hide behind municipalities. They hide behind school divisions and school trustees, but they're not giving them a chance to come to committee and have their say on BITSA because they won't call the bill to committee.

Another way that the current NDP government has failed Manitobans when it comes to affordability, and this is very serious, is by deindexing income tax brackets. That has resulted in what we call bracket creep. It decreases the purchasing value of every dollar Manitobans earn because they're paying more in taxes. It's a sneaky tax grab, and it's something that this NDP government is doing, literally taking money out of the pockets of Manitobans.

Affordability issues continue to plague my constituents and others across Manitoba because Manitoba leads the country in inflation and, in particular, food inflation, and I'm here talking about things like meat, vegetables, fruit, items that are already PST exempt, items that most of us rely on to feed our families.

* (16:50)

All of our grocery bills have skyrocketed, and the pennies that the NDP is proposing that Manitobans will save on chips and pop and other prepared foods do nothing to help with the cost of the real staples that Manitobans depend on to feed their families. And that's a fact.

We've seen the consequences of this out-of-control food inflation in Manitoba, because food bank usage is at an all-time high. Now, I think the most effective way that a government could address this issue is by allowing Manitobans to keep more of their money, to spend it on groceries as they see fit. Not saving—*[interjection]*

No, the members opposite are heckling me again, but that's not what they're proposing to do. They're proposing to save Manitobans a few cents, a few pennies per grocery bill on prepared foods, but they're not doing anything to deal with the cost of ground beef.

The fact that a—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: –jug of milk is \$5.94—[interjection] You know, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) is asking me if I do my own grocery shopping. Oh my goodness. So every weekend, I make multiple grocery trips because, I'll tell him this, I have four kids and I know what it is to feed a family and how my grocery bills have skyrocketed.

They crow on and on about the cost of a one-litre carton of milk—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would ask members, if they wish to have a conversation, to take it somewhere else. I'm trying to listen to the member who has the floor, and people hollering back and forth across is not helping me hear that person.

Mrs. Cook: Meanwhile, a jug of milk costs \$5.94. I don't know about other families; that lasts about a day and a half in my house. So it's going to take more than 2 cents off a litre of milk to result in substantive savings for families.

Hydro rates are going up under this government. Pharmacare deductibles have gone up. They kind of sneaked that one in. So now Manitoba families are paying more for the costs of the medications that they need just to survive.

Again, this NDP government isn't on the side of Manitobans who are dealing with real affordability challenges. And in addition to not being on the side of individual Manitobans, they are very clearly not on the side of small businesses; small businesses that are employing Manitobans, creating jobs, driving our economy, and this NDP government is actively working against them. They've done nothing in this BITSA bill to address the rising costs that small businesses face in this province.

And I want to talk a little bit about restaurants, in particular, because the NDP chose to leave restaurants out of this so-called affordability measure. And there was a very interesting article in the Winnipeg Free Press today that noted restaurant owners are warning of layoffs and a strain on Manitoba's economy if this bill—Bill 53, that we're debating today—moves forward as it is.

And I'll quote from today's Winnipeg Free Press: "Restaurants Canada issued a statement Monday after learning, despite meeting with the province's Finance Minister, that restaurant food would continue to be taxed provincially."

Quote: "It's shocking that we have a government that has a policy that's going to go into place and it's going to negatively impact a significant economic driver." Unquote. That was Kelly Higginson, the national president of Restaurants Canada.

And make no mistake, restaurants are a significant economic driver in Manitoba. They generate about \$3.5 billion in annual sales in Manitoba. They employ over 42,000 people, 40 per cent of which are youth. And we know that there's a youth unemployment crisis in this country and restaurants are doing what they can to solve that problem, no thanks to this government that's actively working against them.

Higginson went on to say that BITSA, as written, quote: "Puts those jobs at risk." Unquote. That's because—and this is a basic business lesson for members opposite—if sales decline, restaurants will have to reduce their hours and lay off their staff.

There's a way around that. You know, the NDP could choose to treat restaurants equitably and fairly in their tax measures, but they're choosing not to. And that ignores some very real issues that restaurants in particular have dealt with in recent years.

The No. 1 issue, I would say, of course, being that skyrocketing, out-of-control food inflation that's behind labour costs, the cost of food is their next biggest budget item, and this government is doing nothing to help them with that.

A lot of these restaurants are still recovering from the COVID pandemic. They're dealing with labour challenges. And this government is doing nothing in this BITSA bill to help them. And never mind if you're a restaurant who owns your property, because you are now paying substantially more in property taxes under this NDP government than you ever were under a PC government. And that's because this NDP government chose to claw back the entirety of the property tax—education property tax rebate for commercial properties. Commercial property owners get zilch in terms of property tax relief from this NDP government—another increased cost put on business owners by the NDP.

We can't forget that this is the same government that chose to gut regulatory accountability legislation and allows red tape to grow unchecked.

And they never believe this, but I'll keep on saying it: Red tape comes with a real, tangible cost to business owners. It's a cost in terms of time to comply with unnecessary regulations. I'm not talking about safety regulations; business owners will tell you they

entirely support regulations designed to protect the safety of their staff and their customers. We're talking about unnecessary bureaucracy that this government—nobody does it better than the NDP, let me tell you.

This is the same government who's put in place an incredibly damaging Manitoba jobs agreement that's going to drive up the cost of projects for Manitobans and keep Manitoba businesses that use non-unionized labour from getting involved in public projects. It's bad for Manitoba businesses.

This is the same government that moved the apprenticeship ratio from two to one to one to one, which limits the number of apprentices being trained and creates an additional challenge for businesses already dealing with a challenging labour market.

There's so many ways that this government is working against small businesses, and this BITSA bill could have been an opportunity to address some of those. Instead, they forge ahead with this half-baked bill without giving any consideration to the needs of the small-business community.

This is a government that has now cut post-secondary training programs designed to grow Manitoba's workforce at a time when many Manitoba businesses are dealing with significant labour challenges, which are, of course, a huge barrier to growth. We've seen programs cut at MITT and Red River College, and it's no surprise because this is a government—it's been well established—they have no vision for economic growth for Manitoba, and that—you'll see the evidence of that. The evidence is that Manitoba has the slowest GDP growth in all of Canada, under the NDP. The evidence is that for six consecutive quarters, business exits have outpaced new business starts. That's a really troubling indicator that tells you what life is like for small businesses under the current

NDP government. Businesses are voting with their feet.

And I do want to talk about a couple of issues with BITSA itself, and I'm going to go back again to this half-baked affordability measure that the NDP is proposing. It seems like they didn't really think it through. So, first, it applied only to big grocery stores, and they were duly chastened for that misstep on their part because they never should've included small—or excluded, pardon me—small businesses from that measure.

Now it includes all of the grocery stores, but it still doesn't include the restaurants. The restaurants are asking for—to be part of this, and the government is still saying no. But when I was reading the bill, I noticed there's also a provision that says they're not going to take the tax off food if they're ordered online. And I'm not sure that I understand the rationale for that decision, Honourable Speaker. When I think about seniors, people with disabilities, busy parents who want to order their groceries from Instacart or DoorDash, they're not going to get that tax relief under this NDP government.

None of what the NDP is proposing in BITSA is a real affordability measure. Real affordability would be allowing Manitobans to keep more of their own hard-earned money. But, of course, that's something that the NDP's just ideologically opposed to. They don't—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 12 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

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