



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXX No. 55 – 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 13, 2026

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS**Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs
Seventh Report**

MLA Shannon Corbett (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (notes du médecin en cas d'absence d'un employé)*
- **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Animal Care Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le soin des animaux*
- **Bill (No. 29)** – *The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg*
- **Bill (No. 35)** – *The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les centres d'apprentissage pour adultes*
- **Bill (No. 45)** – *The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act / Loi sur le Yellowquill University College et modification de la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire*

Committee Membership

- *Hon. Min. CABLE*
- *MLA CHEN*
- *MLA CORBETT*
- *Mr. GUENTER*
- *Hon. Min. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. NARTH*

Your Committee elected MLA CORBETT as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA CHEN as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (notes du médecin en cas d'absence d'un employé):**

Nichelle Desilets, Doctors Manitoba

Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Kyle Ross, Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union

Your Committee heard the following four presentations on **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Animal Care Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le soin des animaux*:

Kaitlyn Mitchell, *Animal Justice*
 Krista Boryskavich, *Winnipeg Humane Society*
 Debra Vandekerkhove, *Manitoba Animal Alliance*
 Jill Verwey, *Keystone Agricultural Producers*

Your Committee heard the following eight presentations on **Bill (No. 29)** – *The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg*:

David Grant, *Private Citizen*
 Michael Shaw, *Private Citizen*
 Michelle Pereira, *University of Winnipeg*
 Peter Miller, *University of Winnipeg Faculty Association*
 Cannan Daree, *University of Winnipeg Students' Association*
 Alan Saji Koshy, *Private Citizen*
 Jino Distasio, *Private Citizen*
 Erik Thomson, *University of Manitoba Faculty Association*

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 45)** – *The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act / Loi sur le Yellowquill University College et modification de la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire*:

Bobbi (Roberta) Pompana, *Private Citizen*
 Bruce Unfried, *Private Citizen*
 Doreen Stranger, *Yellowquill University College*

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (notes du médecin en cas d'absence d'un employé)*:

Cheryl Smukowich, *Manitoba School Boards Association*

Your Committee received the following seven written submissions on **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Animal Care Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le soin des animaux*:

Michelle Costantini, *Private Citizen*
 Nicole Jutras-Scott, *Private Citizen*
 Zoe Gourdie, *Private Citizen*

Danae Tonge, *Private Citizen*
 Carson Callum, *Manitoba Beef Producers*
 Tamara Bodi, *Private Citizen*
 Christie Ratcliffe, *Manitoba Animal Save*

Your Committee received following six written submissions on **Bill (No. 29)** – *The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg*:

Tanis Ostermann, *Private Citizen*
 Chantal Fiola, *Private Citizen*
 Mark Ruml, *Private Citizen*
 Dawnis Kennedy, *Private Citizen*
 Julie Chamberlain, *Private Citizen*
 Cathy Mattes, *Private Citizen*

Your Committee received the following seven written submissions on **Bill (No. 45)** – *The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act / Loi sur le Yellowquill University College et modification de la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire*:

Sharon Desmarais, *Sandy Bay Child and Family Services*
 Annabelle Cameron, *Private Citizen*
 Courtney Penner, *Private Citizen*
 Jeffrey Edwards, *Private Citizen*
 Adam Hopkins, *First Nations Technical Institute*
 Rebecca Jamieson, *Six Nations Polytechnic*
 Shirlene Asham, *Southern First Nations Network of Care*

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 11)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences) / Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (notes du médecin en cas d'absence d'un employé)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Animal Care Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le soin des animaux*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 29)** – *The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 35)** – *The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les centres d'apprentissage pour adultes*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 45)** – *The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act / Loi sur le Yellowquill University College et modification de la Loi sur l'administration de l'enseignement postsecondaire*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 1 of the Bill be amended by replacing the definition "Yellowquill University College" with the following:

"Yellowquill University College" means the corporation continued under the Canada

Not-for-profit Corporations Act with the amended name "Yellowquill University College Incorporated". (« Yellowquill University College »)

THAT Clause 4(3) of the Bill be amended by striking out everything after "by-laws or in" and substituting "the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act."

MLA Corbett: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Richmond (MLA Chen), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Fifth Report

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Chairperson): Honourable Speaker, I wish to present the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense.

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

Meetings

Your Committee met on May 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 16)** – *The Mental Health Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale*
- **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets (renforcement de l'application de la Loi)*
- **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière d'environnement*
- **Bill (No. 300)** – *The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation »*
- **Bill (No. 301)** – *The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation la « Westminster United Church Foundation »*

Committee Membership

- MLA DELA CRUZ
- MLA MALOWAY
- Hon. Min. MOYES
- Mr. NESBITT
- Mrs. ROBBINS
- Hon. Ms. SMITH

Your Committee elected MLA DELA CRUZ as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected MLA MALOWAY as the Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received during Committee proceedings:

- MLA LOISELLE for Hon. Ms. SMITH
- MLA COMPTON for Hon. Min. MOYES

Officials Speaking on Record

- Philip Samyn, Acting Chief Legislative Counsel

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 16)** – *The Mental Health Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale:*

David Grant, Private citizen

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets (renforcement de l'application de la Loi)*:

David Grant, Private citizen

Your Committee heard the following three presentations on **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière d'environnement*:

Tangi Bell, Our Line in the Sand Manitoba

James Beddome, Manitoba Eco-Network

David Grant, Private citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets (renforcement de l'application de la Loi)*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière d'environnement*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 16)** – *The Mental Health Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 18)** – *The Waste Reduction and Prevention Amendment Act (Strengthening Enforcement) / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réduction du volume et de la production des déchets (renforcement de l'application de la Loi)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Environmental Statutes Amendment Act / Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière d'environnement*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 300)** – *The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation »*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 301)** – *The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation la « Westminster United Church Foundation »*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Motions

Your Committee agreed to the following motions:

- THAT this Committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 300) – *The Winnipeg Foundation Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation dénommée « The Winnipeg Foundation », be refunded, less the cost of printing.*
- THAT this Committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 301) – *The Westminster United Church Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation la « Westminster United Church Foundation », be refunded, less the cost of printing.*

MLA Dela Cruz: Honourable Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Elmwood (MLA Maloway), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: The honourable minister of health, education and early childhood learning—I'm—the honourable—let's do that again.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Treaty Week

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Today, I rise to share with Manitobans that next week is Treaty Week in Manitoba, a week in which we reaffirm the importance of the treaties as the foundation of our province and our shared responsibility as treaty people.

The treaties are not remnants of the past; they are living, nation-to-nation agreements between First Nations and the Crown, grounded in mutual respect, peace and relationship.

Within Manitoba lie Treaties 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10. Each reflects commitments of coexistence, reciprocity and a common shared future. These agreements form the not only legal, but also moral and spiritual foundation of our province. Treaty Week provides an opportunity for all Manitobans to deepen our understanding of our history and the spirit and intent of treaties.

Honourable Speaker, education is foundational to this work. Schools and child-care centres are powerful spaces where children and youth learn about treaties, the histories and contributions of First Nations and their own roles and responsibilities as treaty people.

When we engage with treaty education with honesty and care, we help young people understand and engage with those responsibilities at the earliest stages of their lives and we further the work of reconciling the history of our great province.

And leading the work—leading this work is the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. By supporting educators, families and communities in learning about the spirit and intent of the treaties, the commission and the Elders, Knowledge Keepers and the good folks that serve there have played a central role in strengthening and rebuilding the importance of treaties across this province.

In close consultation with educators, the Treaty Relations Commission, with the support of the Elders Council, has worked to provide tools and professional development for educators to incorporate treaty education lessons into all subject areas. And because of this work, educators in Manitoba feel more supported and classrooms across Manitoba are on a better path towards reconciliation.

And through the Treaty Relations Commission's Speaker's Bureau, Elders and Knowledge Keepers are invited all over Manitoba to share a variety of perspectives on the treaties. This includes in classrooms, workplaces and community events.

Honourable Speaker, Treaty Week reminds us that reconciliation is not a single moment or event, but an ongoing commitment—a commitment that calls on each of us to reflect on our responsibilities and to honour the enduring contributions of First Nations to Manitoba's cultural, social and economic life.

Honourable Speaker, joining us in the gallery, from the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, is education manager Amanda Simard, whose dedication to education and to bringing folks together helps strengthen our understanding of treaty relationships.

Today, I am honoured to proclaim May 18 to May 22 as Treaty Week in Manitoba. I encourage all Manitobans to engage in meaningful learning and reflection at home, in your classroom and in your community so that we can continue to grow in our shared responsibility and recognize that we are all treaty people.

On behalf of my department and my colleagues in the Legislature, so many of whom have deep ties and connections to the work of the Treaty Relations Commission and the great folks that work there, I want to thank Amanda and all of her colleagues for the work that they do in supporting educators and learners across this province.

I invite all of my colleagues to stand and honour Amanda Simard and the Treaty Relations Commission.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It is my honour and privilege to recognize Treaty Week right here in Manitoba because, after all, we are all treaty people.

That phrase is important to highlight. It acknowledges that the Numbered Treaties are living, foundational agreements rooted in mutual respect, with the promise of a prosperous future for First Nations peoples and all Canadians.

And it was this appreciation for our shared heritage that guided our work and myself, as the former minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, to introduce Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With.

*(13:40)

Working with the treaty commissioner, Ms. Loretta Ross, Ms. Simard and their team and, of course, the Elders Council, our PC government launched this landmark policy framework to build on Indigenous-inclusive education system that all learners and educators can authentically engage with.

It was through this framework that I had the honour of introducing Manitoba's Treaty Education for All plan to ensure that all K-to-12 teachers, school staff and students across our great province are equipped with educational resources about the original

spirit and intent of treaties. At no cost to employers, our plan ensured that all school teachers and staff would complete their treaty education by December 31, 2025. And just this past September, treaty education became part of Manitoba's grade 12 curriculum as part of our Treaty Education for All plan.

The next step of Mamāhtawisiwin was to expand the strategy to early learning and child-care centres over the coming years to help ECEs better understand Indigenous perspectives and shared responsibilities and incorporate Indigenous knowledge into their programming.

With the partnership of the treaty relations committee—commission of Manitoba, I am so incredibly proud of this work to instill treaty education in our youth and bringing all Manitobans together to embody the spirit of the treaties because, Honourable Speaker, we are all treaty people.

Thank you, merci and miigwech.

The Speaker: Further ministerial statements?

Allied Healthcare Professionals Recognition Week

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): I rise today to recognize and proclaim allied health professionals week.

This week is about celebrating the thousands of allied health-care professionals for their skills, compassion and dedication, which strengthens Manitoba's health-care system every single day. And we have some awesome allied health-care professionals with us, and I'd ask you folks to stand up so we can see who you are as we go through this statement in the House.

Across Manitoba, allied health professionals are there for patients and families at every stage of care and every stage of life. These professionals play an essential role in delivering high-quality care to Manitobans in hospitals, clinics, laboratories, long-term-care homes and many, many community settings. Allied health professionals represent dozens of professions and literally thousands of highly skilled workers whose expertise touches nearly every single Manitoban.

Manitobans encounter these professions—these professionals, rather, when they're seeking care, recovering from illness, managing chronic conditions or transitioning safely back home from the hospital. They help patients regain mobility, access mental health supports, receive accurate diagnoses, recover after surgery, maintain independence and their dignity in their communities, and so much more. Their work

improves patient outcomes, strengthens patient flow and helps reduce pressures across our health-care system.

Honourable Speaker, allied health professionals also play a critical role in ensuring Manitobans receive care closer to home. In rural, northern and remote communities, these professionals help connect people with vital services and supports that make a real difference in their everyday lives.

Our government understands that rebuilding health care means valuing and supporting the front-line professionals who deliver this care every single day. That is why we're continuing to invest in recruitment and retention initiatives across our health-care system, including, and especially, with allied health professions.

We've already added nearly 500 additional allied health-care workers to Manitoba's health system, and we are not stopping there. We're establishing—we've established seven-day-a-week discharges after hearing directly from front-line workers, from allied health-care professionals, that the importance of improving flow in our health-care system can't be done without them, that, in fact, we need to invest in more of them. These changes are helping patients leave hospital safely, in a more timely where—way—and receive care and supports they need at home and in our communities.

Honourable Speaker, as a nurse myself, I understand first-hand the importance of multidisciplinary care teams and the value of ensuring that health-care workers feel respected, are heard and valued and that they're supported to practise to their full scope. Allied health professionals are indispensable members of those teams, and their contributions deserve recognition, not only this week, but every single week of the year.

I want to shout out, especially, social workers here in Manitoba who are mental health experts, who are experts in care across our province. We've got a social worker here with us today. It's great to see you.

And to all allied health-care professionals across Manitoba, thank you. Thank you for your professionalism, your expertise, your resilience, your commitment to caring for others. Manitobans are healthier and safer because of the work that you do. Our government is proud to proclaim and recognize allied health professionals week and we're proud to continue working alongside all of you to rebuild the health-care system that works better for Manitoba patients,

workers and families across the province as you being a core part of it.

So I ask all of us in the Chamber today to rise and congratulate and thank all of these amazing allied health-care professionals on not only their week, but everything they do every week for Manitobans.

Thank you.

Crystal Bennett, Veronica Boychuk, Kimberley Braun, Shayleen Goretzki, Shona Litke, Derek Myhre, Jason Linklater, Michelle Mansell, Emily-Anne Paul, Tim Smith.

The Speaker: The honourable member for Roblin.

An Honourable Member: Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh. The honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I'd just ask that I can add the names of all of our guests into Hansard, and recognize that the president of MAHCP, Jason Linklater, is here. We've got members from MGEU also present with us today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: So it was—okay. As the minister asked after she was done her—after their statement, they would need leave to get those names included.

So is there leave? [*Agreed*]

The names will be added.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): On behalf of my colleagues in the official opposition, I am very happy to be celebrating this allied health professionals recognition week, a time for Manitobans to celebrate health-care professionals across our great province.

Because, each and every day, allied health-care professionals show their dedication to Manitoba patients by delivering exemplary care on the front lines of our health-care system. They support patients throughout the entirety of their health-care journeys. They play a fundamental role in our health-care system. They rush patients to the hospital in their time of need. They test and process samples for medical analysis. They help patients get back their mobility after treatment, and so much more.

Diagnostic services, emergency care, seniors care, community health, mental health, women's health, dental health, rehabilitation, care for Manitobans with disabilities, spiritual health: you name it, there's an allied health professional behind it.

They are a lifeline to Manitoba patients in our health-care system. Allied health workers are also vital to woman's health care. They are mammographers, sonographers, social workers, midwives. They are the ones who will be at the front lines of increasing breast cancer screenings, improving birthing services and ensuring women are safe in our communities.

Allied health workers are also vital to emergency care, and widespread shortages of paramedics, particularly in rural Manitoba, put rural health care at risk. So, to all of our amazing allied health workers, I want to say thank you for being there in our time of need and at our most vulnerable moments and beyond. You are critical to our health-care system.

I'd like to welcome our guests to the gallery today and thank them sincerely for the work that they do to keep all of us healthy in Manitoba.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Neev Patel and Tofumni Ajayi

Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): I rise today to recognize two exceptional students from J.H. Bruns Collegiate: Neev Patel and Tofumni Ajayi, who were recently honoured at the Manitoba Business Hall of Fame's 12th Annual Induction Ceremony.

It was inspiring to see these young leaders recognized alongside some of Manitoba's most accomplished business figures, and I was especially proud to see my constituency of Southdale represented so well.

I had the chance to meet Neev and Tofumni at the ceremony, and their dedication and enthusiasm stood out right away.

Neev received the Leonard and Eleanore Baranyk Inspiring Business Excellence Scholarship after four years of involvement in Junior Achievement, where he developed strong leadership and business skills. From technology to finance, he gained a clear understanding of how teams work together to turn ideas into results. He also brought that experience beyond the classroom by running his own gaming computer business, managing everything from assembly to sales. This fall, he will continue on that path as he begins his studies in electrical engineering. Woo-hoo!

* (13:50)

Tofumni received the Waterford Global Future Leader of Manitoba scholarship in recognition of her commitment to both academic excellence and community leadership. She is an honour roll student, with distinction, and she has been actively involved in school leadership, volunteering in Junior Achievement while also helping lead the DIVERSITY Alliance club at her school. Through her efforts, she has supported a more inclusive and welcoming school environment. She plans to pursue a career in health care.

As we celebrate Small Business Month, it's important to champion young leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs who will help shape the future of our province.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Neev and Tofumni on this well-deserved recognition. I look forward to seeing all that they accomplish in the years to-ahead.

And, as they have class today, Honourable Speaker, they're watching via YouTube with some of their classmates.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Jake Epp

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): On June 1 in the Senate of Canada, former members of Parliament who passed away in the last year will be remembered. While I was unable to accept the invitation to attend to honour my friend, the honourable Jake Epp, I want to pay tribute to his remarkable life of service.

Elected as the Member of Parliament for Provencher in 1972, Mr. Epp would serve in the governments of Prime Minister Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney.

As federal Minister of Health, Jake banned smoking on commercial airlines in Canada, beginning a national trend toward ending smoking in public places.

As senior federal minister for Manitoba, he was instrumental in the development of The Forks in Winnipeg, along with Canada's first level 4 containment lab to help combat infectious diseases, which combatted SARS and developed the Ebola vaccine.

After he left Parliament in 1993, he became vice-president of TransCanada Pipelines. He was also chair of Health Partners International Canada, which distributes donated pharmaceuticals from Canada all around the world. Over \$700 million of medicines have been donated from this organization.

In addition, Jake was the chair of the Ontario Power Generation corporation and named an officer of the Order of Canada in 2010.

Jake and his wife Lydia became very dear friends to my wife Kim and I over the years. His advice and encouragement were always something he gave generously.

Two weeks before his passing last summer, we enjoyed dinner together and he encouraged Kim and I to look forward to life after politics with excitement, which we would do, but it will be a bit more empty than it might otherwise have been with his passing.

To all those who will be honoured in the Senate in a couple of weeks, we thank you for your—and your families for your service. To the honourable Jake Epp, this Assembly offers gratitude to you, Lydia, your daughter Lisa and grandchildren Melissa and Mackenzie, for your commitment to Manitoba and Canada.

Thank you.

Earl Grey Press

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I rise today to recognize a group of incredibly talented and dedicated students from Earl Grey School for their participation in the Earl Grey Press.

The Earl Grey Press began in the fall of 2024, when two students approached their teacher, Liliana Godinez Goodman, and asked if she would be their supervisor. As Earl Grey School values its student voices, Ms. Godinez Goodman agreed immediately, encouraging the school's students to lead the way.

After starting last year as a lunchtime club and running once per week with eight students, their endeavour has grown and transformed into a 30-plus student press team. Students from several different grade 4 through 8 classes come to Ms. Godinez Goodman's classroom during their lunch breaks to write, debate and share ideas. They all work together to complete their articles, and all 30-plus voices are heard in every monthly publication, making this truly a team effort.

Beyond current school news, some regular features of the Earl Grey Press include news of the sports teams, a joke section and the recurring feature called What's In Your Lunch, for which the press team interviews students and staff at the school.

The students of the press team would like to acknowledge the hard work of their editor, Ms. Godinez Goodman, for the many hours she spends supporting

their work and ensuring all their journalists are credited for their contributions.

They would also like to thank their principal, Ms. Trish Penner, for being their biggest fan and copy editor, and Maggie Macintosh from the Winnipeg Free Press as their media mentor.

The students and staff would also like to thank the Winnipeg School Division for its support, recognizing them as—professional development meetings and cheering them on every step of the way, including Rebecca Chambers and David Wall for supporting them as journalists by providing them with sources and experiences.

I ask my fellow members of the Legislative Assembly to rise and join me in congratulating the team of Earl Grey Press on their success.

Safety of Residents in 55+ Manitoba Housing

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): They yell at us. They smoke up in all areas, do not abide by the rules. I go to leave my apartment: blood everywhere, man stabbing himself. Us ladies used to meet in a common area for a visit; we're all too scared now. Cooking, some chemical came through my vents; I passed out, hospitalized for two weeks. Doctor left message with Manitoba Housing manager, no return call.

This is what this government has allowed in 55+ Manitoba Housing through Manitoba. This comes from residents of Crescent Manor in Souris, Manitoba.

These residences were created to provide older Manitobans with a safe, secure and peaceful environment where they can age with dignity and independence. Seniors who move into 55+ housing do so because they want stability, community and safety. Many are on fixed incomes, many are widowers and many simply want peace of mind in their later years.

But today, many residents are telling us they're no longer feel that sense of security. We are hearing concerns about inappropriate placements, rising 'safeting' issues, mental health and addiction challenges within buildings not equipped to provide supports and a lack of consultation with residents before major housing decisions are made.

Let me be clear: every Manitoban deserves compassion, housing and support services. But seniors also deserve to feel safe in their own homes. These goals should never be put against one another.

We need a balanced approach. That means protecting the integrity of 55+ housing, ensuring proper—proper safety measures are in place, increasing supportive housing options across Manitoba and listening direct to seniors and families who are raising these questions.

Thank you.

The Speaker: There's a couple of things before we move on.

First, I want to offer my sincere apologies to the honourable Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care (MLA Asagwara) for my misgendering earlier today. I do apologize.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Secondly, we have some guests in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery, from Linden Christian School, 50 grade 9 students under the direction of Nick Janzen. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan).

We welcome you here today.

And I would draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge where we have with us today Don Davies, Member of Parliament, constituency of Vancouver Kingsway.

On behalf of all honourable—[interjection]—all honourable members, we welcome you here today. And if I said in loge, he's in the public gallery. My mistake.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Youth Social Media Ban Student Questions for Government

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): Honourable Speaker, this afternoon, we have some of the great young minds in Manitoba joining us here: the grade 9 class from Linden Christian School. Earlier today there was another group, but unfortunately—or, fortunately—they had to go back to school.

These students are really dialled in to what's happening in Manitoba and had some really good questions. So I'm going to break with the usual here, and I asked the students to ask a question for the Premier. I'm hoping the Premier will break from his usual course and actually answer those questions today.

There's been a lot of talk by the Premier about the proposed social media ban for youth. But the students are worried what this means for them.

* (14:00)

From the students to the Premier, they ask: Premier, in Australia, reports show that seven in 10 children still have accounts on major platforms. The students are wondering if the Premier can point to specific data points on the social media ban in Australia, and how he will measure the success of his ban.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So I would say the measure of success would be, ideally, improved mental health for young people in Manitoba, less anxiety, less depression, fewer issues around self-esteem and body image.

These are things that people of all ages deal with because of the impacts of social media, primarily negatively. But the thing is, as you go to the younger and younger ages, particularly with children but also with teenagers, your brain is still developing and those ability to maybe have that resilience or different strategies to know what you're seeing with haven't necessarily had the opportunity to develop as fully. And so that's why we're targeting this ban.

We are going to take a different approach from Australia. Here in Canada, the province has unique jurisdictions, and in the subsequent answers, if they are on the same topic, I'd be happy to expand upon this further.

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

Mr. Khan: Honourable Speaker, I would love for that, and I think the students would love for the Premier to expand on that as well. My son is much better at technology than I am, sadly, and I'm not surprised that he knows how to navigate social media.

Reports from Australia state that seven in 10 children still have accounts on major platforms. No one is debating the fact that we need to protect kids from dangers online, to insulate them from rabbit holes of dangerous content, of algorithms that spit out, warp and corrupt their young minds. And that isn't even touching the dangers of AI.

But the question from the students is on the Premier's ability to regulate it. It wasn't the state or—of new Wales—New South Wales that banned social media; it was a national effort.

Which leads to the students' next question, which is: Considering each generation is so much more tech-savvy than their parents, how does the Premier intend to enforce his ban?

Mr. Kinew: I'd be happy to put my tech skills to the test with any young person out there. No cap, got the rizz, definitely. Willing to take questions from the skibidi opposition along the way.

And what I would say in particular is, like I said, we're going to take a different approach than Australia did. Here in Canada, when you talk about contract law, you're talking about provincial jurisdiction. All those terms of services that people typically click by, that's actually a contractual framework that, typically, these tech companies are defining unilaterally. What we're going to say is for you to actually have some agency, some input, the ability to make some good decisions when it comes to that.

Similarly, consumer protection is a provincial area. And we have a piece of legislation here called The Unfair Business Practices Act. And it is our—

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

And stop the clock for a moment, please. I would just remind all members to make sure that we're calling people by their proper constituency name or ministerial title.

Manitoba Housing's Maple Drive Manor Advocacy for Constituents Seeking Placement

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): For years, local residents who've tried to move into Maple Manor in Plum Coulee have faced delays from Manitoba Housing despite the availability of vacant suites.

I've previously written to the Minister of Housing about two separate constituents, a Mr. Albert Harms and a Mr. Benny Wiebe, both of whom have been trying to secure suites in Maple Manor. And I will table those letters for the minister.

In the case of Mr. Harms, he's nearly 70 years old with most of his pension going to food and heat while living out of a camper trailer, struggling to get answers from Manitoba Housing. And Mr. Wiebe has been waiting for over a year for his placement.

With vacant suites available in Maple Manor, can the minister commit to get these two gentlemen their placement today?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): The minister's name is Bernadette Smith, the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith).

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

We've—not allowed to use people's names.

Mr. Kinew: So, again—so if you want to reach out to the Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith) at any time, feel free to do so. She is at your service.

Now, I do want to return to the question at hand. Typically, the Leader of the Opposition asks six questions, apparently not going to do so today. So I think that we should continue to talk about the social media ban in the absence of questions because the topic was raised.

Again, when we're talking about the legal framework in Canada, you have clear provincial jurisdiction to be able to look at contract law. There is also an important principle that courts and, of course, the lawyers who are going to be drafting this law for us look at, which is the best interests of the child. And this is something where we not only have jurisdiction, but this is something that has to guide us as a government.

So I would ask young people out there to tell us: What do you think is in the best interests of the child, particularly at the younger age groups where someone's brain is still developing? Should we allow these wild algorithms to be able—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Crystal Springs Colony Community Well Chlorination of Drinking Water

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Over the last year, the Minister of Environment has been going across the province and either closing or threatening to close community wells. Crystal Springs Hutterite Colony, together with dozens of others, have been harassed for months by the office of drinking water.

Despite biweekly testing and a perfect safety record, the department mandated chlorination of Crystal Springs water. Changing their entire system would not be affordable, but they are now complying, as directed. They had hoped that this compliance would end the harassment, but just this week, they were told that they must now take daily samples.

It's ridiculous. They've done absolutely everything right. They want to know when will this minister—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): I love the Hutterian communities in Manitoba, and what I would say is

let's work together on this, because right now, we're dealing with an outbreak of hepatitis A in some parts of the province that is caused by—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —not having clean drinking water.

Now, what I know that many leaders in the Hutterian community will appreciate is the steps that we're taking to ban social media when it comes to young people. There is a clear harm that is being caused on the mental health level for young people in our country and in our province. The province has jurisdiction in this area.

So I would ask you, the free-thinking adults and youth of our province: Should we stand around and just wait for rich people in the United States of America who run these platforms to do the right thing? Or should we step up and use the tools that we have today to try and help the next generation? It's our firm belief, on this side of the House, that the society should not be focused on training the next AI—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Wind Farm Development Transparency Concerns

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I've heard from constituents that are concerned about the lack of transparency related to this government's wind farm commitment. The minister of Hydro told media that transparency will happen eventually.

That isn't good enough for my constituents. Potential programs are snapping up land in Westman, and Manitobans need to know what is under consideration.

Why is transparency always an afterthought for this NDP government?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): So, as I was saying before I was interrupted by time, our society should not be focused on training the next AI model. We should be focused on training the next generation, and so that's why we are stepping up with the social media ban.

When it comes to potential wind farms in different parts of the province, we know we need power and we're going to build it in a renewable way. The members opposite didn't build a single watt, not even a single calorie of power. There is more power in a Tim Hortons doughnut than they ever built during their time in office.

But when we look at the AI data centres that are being built all across America, they're using hundreds of megawatts, gigawatts of power. We need to have a serious conversation in this province about the future of our economy, and I would much rather have technology serve the people of Manitoba than have the people of Manitoba serve technology.

* (14:10)

Manitoba Municipal Board Timeline for Hearings and Decisions

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): In December 2024, a Portage housing developer was told the municipal board would hold a hearing on his housing project. A year and a half later there's still no decision, there's been no hearing, yet this Premier claims the same municipal board can deliver decisions on grocery store competition in six to eight weeks.

Is this why the chair of the municipal board has resigned, because they know the Premier's timelines are absolutely unrealistic?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): His political father, Brian Pallister, is the one who loved the municipal board and set up this whole framework. So if you've got a problem with it, go see him next time you're asking for donations.

On this side of the House, we've added staff to the municipal board because we want them to knock down the property controls that are keeping food prices high. The other thing we're doing on food prices, we're cutting all the tax on food and drinks from the grocery stores. If this member or anyone on the other side wants to help you with their grocery costs, they need to get out of the way and allow our budget bill to pass today so that you can have tax relief starting on July 1.

But when it comes to the social media topic that was raised by the opposition, we are very clear: We are not going to be passive bystanders when it comes to the public policy conversation of our time. Instead of thanking Donald Trump, as their leader has, instead of bowing down to the tech oligarchs, we are going to stand up for the people of Manitoba, because—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Closure of Highway 227 for Upgrades Compensation for Detour Disruptions

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Manitobans in the RM Woodlands are paying—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. King:—a price for a provincial infrastructure project. Due to the province's closure and detour of Highway 227 for bridge upgrades, heavy traffic is now being diverted onto municipal roads never designed for this volume of use.

Residents are dealing daily with excessive dust, noise, safety concerns and road deterioration while the RM has been forced to budget over \$250,000 for additional gravel and maintenance. To make matters worse, residents are being told to pay out of pocket for dust control caused directly by this provincial detour.

Will the minister commit today to compensating the municipality for these unexpected costs and providing relief for affected residents impacted by this provincial project?

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We are working with the municipality. There are certain costs that are, at times, compensated, depending on the nature of those costs. But those are details that we work out in a technical way with the municipality. They're not really gotcha moments for the floor of the Legislature.

But I will take this time to also say that, you know, I think I've had a lot of questions from the opposition lately through the Estimates process, and what was really clear to me was how devastated many of their communities have been because of the lack of infrastructure investments that happened under the previous government.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier has blocked and stopped every—

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

It is the NDP government's turn in the rotation.

Université de Saint-Boniface Expanding French-Language Nursing Education

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): L'Honorable Président *[Honourable Speaker]*, after years of staffing shortages and cuts under the failed PC government, Manitobans know we need to keep rebuilding our health-care workforce. That's why we're taking real action in investing in education and training—we're take—sorry—we're taking real action to invest in education and training the next generation of health-care workers.

And earlier today, we had a very exciting announcement at l'Université de Saint-Boniface. Can the very best Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care in Canada please tell Manitobans more about this important announcement?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Thank you to my friend and amazing MLA for St. Boniface for this great question.

Honourable Speaker, rebuilding health care means training and retaining more nurses right here in Manitoba, and that is why we were so proud to announce, earlier today with the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) leading the way, that we are adding 30 new nurse training seats to the University of St. Boniface.

This investment brings the total training seats to 75 in the French-language nursing program, and it will ensure that Manitobans can access high-quality care in both English and in French.

We are investing in people, we are investing in training, we are investing in a stronger public health-care system for all Manitobans, and we're doing that for bilingual Manitobans all across Manitoba.

Much done. More—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Removal of PST on Grocery Items Contingent on the Passage of the Budget Bill

Mr. Obby Khan (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier (Mr. Kinew) has blocked and stopped every single minister from his side standing up and answering questions. It really is the Kinew—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —government show.

So maybe the Kinew government can answer this. The federal—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —government stopped the federal tax on fuel without legislation. The Premier's mentor, Greg Selinger—his best friend and his political mentor—under his NDP government, raised the PST without legislation, meaning that they raised the PST without the budget bill passing.

On this side of the House, former premier Brian Pallister lowered the PST without the budget bill passing.

Now, this Premier stands up and claims he can't do it without the budget bill. Last time I checked, for now, it is the Kinew government show, so he can do it.

Will he do the right thing today? Will he actually live up to his words and execute his powers to eliminate the PST junk food tax like he said—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition won't even bother to ask the first six questions in question period. That's how unprepared and ill-equipped and incompetent he is on that side of the House.

Honourable Speaker, we're proud to be on the side of the House where the Premier can tackle—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —any question that comes this way to our side of the House.

But our government, led by Premier Kinew, is doing the work—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Once again, we—*[interjection]* Order.

We have to refer to people by their ministerial title or their constituency name.

MLA Asagwara: I apologize. I'm just so excited to talk about the most popular premier in Canada that sits on this side of the Chamber. Forgive me, Honourable Speaker.

The bottom line is this: Our government is bringing forward real affordability measures for Manitobans—

The Speaker: Honourable member's time is expired.

Mr. Khan: Insults, name-calling, shaming, breaking the rules—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —heckling in the Chamber in front of students.

The Premier really needs to keep his stories straight. He seems to be conflicted on what he can and can't do as the majority government. He still has not introduced a single piece of legislation for his Crown-Indigenous corporation, which apparently has board members and an interim CEO without any legislative authority.

How does the Premier square that circle? How does the Premier go out and claim that he's created a new Crown corporation and empowered it to negotiate with stakeholders, but yet this same Premier (Mr. Kinew) doesn't have the power to remove a couple of cents on a bag of chips or a can of pop?

Will the Premier come clean today and tell Manitobans he has the power to remove the PST from junk food; he's simply choosing not to do it because he's playing political games with your votes?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I don't know about you, but it's not really clear what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to say. One day, they're for removing PST off all groceries, then they're against it. They're going to get in the way of it, but we can do it ourselves.

We have a legal opinion that makes it clear. They have a choice to make on that side of the House. They can choose to make life more affordable for Manitobans by supporting our bill, or they can choose to make life more expensive. They did that for seven and a half years when they were in government, when he was around the Cabinet table. They should change their ways, get behind our bill and pass it today.

The Speaker: Order, please.

If I'd get the clock stopped.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: There are some guests in the gallery that probably won't be with us very long.

We have 19 students from Riverside School in Whitemouth, grades 7, 8 and 9, with teacher Holy Warkentien, from the constituency area of the MLA for Lac du Bonnet.

* (14:20)

We welcome you all here today.

Pembina Valley Region Water Security Strategy

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Communities and farmers across the Pembina Valley region face serious water security challenges, with limited access to both potable and non-potable water. After years of drought, major investment opportunities are being lost, communities cannot grow and potato and other agricultural producers are being held back, while just south of the border, North Dakota is investing billions of dollars in becoming a drought-resistant state. My communities have been asking the NDP for a plan.

When will the NDP release a water security strategy for the Pembina Valley region?

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): Honourable Speaker, we are so pleased to be meeting with municipalities right across our fantastic province. We've been doing that work in the Westman, in the south and everywhere else. It is something that is so important. We recognize that safe, clean drinking water, waste water, everything is so important for municipalities.

Happy to sit down with those communities. I would welcome the members opposite to bring those concerns forward, as opposed to the floor of the House.

Chronic Absenteeism From School Request for Plan to Address

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Every child has the right to read. However, the Human Rights Commission of Manitoba has found that the education system does not equitably support all students in their ability to read. Many students struggle to learn to read, and gaps are larger for students from low-income, racialized backgrounds or students with disabilities. These inequities violate The Human Rights Code and leave many Manitobans behind.

One of the main systemic barriers for Human Rights Commission has found is student absenteeism. If children are not in school, it's harder for them to learn to read. The Premier has known this since 2024, and Manitoba is facing a school absenteeism epidemic. The K-12 education commission called for action. The children's advocate called for action. Now the Human Rights Commission has called for action.

Why doesn't—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): It is absolutely the case that every child in Manitoba has the right and deserves to learn to read, and that's what our government is working towards.

It was a real pleasure, just yesterday—like, something that, when we're talking about absenteeism, I think that's something that's important for all Manitobans and for this House to acknowledge: that this isn't just an education problem. This is a problem that we need to address across government.

And that's why it was my distinct pleasure just yesterday to meet with many of the ministers and

members of our caucus at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, something that was reinstated by our government after the legislation was repealed by the cold, callous PC previous government. And at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, we had an amazing update about the expanded investments that we have made in our Bright Futures program.

And in my next question, Honourable Speaker—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: Ignoring student absenteeism can have dire consequences for students, increases the risk for violence, injury, problematic substance use, mental health concerns and economic disadvantage.

Those are not my words, Honourable Speaker; that's the conclusion from the children's advocate investigating the tragic death of Tina Fontaine. That's also the conclusion of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, which has found addressing 'absenteeism' is a key systemic issue ensuring all Manitoban students have the right to read.

We also know that's the conclusion from the Province's commission on K-to-12 education. We do not need more experts and more studies to tell Manitobans what they already know: 15,000 students chronically absent in our schools is an epidemic. We need action.

Why does this Premier (Mr. Kinew) continue—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Schmidt: Again, it's this government that reinstated the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet that is working on making sure more Manitobans not only reach their 18th birthday but also that more Manitobans graduate grade 12, because we know that education is the key to a bright future.

But we also know that it's also the work of the Poverty Reduction Committee of Cabinet. This is work that we're doing across government to help support kids, to help support schools and to help support families.

So something that we talked about yesterday at the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet was the expanded Bright Futures program which provides wrap-around supports, homework supports, mentorship.

So we have expanded with our partners at Wayfinders into Elmwood High school and Sisler High School just this year; with our partners at the

Boys and Girls Club from Thompson, we have expanded into—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: In 2019, the children's advocate called for a comprehensive plan to measure, assess and respond to absenteeism and its underlying causes. In 2020, the K-12 education commission recommended creation of an action plan to respond to the root causes that lead to chronic absenteeism. In 2025, the Human Rights Commission echoed those recommendations. In fact, the Kinew government has gone backwards. They have attempted to hide the extent of the problem, they put out false information, and they refuse to release the current data showing Manitoba just how bad the problem is.

This Premier needs to stop picking fights with Manitoba families and start supporting them.

The question, Honourable Speaker, is: Why doesn't he?

MLA Schmidt: While I certainly agree with the member opposite that 'absenteeism'—absenteeism is a very important issue that needs to be addressed, I disagree that this government is going backwards.

In fact, Honourable Speaker, and I'll say it with my full voice, there is no government in the history of Manitoba that has done more to address absenteeism than this government, beginning with the universal nutrition program, instituted under Nello Altomare.

And look at—all you have to do—look at Budget 2026, Honourable Speaker. Free transit for youth: Every youth in this province is going to be able to get to school for free.

What else are we doing? The Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) is decolonizing our child-welfare system to support families. Our Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness (Ms. Smith)—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Rural Cell Phone Service Need for Backup Power at Cell Towers

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Rural Manitobans are being put at risk because many cell towers have little or no backup power during outages. When the power goes out, cell service can disappear within a short time, leaving residents unable to call for help and local fire departments without reliable dispatch communications. This is a serious public safety issue, not just an inconvenience.

Will the minister commit today to working with regulators and providers to mandate backup power requirements for rural cell towers so Manitobans are not left without emergency communications during power outages?

Hon. Mike Moroz (Minister of Innovation and New Technology): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for that question. It's a serious one. We're deeply concerned about the matter that he raises.

We've been working very closely with both the federal government, our partners at the federal level, as well as the telcos themselves and local communities. We're working very diligently to get this situation corrected.

Rising Obesity and Diabetes Rates Removal of PST on Snack Foods

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Obesity and diabetes rates have increased—it have increased in Manitoba. I have a constituent who is watching with their family today. They are close to losing their family member due to a fight with diabetes.

They want to know: Why is this Premier (Mr. Kinew) celebrating that he is reducing taxes on Slurpees and junk food?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I just want to acknowledge what that family is going through. It's difficult to watch any loved one struggle with a chronic disease and illness. If they have questions about ways that we can connect them to services or care or have health-care related questions, I'm happy to answer those through my office.

We take this very seriously, which is why in our very first budget, we invested over half a million dollars in developing a diabetes strategy here in Manitoba. Led by Dr. Roussin and other public health experts in the province, we've continued that investment moving forward. That's why we've expanded access to diabetes medications and we're expanding access to diabetes supplies.

We know there's a lot to do on the nutrition front. That's why we have a universal nutrition program in schools. That's the first step to addressing this in a proactive way.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Drivers Reinstated After Medical Suspension Financial Barriers to Licence Reinstatement

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): This government falsely speaks about affordability and helping Manitobans return to work. To this point, medically suspended drivers who have recovered are still forced to pay significant out-of-pocket costs to regain their licence. For many workers, especially in rural Manitoba, a licence is an essential for employment, daily life and independence.

* (14:30)

Will the minister commit to my constituents to review this policy and ensure financial hardship does not prevent Manitobans from 'turning'—returning to work or maintaining independence after recovering from a medical condition?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation): Yes, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Happy to respond directly to his constituent. If he'd like to bring the information—the details to my office, I'd be very happy to do that.

We do have a piece of legislation before this very House that expands the Personal Injury Protection Plan and actually gives more benefits and more support for those folks who have been injured in automobile accidents. It is one of the advantages that we have in Manitoba, is our public insurance corporation. We've strengthened MPI, we've stabilized it and we're continuing to ensure that Manitobans not only get the best rates, but have the best support and protections possible.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Seniors Living in 55+ Housing Resident Safety Concerns

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): Seniors in Spruce Woods are reaching a breaking point. Those who have worked their entire lives and are now living in 55+ housing in Souris say, I'm scared to leave my apartment. Drug use and safety issues are running rampant in seniors housing across Manitoba, and this government is not only allowing it, they are enabling it.

Seniors should not have to fear for their safety in the very places that are meant to provide comfort and security in the retirement years. The minister has a responsibility ensure that seniors housing remains safe and appropriate for the people it was built to serve. Instead, this government continues to ignore

residents, ignore staff, ignore families sounding the alarm.

Will the minister admit today—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): What I can say is that we are committed to ensuring that our housing is safe and affordable, and we are going to continue to build, listen to our residents, work with our residents.

Under the former government, they sold off, they fired staff, they fired security. They fired even food service providers, something the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) raised, that a member from his constituency is looking for housing. We've been working with that member. We're going to continue to work with that member to ensure that they can find housing close to home, as well as food services.

We've hired more fruit—food services so that seniors can get housing or—and food in their housing, and we're going to continue to support seniors right across our great province.

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Charleswood and Headingley Child-Care Spaces Needed

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Child care makes it possible for parents to work, pursue education and support their families, but thousands of families in Charleswood and Headingley are on very long wait lists for daycare spots.

Three years ago, the previous PC government and the federal government announced funding for child care expansions at Beaverlodge and Westgrove School. I spoke with constituents just this morning who have not been able to get any clear answer about when those spots are going to open, and as of right now, those families still don't have child care lined up when the school year starts in September. Without access to daycare, these parents may have no choice but to quit their jobs.

When will Charleswood and Headingley see the additional child-care spots we so desperately need?

Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning): Well, Honourable Speaker, the member from Roblin has a serious question to ask herself, and—is that, is she going to support BITSA? Because all you have to do is look at Budget 2026, to look at our child-care plan: more than

2,000 spaces in 2026 alone. So I urge the member to get on board.

Opening spaces is only one part of the solution, Honourable Speaker. We need to have the trained, high-qualified ECEs to work in those spots once they're open, so we're also increasing wages for child-care workers this year. Is the member from Roblin going to support BITSA? Is she going to encourage the member that sits beside her to her left and to her right to support for BITSA?

If she cares about child care, she will vote for Budget 2026, the best budget in the history of Manitoba.

Seasonal Time Changes Request to End the Practice

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Years ago, a Liberal government in Saskatchewan put an end to time change. A Liberal government in the Yukon got a-rid of time change. The NDP government of British Columbia is ending time change. The Conservative government of Alberta is ending time change. The government of the Northwest Territories is ending time change.

When will this Kinew government join western Canada and put an end to time change?

Hon. Wab Kinew (Premier): You know, since we started talking about social media and TikTok, it's kind of ironic we're going to end with For Whom the Bell Tolls.

But I do want to say to the people of Manitoba that it's pretty clear that the practice of changing our clocks twice a year is coming to an end. That's why we're consulting with Manitobans to see about whether you prefer us to stay on daylight time or on standard time.

I only wish that we had stopped the practice of time change an hour ago so I could have stayed on the call with the premiers just now and not have to listen to the terrible questions from the opposition.

Farmland Along the D20 and Manning Canal Request to Address Flooding and Drainage Issues

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, the City of Steinbach, as well as the RM of Hanover, have been raised serious concerns about flooding and drainage issues connected to the Manning Canal and the lack of provincial maintenance on the D20 drain.

Now, as producers are trying to get crops in the ground, farmland along the D20 and Manning Canal

continue to struggle with excess water, poor drainage and a government that refuses to provide answers or relief, despite repeated requests from the municipalities, the producers and myself as the local MLA.

Why is the minister failing to even respond to southeast producers and municipalities when proper drainage maintenance and—is critical to protecting farmland, rural infrastructure—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Well, it's spring in Manitoba, so drainage is definitely top of mind for many municipalities across the province, and I've had the opportunity to be out in rural Manitoba in several different communities over the last little while to see some of their drainage challenges, both at the municipal level, as well as issues related to provincial infrastructure.

So, I'll continue to do that. We'll continue to work with municipalities, and I will remind the member opposite that it was his colleagues, when they were in government, who cut—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Naylor: —budgets; they cut budgets for maintaining infrastructure; they cut staff and cuts have—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Seniors Living in 55+ Housing Resident Safety Concerns

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): The minister can continue to deflect, but this won't bring much relief to the seniors who are living in these dangerous conditions, or their families. And this did not happen by accident.

These conditions are direct results of the decision made by the Minister of Housing and the NDP government. They—residents, after 10 years of living there, this past year has been a nightmare. This comes from many, many residents. It's not your government; it was—it's the current government that started this and is involved and they should be ashamed.

Will the minister take responsibility for the conditions that are making seniors feel unsafe and commit to taking immediate action before this situation gets even worse?

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): Honourable Speaker, I want to remind that member under their—when they were in government that they were selling off social

housing. They were cutting staff; they were cutting security; they were cutting maintenance; they had boards on social housing; they were putting people out into tents. They weren't supporting members that were living in social housing.

I want to table a letter from the postal Canada that says—from Canada Post—sorry; Canada Post—thank you for that—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —it says, and I'll quote: Our new security upgrades have been so successful that Canada Post actually took the time to write us, Manitoba Housing, a letter that says we recognize, I quote, that these enhancements represent a substantial investment and shift in priorities and we commend Manitoba Housing for taking this proactive approach—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: They—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Health Care in Southern Manitoba Concerns Regarding Access to Care

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Southern Manitoba families are tired of being ignored by the NDP government when it comes to health care. The Carman Memorial Hospital is frequently closed and now surgeries have been suspended indefinitely because of an ant infestation, another shocking example of a health-care system falling apart under the NDP government.

* (14:40)

How can this Kinew government claim to be improving health care when southern Manitoba patients are losing access to basic hospital services and surgeries within their own communities?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I just want to make clear that I did not bring the ants to the hospital. This is a really serious issue that is actually a long-standing issue that is being addressed as assertively as possible.

I want to thank everyone for working really hard to address this problem. We've ensured that folks are getting the surgeries that they need, and I want to thank our partners who are making sure and the surgeons who are stepping up to make sure that these Manitobans are getting the surgeries that they need.

This ant issue is a historical one. We definitely are throwing everything we can at these ants to address the issue and that, moving forward, we're not going to see this be a problem in the future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

And, earlier today, during question period, the Leader of the Official Opposition said that, and I quote, the—will the Premier (Mr. Kinew) come clean today and tell Manitobans.

So I would caution the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition that that language is coming very close to being deemed unparliamentary. So I would caution that member to be more careful with language in the future.

PETITIONS

Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities

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

The background—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: —to this petition is as follows:

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. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Khan: The current adolescent-care service model creates undue hardship on caregivers—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would ask members to respect our ASL interpreters and speak in a normal speaking voice so that they can do their jobs properly.

Mr. Khan: I'm speaking right into the mic.

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

(1) Children with disabilities often require child care—sorry, can I get some more water, please? Thank you. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Khan: (1) Children with disabilities often require child care beyond the age of 12. Children with disabili-

ties 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—thank you—man, my throat's killing me—(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 an alternative option—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—I'm dying. *[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: He's got a cold.

Mr. Khan: It's brutal.

(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.

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

(7) In this report—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.

Number—we petition the Legislative 'ofssembly' 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—last one.

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

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Rita Beasse, Morgan Rain, Tara Higgins and many, many other Manitobans.

911 Services in Rural Manitoba

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): 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, 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.

* (14:50)

(4) The March 2025 tragedy is not an isolated incident, as there has been other reports of failed 911 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 of 2024, following another 911 service failure, a provincial represented-representative repeated the same assurances 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 servicing 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 location or mobile phone—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 of 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.

(2) To urge the provincial government to work with municipalities, telecommunications providers 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.

This petition was signed by Tekla Vandersteen, Chad-well, and Ray Wight [*phonetic*] and many, many, many other fine Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

The background of 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 a new Portage regional health facility was well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit an added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically an addition of an MRI machine.

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

(3) Portage la Prairie is centrally located in Manitoba and is on Highway 1 in South Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in that RHA.

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

(5) Located around Portage la Prairie are the Dakota Tipi, Dakota Plains, Sandy Bay and Long Plain First Nations reserves. Indigenous peoples of Canada 'disproportely' face barriers in access to services and medical care. An MRI machine located at 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 of the new regional—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 an opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

(7) The average wait time for Manitobans to receive an MRI scan is currently six to eight months. Having an MRI machine in the Portage 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 an investment and placement of an MRI machine in the Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This has been signed by Linda Sigurdson, Jim Young and Heather Kerr and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Red River North): 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) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Portage la Prairie 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 Southern Health/Santé Sud Health Authority. Currently there is only one MRI machine in the RHA.

* (15:00)

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

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

(6) Located is—in close proximity of the regional health authority is a Southport airport. This aerodrome has a runway length that is more than adequate to

support medical air ambulance services. This would provide the opportunity to transport patients by air from more remote communities to access MRI imaging services.

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

Honourable Deputy 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 Rosa Rawlings, Margetta [*phonetic*] Whiteley, Kevin Levine [*phonetic*] and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Road 247—Request for Pave Upgrade

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) La Salle is the largest urban centre in the RM of Macdonald. With a population of over 2,600, the community members are active in establishing facilities and infrastructure that will meet the needs of a rapidly growing urban centre.

(2) La Salle is one of Manitoba's fastest growing communities, having grown over 60 per cent since 2016, and is an attractive place for commuters who work within the Winnipeg city limits.

(3) Provincial Road 247 is frequently used by buses, parents and new drivers, as it is the fastest and most direct route for Sanford Collegiate students from La Salle to get to and from school.

(4) La Salle and PR 247 can be dangerous to travel, as it is located in a well-developed agricultural area, leading semi-trucks, large farm equipment and machinery to use the narrow roadway.

(5) Most recently, in 2020, 17-year-old Chloe Boyle lost her life travelling down the road to school, tragically losing control on the loose gravel. Previously, there were several collisions that occurred on PR 247, causing damages and non-fatal injuries.

(6) Due to the active nature of this roadway, it is needing more maintenance to deal with loose gravel and large potholes caused by the daily wear and tear by drivers and equipment, leading to dangerous driving conditions, especially in wintertime.

(7) There are local online groups with over 2,000 members dedicated to inquiring about the roadway conditions of PR 247 and 330, posting consistently and asking for updates or sharing issues that are happening that may affect families and their young drivers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to assist in paving Provincial Road 247 to La Salle from Manitoba Highway 3; and

(2) To urge the provincial government to ensure the safety of local residents and young drivers who use Provincial Road 247 from La Salle so that they have a safe way to access education year round.

This is signed by Michael Dale, Glen Irvine, Tim Muys and many, many more Manitobans.

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Lisa Sawatzky, Susan Peters, Ann Wolfe and many, many, many Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll remind all members reading petitions, you can name three petition signers at the end and two manys at the end.

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 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.

* (15:10)

(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.

This is signed by Danica Lemoine, Monique Granger, Chris Granger 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, margin-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 productions, mushroom farming, hog operations and 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 productions, 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 the costs of putting food on the table for Manitoba consumers.

This petition has been signed by Tiffany Butler, Bruce Apperley, Duane Davidson and many, many more Manitobans.

Breast Screening

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Due to evolving scientific evidence, the Canadian Cancer Society is now urging all provinces and territories to lower the starting age for breast screening to 40.

(2) Based off 2023 treatment standards, it is estimated that screening women annually for breast

cancer starting at age 40 will save the Canadian health-care system \$460 million annually.

(3) After non-melanoma skin cancers, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among Canadian women. One in eight Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer during their lifetime, and one in 36 will die from it. This is 30,500 diagnoses and 5,500 deaths every year, and 84 diagnoses and 15 deaths every day.

(4) Early detection of breast cancer will lead to better outcomes in patients, with better odds of survival and less severe cases. Women in their 40s who have access to mammograms have a 44 per cent lower mortality rate from breast cancer than those who don't receive screening.

(5) Lowering the breast cancer screening age to 40 in Manitoba will reduce long-term costs to the health-care system because cancers that are caught earlier are typically less complicated to treat.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately put forward a plan to increase breast cancer screening capacity and lower the breast cancer screening age to 40.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Provincial Road 210

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

* (15:20)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by Audrey Goertzen, Lynell [*phonetic*] Laurin, Linda Dooley and many, many other Manitobans.

Construct New Personal-Care Home—Stonewall

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) The government of Manitoba funded the design for a new personal-care home in Stonewall to address the critical need for additional care-home spaces in the community and surrounding areas.

(2) The community has committed to raise \$10 million in funding for this project, demonstrating strong local support and readiness to proceed with construction.

(3) Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority is experiencing a critical shortage of personal-care-home beds.

(4) Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority has the lowest number of personal-care-home beds per capita, with a shortfall of approximately 400 beds.

(5)—excuse me. Despite these approvals, the government has made no mention of the construction of the Stonewall personal-care home, leaving many seniors

and their families without access to adequate personal-care services in the region.

(6) The delay in commencing construction exacerbates existing challenges in providing timely and appropriate care for aging residents, forcing some to seek services far from their families and their community.

(7) Investing in the timely construction of this personal-care home will provide essential services to a growing senior population, support the local economy and demonstrate the government's commitment to the well-being of Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately restore funding and commence construction on the personal-care home in Stonewall, ensuring that this essential project proceeds without further delay.

This petition has been signed by Shelley Krause, Kim Ritz, Shelley Eros and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

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 the 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; 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, honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition is been signed by Michelle MacDonald, Laurie Bennett, John Banmann and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

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

* (15:30)

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:

(1) 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 Zoé Maclean, Sarah Robertson, Brittany Klatt and many, many other Manitobans.

New Neepawa Health Centre

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Neepawa Health Centre is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would 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, clearer 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.

(5) This—the new CT scanner will reduce wait times as it would decrease the need for patients to travel long distances, sometimes involving overnight stays, to access the care that 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 James M. Kaye, Marjorie Gork, Murray Mills and many, many more Manitobans.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I—honourable Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) Despite repeated violations of this—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) Our provinces have taken proactive steps to strengthen bail enforcement, but Manitoba has not used all the available tools to address these—this issue effectively.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Paul Sainsbury, Ian Cunningham, Dean Lyons and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Government House Leader): 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 Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume debate at second reading of Bill 53.

The debate is currently on the referral amendment to the main motion moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), standing in the name of the honourable member for Roblin, who has 12 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I'm glad I have the opportunity to get up and conclude my remarks about the motion before us today.

And the motion, of course, that we're debating is the one put forward by my colleague, the member for Interlake-Gimli, and his recommendation—that I wholeheartedly agree with—is that we move this bill to committee where members of the public can come and have a say about what's—BITSA does and doesn't do.

I remain surprised that the NDP government is unwilling to do that. I thought, maybe something will change overnight; maybe they'll go home and give it some thought and realize, yes, we should take this bill to committee and let Manitobans have their say. If we believe in the bill, if we believe it's the right thing for Manitobans, it should go to committee and members of the public, including those who are struggling with affordability right now.

We talked a lot about the ways that Bill 53—the way that BITSA fails to meaningfully address affordability for Manitobans. It does nothing to address the fact that property taxes have skyrocketed, particularly in the city of Winnipeg, under the current NDP government.

* (15:40)

It doesn't correct one of the major errors the NDP government made soon after taking office, which was de-indexing income tax brackets, and the bracket creep that has resulted, that has taken away from the purchasing power of every Manitoban's earned salaries. It's a sneaky tax grab, and Bill 53 did nothing to fix that.

It did nothing to address the fact that Pharmacare deductibles have gone up under the current government again this year, forcing Manitobans to pay more out of their pockets for life-saving medications that they need, again contributing to the affordability crisis in this province.

Bill 53 actively works against businesses in this province as well. And I talked at length yesterday about the challenges facing the restaurant sector in particular, and I just want to reiterate again today that the government's decision to leave restaurants out of the only paltry, half-baked affordability measure they could come up with in this budget is a mistake, and the restaurant industry has spoken out about that. They've warned that the NDP government's decisions are going to lead to layoffs and economic strain in a sector that is a significant economic driver in Manitoba, generating about \$3.5 billion in annual sales in our province and employing over 42,000 people.

And the reason Bill 53 is a problem for them is that this bill—and this is a quote from Kelly Higginson, national president of Restaurants Canada—BITSA puts those jobs at risk. And that's because, as restaurant sales decline, those restaurants will have to reduce their hours and lay off employees, and that's a real significant risk for an important sector in Manitoba.

I would think that a lot of those restaurant owners would like the opportunity to come to the Legislature and have their say on BITSA, because, you know, they noted—they told media they've met with the Finance Minister, but their concerns remain unaddressed. The Finance Minister and the NDP government didn't want to implement their recommendations into BITSA. Their concerns were ignored entirely. So that's the another good reason that we need to bring this bill to committee.

And I do—I just—I was thinking about the NDP government's position that they've taken on this matter, this very political posturing that they're doing, insisting that they need BITSA passed in order to implement a tax cut on junk food, and I thought, I've seen this film before, to quote Taylor Swift. I've seen this film before.

I saw this last fall when the NDP insisted that they needed this side of the House to pass a bill in order to get the 72-hour detention centre up and running. They held a press conference about it, they said they were ready to go; it was ready to start within days if only we would pass the bill.

And it all turned out to be nonsense, honourable Deputy Speaker, because that 72-hour detention centre wasn't ready to go for months. It was posturing from the NDP government, and we are seeing the exact same thing here today. It's political posturing, it's nonsense and Manitobans will see through it.

The other topic that I wanted to make sure I mentioned before my time runs out—and I brought it up in QP today and I didn't really think about it in the context of BITSA, but, you know, the Minister of Education tied it to BITSA directly, so I would argue that it's relevant here. Budget 2026 was silent on the issue of child-care spots for Charleswood and Headingley.

It named other communities, but it was entirely silent on Charleswood and Headingley. And, of course, you know, I represent a growing community, many young families. We have thousands of families on very lengthy wait-lists for child care in Charleswood and Headingley both, and this budget announced nothing to help them.

So BITSA has nothing to help them, and I think some of those people would like the opportunity to come to the Legislature and have their say about the importance of increasing child-care capacity in Charleswood and Headingley and how this budget has failed them.

The specific child-care spots that I asked about in question period today, expansion spots at Beaverlodge School and Westgrove School, were previously announced by the previous PC government and the federal government at the time in 2023. They committed funding three years ago for these spots, and when the NDP came into power, they either cancelled the spots or simply fumbled the ball and didn't get them open.

I spoke to constituents just today who've been in contact with the schools; they've met with the school division and they can get no clarity on if or when these spots are ever going to open. I would've expected to have seen those measures in this budget. I would've expected to have seen those measures in BITSA. They're not there: yet another good reason why my colleague's motion to take this bill to committee is so relevant and timely and important.

And there were other measures missing from this budget as well, that I think, you know, Manitobans would like to have the opportunity to point out to the NDP government, because they call themselves a listening government, but as we've seen time and time again, they may be listening, but they're not hearing and they're certainly not acting.

In my constituency alone, there are significant infrastructure issues. And, you know, I will say, as a credit to the Minister of Infrastructure, I did ask her some questions in Estimates and she actually

endeavoured to answer those questions. And I really appreciate that because that's not something that I've seen from all of the ministers in the NDP government, certainly not the two and a half hours I spent in Health on Friday and got no answers.

But getting back to the matter at hand, the No. 1 infrastructure priority for the RM of Headingley is the division of Highway 1 through Headingley; that's Portage Avenue.

And if you've driven out that way any time recently, you will know that with the addition of the Costco and the growth within the RM, it's a real traffic mess on Portage Avenue through Headingley right now. And I certainly wouldn't be doing my job as an MLA if I didn't take this opportunity to advocate in the strongest possible terms for an infrastructure investment in the RM of Headingley that would see Portage Avenue twinned, divided, with service roads constructed. It's become a significant safety issue in my community.

And I'm sure that if we brought BITSA to committee, you'd see representatives from my constituency, from residents of the RM of Headingley, that would be happy to come to the Legislature and talk about the safety issues they've encountered. For example, at the intersection of Blumberg Trail and Portage Avenue, there's a development in there that is growing by leaps and bounds.

And we love to see our communities growing; we love to see more people coming into the community of Headingley, particularly young families, but there needs to be appropriate infrastructure investment to ensure their safety.

So we've got an intersection where a very busy street is intersecting with Portage Avenue, which is, of course, incredibly busy, and there's no lights, no signs, no signals there; and there have been accidents at the—that intersection, none that I'm aware of that have been fatal, thankfully, but we certainly would never want to see that happen. That's one thing that I was hoping to see addressed in Budget 2026 or in Bill 53, in BITSA and, sadly, it was not.

There were a number of other concerns as well, that I had hoped to see in Budget 2026 that were not there. One of those is an ongoing—crisis, I think, is not too strong a word when it comes to long-term care in this province.

We know that we have an aging population. We've known this for some time, and, you know, in my conversations with constituents, we often reflect

on how this probably—this needed to be addressed 20, 25 years ago; government needed to be planning for the silver tsunami of aging Manitobans that's going to reach its peak in a few years.

And, of course, as Manitobans age, they will require more significant health-care services. They will require more support in order to maintain their independence and to live in their homes as long as possible. And some of those Manitobans will, of course, require personal-care-home placement.

My community of Headingley is no exception. They—there's been a strong advocacy effort there to get assisted living constructed in Headingley. One of the challenges there is that residents in Headingley, once they graduate beyond assisted living and require more intense care in a personal-care home, because they're in the Southern Health-Santé Sud region, they are often sent to very far-away communities for care. So an assisted-living operator doesn't want to set up shop in Headingley knowing that residents aren't going to want to lease spaces in that facility if they then have to leave the community for personal-care-home placement down the road.

So these issues are all connected, and certainly there's a role for the provincial government in helping to ensure that we have adequate long-term-care spaces where we need them and when we need them. And certainly that includes home care. I've talked about this issue a number of times—

* (15:50)

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'd invite the member to bring her comments back to BITSA.

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for your guidance, honourable Deputy Speaker. I see that my time is coming to a close.

I would just conclude by saying that I find BITSA disappointing. I wish that the members opposite would agree to move it to committee so that Manitobans could come and have their say.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): It's my pleasure to rise today to speak on the amendment regarding Bill 53, the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act, commonly referred to as BITSA.

And let me say clearly at the outset, Manitobans deserve far better than what is contained in this legislation. They deserve a government that understands

the pressure families are under, they deserve a government that respects taxpayers and they deserve a government that brings forward meaningful affordability measures instead of symbolic gestures and political talking points.

That is why our PC team is supporting the amendment to refer the subject matter of this bill to committee, because this legislation, as drafted, does not meet the moment Manitoba—facing Manitoba families. All across the province, Manitobans are struggling. Families are watching grocery bills rise month after month, rent is higher, mortgage payments are higher, hydro bills are higher, fuel prices are higher, transportation costs are up and property taxes, honourable Deputy Speaker, continue to rise.

People in Manitoba are doing everything right. They are working hard, they're paying their taxes, they are trying to build a future here in Manitoba. Yet despite all of that, life is becoming more unaffordable under this Kinew NDP government.

And what does this government offer in response? Pennies. Pennies back on prepared food, pennies back at convenience stores, pennies back at the checkout counter, while the same government quietly takes hundreds and thousands more out of Manitobans' pockets through rising taxes, rising assessments, bracket creep, rising hydro rates and rising fuel costs. Manitobans cannot build a future on pennies. This legislation simply does not provide the meaningful affordability relief Manitoba families actually need.

And this is not happening in isolation; we have now seen a clear pattern from this NDP government over the last two years. Last year's BITSA raised taxes on Manitobans by eliminating indexation of tax brackets and the basic personal exemption. That means, every year, inflation pushes Manitobans into paying more income tax. Middle-income Manitobans pay more, low-income Manitobans pay more, seniors pay more. This NDP government broke its own campaign promise to index tax brackets. It broke its promise to deliver a middle-class tax cut. And instead, it quietly increased the tax burden on Manitobans.

At the exact same time they were hiking education property taxes and school taxes, this government has become very skilled at giving with one hand while taking far more with the other. They talk about affordability while Manitoba families are paying hundreds more in taxes every single year. And what makes it worse is how they handled the process.

The last two years, the government stuffed BITSAs full of unrelated omnibus legislation. They jammed at-major policy changes into budget implementation bills. And then they rammed the legislation through this Legislature without meaningful public input. No transparency, no accountability, no serious committee review. They refused to allow Manitobans to properly present at a committee. They refused to hear from stakeholders, and they avoided scrutiny at every opportunity.

That is precisely why this amendment matters, because Manitobans deserve the opportunity to be heard. They deserve the opportunity to tell this NDP government directly how affordability challenges are affecting their lives and they deserve the opportunity to point out the very real problems contained within this legislation.

The PCs have made our position very clear: We will not support this legislation in its current form, but we are offering this government a constructive path forward. If this government is serious about affordability, this is the test. We have proposed a significant increase to the basic personal exemption so Manitobans can keep more of what they earn.

Our proposal is to move toward a \$30,000 basic personal exemption. That would put \$3,000 back into the pocket of Manitoba families. That is real relief; that is helping pay the mortgage; that is helping buying groceries; that is helping put gas in the vehicle; that is help paying hydro bills; that is support families would actually feel every single month.

Unlike the delayed and minimal measures in this legislation, that relief would begin immediately, and it would stimulate Manitoba's economy because families would spend that money in their communities at local businesses, at local restaurants, at retailers, at service providers, at family-owned operations struggling under rising costs. That spending supports jobs, it supports economic growth and it supports Manitoba families.

Our proposal is practical. It is responsible and is based on a simple principle: government should allow Manitobans to keep more of the money they earn.

Unfortunately, this NDP government has chosen the opposite path. They eliminated indexation; they increased taxes through bracket creep; they increased education property taxes; they increased costs on Manitoba families. And now they expect applause for offering tiny tax exemptions on selected food purchases.

Manitobans won't be fooled. They know when their hydro bill rises. They know when they pay more at the pump. They know when their property tax bill arrives and they know when their paycheque no longer stretches far enough.

This legislation simply does not meet the scale of the affordability crisis facing this province, and nowhere is that more obvious than in the government's approach to prepared food taxation. Stakeholders in Manitoba's restaurant industry have raised serious concerns about this bill. Under this legislation, prepared food sold by grocery stores and convenience stores will become exempt from PST while virtually identical prepared meals sold by restaurants will continue to be taxed.

That is not a neutral tax policy. That is government picking winners and losers; and the losers in this case are Manitoba restaurants, Manitoba restaurant workers and Manitoba communities that depend on those businesses.

The government calls this an affordability measure, but true affordability measures apply fairly and consistently. Food is food. A prepared sandwich from a grocery store is treated differently than a prepared sandwich from a local restaurant. A prepared salad from a convenience store is treated differently than the same meal sold by a family-owned diner. The product may be identical, the meal may be identical, but the tax treatment changes solely because of where it is purchased. That is unfair and it distorts consumer choice. It interferes in the marketplace and it places one sector of Manitoba's economy at a structural disadvantage.

And this is not some small sector of the economy. Restaurants support approximately \$3.5 billion in annual sales across Manitoba. More than 42,000 Manitobans work in the restaurant industry; 40 per cent of those jobs are held by young people. Restaurants are among the most labour-intensive sectors in our economy, supporting significantly more jobs per million dollars in sales than grocery or retail operations.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, these are local businesses. These are family-owned businesses. These are first jobs for Manitoba students. These are employers supporting communities in every region of our province. And now this government is introducing a policy that actively shifts consumer demand away from restaurants and toward other competitors.

* (16:00)

At a time when restaurants are already struggling with rising costs, labour shortages and declining profitability, this government is making the situation even worse. For many Manitobans, restaurants are not a luxury. For shift workers, for seniors, for families balancing work and child care, for Manitobans with mobility challenges, prepared meals from restaurants are often the most practical and accessible option.

So when the government proposes to tax restaurant meals differently, they are not increasing affordability equality—equally. They are limiting affordability based on where Manitobans buy their food. The principle here is simple: If the government believes prepared food should be exempt from PST for affordability reasons, then that exemption should apply consistently, regardless of where the food is purchased. Anything less is selective taxation. Anything less is government interference in the marketplace, and anything less undermines the government's own affordability argument.

There are many other unanswered questions in this legislation.

An Honourable Member: What are those questions?

Mr. Nesbitt: My colleagues are asking for more, so I will deliver. There are questions about changes to the film tax credit. Will these changes increase bureaucracy? Will they discourage investment? Will they create more red tape?

There are questions about the provisions related to bare trusts and beneficial ownership. How exactly will these taxes operate? Who will be affected? What protections exist?

There are questions about allowing municipalities to impose accommodation taxes on short-term rentals. Will there be limits? Will there be oversight? How high can these taxes go?

The Speaker in the Chair

There are questions about streamlining borrowing powers for school divisions. Will this increase debt? Will taxpayers face additional liabilities? Would borrowing not be better managed centrally by the province? These are serious questions, Honourable Speaker, and they deserve more than rushed debate at the end of a legislative session.

The failures of this government's affordability agenda extend far beyond this single bill. This government talks constantly about affordability while increasing the burden on Manitoba families in nearly every area of daily life. As I said, hydro bills are

increasing, MPI rates are increasing, natural gas rates have increased dramatically. Gasoline prices remain painfully high after this government cancelled the fuel tax holiday.

At the same time, private capital investment in Manitoba is declining. Businesses are losing confidence, entrepreneurs are looking elsewhere and skilled workers continue to leave for provinces with lower taxes and stronger economic growth. Honourable Speaker, that should concern every member of this House because affordability is not just about today's bills; it is also about whether Manitoba remains competitive tomorrow.

Right now Manitoba is falling behind neighbouring provinces. Saskatchewan and Alberta are lowering taxes and competing aggressively for workers and investment. Meanwhile, here in Manitoba, costs are increasing and this government is making it harder for families to get ahead. And what is especially troubling is that this government appears to believe symbolic announcements are enough. A small PST exemption here, a delayed rebate there, another government press conference, another slogan.

But Manitobans are asking a much more important question: Why is life becoming more expensive in Manitoba in the first place? Why are taxes increasing? Why are utility costs increasing? Why are housing costs increasing? Why are businesses struggling? Why are young Manitobans leaving? The NDP cannot solve an affordability crisis while continuing to increase the overall financial burden on families.

That is why our PC team, my colleagues on this side of the House, continue to advocate for broad-based tax relief. Because broad-based tax relief treats Manitobans fairly. It does not pick winners and losers, Honourable Speaker. It does not favour one industry over another, and it does not force families to change their behaviour to qualify for small government incentives. Instead, it respects taxpayers.

Honourable Speaker, our PC proposal to significantly increase the basic personal exemption will save money for all Manitobans on their income tax and will help every working Manitoban. It would help the nurse. It would help the tradesperson. It would help the teacher. It would help the truck driver. It would help a young family trying to buy their first home. And it would help seniors trying to stay ahead of rising costs. That is real 'affordability' policy.

I also want to address the government's—this government's approach to education property taxes because

Manitobans deserve honesty on this issue. The NDP government likes to talk about increasing the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit by a measly \$100, but while they announce the future \$100 increase to this tax credit, education property taxes continue rising dramatically. The government is collecting hundreds of millions of dollars more in education property tax revenue than just a few years ago.

So Manitobans are paying substantially more overall while receiving relatively little back in return. And, once again, Honourable Speaker, that relief is delayed. Families struggling today cannot wait any longer for affordability relief. They need help now.

In Winnipeg here, many homeowners are opening their tax bills—well, last week, this week—and seeing increases of hundreds and, in fact, sometimes thousands of dollars annually. And this NDP 'government's' response is essentially to say, do not worry; you may eventually get a fraction of it back. That is not meaningful affordability; that is political spin.

This NDP increasingly believes government should manage economic behaviour through selective tax policies. We see it in this bill. We saw it in previous BITSA legislation. And Manitobans are beginning to understand the consequences. Selective taxation creates uncertainty, it discourages investment and it undermines confidence in Manitoba's economy. Businesses want fairness, families want predictability and workers want opportunity. What they do not want is a government constantly changing the rules while increasing the cost of living.

Honourable Speaker, this amendment that we are debating today is about accountability. It's about allowing Manitobans to participate in the legislative process. It is about ensuring that legislation receives proper scrutiny before becoming law. And, frankly, given the number of concerns raised by stakeholders already, committee review is the minimum this government should accept. If this NDP government truly believes this bill is good policy, then they should have no fear of public input.

* (16:10)

Let Manitobans speak. Let stakeholders present. Let experts testify. Let small businesses explain how these policies affect them. That is how democracy is supposed to work. But too often this government acts as though scrutiny itself is the problem.

Our PC caucus is not opposing this bill simply for the sake of opposing it. We are doing our job. Our responsibility is to hold government accountable.

Our responsibility is to improve legislation where possible, and our responsibility is to stand up for Manitoba families struggling under rising costs. We are prepared to work constructively, Honourable Speaker. On this side of the House, we have said clearly that if this government introduces meaningful affordability measures, particularly a significant increase to the basic personal exemption, we are prepared to work with them to move this legislation forward quickly.

The timeline is entirely within the government's control. They can improve this legislation, or they can continue defending measures Manitobans know are inadequate. Affordability is not a slogan. It's not a communications strategy. It's not a photo opportunity. It's about whether Manitobans can afford groceries. It's about whether seniors can remain in their homes. And it is about whether young Manitobans can build a future here instead of leaving.

Honourable Speaker, this province has enormous potential. But people need confidence, they need opportunity and they need a government that respects the value of every dollar earned by hard-working Manitobans. Our PC caucus believes Manitobans deserve to keep more of what they earn. We believe broad-based tax relief is more effective than selective gimmicks. We believe stronger economic growth comes from empowering workers, entrepreneurs and families. And we believe legislation should be transparent, accountable and properly scrutinized.

Honourable Speaker, this amendment provides an opportunity: an opportunity for Manitobans to be heard, an opportunity for stakeholders to participate, an opportunity to improve this legislation and an opportunity to finally provide meaningful affordability relief for Manitoba families because Manitobans need real relief, not small changes. They need support they can actually feel, and they deserve a government willing to listen.

I urge the NDP to send this legislation to committee as a basic democratic step that ensures the people most affected by these changes actually get a say in them. Because when a bill touches nearly every corner of daily life, like income taxes, property taxes, renters' credits, food costs, municipal taxes and sector-specific exemptions, it cannot be treated as routine housekeeping. It has to be examined in the open with evidence, questions and accountability.

Allow Manitobans to have their voices heard because affordability is not just a political talking point, it is a lived reality. It is the parent trying to

stretch a grocery budget that doesn't go as far as it used to. It is a renter watching monthly payments climb faster than wages. It is the homeowner opening a property tax bill that looks nothing like what they were told to expect. It is small-business owners trying to plan for the next year while navigating shifting tax rules and uneven treatment between sectors.

And, Honourable Speaker, those voices are not asking for perfection. They are asking for fairness, clarity and relief that actually matches the scale of the pressure they are under. Committee is where those realities come forward in a structured way, where gaps in policy are identified before they become real-world consequences. Improve this bill because legislation of this magnitude should not be frozen in its first draft, especially when stakeholders have already raised legitimate concerns about imbalance and unintended outcomes.

Whether it is the uneven treatment of prepared foods across sectors, the delayed and limited nature of tax relief measures or the continued failure to meaningfully address bracket creep and the erosion of indexation, there are clear opportunities to strengthen this legislation.

But those improvements only happen, Honourable Speaker, when a government is willing to listen, not just announce and finally deliver the meaningful affordability measures Manitoba families are demanding—not symbolic offsets, not delayed credits, not partial fixes that lag behind rising costs, but real, measurable relief that shows up in household budgets. That means policies that reduce the overall tax burden in a fair and consistent way, strengthen competitiveness and ensure that working Manitobans are able to keep more of what they earn.

Because, at the end of the day, Honourable Speaker, affordability cannot be measured by how a bill is described in a press release. It is measured by whether families feel a difference when they sit down at their kitchen table and try to make the numbers work. I urge this government to support our amendment today and help make life better for Manitobans.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Colleen Robbins (Spruce Woods): I'm pleased to rise in the legislative—Legislature today, to be able to speak to our Progressive Conservative amendment to the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act today.

The amendment reads: The budget implementation and tax statutes 'amementon' act, 2026, be now

read a second time, but that the order for the second reading to be discharged, the bill withdrawn from the Order Paper and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

At its core, the amendment is about accountability, transparency and proper democratic scrutiny. Bill 53, or BITSA, is what is known on—as an 'onimous' bill. These kinds of bills are single, yet massive pieces of legislation that packages numerous and sometimes unrelated topics or laws into one bill to be voted one—on at once.

Bills like this require the utmost attention to ensure that they are effectively amending 'legislativelation' to improve the lives of Manitoba families, seniors, farmers and tradespeople. It is important that we, as members of the Legislative Assembly, take debating every single piece of 'legislativelation' seriously, and BITSA is no different.

We must ensure that we are doing everything we can to improve the lives of Manitobans, and this amendment will help us do that. The amendment that our Progressive Conservative team has proposed will send the Bill 53 to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs. This will allow members of the public, people who we are supposed to be representing, a chance to speak to Bill 53 first-hand. This is a great opportunity for Manitobans to be directly involved in our democratic process and have their say.

* (16:20)

Manitoba has a great public testimony process, and it is such an honour to be able to go to committee here at the Legislature and hear directly from Manitobans how a piece of legislature is going to affect them and their families and what they believe we can do to make it even better.

That is what our Progressive Conservative amendment to Bill 53 will do: send the legislation to committee so that we can hear from Manitobans on how to make it better. Progressive Conservatives are not obstructing Bill 53. We have to ensure that the bill is making a positive impact on the lives of Manitobans. The public knows better than anyone how the legislation will affect them. We'll have a chance to hear from Manitobans of every background, every occupation, every income bracket, every region of our province and every age.

These are the folks who get up every morning and build Manitoba into the place we all love and call home. I have to wonder why the NDP could not support hearing from Manitobans of every age or

background or occupation. Perhaps they simply do not care what they have to say regarding this piece of legislation or any other. Perhaps the front bench of the NDP government believe that they know better than hard-working Manitoban families.

Our Progressive Conservative team, on the other hand, will never take working for Manitobans for granted. We know that they are experts in what they need to succeed. They are the experts that know best in how to make their lives even a little bit easier, and they are the ones who know best how to make Manitoba moving again, moving in a positive direction where we build things, a positive direction where more kids go to school, a positive direction where seniors feel safe in their own homes again and a positive direction where families and those living on fixed incomes get to keep more of their hard-earned money at the end of each month.

Send BITSA to committee, another tool that we as legislatures can use to hear directly from Manitobans on all of these issues, issues that are affecting the daily lives of those across the province of Manitoba. I can certainly say for myself and for our entire Progressive Conservative team that we will always make time to listen to Manitobans and work with them. Good legislation does not weaken through scrutiny; it improves it. But if the legislation at hand is strong, and improves the lives of Manitobans, it will survive.

Good legislation is not defined by how quickly it passes, but by how well it's examined and tested. When bills are referred to committee, they are open to detailed review and expert input. This helps us identify unintended consequences, clarify intent and ensure that the final law best serves the public. Context matters when debating and voting on legislation. We must hear from the people in which the bill was impact—will impact. We must better learn about the challenges they are facing and what this bill does to help them.

Families, businesses, seniors and communities are all facing rising costs and affordability pressures. Decisions must be grounded in evidence, tested through debate and refined through a rigorous consultation progress—process. This is not a time for rushed or hysteric legislation. This is a time for deliberate, thoughtful governments that recognizes that real-world conditions and challenges that Manitobans are facing every single day.

Honourable Speaker, right now those challenges are deeply concerning. Since the NDP took office

in 2023, Manitoba's economic momentum that it—was created by our Progressive Conservative government has grinded to a halt. Manitobans' GDP growth, which stood at 4.7 per cent in 2022, now sits at just 1.3 per cent. That is not stability; that is stagnation.

At the same time, Manitoba is seeing persistent weakness in its labour markets. The unemployment rate now stands at 5.7 per cent, and for young Manitobans, the situation is even worse, with youth unemployment at 11.6 per cent. It's easy for those numbers like this to get lost in the translation, but those numbers represented thousands of Manitobans who are out of work, unable to provide for themselves. They represent thousands of young people who are unable to find their footing in the market or build careers in Manitoba.

And, Honourable Speaker, far too often as a result of these numbers, we are seeing young families get up and leave because life has simply become unaffordable here in Manitoba. Opportunity is just too hard to come by under this NDP government. And while families are struggling to find work, those who do are facing pressure from every direction.

In the agriculture sector alone, wages saw a 13.6 per cent decrease in March 2026, which is especially concerning in a province where agriculture is a cornerstone of our economy. The crop 'profitability' of almost every single crop grown in Manitoba is in the red in 2026. Canola shows a loss of \$28 per acre. Red spring wheat is showing a loss of \$72 per acre. And barley is showing a whopping loss of more than \$165 per acre. The numbers improve when you take an estimated \$200-per-acre fixed cost out of the equation, but that means farmers are simply not paying themselves.

The weakness is also showing up in our trade performances. Between January and June 2025, Manitoba exported ten dollars—or \$10.14 billion in goods, down \$312.4 million from the same period the year before. That represents a 3 per cent decline in exports a—year over year. At a time when global competition is intensifying, Manitoba is moving in the wrong direction. On May 7, at Committee of Supply, the Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation (Mr. Moses) literally said: It's not our role, necessarily, to be making trade deals, as in, like, a new trade deal. Our trade dependence on the United States remains high at 71.6 per cent of total 'exporte', yet exports to the US have declined by 6.2 per cent.

Right now, Manitoba does not have a stable market. Exports to China have dropped by more

than 30 per cent, deeply concerning to pork producers that operate in Brandon and Westman. At the same time, Manitoba has seen an 806 per cent increase in imports of petroleum and coal oils from the United States over one-year period. That raises important questions about energy costs, supply change dependency and a long-term economic resilience.

Food production costs, overall, are now increasing at more than twice the rate of general inflation. And Manitobans' consumer price index rose 3 per cent in March 2026, the highest year-over-year increase among all provinces. Food costs alone are up 4.9 per cent year over year, leading all categories of inflation.

And this matters because when food inflation outpaces general inflation, it functions like a regressive tax on low- and middle-income families. It means Manitobans are paying more at the grocery store just to maintain the same standard of living. Higher grocery bills means less money for everyone—everything else: rent, utilities, transportation and local businesses. And when consumer spending slows, the entire economy weakens further.

* (16:30)

And that is why our progressive Conservative team is determined to work with the government to raise the basic—basic personal exemption to at least \$21,000, and this will save Manitoba families hundreds of dollars per month. It will allow parents to be able to put healthy groceries on the table for their children. It'll help them with the cost of sports and maybe they'll be able to put a little bit away every month for the kids' post-secondary education.

Manitobans are hard-working people; that is something that everyone in this Chamber can agree on. But at the end of the day, they're not asking for less. They're asking for a government that lets them keep their money and wants to grow their economy, and that is why our Progressive Conservative amendment to Bill 53 is so important. Because before we pass the major budget legislation, we need confidence from Manitobans that the economic direction we are going in is working for them, not against them.

Honourable Speaker, beyond the economic development and the cost-of-living indicators facing Manitobans, there is a deeper stake with Bill 53 that we must address. It is that of the NDP failing to be transparent with Manitobans about how they're making decisions that are going to affect them and their families. Manitobans deserve to understand not just what is in

the bill, but also why it's being done and what the long-term consequences will be.

When a government is confident in its legislation, it does not avoid scrutiny, such as a committee process; it welcomes it. However, what we are seeing with Bill 53 is exact opposite. We are seeing a government that is reluctant, at best, to explain to Manitobans its decision, and that raises a very simple question: What is the Kinew government afraid of hearing?

Are they afraid to hear that the legislation, including Bill 53, does nothing to address the rising cost of living face—living facing families and seniors in our province? Are they afraid to hear how they have done nothing to secure investment in megaprojects that will turn Manitoba into a have province, as promised by the Premier (Mr. Kinew)? Or, are they afraid to hear that our Progressive Conservative plan to increase the basic personal exemption will have a transformative impact on the financial well-being of families and seniors in Manitoba?

Honourable Speaker, on this side of the Chamber, we can recognize a good idea. We understand that every little bit helps families who are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

However, we also understand that saving a few pennies on a cart of groceries is not going to create the positive impact the NDP government says it will. If this legislation is truly what Manitobans need to ease the pressure of the cost of living, if it truly strengthens our economy and improves sustainability, then the Premier should have no problem sitting down with those who it will most affect.

Honourable Speaker, it is clear we do not have a transparent government. It is clear we do not have an accountable government. What Manitobans have is an avoidant government. They have a government that thinks they know better than they do—Manitobans do—a government that has a holier-than-thou perspective on governing, and Manitobans can see that. They can see that legislation is being carefully built with meaningful consultation versus when virtual signalling is being forced through legislative process.

Unfortunately, instead of slowing down to ensure their policies are actually improving the conditions Manitobans are facing, they are speeding up and trying to pass BITSA with as little oversight as possible. Unfortunately, this pattern did not start with BITSA. This is what Manitobans have grown to expect from the Kinew regime.

There are many examples of this government covering up information or refusing to share data with not just other members of the legislation, but with Manitobans. We saw it with the student absentee data. Again, at Committee of Supply on May 8, the Minister of Education and early childhood stated that she won't release the data despite having it.

Yet, when those records were requested through FIPPA, the department refused to release them. She even went as far to say that the honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv), and therefore Manitobans, do not need to know the data.

Honourable Speaker, this is wrong. The honourable minister seems to forget that she works for Manitobans and not the other way around.

We see it with economic and investment concerns as well. Manitobans are tired of hearing the Premier (Mr. Kinew) reannounce the same things over and over again. Announcing a project is one thing, but it would be refreshing to see them 'openly' discuss the private capital being invested into megaprojects they speak so fondly of.

School divisions and municipalities have fallen victim to the political games being played by the Kinew government. It is while they've suffered from the mixed signals and lack of clear action from this government. Transparency is not selective. Governments do not get to celebrate good news publicly while 'withholding' information that doesn't paint the picture they want.

And that is why our Progressive Conservative amendment to Bill 53 is so important, because sending this legislation to committee will have the government a chance, defend their assumptions, explain how they wrote this bill and listen to Manitobans who live the realities of their policies every single day.

In 2023, the NDP ran on a promise of fixing health care, giving our children better opportunities and making life more affordable. And now Manitobans are asking, when is health care going to be fixed? When will our children have better opportunities? And when is life going to be more affordable? These are reasonable questions and they deserve timely and honest answers. And our Progressive Conservative team is giving the NDP government a chance to have a frank discussion with Manitobans and answer them.

Honourable Speaker, at the end of the day, this debate is about whether life is actually getting better for Manitobans. And for far too many Manitobans, the answer is simply no. They are working harder than

ever before, yet keep falling behind. Families are feeling it every time they walk into the grocery store or fill up at the gas station. Seniors on fixed incomes are feeling it every time their income taxes go up due to bracket creep.

Manitobans [*phonetic*] may not hear the term bracket creep every day. When tax brackets are not properly indexed to inflation, wage increases automatically push families into higher tax brackets, even when those families are not actually better off financially. That means Manitobans are effectively paying higher taxes simply because inflation is driving nominal wage growth. At a time when families are already struggling, this government is allowing inflation to quietly increase the tax burden on working people.

The government can talk all they want about affordability, but Manitobans are living the reality every single day. Food costs in Manitoba are rising at nearly 5 per cent year over year, far above what many families can absorb. Manitobans' inflation rates remain above the national average and was the highest among provinces in March 2026.

This is why scrutiny matters. Before this legislation improves big decisions, Manitobans deserve confidence that government is making life more affordable, not more difficult. They deserve confidence that the economy is being strengthened, not weakened. And they deserve confidence about a government is listening to the people who are living these challenges every single day, not just defending political messaging inside the Chamber.

* (16:40)

Honourable Speaker, one of the most concerning arguments that we hear from the government benches is the idea that after asking difficult questions, is somehow slowing down the government or getting in the way of progress.

The NDP front benches treats the concerns of many constituents as though they are a nuisance or unworthy of being heard. Frankly, I can only imagine they treat their own backbench the same way. Well, democracy is not supposed to be convenient for the government. The role of the official opposition is not to rubber stamp legislation simply because the NDP wants to go on vacation all summer.

Our responsibility is to examine legislation carefully, identify weaknesses, raise the concerns that our constituents have brought forward and ensure that laws are effective as possible before they are passed.

And that is exactly what our Progressive Conservative amendment seeks to do.

The Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs exists for a reason. It exists so legislation can be tested publicly. It exists so Manitobans can directly participate in the legislative process. It exists so experts, businesses, municipalities, farmers, workers, taxpayers can speak about how legislation will affect them.

What we are asking for you today is not radical. We are asking for transparency. We are asking for public accountability. We are asking for legislation that affects the economic future of this province to receive the scrutiny it deserves. The government may have the numbers to pass Bill 53, but that does not remove this legislation's obligation to ensure the bill is sound. In fact, majority governments have even greater responsibility to exercise restraint and humility because they possess the ability to move legislation quickly, whether or not meaningful consultation has occurred.

This is why committee review is so important. It acts as one of the few safeguards against rushed decision making and unintended consequences. And let's be honest, Speaker: Governments do not always get things right the first time. This is precisely why democratic institutions exist.

At its core, this amendment is about whether this House is prepared to slow down long enough to properly examine legislation that will have major consequences for Manitoba families and businesses, workers and taxpayers, because right now Manitobans are facing enormous pressure. Economic growth is slowing, unemployment is rising, food costs continue to increase, investment confidence is weakening and affordability is becoming more difficult for families across the province.

At the same time, Manitobans are increasing seeing a government that talks about affordability while making decisions that quietly increase costs. They are seeing promises about economic growth, while exports decline and private capital investment weakens. They are seeing promises of transparency while important information is delayed, withheld or avoided.

The government may not like the questions being asked. It may not like hearing criticism about slowing growth, rising costs or declining investment confidence. But accountability is not optional simply because it's uncomfortable and that is why this amendment deserves support because, at the end of the day,

Manitobans deserve legislation that has been fully examined, publicly tested and transparently debated, not legislation rushed forward for political convenience.

Our Progressive Conservative amendment gives the government the opportunity to do the right thing: withdraw Bill 53 from immediate second reading, refer the subject matter to committee and allow Manitobans to be heard and ensure the legislation is actually working in the best interests of the people of this province.

I urge all members of this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Earlier in the honourable member's speech, she referred to the government incorrectly. You can refer to the government as the Kinew government, but you can't say Kinew regime or other things like that. So I'd just caution the member to be more aware of the words she uses.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House this afternoon and to speak on the budget implementation and tax statutes amendment act. The acronym we throw around here is BITSA.

But it's interesting to me that, you know, while I'm taking the opportunity to do so this afternoon and my colleagues on the PC side of the House and this PC team are putting words on the record and doing our jobs and representing our constituents and their concerns and holding this government to account, it really is interesting to me that members across the way, the NDP MLAs and even NDP ministers are refusing to get up out of their seats and do their jobs and earn their salaries.

And, you know, it's unfortunate that they're not getting up and talking to what is the single most important document this House passes each year. It's the budget bill. It's how we spend the Manitoba taxpayer money.

And in—and this year, it's a \$27-billion spend. It's a \$27-billion budget, so there's a lot to talk about. Half an hour surely isn't enough. And I'll do what I can to raise the concerns that have been put forward by Manitobans and by my constituents.

But this is a prime opportunity for members of across the way to bring forward the concerns of their constituents. You know, there are 57 members of this

House, and we all have the honour of serving here, and our constituencies each have roughly 25,000 constituents—residents. So, that's—each MLA here represents about 25,000 Manitobans. Surely, the NDP MLAs would have heard concerns from their constituents.

If one NDP MLA represents 25,000 Manitobans—there's 35—there's 34 of them across the way—surely, they would have something to say about health-care wait times and what could be done to improve health-care wait times after three years of this NDP government and the—and their failure to fix health care. In fact, health-care wait times have doubled since they've come into office and ER wait-time records are being set on a continual basis. And, sadly, in the last number of months, Manitobans have also learned of four Manitobans who passed away recently while waiting in an ER waiting room, which is just absolutely tragic. And those are just the cases we know about.

But, you know, you would think that NDP MLAs across the way would have heard concerns from constituents and would want to put some words on the record in this House, which is their right to do so. You know, I mean, their House leader can tell them not to, but, frankly, they have every right as a legislator in this place, just like anybody else does, to get up and to talk about this budget bill.

But if it's not health care that they want to talk about, because their record is actually pretty terrible, then maybe they want to talk about crime. But no one is getting up and talking about crime. Maybe they want to get up and talk about affordability for Manitoba families. You don't see any members opposite getting up in their place and talking about affordability. And that, to me, is pretty amazing because Manitoba is in a—Manitoba families are struggling right now.

* (16:50)

And, again, you would think that NDP MLAs have heard something from some constituents about the challenges they're facing now in this NDP economy and the rising education property taxes thanks to this NDP government and the rising income taxes because of this NDP government removing indexation from income tax, which means that there is now what we call bracket creep, which is that as inflation actually pushes Manitobans into higher income tax brackets, forcing them to pay more in income tax. And, in fact, just last year, the NDP government collected an additional \$82 million in income taxes as a result of that one measure alone.

So you'd think that NDP MLAs across the way would have something to say about affordability, but they're not getting up and doing their jobs. And, you know, the reality is they earn—the backbenchers earn \$112,000 a year and they sit there in absolute irrelevance. They sit there in absolute silence—all of them. You know? It gets to the point where you can't even really remember which constituency they represent or what their names are because they're never used. They never stand up and speak; they're never recognized in this House. And that's disappointing, because there are pretty significant challenges facing our province, facing Manitoba families these days.

So, again, as I said, you have the single most important document that a government can bring forward—the budget bill. And as I said, this one is a record \$27 billion. It's a \$27-billion spend on a province with a relatively small population of one and a half million people; 57 MLAs here in this Legislature, each one of us representing 25,000 people. You've got 34 NDP MLAs on that side. You do the math: 34 times 25,000. That's how many Manitobans are being disenfranchised right now, because not a single one of those NDP MLAs is getting up and speaking to this budget bill, is bringing forward the concerns of Manitoba families, whether it's on health care or on crime or on the state of our economy or on affordability for Manitoba families.

And, you know, I just think that that is a singular disappointment and I am so proud of our PC team, which is, again, doing the work of representing the concerns of all Manitobans, even those who live in the constituencies that are represented by the members opposite, by members of that NDP caucus. And it is our PC members that are actually doing the work of bringing their concerns to the floor of this esteemed Chamber and holding this government accountable and, frankly, speaking truth to power.

So, as I said, I have a number of things to talk about. Half an hour is truly not enough time and I know we're coming up on 5 o'clock here and day's end fairly shortly. But I am really glad that I'll have the opportunity tomorrow, if nothing changes, to get up again and to put some concerns on the record.

But, again, I would just say to all those NDP MLAs across the way that you're earning \$112,000 a year and to not get up and put one single solitary word on the record about a \$27-billion budget that has to do with health care, that has to do with crime, that has to do with affordability, is just an absolute dereliction of duty, is just an absolute failure to do your jobs.

And the ministers actually earn more than \$112,000. The ministers receive a supplement. And, you know, what a slap in the face, especially these days with the NDP failures when it comes to health care, with the NDP failures when it comes to crime, when it comes to affordability and on any number of issues, that the ministers actually receive a bonus for the apparent work that they do. And I'm of the opinion that maybe it would be better if they just didn't do that, if they just didn't do anything. Because clearly what they are doing is making things worse.

You know, when they came in in 2023, our PC government left them with a 300-and-some million dollar budget surplus. It was our PC government in seven years that came in after 17 years of NDP disaster. You had two runaway crises at the same time: one was health care—runaway health-care wait times, and the second was runaway budgetary deficit.

And within three years, it was our PC team that not only delivered the first balanced budget Manitoba had in over a decade, but we also brought down—according to CIHI, the Canadian institute of health information, brought down ER waiting times from about five hours to around the national average, which was around three hours. So, clearly, there was, at that point in time, you know, more work to do, and that work was being undertaken. But health-care wait times came down.

And across seven years of PC government, we cut the PST, we increased spending on health care, we increased spending on education, we built schools and health-care wait times averaged about 2.3 hours across seven years. On the fiscal side, we balanced the budget twice. So you take those metrics now and compare them to the last three years of the NDP, where health-care wait times have now doubled. You've got three hospitals greylisted by nurses, by the union, which is amazing. That never happened under a PC government.

So that's their record; that's on them. And, again, they take a \$300-million budget and they turn it into a \$2-billion deficit, an arbitrary deficit. What do I mean by that? It's just something—they purely made it up. They had promised—they made \$3 billion worth of promises in that election.

And so what they did is they cooked up some numbers, they faked the math, fake NDP math, and they tend to do this, you know. Like, they'll say, well, there's more Manitoba—for the first time in years, more Manitobans have moved, or staying here in Manitoba.

And then all of a sudden, a couple months later, oh, you know, Statistics Canada actually shows that that is incorrect, that claim is incorrect. And then there's a CBC news story that comes out and clarifies that this NDP government's numbers on interprovincial migration were wrong. Oh, you don't hear about that.

This NDP government comes out and claims last fall that they hired 231 new paramedics. A couple weeks later—whoop—that was wrong, you know, have to clarify that. Turns out there was only 18; we only hired 18. And then, not only that, but to add insult to injury it turns out there was—not only did they not hire 18, but there's actually a shortage of 34, so there was a loss.

So anyway, this NDP government is really not good at numbers, but they take this \$300-million surplus that was given to them by the previous PC government and they turn it into a completely arbitrary \$2-billion deficit. There was no pandemic at that time. They had no reason for doing so. You know, President Biden was in office. There was no threat of tariffs. There were none of these things that they like to—things or other people that they like to blame there at the time when they first took office in 2023 and into 2024 when they introduced their first budget. And yet they take—they took a balanced budget and they turned it into an absolutely massive whopper of a deficit.

So it's just amazing to me, Honourable Speaker, that in—I have a colleague, you know, clarifying what I was saying and maybe I misspoke. Sometimes I'm—while I'm up here I think I'm saying one thing and maybe my mouth is doing another. But just to be very, very clear: Our PC government left a \$373-million budget surplus. And these folks across the way, these socialists across the way, did what they do best and they spent all of that and then some, to the tune of \$2 billion—to the tune of \$2 billion.

And so it's clear, Honourable Speaker, just to finish up my point before we hit five o'clock here, that this NDP government has got everybody high on good vibes, but they're not so good at producing results. They're pretty terrible at producing results. They're good at politics, but not so good at policy. And I'll pick up tomorrow.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 16 minutes remaining.

The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

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