



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Tom Lindsey
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 14, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Could you please call Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 233—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

The Speaker: It's been announced that we will now go to second reading of Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza), that Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

The Speaker: The honourable—[interjection]

House Business

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Honourable Speaker, 'pursuant' to rule 34(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter). The title of the resolution is Right to Defend Your Home and Family.

The Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 34(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Borderland. The title of the resolution is the Right to Defend Your Home and Family.

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Mrs. Cook: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to an issue that I think is of great importance to the long-term-care sector and therefore to seniors in our province.

As we all know, we are living in a time of significant demographic change. We in Manitoba have an aging population. There are approximately 230,000 Manitobans over the age of 65. That's almost 20 per cent of our total population and, of that group, 30,000 Manitobans are aged 85 or older.

As our population lives longer, we tend to need more support as we age. Many people are able to remain independent in their homes for as long as possible with the support of programs like home care, but many will require the more intensive care that is provided in a personal-care home. And I know that all of us in this Chamber have seniors in our lives as loved ones, and we have seniors, certainly, in our constituencies. And I didn't look at a map, but I would venture to guess that all of us have at least one personal-care home in our constituencies.

There are 124 personal-care homes in Manitoba, the majority of which are either publicly owned or operated by non-profit and faith-based organizations. And, under current provincial law, all property owners must pay school taxes unless the property qualifies for a school tax exemption under section 23(1) of

The Municipal Assessment Act. Now, examples of some of those exemptions include seniors housing, personal-care homes, colleges, community halls and museums.

But, in the case of personal-care homes, the current exemption is only 0.81 hectares, and that exemption has been in place since October 30, 1989. It has not been updated since that time. I'm older than that, but I know we have members in this Chamber who—that's been the case for their entire lives. And the fact is that modern personal-care homes are—tend to take up a larger footprint, and that's because we know now that caring for seniors best practice is something called a small-home model where we, instead of building a tower and everybody's housed in facilities with tight hallways and one big common dining room or a couple of common dining rooms, we prefer to ensure that seniors have a more home-like environment, and that requires a larger footprint. As a result, many personal-care homes are paying significant education property taxes.

And, during the break between sessions, you know, as the Health critic, I did my job and I went out and I met with a variety of personal-care-home operators across the province. And I had conversations with them, and I had conversations with the organizations—the advocacy organizations that represent them, like MARCHE and the long-term-care association of Manitoba. And one of the issues that came up consistently is that personal-care homes are facing increasing costs, and that's not a surprise.

Every Manitoban is dealing with the impact of inflation. Rising food costs, in particular, are a significant cost driver for personal-care homes, particularly those that may require specialized food to meet the requirements of their residents.

So food is a significant cost driver, and the other—the biggest cost driver, of course, for personal-care homes is personnel costs, and, in many cases, those wage increases are negotiated by the Province. And personal-care-home operators are happy to pay their employees increased wages, absolutely, but they have no control over that, and they also have no way of increasing their revenue.

So they do receive funding from the Province to cover those wage increases, but the problem is that that funding doesn't keep up. It doesn't actually fully cover the cost of wage increases. Particularly in the city of Winnipeg, for example, personal-care homes get funding for benefits—staff benefits of 18 per cent,

but the actual cost is 22 per cent. So there's a shortfall there on wages.

And then they're dealing with increased hydro rates, Centra Gas. They pay ambulance fees for some of their residents who need to be transported to hospital under certain circumstances, and, of course, they're paying property taxes.

* (10:10)

And we know, in the city of Winnipeg in particular, education property taxes have skyrocketed over the last couple of years under the current government. And I just think that this is a really easy way that the government could ease the cost burden for some of these personal-care-home operators. And the majority of these are non-profit personal-care homes. They are going to invest those dollars back into their residents, because one of the things that personal-care-home operators have consistently told me is that, due to increasing costs, the things that get cut, if they have to make cuts, is resident programming: recreation, the companionship and the enrichment that is provided to Manitoba personal-care-home residents. And nobody wants that.

Many of these personal-care homes are operating at significant deficits, and that's led to some issues over the last couple of years. We saw one large personal-care home in Winnipeg actually stop accepting new residents last year for a period of months. And another one, unfortunately, closed its doors, and the government had to step in and expropriate it to keep the doors open, because it's becoming untenable for personal-care-home operators to operate financially.

And that's what Bill 233 is about. It's about relieving a significant point of cost pressure for personal-care-home operators so that they can reinvest those dollars in good food and programming and more staff because, as we know, we're trying in Manitoba to get personal-care-home staffing levels to higher levels to provide a higher level of hours of care per resident day.

That's a recommendation that came out of the Stevenson report, and it's certainly something that the long-term-care sector's been trying to get to for some time, but it—it's not—it costs money. So if personal-care homes are spending money on property taxes that they could be spending on staff and programming and food, I think we can all agree it makes sense that they should be spending money on resident care rather than property taxes.

And if you add to that the fact that this isn't even a policy that's applied consistently across the province, because some RHAs, as I understand it, pay the property taxes for the personal-care homes in their jurisdiction—not the case in Winnipeg. So those Winnipeg personal-care homes are at a significant disadvantage compared to their counterparts in other provinces.

I do just want to touch on the fact that I was disappointed that the current government didn't even want to debate this bill, that they tried to stop it from coming to the floor of the Legislature at all. And I find that really disappointing because this bill deals with, at its core, some really important issues that are going to become more important with time in Manitoba as our population ages, as more people require PCH-level care. We need to know that our personal-care homes can operate sustainably and that the seniors who reside in them are getting great food and good recreation opportunities and appropriate staffing levels. And all of those things cost money.

I know that if I had a loved one in a personal-care home I would feel better knowing that, rather than spending money on property taxes, that the resident fees that my loved one paid and the tax dollars that were provided to that facility were instead going to resident care.

And, for that reason, Honourable Speaker, I hope that members will support this legislation, allow it to go to committee; perhaps we'll hear from some of those personal-care-home operators who can tell government members about some of the cost pressures that they're facing. And this is just one lever the government has at its disposal to relieve some of that cost pressure and allow those personal-care homes to reinvest those dollars into staff, into programming, into food, into the things that our seniors need to maintain an excellent quality of life in their later years.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Questions

The Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party, followed by a rotation between the parties, and each independent member may ask one question. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

And the floor is now open for questions.

MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz (Radisson): Now, of course, affordable housing for seniors and folks in need of support by institutional organizations, non-profits, so to speak—of course, that is worth debating here in this Chamber. As legislators, it is also our responsibility to ensure that the legislation that's before us is well researched, well informed.

And so I do ask the member opposite, who introduced this bill, who, specifically, she consulted with, and who is in support of it?

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I thank the member for Radisson for that question.

As I mentioned in my opening comments in debate on the bill, I have consulted with numerous non-profit personal-care-home operators across the province, as well as the association for residential care homes for the elderly, MARCHE; the long-term-care association of Manitoba, otherwise known as LTCAM; as well as just seniors in my constituency and the families of seniors in Manitoba who reside in personal-care homes and want to ensure that the dollars that go into those homes are put to their best use.

And that, of course, is to the care of residents, to programming, to food, to increasing staff in those facilities, so that seniors can age well and enjoy a high quality of life in their later years.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Thanks to my colleague from Roblin for bringing this important bill forward.

This bill is about dignity. It's about respect.

Can the MLA from Roblin please share with me where the idea for the bill originated?

Mrs. Cook: Thank you to my colleague from Portage la Prairie for his question. He's an excellent advocate for older Manitobans in his area of the province and across all of Manitoba.

I have visited and spoken with a number of personal-care-home operators over the last few months and they've all told me a similar story. They are facing significant cost pressures not unlike those that ordinary Manitobans are facing.

The cost of food has skyrocketed. Manitoba leads the country in food inflation, unfortunately. The cost of wages and staffing has gone up. They're also dealing with increased rates for hydro, Centra Gas.

You know, they're paying ambulance fees for a number of their patients who require transport to hospital in the face of these rising—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Dela Cruz: So this act—this bill will—proposes to increase the school taxes exemption for property use to provide residential care, housing or support services for seniors and other persons from 0.81 hectare to five hectares in total.

My question for the member opposite is, what specific institutions, care facilities require five hectares?

Mrs. Cook: The recommendation to me from the sector was 10 acres, which, if you convert is, I believe, just below five hectares. I rounded up to five hectares for just a nice rounder number.

But if you look at a facility like the Simkin centre in Winnipeg, for example, it has a significant footprint, as most modern new personal-care homes do. You know, for example, Niverville's personal-care home sits on approximately eight to 10 acres of land, and that's an example of a modern, beautiful new personal-care-home facility.

We want to see more of those in Manitoba, and the non-profit operators who are behind those projects would be much more likely to pursue that, I think, if they knew they weren't going to be—

The Speaker: Members' time has expired.

MLA Bereza: There are 124 licensed personal-care homes in Manitoba.

What services are offered in PCHs, and is there an opportunity with this increased funding to enhance them?

Mrs. Cook: Thank you for that question.

I think it would come as a surprise to some Manitobans to know the number of things that a personal-care home actually pays for. Of course, they're funding meals, including meals for special diets; assistance with daily living activities such as bathing, getting dressed and using the bathroom; nursing care—those, of course, are staff costs; routine medical and surgical supplies; prescription drugs eligible under the personal-care-home program; physiotherapy; occupational therapy; laundry, linen, housekeeping; the list goes on.

Personal-care homes have a—have long, complicated budget lines, and, again, reducing the amount of

property tax they pay would enable them to reinvest those dollars into care services—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Dela Cruz: Prior to entering this Chamber, I actually had worked for a non-profit that houses folks living with disabilities. They create homes in community on properties that they share with folks that, you know, that see themselves as equals to other residents there.

And so, in that work, you know, I did see the budget lines of a lot of the housing establishments within the sector as well that support seniors.

* (10:20)

And so I am wondering if the member opposite can maybe point to where she sees the money coming from, if not from those that have a large acreage, Honourable Speaker?

Mrs. Cook: Well, I think, you know, we could get into a debate about whether education should be funded from property taxes. I know that the previous PC government was moving toward a plan where education would be funded from general revenues and not from property taxes. But I think you—we're robbing Peter to pay Paul here because we're funding personal-care homes with tax dollars and then those personal-care homes are turning around and paying tax dollars back to the Province in education property taxes.

It doesn't make any sense, Honourable Speaker. There's only one taxpayer, and I think that if we're going to be spending those tax dollars they should go into the care of seniors, not back into government coffers.

MLA Bereza: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and again to my colleague from Roblin.

There's a number of things that are offered at personal-care homes, from meals, different assistance, you know, such as bathing, getting dressed and that.

How would this increase of dollars that the personal-care homes would have access to, with Bill 233 passing, what could they do with that to enhance more of what's going on in their care home?

Mrs. Cook: Thank you to my colleague from Portage la Prairie. That's an excellent question.

And, consistently, when I met with non-profit personal-care-home operators over the intersessional break, they told me that those dollars would be

reinvested in their residents, whether that's more staff for recreation programming and to increase the number of hours of care per resident day, which is certainly a goal that personal-care homes have; whether they would invest that money into higher quality food, that's certainly been a topic of conversation. There was a significant Winnipeg Free Press investigation into the quality of food in personal-care homes last summer that I certainly got a lot of letters about in my office.

They'd invest it in recreation programming and ensuring—

The Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired.

MLA Dela Cruz: Honourable Speaker, when it comes to our record in government, we honoured the recommendations of the Stevenson report in a way that their government didn't. We established an independent office of the Seniors' Advocate—office, in a way that their government didn't, and we are also acknowledging the need to live with dignity in community, the way that their government didn't.

Honourable Speaker, a lot of seniors and folks living with needs of additional care live in community and are homeowners.

Does the member opposite realize how this bill would disproportionately impact homeowners like them in community?

Mrs. Cook: Well, I question the premise of the member's question. I think it only disproportionately impacts people living in their homes in the community if the NDP government turns around and increases their property taxes to offset this, which is certainly not something we would want to see them do.

The member mentioned the Stevenson report and the recommendations that came out of that, and I don't know, and I guess I would ask her if she's aware that her government cut the Stevenson funding that was rolling out under the previous PC government. It was supposed to roll out under six phases of funding, two phases rolled out under the previous government, and then when the NDP took power, that funding stopped. I don't know if she's aware of that.

MLA Bereza: The member from Roblin mentioned before about moving this from 0.81 hectares to five hectares and mentioned about the personal-care home in Niverville. I know the personal-care home in Portage la Prairie sits on approximately five hectares as well, too.

Is there other care homes across Manitoba that could fall into this category?

Mrs. Cook: Certainly. There's, you know—I mentioned the Simkin centre is one, I believe it has one of the larger footprints within the city of Winnipeg. But any new personal-care homes that the government wants to build are very likely to have a larger footprint.

And that's because we know that providing the best level of care to seniors means that we're not institutionalizing people in a medical facility. We are creating a home for them, because it is their home. And a more home-like setting generally requires a bigger footprint, where residents will live in pods, smaller communities where they know their neighbours. They go to a common dining room that isn't full of hundreds of people, but has a smaller group of people and has a consistent staff every day—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

And the time for questions has also expired.

Debate

The Speaker: The floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): Before I get to this bill, I just do want to acknowledge today is Moose Hide Campaign day, a day to recommit to ending violence—gender-based violence against women and children. And so I want to thank all the people doing the work 365 days a year. I know our government is happy to walk alongside you making those changes, protecting women and children and building a better society for us all.

And I would say that's even connected to what we're talking about today: the care for seniors' dignity. It impacts us all.

Folks in the non-profit sector are really engaged in this topic, so I think there's a through line to Moose Hide Campaign day, addressing violence against women and children but also caring for seniors. So thank you for allowing me those 45 seconds.

So, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, I am so thankful to be able to get up today and speak to it. We've had some time to review it, maybe a little extra time—more time than the member would have liked—but we thought it was important to consider its impacts, which, unfortunately, very much on PC brand: the full impacts of their legislation aren't always considered. So I appreciate the member for

bringing this forward, but there are some concerns with the bill.

I feel there's a—perhaps a lack of an appreciation for the interplay between the many levers the governments have, and I think the member mentioned there—this is one lever of many. And so, yes, this is one lever, but when we pull a lever, there's impacts, and there's impacts on the institutions that—the PCHs that she spoke about in her statement. And there's impacts on broader society, the folks within those institutions, the folks on the boards, but also the community surrounding it. So I think there is a real lack of an appreciation for that interplay.

And so I worry about the shifting of the tax burden, because I think this is a real concern for those invested in the education system. We are a government that really cares about our education system alongside our health-care system. Those are two of our main priorities, so we want to invest in both of them and support those engaged in both those systems in as good a way as we can.

I do want to take a second to thank all those non-profits and the personal-care homes, the members on the board, the staff, the nurses, the doctors, the health-care aides, the allied health professionals and also all the families. Because I know the health-care system generally, but also as we have our family members aging, we are all engaged in the health-care system in different ways and more intensely as our families age. So I do want to say thank you to all those organizations.

Our government's been really excited and enthusiastic in our partnerships with personal-care homes. We've been making different investments, including in February 2025, we announced \$72-million investment into a 90-bed expansion at Park Manor Personal Care Home, which is an example of your tax dollars being reinvested into your community's priorities. And so we want to continue that investment, and we're happy to work alongside Park Manor Personal Care Home in Transcona, along with many others.

So, in January 2026, we stepped up to replace the aging Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home—which I'm sure the local member is very enthusiastic about this expansion—with a 95-bed facility. And this—so this will add 65 net-new long-term-care beds for seniors who need—who have needed them for a very long time, for years.

And we're not only thinking in the immediate, we're looking at the medium and long term. So we're

happy to have announced plans for an additional personal-care home in Bridgwater, south Winnipeg, in the constituency of Waverley.

So we recognize the needs within the sector and are really enthusiastic in making those investments.

* (10:30)

One personal story I want to tell is, early on in our time in government, we—well, I—this continues. We get to know our constituencies; we get invited to different workplaces; people want to share the work that they're doing. And I, along with some of my colleagues, had the opportunity to be invited to Holy Family, down on Main Street, and they are—they were so welcoming. I got to learn so much about their work. I want to thank them for their work. And, as we were touring, we were learning about the different needs that seniors needed in their facility, the different pressures the institution was feeling.

But then there was also a moment where we arrived at a portion of the building that was sitting empty. There's an entire wing in Holy Family that was sitting empty, and they were really anxious—or enthusiastic—to use this wing. It was sitting unused. There's an obvious need. We know it. They know it. And so they were enthusiastic in—to find a way to use it. And so I was so happy to hear our Health Minister, Minister for Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, announce that we were expanding that wing of Holy Family and we were going to start using it for 26 transitional beds.

So those are beds that help relieve the pressures in hospitals, in the ER. And so we're putting existing infrastructure, working with our community partners, and we're really starting to relieve those pressure points within the larger system.

So I want to thank Holy Family not only for opening up their doors to our team but being such an active partner in really addressing the needs not only of their residents, their community, but recognizing the larger system and how they can play an active role in that.

And so the member, the bill, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act, wants to relieve some of the tax burden and maybe shift it in some way. And so I can't help but think that this is either going to be an increase to families, or a shifting of the tax burden to different parts of our communities, different parts of our province, or a cut to services, which is always on the table with the PCs. And they're quick to say, tax relief, cut taxes, but they don't tie it to the cuts to services that often comes with that.

And so I worry about their record of closing 222 personal-care-home beds over their last administration. I worry about the impacts to also the education system: are we building less schools, are we hiring less teachers, are we hiring less clinicians, are we building less play structures? There wasn't really a mention of the fiscal impacts on school divisions in what the member shared earlier today. So I'm curious, what is that impact and how does she see that playing out in her community, in our province, through the school divisions, through the school communities?

Because I think we want we want seniors to live with dignity, obviously. We also want to invest in children and ensure they live a dignified life. So we don't live in a world where it's an either-or, it's a both-and. So we want to really consider those implications of amendments to taxes like the—those that are being proposed today.

So I'm really thankful to the member for bringing this forward; it gave us a chance to talk about personal-care homes, the health-care system, the care sector generally. I think it's underappreciated, and I know our government's doing our best to really speak to the care sector, whether it's health care, whether it's child care. We really see value in valuing those that provide the care that we all rely on in such a meaningful way.

So in—just in closing, I just want to say, thank you, to the member for bringing this forward. We do have some serious concerns about the impacts, and we believe we need to work with the sector and across sectors to make sure that we're meeting the needs of personal-care homes but also the education system and those who—the cross sector who engage in both of those.

So I appreciate the member for bringing it forward, and I look forward to more debate.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I—again, I appreciate my colleague from Roblin for bringing this important bill forward.

And, again, as the member from Lagimodière said that he had concerns with this bill or they had concerns with this bill, and I just want to say that I look forward to them passing it so that we can get to committee, so if people do have an interest in this bill, do have some concerns, that's the place where they should be able to answer that question.

We don't always have all the answers here, but we know that we can call—count on people coming to committee to learn about this.

So I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 233, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act. At its core, this bill is about dignity, it's about respect and it's about recognizing the value of seniors and Elders who have helped build our province and our communities.

Bill 233 proposes to increase the personal-care-home maximum size exemption for the purpose of school taxes to five hectares. Some may see this simply as a technical amendment or an adjustment to an assessment rule, but in reality, this legislation is about improving quality of life for Manitobans' most vulnerable residents—some of Manitoba's most vulnerable residents.

This bill acknowledges an important reality in 2026: the current exemption level simply no longer reflects modern personal-care-home operations, modern infrastructure needs or the increasing costs that are skyrocketing by these facilities across Manitoba.

Personal-care homes today are not the same as they once were decades ago. They are now require—they now require expanded safety systems, larger accessible spaces, specialized dementia-care units—and I can speak on that personally as well, too, because my mother was in a dementia-care unit. And there was things they had to buy, whether it was ankle monitors, whether it was wrist monitors, whether it was doors that only opened one way. There's so much more now that is involved here; upgraded ventilation systems, emergency preparedness.

As the needs of residents become more complex, personal-care homes must evolve to meet these needs. Bill 233 creates the financial flexibility necessary for those things to happen. Every dollar that a personal-care home saves through fairer tax treatment is a dollar that can be reinvested directly into that facility.

Again, and I'll say this in my closing, that I look forward to this bill moving on to committee so those that do have concerns, both for and against, can come out and speak. So I ask my colleagues to let's make sure that we pass this bill today and let's get this on to committee.

Thank you so much.

MLA David Pankratz (Waverley): It is always an honour to rise here in the Chamber and have an opportunity to put a few words on the record, and I thank my colleague from Lagimodière for also mentioning the Moose Hide Campaign walk that's

happening today—do incredible work combatting gender-based violence across the country.

You know, and I do just want to touch on one piece quickly with Bill 233 that was mentioned. There was an idea brought forward that, for some reason, we didn't want to debate this bill. And I think that that's a misrepresentation of what happened.

You know, in this Chamber, it's really important that we respect precedents and procedures and, typically, for private members' bills, you wouldn't necessarily be allowed to bring forward ideas that cost the government money. Now, we challenged that because we thought there may be a chance that that was the case here, and so we wanted to make sure that we got that opinion. Now, the ruling was that it did not in a significantly—significant way change that or make it so that we could not debate it, and so now we have the opportunity to debate it.

And so, ultimately, our government is just interested in making sure that we're protecting the pillars, ultimately, of our democracy and the rules that govern this House. So I just wanted to clarify that on the record before we continued to debate this important bill.

* (10:40)

And, to begin, I actually want to highlight—because this is such an important conversation today, we're talking about PCHs—the incredible work that folks in the sector do every single day. We all know we're all aging. We all hope that we get to the age in a healthy way where we can live in a comfortable way in homes that make us feel good and allow us to live full lives as we age out in our home communities.

And so one thing that I was very excited to see from our government recently was an announcement that we are increasing the budget by \$5 million to allow for healthier and sometimes maybe more culturally appropriate food for certain people in PCHs to make sure that as they're aging, they're living in these homes, that they would have access to food.

And that's going to support the folks that this bill is affecting, right? So this bill is specifically speaking about the idea that we need to create more revenue streams for the folks that are running these spaces and to make sure that the people living there have access to the resources they need.

And so now, in some of these homes—and I do have a quote here from Laura [*phonetic*] Cerqueti, the CEO of Simkin centre. It was really, really wonderful

to hear because they were—they're speaking specifically about healthier food, more appropriate food for folks, and we know how important that can be just in day-to-day life: So I see it every day, residents light up when they're served a meal they recognize or something that reminds them of home. Foods are one of the most meaningful parts of their day, whether it's fresh, nutritious and thoughtfully prepared, it supports not just their health but their sense of comfort and dignity.

And so I think it's just—it's such an important piece of this conversation today, as we're speaking about making sure that PCHs are adequately funded and that they have the resources that they need, to show that our government is committed to that work. And we've been committed to it since we came into government in 2023.

We also heard from the member opposite, the member from Roblin, speaking about grocery prices and the effect that that can have on PCHs. So I want to comment on that as well today. We actually have another bill before the House right now, BITSA bill, that we are discussing. And, you know, ultimately, within that bill, there are a number of measures which would also be helping PCHs and folks who are looking to make—or hoping for cheaper grocery prices. So, within that bill, there's a 7 per cent reduction of the PST, a complete removal on all groceries.

And up 'til this point, the members opposite have continued to hold that bill up, unfortunately. I'm hoping that they will change course so that we can pass that bill and get that 7 per cent PST removed. I never thought I'd see a day that a PC government would be against a PST reduction. But, you know, it takes the new NDP here to lead the way, I guess, in that regard. And so, hopefully, you know, members opposite will get on board and remember what some of their core values are as Conservatives here in Manitoba.

You know, we also have made significant investments in PCHs, specifically in my home constituency in Waverley. And so we are building a brand new PCH in Bridgwater. And that was just announced a few weeks ago. It was really well received. And what that means is that more Manitobans, as they age, will be able to age in their communities, the places that they feel comfortable, with family close to home. And with that investment we made for healthier food that makes them feel comfortable, I really think that we're doing the work every day to support those Manitobans that need it so much.

And I do want to tell a quick personal story here. Earlier on in my life—you know, I've worn a couple different hats over my work life. And, in my late 20s, I worked briefly as a paramedic, rurally. And so my family—I had a young son and my wife at the time; we were living in Brandon for about a year, a great time in our lives. We loved the city. We loved the folks there. We still have great friends in Brandon. But I would drive out to Virden every morning for my shift, and I would hop on the transfer truck. And then we would go out to all these different communities, and we would end up doing transfers for often folks from PCHs—so, for example, Russell or Killarney—and then we would drive them in to HSC or St. B to make sure that they were getting the treatment that they needed.

And I'm telling this story just as an opportunity for me to be able to really lift up all of those folks who were doing the work every day. When I showed up—I remember there was a call in Russell. We went out and there was someone who was really struggling, an elderly patient who—really having a tough time. And I walked into the room, and the staff that were there, they weren't staff—they were family; they were friends, right? You could tell how close they were with that person that we were about to transfer. They had their favourite blanket with them. They were packing them some food for the ride. And then we took them in to HSC, and the conversations that I was able to have with them was—it was really enlightening just to see the amount of care and empathy and energy that went into that work.

And so that is exactly why I'm proud to be a part of a team that continues to do the work of supporting those folks every single day and making sure that we're investing in our health-care system, in our education system, to make sure that we have folks that are coming into the sector who can do that work in a really good way.

Advanced Education, our minister's doing some amazing work in that file to make sure that we have new health-care aides and nurses and folks that are able to graduate with the skills that we need to build up this province and to support the folks who need it most.

So one of the other things that I wanted to talk about briefly was just our expansion of health-care services, as I sort of touched on, because it directly affects the ability of PCHs to do their job appropriately, right?

And so to make sure that people that are in their care, that are living in their facilities, and, you know, again, we're talking about the fact that we maybe are looking for other ways, other funding models or ways to get them the resources that they need.

One resource that has been so effective for so many Manitobans, but not enough Manitobans know about it, is Medinav.ca, and I want to tell you how this connects so directly.

I have a family member who was in a PCH and, you know, you can—what happened was they had a little fall, unfortunately, and they needed to get some stitches. And so, in the past, what would often happen is that you'd have to go into an ER or an urgent care to try to get that done.

But now, with our expansion of services in health care, you can go on Medinav.ca, and they booked an appointment into a minor injury and illness clinic. They went in, they got that stitched up and it was all taken care of, in and out, and then they were back to the comfort of their amazing PCH that afternoon.

And so this is just one more of the many ways that we are supporting folks as they age in Manitoba and that we are supporting PCHs here in Manitoba.

And so to finish, what I will say, and I know we want this, you know, to be debated in a fulsome manner and to have a full conversation. And, yesterday, I do recall the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) specifically was passionately, passionately debating that there are 57 MLAs in this Chamber and that he would very much like to see them speak on bills.

And so I was really happy that I had the opportunity today. You know, we go through an order, we take turns speaking to these things, but I'm really happy today that I had the opportunity to put a few words on the record and to also just finish on saying that I really want to lift up the incredible folks doing amazing work at PCHs right across this province.

Whether you're in Brandon, where I spent some time and had a wonderful experience; or in Virden, or Russell, or Killarney, or Winnipeg or Thompson; we're here for you, we're going to keep on working for you, we're going to keep on making the investments that you need in health care and making life more affordable for everyone across this amazing province.

Thank you so much, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: There's some guests in the gallery.

We have seated in the public gallery a home-school group of 70 grade 8 students under the direction of Jen Kroeker.

And this group is located in the constituencies of the honourable members for Transcona (MLA Corbett) and Seine River (MLA Cross).

And we welcome you all here today.

* * *

MLA Robert Loiselle (St. Boniface): L'Honorable Président [*Honourable Speaker*], it's always a pleasure to have the chance to talk about seniors and how we take care of seniors in Manitoba, how we fund, you know, taking care of seniors in St. Boniface. Proud to say we have a long history of taking care of our seniors. In fact, we have many seniors homes in St. Boniface, and I've always said that many hands—it takes many hands to make work light.

And, in St. Boniface, we have this wonderful organization called the Compassion Network, le Réseau Compassion. In fact, it's, like, 13 member agencies, over 8,500 employees. And, under RCN, we have place Aulneau, l'Accueil Colombien; we have place Despains, place Saint Vincent. And I'm really proud to see our government supporting the good work that they're doing; in fact, that we announced, recently, \$5 million to improve the food in some of those PCHs.

* (10:50)

And, in the French community, of course, I can see tourtières, of course, or rubaboo, maybe, which is known as a Métis stew—things that our seniors in our French community, of course, adore.

And I think, when it comes to supporting our seniors, it's important, as it is in St. Boniface and across Manitoba, to support seniors, of course, in language of their choice. And, in St. Boniface, our government is supporting, you know, French-language services across the board but also in health.

In fact, yesterday, we were at the University of St. Boniface announcing an extra cohort of 30 students in ce qu'on appelle les soins infirmiers [*what we call nursing*], or in English—and I have to switch languages here for a second—but soins infirmiers [*nursing*] in English, of course, is the nursing faculty—voilà. That didn't take long at all; the on-board translation there took a second. But the faculty has to be increased by

30 seats on top of 45 simply because we know the demand is there, but there was 110 applicants.

So it's wonderful to see our government supporting that, supporting seniors, supporting francophone seniors. And we know that when seniors receive care in the language of their choice, such as it is in St. Boniface, in French, their life expectancy is greater.

And I love to tell this story about my memère—ma grand-mère [*granny—my grandmother*], Annette Beaudry. She lived in North St. Boniface, and I never, ever, once in my life, heard her speak in English. And she received excellent care at St. Boniface Hospital in French, Actionmarguerite in French, and she was able to receive health care in French, which is so important.

French spoken

Donc, l'Honorable Président, je crois que c'est important de noter que notre gouvernement s'emploie à rendre la vie plus abordable pour les familles manitobaines en prenant des mesures concrètes et en obtenant de vrais résultats. Ce projet de loi, je crois, manque encore à l'appel.

Ce que nous voyons de la part des progressistes conservateurs c'est toujours la même chose : des idées mal ficelées, aucun plan et aucune compréhension des pressions réelles auxquelles font face les familles. Ils n'ont rien appris de leur passage au gouvernement pendant sept années et demie. Lorsque les Manitobains avaient besoin d'aide, ils ont coupé dans les services. Ils n'ont rien fait pour rendre la vie plus abordable, non seulement pour les familles aux Manitoba, mais aussi pour les aînés.

Les voilà de retour avec des idées mal conçues, qui ne résistent pas à l'examen et qui n'apportent aucun véritable soulagement. Si ce projet de loi est adopté, dans de nombreux cas en milieu rural au Manitoba, les taxes scolaires foncières seront transférées du secteur public et entraîneront une hausse — ou entraîneront une hausse des impôts pour les propriétaires et les entreprises.

Nous sommes déterminés à vous aider, à la pompe, à l'épicerie et dans vos factures mensuelles, grâce à des mesures concrètes qui rendront la vie plus abordable.

Donc ce projet de loi, la question est simple : cette proposition rendra-t-elle réellement la vie plus abordable pour les Manitobains et les aînés? Je crois que la réponse est simple. La réponse est non. Et c'est parce que ce projet de loi, dans de nombreux cas, transférera les taxes scolaires payées par le secteur

public vers les résidents et les entreprises. Ce n'est pas la bonne voie à suivre. Nous adoptons évidemment une différente approche.

Notre approche, c'est de réduire les impôts pour l'ensemble des Manitobains. Par exemple, nous avons augmenté le crédit d'impôt d'abordabilité destiné aux locataires jusqu'à 625 dollars, avec un soutien accru pour les aînés. Le crédit d'impôt d'abordabilité destiné aux propriétaires a été porté à 1 600 dollars, ce qui aide les propriétaires à payer leur hypothèque.

Le Budget de 2025 a augmenté le seuil d'exemption de la taxe sur la masse salariale de deux vingt-cinq – 2,5 millions de dollars, ce qui signifie que des milliers d'entreprises manitobaines ne paient plus cette taxe – ne paient plus toute la taxe sur la masse salariale, et que plusieurs autres paieront moins. Cette exemption aide près de 875 petites entreprises.

En même temps, nous réduisons le coût de la vie pour les Manitobains. Nous avons gelé le prix du lait afin de stabiliser les factures d'épicerie, nous faisons preuve de leadership au pays en lançant notre étude provinciale sur les prix des produits alimentaires, afin de trouver de nouvelles façons de réduire les coûts et d'améliorer l'abordabilité pour les Manitobains.

Donc, encore une fois, ce projet de loi manque à l'appel, comparé à ce que notre gouvernement fait pour rendre la vie des aînés plus abordable ici au Manitoba. Nous avons également renforcé le système de soins lui-même, car rendre la vie plus abordable dépend aussi de la disponibilité des services au moment où ils sont nécessaires.

En revenant à ces services, je suis fier d'annoncer que, hier, nous étions d'ailleurs à l'Université de Saint-Boniface pour annoncer une nouvelle cohorte de 30 étudiants en soins infirmiers, au-delà des 45 étudiants qui sont déjà dans la faculté des soins infirmiers à l'Université de Saint-Boniface, simplement parce que la demande est là. La demande est tangible : nos aînés veulent avoir des services de santé en français. D'ailleurs, 110 demandes ont été reçues pour la faculté des soins infirmiers, alors c'est ce que nous avons annoncé.

Et je suis fier du fait que nous avons aussi annoncé un aide de cinq millions de dollars pour nos aînés pour rendre leur nourriture plus culturellement propice. On sait que dans la communauté franco-manitobaine, chez les Métis de la rivière Rouge, on aime notre tourtière, on aime notre ragoût de boulettes, on aime notre rubaboo, qui est une autre façon

de dire ragoût en français. On aime nos pâtes, notre pain français, et cetera. Et c'est de cette façon-là qu'on veut appuyer nos aînés.

Alors encore une fois, ce projet de loi manque à l'appel, manque de sérieux. Comme d'habitude, les conservateurs sont en train de proposer un projet de loi qui ne va pas vraiment aider les aînés, et d'ailleurs va rendre la vie moins abordable pour les contribuables. Donc, notre gouvernement, quand nous examinons ce projet de loi, nous le faisons dans cette perspective plus large. Cela signifie rendre la vie plus abordable pour les familles, renforcer les crédits d'impôt qui remettent directement de l'argent aux Manitobains, stabiliser le prix des produits essentiels et investir dans les infrastructures de soins sur lesquelles les gens comptent.

Voilà la différence dans notre approche. Nous ne considérons pas rendre la vie abordable sous un seul angle : nous agissons sur l'ensemble des pressions auxquelles font face les Manitobains, parce que les aînés méritent – nos aînés méritent la dignité. Les familles méritent du soutien. Les fournisseurs de soins méritent de la stabilité. Et les Manitobains méritent un gouvernement prêt à faire le travail nécessaire pour rendre la vie plus abordable, tout en renforçant les systèmes sur lesquels les gens comptent chaque jour.

Et je veux finir par, encore une fois, partager l'histoire de ma grand-mère Beaudry qui n'a jamais eu à parler en anglais à Saint-Boniface, parce qu'elle a reçu des soins de santé en français à l'hôpital de Saint-Boniface et à l'Actionmarguerite, et je félicite leur excellent travail.

Merci, l'Honorable Président.

Translation

Honourable Speaker, I believe it is important to note that our government is working to make life more affordable for Manitoba families by taking concrete steps and achieving real results. This bill, I believe, is once again missing the mark.

What we see from the Progressive Conservatives is always the same: half-baked ideas, no plan, and no understanding of the real pressures families face. They have learned nothing from their seven and a half years in government. When Manitobans needed help, they cut services. They did nothing to make life more affordable, not only for families in Manitoba but also for seniors.

Here they are again with poorly conceived ideas that don't hold up to scrutiny and offer no real relief.

If this bill passes, in many rural areas of Manitoba, school property taxes will be shifted from the public sector and will enter an increase—rather, will result in a tax increase for homeowners and businesses.

We are committed to helping you at the gas pump, at the grocery store and with your monthly bills through concrete measures that will make life more affordable.

Thus, with this bill, the question is simple: Will this proposal actually make life more affordable for Manitobans and seniors? I believe the answer is simple: The answer is no. And that's because this bill, in many cases, will shift school taxes paid by the public sector onto residents and businesses. That's not the right path to take. We are obviously taking a different approach.

Our approach is to cut taxes for all Manitobans. For example, we've increased the tax credit that makes life more affordable for renters to \$625, with increased support for seniors. The tax credit that makes life more affordable for homeowners has been raised to \$1,600, helping homeowners pay their mortgages.

The 2025 Budget raised the payroll tax exemption threshold by two twenty-five—\$2.5 million, meaning thousands of Manitoba businesses no longer pay this tax—no longer pay the full payroll tax, and many others will pay less. This exemption helps nearly 875 small businesses.

At the same time, we're lowering the cost of living for Manitobans. We've frozen the price of milk to stabilize grocery bills, and we're showing leadership across the country by launching our provincial study on food prices to find new ways to reduce costs and improve affordability for Manitobans.

Once again, this bill falls short compared to what our government is doing to make life more affordable for seniors here in Manitoba. We have also strengthened the health-care system itself, because making life more affordable also depends on the availability of services when they are needed.

Coming back to these services, I am proud to announce that yesterday we were at the Université de Saint-Boniface to announce a new cohort of 30 nursing students, in addition to the 45 students already in the nursing program at the Université de Saint-Boniface, simply because the demand is there. The demand is clear: Our seniors want health services in French. In fact, 110 applications were received for the nursing program, so that is what we announced.

And I'm proud that we've also announced \$5 million in funding for our seniors to make their meals more culturally appropriate. We know that in the Franco-Manitoban community, among the Métis of the Red River, we love our tourtière, we love our meatball stew, we love our rubaboo—which is another way of saying stew in French. We love our pasta, our French bread, and so on. And that is how we want to support our seniors.

So, once again, this bill falls short; it lacks seriousness. As usual, the Conservatives are proposing a bill that won't really help seniors—and, in fact, will make life less affordable for taxpayers. So when our government reviews this bill, we do so from this broader perspective. That means making life more affordable for families, strengthening tax credits that put money directly back into Manitobans' pockets, stabilizing the prices of essential goods and investing in the care infrastructure that people rely on.

That's the difference in our approach. We don't view making life affordable from a single angle: We're addressing all the pressures Manitobans face, because seniors deserve—our seniors deserve dignity. Families deserve support. Care providers deserve stability. And Manitobans deserve a government willing to do the work needed to make life more affordable, while strengthening the systems people rely on every day.

I want to conclude by, once again, sharing the story of my grandmother Beaudry, who never had to speak English in St. Boniface because she received health care in French at St. Boniface Hospital and Actionmarguerite, and I commend them for their excellent work.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to put a few words on the record. Our government has been focused on making life more affordable for each and every Manitoban across this province. We are taking real action and getting real results. We've also been strengthening the care system itself because affordability is also affected by whether services are available when they're needed.

In June 2025, our government announced the opening of a new 26-bed transitional-care unit at Holy Family Home in Winnipeg, supported by a \$1.9-million capital investment. That expansion helps seniors leave hospital sooner, recover in the right setting and access more appropriate care closer to

home. And, in February 2026, we took action to stabilize operations at the Golden Door Geriatric Centre, protecting both residents and staff while—

* (11:00)

The Speaker: Order, please.

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

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 10—Removing the Land Transfer Tax for First-Time Home Buyers

The Speaker: The hour being 11 o'clock, it is now time for private members' resolutions. And the resolution before us this morning is resolution No. 10, Removing the Land Transfer Tax for First-Time Home Buyers, brought forward by the honourable member for Agassiz.

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I move, seconded by the member from Borderland,

WHEREAS, according to the "Royal LePage 2024 Demographic Survey: Next Generation of Buyers", 94% of Manitobans aged 18-38 believe that home ownership is a worthwhile investment, and 86% of those who do not currently own a home say it is a priority for them and a milestone they hope to achieve in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS despite the desire to own a home, Manitobans are finding it increasingly challenging to purchase a home due to the increased cost of living and increased housing prices; and

WHEREAS the land transfer tax adds an additional cost to purchasing a property in Manitoba and can be a barrier to home ownership for first-time home buyers; and

WHEREAS on the average detached single-family home, the land transfer tax can often exceed \$5,000; and

WHEREAS according to the 2024 CMHC Mortgage Consumer Survey, the top two concerns for first-time homebuyers included paying too much for a home and unforeseen housing costs; and

WHEREAS residential homebuyers pay the bulk of land transfer tax collected in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS it was an NDP Provincial Government that introduced the land transfer tax, and the current Provincial Government has not done anything to help with the affordability of owning a home for a first-time home buyer; and

WHEREAS in Ontario, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island, there are first-time home buyer incentives that include rebates on land transfer tax.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to remove the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers to assist more Manitobans with achieving the goal of owning a home.

Motion presented.

Ms. Byram: It is a great honour to stand in this Chamber here today and bring forward this important resolution, removing land transfer tax for first-time home buyers.

This resolution couldn't come at a better time. We are all seeing a housing crisis right across the province here in Manitoba, from corner to corner. We are—you know, many families, many home buyers are looking for some relief in purchasing their home, and this resolution can provide some of that relief for young families, young people, those first-time home buyers who are searching the market to make that purchase and look for some financial assistance at the same time.

Removing the land transfer tax for these first-time home buyers can open up the marketplace but also provides an opportunity for those that are entering the housing market for the very first time.

Mr. Diljeet Brar, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This would save thousands of dollars for Manitobans and—while they're investing in their home. This can put—that extra bit of savings, they can invest it back into the economy. You know, they may want to look at doing some renovations, maybe some furniture purchases. So any savings that these individuals would have in saving that transfer tax could go back into the economy while reinvesting back into their home as well.

And we, on this side of the House, want to make it easier for these home buyers, these first-time home buyers, to purchase their home. And I want to believe that all members in this Legislature want to work towards making life more affordable for many Manitobans, and this is one effort that we can all work towards and help in taking some of the pressure off

when we see affordability crisis across the province—but not just affordability crisis; there's a housing crisis, honourable deputy Speaker.

And we have, in the last couple of years, seen the NDP raise taxes on homeowners here in our province. We—on not just those owning their home but property taxes and school tax hikes. Many are shocked when they're opening their tax bills. We know that some of—people in Manitoba are seeing those bills increase and are shocked when they get that in the mail. We've seen that already happening this month.

They've increased taxes on homeowners by 19 per cent. This is making life more unaffordable for families in our province, adding to the affordability crisis, adding to the housing crisis. So when people are opening these bills, they're faced with higher costs.

The NDP have cancelled indexation of tax brackets and the basic personal amount, and they're refusing to index the thresholds for the land transfer tax, which means, every year, more low-income and middle-class families will be paying land transfer tax if they buy a home.

We need to make it easier for first-time home buyers to purchase a home, those that are making the investment, and that's why we've introduced this, because it's time for these buyers to get help and exempting them from this land transfer tax.

The rates and thresholds of the land transfer tax have not been updated much since the NDP introduced it in 1987. We need to make a change so that it no longer impacts young and new home buyers. A \$200,000 home in 1987 would be worth well over \$500,000 in today's market. The NDP are raising taxes on those homeowners—on all homeowners—and seniors with more than \$400-million education property tax increases and school tax hikes. That is not affordability here in today's world.

The NDP have cancelled indexation of tax brackets and the basic personal tax amount. I've already mentioned that, but I can't highlight that enough. That is something that could impact many lives or—for many Manitobans and offer savings in this affordability crisis that we are faced with here.

The NDP eliminated the 50 per cent education property tax rebate. That was something that provided relief to families. And they've taken that away. They've completely eliminated any assistance for cottage owners, secondary residences and small businesses from their skyrocketing education property tax.

So here, today, we've brought something forward that can help with that middle class, with those first-time home buyers, to take some of that financial pressure off and making life more affordable.

In 2024, the NDP and Manitoba government increased the land transfer tax from 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent for homes in excess of \$200,000, making it the highest tax of its type in Canada. Land transfer tax varies by province to province in Canada. The rates typically range from 0.5 to 3 per cent of the property's purchase price, and some provinces offer rebates for first-time home buyers. And Alberta and Saskatchewan do not have such taxed levies.

Again, we need to make the housing market inclusive and accessible for underrepresented groups and first-time home buyers. And that is coming from Manitoba Real Estate Association. And that organization goes on to say, we want to enable home ownership which allows newcomers to put down roots and plan to stay in the province long term. Manitoba is the only Prairie province to impose a land transfer tax, making home ownership less affordable, especially for first-time and low-income buyers.

And Manitoba Real Estate Association, they go on to say in their report, reform the provincial land transfer tax to reduce the cost barrier that the tax imposes on first-time, low-income home buyers, individuals with disability or home buyers experiencing a family breakdown and change in financial circumstance.

So we can see from other organizations as well the importance of legislation like this and the impact it can have for families, for low-income earners, for those that are going through, you know, maybe family breakup, but anybody that's doing that first-time home buyer. This is a significant savings. This provides significant tax relief with—right here, right now. We're not having—we wouldn't have to wait. It is something that these people—individuals can see right away.

The NDP have not come up with a single plan that can work to free up the housing market or pressure while helping individuals with affordability at the same time. And this legislation, removing the land transfer tax, provides immediate solution with real relief.

Many Manitobans are trying to save for their first time—for their first home but feeling it may not be achievable. People are reducing their spending habits in an effort to try to save. Some have delayed or eliminated other plans like large purchases, maybe

getting that vehicle they're—they would require or need. Some simply can't afford to live on their own. And many have delayed starting a family because they simply can't afford it. We see many that probably maybe have not put away any savings for retirement.

* (11:10)

Removing the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers can help families build their future for generations. It provides stability and confidence, and it can help build the economy. Most importantly, it helps build families' dreams. This could provide tax relief now in this affordability crisis and eliminate or take some of the pressure off of the housing crisis. And I ask this NDP government to make the right choice and do the right thing and remove the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Logan Oxenham (Kirkfield Park): Well, thank you, honourable deputy Speaker, and thank you, everybody else.

After eight years of the PC government's approving significant rent increases and cutting supports that made it harder for families to save, I'm just wondering how members opposite pretend this narrow land transfer tax change suddenly makes them champions of housing affordability for Manitobans today?

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): You know, that line about seven and a half and eight years is getting old and people are getting tired of that. I am talking about real change, real tax relief here today in the province of Manitoba. That's what Manitobans want. They want to know what we're going to do to help them live in an affordability crisis right here in Manitoba today, not eight years ago.

So, moving forward, removing the land transfer tax helps take some of that financial pressure off for those that are looking to make that purchase, looking to make that investment in buying their first home. So it's providing tax relief and freeing up a housing market during this crisis.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I thank my colleague, the member for Agassiz, for her work on this resolution.

And I'd like to ask her, what—can she talk about the impact that this change will have on Manitoba families and how it will benefit them?

Ms. Byram: Sure, and I want to thank the member from Borderland for asking that question, because it gives me an opportunity to put on the record what this can do for the province of Manitoba while helping families and those first-time home buyers.

Removing the land transfer tax provides families savings where they can reinvest it into the home purchase, whether it's furniture, whether it's maybe a small reno in the house. So it's putting money back into the home, investing in that home, all while still supporting the local economy in some cases. It also could provide freeing up maybe a rental property, so a family or—

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

Mr. Oxenham: You know, if affordability was truly a priority for the PCs, then why did they send tax rebate checks to out-of-province billionaires instead of using those dollars to help Manitobans with real, ongoing pressures of housing, groceries and utilities that are the actualities that are facing Manitobans right now?

Ms. Byram: Again, I want to talk about what we're going to be doing here today. I think we can all agree, on both sides of the House, that many—we're all facing an affordability crisis as well as a housing crisis. And I am bringing this forward today because I want to be able to work together, sit down—you know, we're—we all put our names on that ballot because we wanted to make Manitoba a better place—[interjection]—and this is an opportunity where we could sit down and work together.

And I hear the member opposite, Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine), might want to get up and speak to this, because this does affect families, in all reality, where we could work together and help families save money when they go to—

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

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): As we know, the NDP is hiking costs on public-sector construction projects and limiting construction workers from participating in that.

So, with a policy like this, will we see more home construction and an increase in sales if we do provide an incentive for first-time home buyers?

Ms. Byram: Thank—I want to say thank you to the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) for bringing that up.

Because the NDP have increased contracting jobs, and that's going to play on our economy here in the province of Manitoba. Having new homes built in the province could—and removing the first-time home buyer tax credit opens up the marketplace for those individuals who are seeking that purchase. This could provide savings for that family as well as open up the market for new residents.

Mr. Oxenham: Manitobans remember that, under the PCs, housing costs kept rising while supports were reduced.

Why should families trust a party that spent nearly a decade jacking up hydro rates, slashing jobs and cutting supports to suddenly understand affordability when this bill ignores the monthly bills that people are struggling with today?

Ms. Byram: I just want to remind the members opposite that they brought this in. They brought this tax in in 1987, and they continued to increase. They've not ever indexed on this.

And I think Manitobans want to know what we are going to do for them today—not what happened yesterday, the day before, years ago. It's what we're working towards now in today's time to make life more affordable for families, for those that are looking to make that first home-buy purchase and help with the pressures of affordability and the housing crisis here.

What are we going to do today? This is important legislation I've brought forward—

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

Mr. Guenter: I'd like to ask the member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram): How does the land transfer tax affect affordability for first-time home buyers, for Manitoba first-time home buyers?

Ms. Byram: I want to thank the member from Borderland for asking that important question.

So we can see young families or those groups that may be underrepresented trying to save to make this huge purchase, their biggest investment of their life. So some of them have, you know, maybe had to

reduce or sacrifice maybe a big purchase like a car. And they've worked to have savings set aside. And if they know that they don't have to have that tax included in the cost of this big purchase, it helps them with their savings and opens up the marketplace to these—

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

Mr. Oxenham: I know the member opposite wants to forget about the past, but they do say the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, honourable Speaker.

So, with that in mind, at a time when young families are being squeezed by record rents, high grocery bills and rising interest rates, how can the PCs defend selling off 168 affordable housing units and then claiming that this one tax break shows they understand what Manitobans are actually facing? *[interjection]*

Ms. Byram: Again, maybe the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) would like to get up and speak to this resolution and put some words on the record.

We've seen what this NDP government has done, and, most recently, they've increased property taxes. That hits home to many families. We see it. We see it; we've heard it. I hear it in my constituency. Winnipeg constituents are hearing that. And I'm sure members opposite have had phone calls to their constituency offices about the increased in land—or property taxes that this NDP government has done.

* (11:20)

And what this resolution does is reduces—eliminates prop—or, land transfer—

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

I would request all members to please keep it low.

Mrs. Stone: I thank my colleague for bringing this very important resolution forward, as we know yet—many young people are struggling to afford homes. And with the skyrocketing property taxes that the NDP has created, this has proven to be an even further goal for many young Manitobans.

So what financial strategies are young Manitobans employing to save for home purchases in light of the land transfer tax and rising home prices and NDP property taxes?

Ms. Byram: Again, I want to say thank you to the member for Midland (Mrs. Stone) for bringing—asking that important question. And, as the critic for Finance, she is well aware of the increase in property taxes that many Manitobans are facing here today, and—which is impacting the affordability and the ability for many young people to make that first home-buy purchase.

In particular, you know, we've seen some of these young people trying to save. Maybe they're not even able to, like I mentioned before, put money away to buy a car, put away for retirement. Maybe they've even changed the timeline on family planning just because they—

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

The time for question period has expired.

Debate

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

MLA Carla Compton (Tuxedo): I am pleased to speak about something that matters deeply to Manitobans across our province: affordability, housing and the dream of home ownership. Because, for most Manitobans, home ownership is not about luxury, it is about stability, it is about security and it is about belonging. It is about having a place to come home to at the end of the day and the ability to build a future in the community you love.

And I think about Manitobans across our province: a young couple saving for a down payment, a single person hoping to buy their first condo after years of renting, a parent starting over after a difficult chapter in life or a newcomer family working hard to build a future here in Manitoba. People are working hard, doing everything right and still trying to balance rent or mortgage payments, groceries, child care, hydro bills and a rising cost at the gas pump.

And, like so many Manitobans, they are not only worried about the cost of purchasing a home, they are worried about whether they can afford life after they move in. Can they afford groceries every week? Can they afford child care? Can they afford the hydro bill in January? Can they continue saving for their future while building a life here at home?

And that is exactly why our government believes affordability must be about more than a single fee paid on closing day. It must be about helping Manitobans manage the full cost of living every single month.

Honourable Speaker, our government understands the pressures for first-time home buyers are—the pressures that first-time home buyers are facing in today's economy. We know home ownership remains an important goal for Manitobans.

According to the Royal LePage twenty—2024 demographic survey, 94 per cent of Manitobans aged 18 to 38 believe owning a home is a worthwhile investment. And 86 per cent of non-homeowners say it is a milestone that they hope to achieve in their lifetime.

But this conversation is about more than statistics, it is about whether Manitobans still feel that stability and opportunity are within reach. Whether someone is buying their first home at 25 or 55, whether they're raising children or living on their own, people want the chance to build a good life for themselves and the people they love.

For some, that means raising a family in their first home, and for others, it means finally having a place that is truly their own after years of hard work and saving. And our government believes Manitobans deserve that opportunity.

And that is why our government has taken a broad, practical and responsible approach to affordability because families and individuals do not experience affordability one bill at a time, they experience it all at once: at the grocery store, at the gas station, at the kitchen table when the hydro bill arrives, at the end of the month when rent or mortgage payments are coming due. And after eight—oh—and after the seven and a half years of the previous PC government making more expensive choices, many Manitobans are still working hard to recover financially.

Honourable Speaker, members opposite now speak often about affordability, but Manitobans also remember the choices that were made when those members were in government. Rents increased dramatically, supports were reduced, affordable housing units were sold off and too many Manitobans were left feeling like stability was moving further out of reach.

In 2022 alone, the Residential Tenancies Branch approved above-guideline rent increases for more than 25,000 rental units, with average increases nearing 10 per cent. And Manitobans remember that the former government approved every single above-guideline rent increase application in 2019 and 2020—every single one. At the same time, they cut the renters tax credit.

Honourable Speaker, it is difficult to take lectures about affordability seriously from members opposite after the choices that they have made when they were in government because, while Manitobans were struggling with rising costs, the former government chose cuts and short-term decisions that made life harder for many people to get ahead.

Our government is taking a different approach. Instead of asking Manitobans to carry more of the burden, we are focused on lowering costs across the board and helping people keep more of what they earn.

We froze hydro rates to provide stability for homeowners and renters alike. We made the gas tax cut permanent, keeping Manitoba fuel prices among the lowest in Canada and providing relief every single time Manitobans fill up their vehicles. We increased supports for renters and homeowners. And, through Budget 2026, we are removing the PST from groceries and prepared food items purchased at grocery and convenience stores, putting more money back into Manitobans' pockets every time they go to the checkout. These measures matter because affordability is not just about purchasing a home, it is about being able to afford to stay in that home and build a life there.

Honourable Speaker, our government also understands that strong public services and economic opportunity are part of affordability too. And that is why, while we rebuild and strengthen health care by hiring more nurses, doctors and health-care aides, we are also creating good jobs and growing Manitoba's economy. And, thanks to the work of this incredible team, Manitoba now has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. And that matters to Manitobans trying to qualify for a mortgage.

Honourable Speaker, affordability also means supporting Manitobans at every stage of housing, whether someone is renting an apartment, saving for their first home, raising children, starting over or trying to stay ahead of the rising costs later in life. And that is why we increased the renters tax credit and moved to quarterly payments so people can receive support sooner.

It's why we set Manitoba's 2026 rent increase guideline at 1.8 per cent to help protect tenants from sudden and unreasonable increases, and it is why we are strengthening renters' protections and bringing forward new rules to stop unfair rent hikes, because many people who are on the journey to home ownership begin as renters. And it—the more and more that rents increase at a high rate every year, it makes

it harder and harder for folks to save that down payment, which is absolutely essential for them to become homeowners.

* (11:30)

Since forming government, we have created hundreds of affordable and social housing units, reopened units closed—that were closed under the previous government and added shelter spaces for Manitobans who need support because housing affordability is not solved through slogans or symbolic gestures, it is solved through practical action, steady leadership and long-term planning.

Honourable Speaker, our government also understands that helping Manitobans save for their first home means lowering everyday costs of living, and that's why we've doubled the Prenatal Benefit for low-income mothers. It is why we continue to expand affordable child care, it is why Budget 2026 will make transit free for children and youth under 18, and it is why we are delivering targeted affordability measures that Manitobans can count on throughout the year. Because every dollar matters to people trying to build stability and plan for their future.

Families are dealing with global economic uncertainty and rising costs that have been worsened by Donald Trump's tariffs, tariffs that members opposite have publicly thanked him for, despite the impact those measures have had on affordability for Manitoba families and businesses. On this side of the House, we believe government should stand up for Manitobans, protect affordability and strengthen our economy during uncertain times, not make life harder for working people. And that is exactly what our government is doing.

And, as I see, I've maybe written a few extra words for what my time allows. I just want to move to close by just speaking to how our government truly does believe in affordability and supporting Manitobans in their journey to home ownership, if that is the journey that they are on. And because we believe Manitoba should be a place where people can afford not only to buy a home but to build a life, a place where young people can picture a future here, where seniors can remain connected to the communities they helped build and where newcomers can put down roots and where working Manitobans can feel that stability and opportunity are still within reach.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

Hon. Jamie Moses (Minister of Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation): Honourable deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in this Chamber, always a great—always a pleasure to get a chance to put some words on the record. You are always fortunate, as representatives of our constituencies, to put some words on the record. So very happy to be speaking to this resolution today.

I want to just acknowledge my colleague who just spoke, the member for Tuxedo (MLA Compton). You know, the lights flickered near the end of her comments. Now, in sport and during the—basketball, we would call that shooting the lights out. Her comments were so good. She dunked all over the opposition in their resolution today in her comments and succinctly wrapping up why it's not the best approach for Manitobans when it comes to affordability and housing affordability for Manitobans.

And I want to touch on though—in my remarks. You know, I appreciate the sentiment with which the member opposite brings forward this resolution today, but timing is a lot of it. A lot of life happens because of timing. We look at this resolution being brought forward today at a time when we're in the midst of debating BITSA, the bill put forward to implement our budget as government to bring real affordability for Manitobans.

Now, a member says that this initiative that she's proposing in this resolution would bring forward affordability. But I say to her, if she wants to deliver on real affordability today, literally today, she could work with her colleagues and pass BITSA and ensure that Manitobans can have real affordability through the process of removing their tax off of groceries. That's what we put forward to Manitobans, a real opportunity to live—or to deliver affordability for them where they need it most, at the grocery store, every time they go to buy some food.

And we know families are busy. We know families are busy, they're balancing out paying for things like their mortgage and their—that would be impacted by home ownership. We know they're impacted by paying for affordability on rent. We know that they're also impacted by affordability at the grocery store.

And so, for us, we want to impact them and help them out in all those ways. And that's exactly what we're proposing in our budget that is implemented through BITSA, which we're trying to pass through and is only being blocked by members opposite.

We, in that bill, bring forward affordability for homeowners with the Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit that's going to rise up to \$1,700. We're going to bring forward affordability for renters, which isn't—going to increase the renters tax credit higher after it's been cut and slashed by the former failed PC government.

And we're going to do it in a way that meets renters where they're at, by sending them out quarterly cheques to ensure that they get the money—support their rent when they need it. And on top of that, we want to deliver affordability at the grocery store.

Now, after years of skyrocketing inflation that we saw reach 8 per cent under the former failed government, the leaders of Brian Pallister and Heather Stefanson were okay with inflation reaching 8 per cent. That's not what we want to have for Manitobans. We want to deliver them real affordability.

And so you look at our track record. When we got into government, what did we do to tackle affordability? We cut the gas tax. It was a campaign commitment and something we delivered on immediately. The result of that reduction of cutting the gas tax was that we had the lowest fuel cost in the country for that year. The impact of that is that it dragged down not only Manitoba's inflation to being one of the lowest, if not the lowest in the entire country, it also had the impact of dragging down the national average of inflation throughout that same period.

And the impact of that is that the Bank of Canada was able to assess that because of the lower inflation levels, we could therefore decrease interest rates. And what impact did that have? It actually made home ownership more affordable because people didn't have to pay as high for renewing their mortgage when it came to the interest rate levels.

So you see how our provincial policy had such a great impact not only on affordability for goods that were being transported through grocery stores, people's affordability—whether they're driving on the highway to get to work or to school or to visit a loved one—had an impact also on making their residence, through the impact of lowering interest rates, more affordable. That impacted Manitobans and all Canadians, and that's because of the good work of our government.

Additionally, when it comes to affordability, honourable deputy Speaker, we haven't stopped there. The gas tax led to a series of other affordability

measures that we've taken that have impacted people who rent and people who own. And I think that's one of the other errors of this resolution, that it only would impact people who are trying to own a home. There are thousands of Manitobans who one day would love to own a home but are not in the financial position to do so, and it's us—on government to ensure that we provide real affordability measures for them as well.

We can't pick and choose who we want to support. We've got to support all Manitobans. That's part of our government's policy of building together one Manitoba.

What we see in this resolution is the members opposite clear preference toward only home ownership, only supporting people who can afford a home and leaving to the side people who rent or people who have other housing situations. Now, we want to include those people too. And that's why we took the significant step in last budget to increase our home—our Renters Affordability Tax Credit, and that's why we're taking another step in this budget to increase it again. Because not only does our budget take home ownership affordability seriously, we take renters' affordability seriously as well. That's a government that looks out for not just one set of Manitobans but all Manitobans.

That's why, on top of it, I'm happy to work alongside ministers and colleagues from every part of the province to deliver on affordability. Whether that's the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) or the Minister of Housing, who are passionately delivering on affordability and real housing for people who we are trying to uplift in their lives, including more supports for folks on EIA, folks who are getting housing through Manitoba Housing, Rent Assist. We are improving all of those systems for the entire journey of people on the housing spectrum, and that is led by many of our amazing colleagues in our Cabinet.

And so you clearly see the picture that I'm painting, honourable deputy Speaker, that I hope all Manitobans can understand that we take affordability seriously. Not only do we take it seriously but we're delivering on it.

We're delivering on affordability for people who are just trying to get a roof over their head. We're delivering on affordability for people who rent, for people who own homes as well. As you've seen, we started a Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit at \$1,500 which made sure that more Manitobans were better off under our plan. We then increased it to \$1,600, ensuring that even more Manitobans were

able to benefit from our Homeowners Affordability Tax Credit.

* (11:40)

And this year, in this year's budget, the budget that we are 'intempting' to implement this very day, later this afternoon, would see the benefit for homeowners increase to \$1,700. That's a real opportunity for all members of the Chamber to deliver affordability for the homeowners in Manitoba.

And what is our position? Our position as government is to move full ahead and actually deliver on affordability for Manitobans. What does the opposition say to that? They say, no way. They don't want affordability for homeowners.

Regardless of what they put forward in this sort of resolution today, they obviously don't really care about affordability for homeowners, otherwise they'd be passing our implementation of our budget today. If they cared about affordability for renters, they would pass on—they would pass our budget implementation today. If they cared about affordability for anyone who buys food at grocery stores, they would pass our budget today.

Now, does the member opposite, who brought forward this resolution, have to have anything to say to that? I don't think so. Because I think this is—all well wishes and well intentions aside—I don't think member opposite was serious when she brought forward this resolution today. I think that if she was really serious, she'd be passing our budget today.

One more point I want to bring up, honourable Speaker, in the time that I have left, is that, like this, and similar to their unfunded proposal for change in the basic tax interception, did the member opposite outline how much this resolution would cost Manitoba taxpayers? Did she outline what programs might get cut as a result of this sort of implementation?

Well, did she say how many teachers would get cut? Did she say how many nurses she would fire? Did she say how many schools might get closed? Did she say that? I don't know. So I'm not sure exactly if this is a well-thought-out resolution. But, suffice it to say, honourable deputy Speaker, and to the folks watching throughout Manitoba, our government is delivering on real affordability for homeowners, for renters and for all Manitobans. And we'll keep doing that good work on behalf of this great province.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Wow, you know, honourable Speaker, they just make things up.

And listening to members across the way—or listening to members across the way, it kind of reminds me—and I'm sure many Manitobans will be able to relate to this—but they're kind of like that boss that will give you an apple fritter or bring in a cup of coffee and—when really, you're like, okay, I appreciate this, I appreciate these things, but I'd like a raise.

You know, I—really, it's about the money. I'd like a little more money. And—maybe it's a time—some time off, and well, you know, the boss will hem and haw and can't give you—can't quite give you the raise or can't give you that time off, but here's a cup of coffee. And that's this government. That's this government.

And you really see their academic background come out on a day like today.

You know—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

Mr. Guenter: —no one there has any real life—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

Mr. Guenter: —real work experience. They have no idea what it's like outside the Perimeter. *[interjection]*

And now the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine)—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

Mr. Guenter: —is chirping from a sedentary position. She nearly got up out of her seat, but it's my time now. She had the opportunity. She can take it after. She can take it after. But if she takes the time, I'd like her to explain why is it that she—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

The member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) has the floor.

Mr. Guenter: That's right, Chair. I thank you for that.

And—but, you know, when it comes to affordability, and I'm—one of the things I was so proud of our PC government doing was to actually deliver hundreds of millions of dollars in support for the CLDS sector, for support workers of those of adults living with intellectual disabilities. And one of the things we did was rectify a long-standing problem under the previous NDP government where the wage subsidy in that sector for those support workers was \$14 an hour. We took that up to \$19 an hour.

And that Minister of Families there, who wants to chirp again from a sedentary position, has nothing to say on that file because she and her government have done absolutely nothing for—*[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order.

Mr. Guenter: —vulnerable Manitobans.

And this morning, on a resolution that would save young Manitoba families—young Manitobans who dream about owning a home—would save them thousands of dollars, this NDP government—you know, member—minister after minister, member after member, will get up and talk about this and that and chew their fingernails and wring their hands and, well, we can't do this because it's not the right time. And, you know, and we don't like the context in which is—and all this. You see their academic background come out right now. And that's all they have on that side, by the way. They're all former teachers and former union bosses and former special interest group lobbyists. That's what they are.

They don't know what it's like to work in the real world. They don't know what real life is like. And so they wax academic about a real measure that would actually put real cash back in the pockets of Manitoba families and make home ownership much more attainable at a time when property prices—when home property values are skyrocketing.

You know, and I can't help but think that maybe the reason why they're so defensive of these taxes is because it was the NDP that brought it in in the first place, in 1987. And in fact, today, Manitoba is the only Prairie province to levy a land transfer tax. But not only were they the first ones to bring it in, they also hiked it. Greg Selinger raised the land transfer tax to 2 per cent on properties over \$200,000.

Today in Manitoba, you cannot find a home for sale under \$200,000. I mean, most of the homes—like \$250,000, but that sure ain't much, okay? And, actually, some of the values are actually—are higher for a first-time starter home—you know, \$300,000 or more, or up to \$400,000. It's just crazy. So this has resulted in home ownership being put out of reach for a lot of young Manitobans.

And, today, this government has the opportunity to stand up and say, yes, we support young Manitobans owning a home, and we want to make it easier for to do—for you to do that. And it wouldn't cost a whole lot.

I mean, they had no problem when they came into government, taking a \$373-million surplus and turning it into a \$2-billion deficit. I mean, they'll spend on all their own—[*interjection*]

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order.

Mr. Guenter:—special interests. They'll spend all kinds of money on their special interests and their pet political projects. We can talk about the Manitoba jobs agreement and the slush fund they've set up there. They're taking 85 cents per hour per worker, skimming off the top of—off of public projects, collecting millions and tens of millions of dollars.

So the money is there. It's not about the cost. Once again, they're trying to find every excuse not to provide real property—real tax relief to Manitobans, because they believe this money fundamentally belongs to them. It belongs to the government. And that's the fundamental difference in philosophy here. We believe, on this side of the House, as PC colleagues, that Manitoba taxpayers should be able to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. And on that side, they believe that money belongs to the government. They believe they know how to spend it better than anybody else.

But the problem is, while they're spending—this year \$27 billion—health-care wait times have doubled, and crime is getting worse. Our roads are not getting built, and, frankly, affordability is getting worse for Manitoba families, and our economy is dead last in the country.

So that is—those are the facts. [*interjection*] And again, the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) is sitting there—[*interjection*]

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order.

Mr. Guenter:—and chirping. And I'd welcome her to get up and talk about affordability. I'd welcome colleagues to get up and talk about and actually support a real measure that puts real tax relief on the table for Manitoba families. That's what this is about, and that's what our PC team has always championed. We have always been on the side of putting more money back on the kitchen table. And that's absolutely true. That's absolutely true.

But I have to say—I have to say, as someone who comes from a working-class background, it frankly, it makes me sick to hear members across the way in their ivory towers talking about—waxing academic again and going on and on, okay, about how that—a measure like this, it's not the right time for it, or what would it

cost Manitoba taxpayers. I mean, the irony of the minister asking what a measure like this would cost Manitoba taxpayers. It's their own money. Like, we're just letting them keep more of their own money.

* (11:50)

So, frankly, I am quite sick of hearing NDP ministers and members across the way, you know, talk about their failed record on affordability. And the reality is they do make things up every single day in this House. They absolutely make things up. They take credit for things they have no business taking credit for, and they shift the blame to everyone but themselves when they're the ones to blame. They really do.

And, frankly, the City of Winnipeg is sick of it when it comes to education property taxes. They actually put out a mailer explaining, hey, this isn't us, you've got to talk to your NDP MLAs when it comes to education property tax hikes, because that's their record. That's the NDP record on affordability. But they take credit for things like the PC income tax cuts, which they had nothing to do with, and they came into effect a couple—two months after they took office, the NDP took office, and they take credit for them. They had nothing to do with that.

So, frankly, they make things up all the time. I would implore members across the way to be factual, to be relevant and to speak in support—and to actually not only speak in support but to actually deliver real affordability for Manitoba families. [*interjection*]

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

This is a beautiful, beautiful Chamber, and you are all beautiful. I would request everybody to please behave beautifully as well, please.

MLA Billie Cross (Seine River): I don't know about you, but I have a really, really sore neck. Any of my colleagues? And I think I know why a lot of us have sore necks right now. We have whiplash from this caucus on this side of the House who doesn't know what they want to do.

One minute, spend more. One minute, cut taxes. One minute, oh my gosh, do this, do that. They have no identity, just like their politics. Their policy is out there. Manitobans voted very clearly in 2023 that they wanted a change. This opposition caucus has not changed one bit. Do not believe a word that's coming out of their mouths, Manitobans, because this is bologna.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

MLA Cross: I can't believe how hard—well, you guys got away with saying it, why can't I? I love bologna, by the way; however, I prefer it just on sandwiches or maybe fried. *[interjection]* This morning's all about food. I think we're all really hungry for lunch. *[interjection]* Yes.

Honourable assistant deputy Speaker, I have three children. My youngest son is currently saving to buy a home. So, you know, we're in that stage of our lives as parents where our kids have moved out; they're buying homes, they're saving. Two of my kids have homes, my third one is saving. He works for CN. My daughter-in-law works for The Winnipeg Foundation. She goes to full-school full time—evenings, week-ends—to get a university degree to try and better herself. My grandson is going to be six this summer. They are a busy, busy working family.

Do you know how thrilled they are at the aspect of not paying PST on chickens and salads and things at the grocery store? They don't have time to go home every night and cook a full meal. But it's so important that my grandson still eats a healthy meal. It's so important that they have grab-and-go items.

The fact that you don't have to pay PST on any grocery item in the store—who wouldn't want that? Oh, right, the PC caucus, the people who pretend that they want tax cut after tax cut—they're blocking a tax cut. I don't get it. I'm completely confused.

You know, this morning they also talked about, you guys got to stop talking about seven or eight years of us being in government. Do they realize how many times this morning they noted that it was a previous NDP government that brought in this land transfer tax to begin with? What are they talking about? Whiplash again.

They are so confused that they don't even know how to stand up and debate the real merits of what they want to do. Because I don't think that when they get up to debate they're thinking of Manitobans. They're thinking of their political futures.

And I can tell you for a fact that if something was going on in my caucus where I couldn't feel proud to stand here every day as a mother, a grandmother and someone who's a teacher, I would step aside and do the right thing and not stand up and support things that don't help Manitobans. I didn't take this job on to make my—to further myself. I took it on to help other people. And I think anybody who's in this room should be absolutely doing the same. They shouldn't be standing

up and flaming people. They shouldn't be standing up making comments towards individuals that are derogatory or that are disrespectful. And it happens all the time.

I sit on the PC caucus side because they don't have enough members. Because Manitobans, the majority, trusted us and elected us to do a job here. And the things that I have to listen to day after day on this side of the room would make Manitobans sick to their stomach. It is so seldom that I hear a caucus member on this side complain about a male colleague across the aisle, but I constantly hear them complain about the females in this room. Why? Because as soon as a woman stands up and stands up for herself and others, she's labelled angry. She's labelled, you know—oh, she's a bully. And I hear it all the time. And it happened this morning. So shame on that member for standing up and inflaming a situation.

Let's now continue to debate the land transfer tax. My question—I kind of have a question for folks, and I'd like an answer at some point. If we brought in this tax years ago—a previous NDP government—then you came into power for seven and a half years, why didn't you get rid of it? Why didn't you do the right thing instead of standing up right now and telling us to—pointing fingers at us, telling us how to govern?

Because it doesn't make sense. Because government needs to find balance. Government needs to make decisions to keep the province moving forward. They need to think long term. They need to be fiscally responsible. Government can't do everything for everyone. But our job is to try and find a way to do things so that the majority of Manitobans feel supported so that they have a good life, so they can do all the things that they want to do. That's the simple fact. Our job in this place is to do our very best to represent folks.

I've heard members stand up for—here for weeks talking about the property education taxes that are, you know, coming out right now. People are seeing their bills. Well, shame on every single person in this room who is complaining about funding for schools. Do you not have children or grandchildren that go to school that need supports? Absolutely, you do.

And you know what? I haven't got my tax bill yet—it just hasn't arrived—but my parents got theirs yesterday. And so I had a chance to visit them. I looked at their tax bill. And guess what? Guess what, honourable deputy Speaker? Their school portion is \$1,900. Under the previous PC government and their scheme to give rebate cheques to try and buy votes,

you know what they would have received? Half that amount.

An Honourable Member: Table it.

MLA Cross: Just under \$1,000. Guess what they're getting with our government—\$1,600. That's affordability.

They can say, table it. Here's what I would say. They should get out, knock on doors. I've hit over 2,000 doors in my constituency in the last month. And guess what I'm hearing from folks? You guys are on the right track. *[interjection]* Oh, someone asked if there's an election coming. No, this is the work I do every year. I go through my entire constituency every single year so that I actually listen to the folks in Seine River.

Imagine that. Isn't that crazy—I don't wait for an election? And guess what? Not one single person—over 2,000 people we've talked to—not one single person said, yes, my education property taxes are too high. You know what they're saying? They're saying,

Premier's (Mr. Kinew) on the right track; you guys are doing great; thank you for repairing health care.

Yes, there's more work to do. They understand that. They know that we can't fix what they did in two years. Three emergency rooms they closed and now they sit here, stand here, every day after day, complaining that rooms are filled in hospitals, that the emergency rooms are overrun, that people are waiting. It's their fault. If people had made better choices who sat in these seats, they would have put Manitobans first. They would have made sure that people had the resources they needed to be healthy.

We listen to members on this side complain about unions. The Manitoba—

The Acting Speaker (Diljeet Brar): Order, please.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 14, 2026

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