



Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LXXX No. 56B – 1:30 p.m., Thursday, May 14, 2026

ISSN 0542-5492

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 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Susan and Richard Nowell

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Today I rise to honour the lives of Susan and Richard Nowell of Lac du Bonnet, whose passing last year during the wildfires left a deep loss that continues to be felt across Manitoba.

Susan and Richard were more than respected members of their community; they were the kind of people who quietly made life better for everyone around them. They were compassionate neighbours, devoted parents, loyal friends and people who never hesitated to lend a helping hand.

Richard, known to many as Richie, was someone who loved the outdoors. He loved fishing and he loved fixing just about anything with a motor. He shared that knowledge generously, especially with his sons.

Susan brought the warmth and kindness everywhere she went. She dedicated countless hours supporting community initiatives, helping friends and family in need and creating spaces where people could gather, connect and feel cared for. Through her work at Mrs. Lucci's Resource Centre and Café Lucci, she touched countless lives in Lac du Bonnet and beyond.

Together, Sue and Richie lift—pardon me—together, Sue and Richie built a life centred around family, community and caring for others. Their greatest pride was their three sons, T.C., Ryland and Emmett. Everything they did was rooted in love for their boys and for their community that they called home.

Whether it was driving across Manitoba for hockey tournaments, helping neighbours during difficult times or simply making people feel welcome around their table, they lived lives defined by generosity and compassion.

I also want to take a moment to commend the courage and service of their son, Ryland, and his partner,

Madison Langrell, both Manitoba conservation patrol officers, who spent last year's wildfire season helping protect and evacuate Manitobans from danger in other communities.

So, in the midst of their tragedy, Madison, as well as their son, Emmett, showed extraordinary bravery in attempting to reach and help Susan and Richard during the fire and reflecting the same compassion, selflessness and courage that defined their lives.

Today, we also recognize the family and loved ones that they leave behind: their sons, extended family members, friends and neighbours who continue to carry their memory forward. Manitoba grieves alongside them and we thank them for sharing Susan and Richard with us.

Our government is committed to ensuring their legacy is never forgotten. That's why the bridge over the Winnipeg River on Provincial Road 313 in Lac du Bonnet will be renamed the Susan and Richard Nowell Memorial Bridge. It will stand as a permanent reminder of two people whose kindness, generosity and love for community left a lasting mark in Manitoba.

May their memory continue to guide us in how we care for one another, especially in times of hardship.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Today I rise in remembrance of Richard and Susan Nowell of Lac du Bonnet as we mark one year since the tragic wildfire that took their lives and forever changed our community.

Richard and Susan were more than victims of a terrible disaster. They were deeply loved by people, who gave so much of themselves to others.

As our community continues to grieve, many residents are still carrying difficult questions about the response to this wildfire. It has been said that the fire was predictable and that the situation was under control—far from the truth.

For the families and community members who lost loved ones, those words have been painful to hear. If this disaster was truly foreseeable, many of the—many in Lac du Bonnet are still waiting for acknowledgment and accountability that reflects the gravity of what our community endured.

Richard Nowell was known as a hard-working man who loved the outdoors, loved his family and was always willing to help a neighbour in need.

Susan cared deeply for the young people she worked with and believed every child deserved patience, encouragement and dignity. I had the pleasure of working with Susan and the Lucci staff with many youth in our communities. She is definitely going to be missed. Her kindness left a lasting impact on so many families that it's even difficult to count.

Together, Richard and Susan represented the very best of Manitoba: compassion, generosity, resilience and community spirit.

Today, I also want to recognize the extraordinary support shown in the aftermath of that tragedy. I would like to thank Manitobans from every corner of this province who stepped up during one of the hardest times our community has ever faced.

To Reeve Loren Shinkel, Fire Chief Simmons, John Fleming, first responders, volunteers, neighbours and all of those who came to help: thank you. Your compassion carried people through unimaginable grief.

In moments like these, we are reminded that Manitoba is strongest when we stand together.

May Richard and Susan Nowell continue to be remembered with honour, and may their family and our community continue to find strength in the overwhelming support that surrounded them in their darkest days.

Honourable Speaker, I ask leave for a moment of silence after everyone has had the opportunity to speak to the ministerial statement. And I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this statement.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence?
[Agreed]

A moment of silence was observed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I rise today to recognize the international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, observed every year on May 17.

This day is about raising awareness of the long and painful history of discrimination, violence and

rights violations faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ people here in Manitoba, across Canada and around the world, and to also raise awareness regarding the freedoms which have been hard-fought for by these communities and our allies.

It's also a day of collective action—a worldwide celebration of sexual and gender diversity and a call to stand firmly against hate, bigotry and exclusion in all of its forms.

This year's theme, At the heart of democracy, is especially fitting because democracy is not just about elections or institutions; democracy is about people. It's about whether everyone can participate fully, safely and authentically in public life. It's about whether everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

We have members, Honourable Speaker, in this very Chamber who've contributed to a more fair and just democracy for all, all of that being before they were elected.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MLA Naylor) fought hard for parents in this province—protests at the Leg., a Charter challenge, speaking to government committees and media interviews—all for queer parents, so they have the legal rights to be parents of their own children. And it worked.

The MLA for Kirkfield Park fought tirelessly to advance trans rights in Manitoba through legislation and by being a strong and visible and positive representation.

Since forming government in 2023, our team, under the leadership of a Premier (Mr. Kinew) who regularly reminds trans kids that he has their backs, we have advanced more legislation celebrating, cementing and affirming 2SLGBTQIA+ rights than ever before.

* (13:40)

Our government is proud to have a diverse caucus that includes members of these communities. We are proud to have MLAs on this side of the House who show up every day for their constituents—all constituents—and for Manitobans as they are, true and authentically.

Representation matters. It matters for young 'peoper' who are searching for belonging, it matters for families and it matters for the future of this province we love and call home.

And yet, Honourable Speaker, it is so often in democratic spaces, including this very Chamber, where we continue to see some of the most troubling behaviours directed at queer and trans people. The PCs have a long and callous record when it comes to the queer community. Too often, they have not just tolerated hate, they have encouraged it.

For years, the MLA for Borderland and other PCs have routinely refused to stand or applaud for 2SLGBTQIA+ Manitobans who are being recognized and honoured in this Chamber.

The MLA for Roblin once wore a pink shirt to single-to signal support for trans people, yet she remains part of a caucus that includes four members who voted against legislation to simply recognize the existence and humanity of two-spirit and transgender Manitobans and, in fact, voted against legislation that would protect the gender expression of all Manitobans. I wonder what thousands of progressive voters in Roblin will make of that during the next election.

And the Leader of the Opposition has led the way and has led the example on that side of the House in the worst way possible. Manitobans will remember the transphobic rhetoric and fear mongering during the last election campaign, the so-called parental rights messaging that targeted the most vulnerable youth in our province: trans youth.

Just weeks ago, this House saw a ruling confirming the dehumanizing comments directed at myself, but more importantly, comments that were directed at the many Manitobans who share that lived experience, many of them being youth, across Manitoba. But, thankfully, Honourable Speaker, Manitobans continue to reject that politics of division. They continue to reject that politics of hate.

Young 2SLGBTQIA+ Manitobans deserve a government and a democracy that sees them, values them and stands with them. They deserve leaders who believe in their right to live openly, safely and authentically. And that is exactly what our government will continue to do.

We are proud to support organizations doing life-changing and life-saving work in our communities. Manitoba is the first jurisdiction in Canada to host a two-spirit powwow and two-spirit sun dance led by Elders like Elder Charlotte Nolin, Elder Barbara Bruce and Elder Albert McLeod: two-spirit Elders carrying knowledge across generations, contributing to making Manitoba a more beautiful, better and safer place for all of us.

We're proud to celebrate Place of Pride as the only 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors housing in the country, right here in Manitoba and right here in Union Station.

We have incredible young leaders in rural communities, like the folks at Pembina Valley Pride, who are strengthening unity in our province and strengthening our province as a whole by choosing to be visible and proud and to welcome people to their communities to celebrate their diversity.

And so, Honourable Speaker, I will repeat the message I always share with young Manitobans who are impacted by homophobia, biphobia and transphobia: Wherever you are in this province, you deserve to be respected, you deserve to be supported, you deserve to be loved and you deserve to be treated with dignity and common decency. Every single member of our government—every single member of our government—stands for that, and every single member of our government will stand with you.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): I am honoured to rise today to recognize the international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia that takes place this Saturday, May 17. This day is observed in over 130 countries, uniting millions of people across the world.

Over the last few decades, Canada has been a global leader in promoting acceptance, inclusion and universal equal rights. It's a record that adds to the countless reasons that makes me proud to be a Canadian.

It was just less than 30 years ago that Manitoba elected its first openly gay member of the Legislature. And despite the minister's personal political attacks on me today, I do want to recognize them as Manitoba's first non-binary MLA, and their colleague, the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Oxenham), as the province's first openly transgender MLA.

Yet, far too often, Manitobans have been bullied, threatened and even physically harmed simply for who they love and how they identify. That's the harsh reality of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. And we as legislators all have a duty to ensure that every Manitoban, no matter who they are, is afforded dignity, freedom and safety. And this ideal absolutely includes Manitobans from the 2SLGBTQ+ community, whose full participation in our society is vital to building a stronger province.

I know that all of us in this Chamber are committed to ensuring that our province is a place where all Manitobans can thrive.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Just before moving on to members' statements, there's some guests that I would like to introduce.

In the loge to my right, we're joined by Senator Marilou McPhedran.

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

And I would also draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Canadian Parents for French.

And on behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Robert Watkins

Hon. Mike Moyes (Minister of Environment and Climate Change): I rise to honour the extraordinary life and exemplary service of Robert Watkins, a proud Second World War naval veteran whose devotion to country and community was nothing short of heroic.

The province of Manitoba lost a towering figure of courage and commitment when he passed away on April 2, at the age of 101.

Born in Brooklands and raised in Winnipeg, he began his naval journey at 14 with the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets, at—and at 18, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy, training out of the HMCS Chippawa.

From his earliest days, he embodied the finest virtues of service: unwavering duty, steadfast resolve and an inspiring sense of sacrifice.

In 1943, he sailed overseas and served, patrolling the English Channel, the Irish Sea and the North Atlantic.

He served with remarkable bravery and professionalism, helping to protect convoys and save lives. After his wartime discharge in 1946, he rejoined the naval reserves, serving another decade, remaining a proud and active member of the naval community.

Back home in Winnipeg, he made a lifetime career in public transit, retiring in 1984 as superintendent of schedules.

Bob was a devoted family man: the loving husband of Jean for 56 years; father to Debbie and Sandra; grandfather to Lauren, Wade, Jaclyn, Melissa and Garrett; and proud great-grandfather to Seth, Colette, Connor and Nolan.

His centenary was celebrated by the naval community and his family, who remembered him for his service, stories and his gentle, dry humour.

Honourable Speaker, we honour Lieutenant-Commander Robert or "Bob" Watkins for his extraordinary courage at sea, his decades of selfless service to Manitoba and the luminous example he set for generations.

I invite members to join me in remembering his life and offering heartfelt condolences to his family, including his daughter and nephew and members of the Armed Forces who have joined us today in the gallery.

I would ask for their names to be added to Hansard and for leave for a moment of silence.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Sandy Lopushansky, Robert Watkins.

Lieutenant-Commander Craig Lemoine, Commander Dan Smith.

The Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

A moment of silence was observed.

* (13:50)

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Peyton Morrow

Ms. Jodie Byram (Agassiz): I rise today to recognize an exceptional young member of Agassiz: Peyton Morrow, and I welcome her and her family here to the gallery today.

Peyton is a grade 6 student whose first place junior essay in the Royal Canadian Legion's Remembrance Day literary contest has earned her well-deserved recognition, reflecting both her writing talent and respect for Canada's military history.

It is also fitting to recognize Peyton during nurses' week, when we honour those who dedicate their lives to caring for others. Her essay about women who stepped forward in times of war reflects that same spirit of strength and service.

Peyton's connection to service runs deep with family who have served in the military, and her parents and grandparents are proud members of the local Legion. Peyton herself is a familiar face there, often attending bingo with her mom and aunt. She recently read her award-winning essay at the Legion 110 and was invited to share it again at the 45th Annual Vimy & Beyond Fundraiser at the 26th regiment, Brandon Armoury, a meaningful honour for a young writer.

Beyond her writing, Peyton is an active and enthusiastic student. She enjoys math, social studies, participates in sports and plays hockey out of Neepawa, where she and her team earned silver at provincials. She also plays softball in Gladstone and loves golf in the summer.

It's meaningful to see a young person engaging with history, particularly during difficult times, when understanding the sacrifices and courage of those who have served helps ground us in values and resilience, compassion and community.

Peyton is a wonderful example of talent, leadership and heart in young people across rural Manitoba.

Congratulations, Peyton, on your accomplishments, and I ask leave to read Peyton's short essay as well as have her name and her guests' names entered into Hansard.

Sydney Baskier, Brett Morrow, Karmelle Morrow, Kelly Morrow, Peyton Morrow, Richard Tower.

The Speaker: Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Byram: Women in War.

Women contributed enormously in war for these reasons. They were nurses in the first war, nurturing the wounded during the war. In the Second World War they returned as nurses, again going by sister or ma'am. Post-Second World War, a handful of the women were sent to Korea. This is how women contributed to the wars.

In the First World War, women's contributions were working as nurses. They were called Nursing Sisters because they were taken from the ranks of religious institutes. The number of Canadian women nurses was exceeding 2,800 serving in World War I. They were nicknamed the bluebirds because of their blue dresses and white veil, and were extremely respected. This is how women helped in World War I.

In the Second World War, the women returned to Nursing Sisters. There were roughly 4,500 nurses attached to all three branches of Canada's military;

two-thirds of them served overseas. In the Second World War, Nursing Sisters wore military apparel and a white veil. They would also serve in other roles during the war and eventually 50,000 women applied for other roles in the military. This is how women helped in the Second World War.

These are the contributions of women post-second war. Women were sent to Korea to act as Nursing Sisters in the Korean War. The military faced a shortage of personnel and 5,000 women were recruited again. The number of nurses started to decline in the mid-1950s, when new technology reduced the need for more personnel in various trades.

This is what women did to help post-second war. These are the ways women helped in the First World War, the Second World War and post-second war.

In the First World War, the women cared for the wounded on the battlefield. In the Second World War, they returned as nurses and played important roles in the war. Post-second war, women were sent to Korea to nurse during the Korean War. Without women, lots of soldiers wouldn't have survived the war.

Anjad Sabir

Hon. Mintu Sandhu (Minister of Public Service Delivery): Today I rise to recognize the inspiring work of Anjad Sabir, a highly respected East Indian music teacher with over 35 years of experience sharing the beauty of South Asian music.

Since immigration to Canada in 1993, Mr. Sabir has made a meaningful impact in Winnipeg through his dedication to teaching and performance. He has taught at the Indian school of dance and music, and the University of Manitoba, and continues to inspire students in the Seven Oaks School Division.

Mr. Sabir is currently teaching the traditional instrument known as tabla to the students in the Seven Oaks School Division. Through his lessons, he is helping students build discipline, confidence and creativity. For many students, especially those from South Asian backgrounds, his classes serve as an important link to their cultural roots and to help foster inclusion and belonging within the school community.

Through his work, Mr. Sabir continues to show how music can unite people and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Mr. Sabir for his dedication to our students and sharing the art of tabla music in Winnipeg.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Mike Ledarney

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I rise today to recognize and honour Mike Ledarney for his remarkable 28 years of service supporting Manitoba's parliamentary and political process.

Mike began his career with the Progressive Conservative caucus in October of 1997 and has since worked alongside many members of the Legislative Assembly, caucus staff and provincial leaders through the decades of change in Manitoba politics. Throughout his career, Mike has earned the respect of colleagues across this building throughout—through his professionalism, dedication and strong work ethic.

Over the years, Mike served during the leadership of Premier Gary Filmon, Stuart Murray, Hugh McFayden, Premier Brian Pallister, the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), Premier Heather Stefanson, Bonnie Mitchelson and the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko). He also worked closely with the many current and former MLAs and staff whose contributions helped shaped the province.

In addition to his work in the Legislature, Mike has served as a councillor for the Town of Teulon from 2002 to 2019. He volunteered countless hours during provincial election campaigns and remained committed to the public service, both inside and outside of these halls. He even stepped forward as a candidate in Inkster in 2003, demonstrating his belief in democracy and civic participation.

Careers lasting over three decades are built on loyalty, commitment and service to others. Mike Ledarney's contributions to the Manitoba legislative community and public life deserve to be recognized and appreciated.

Please join me in recognizing Mike, who joins us in the gallery, for the years of dedicated service and wish him all the best in the future.

Concordia Hospital's Extended Hours Primary Care Clinic

MLA Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Honourable Speaker, improved access to Concordia Hospital's new Extended Hours Primary Care Clinic means residents can get the right level of care weekdays between 5:30 and 11:30 p.m., and weekends between 1:00 and 11:30 p.m. The clinic's open 365 days a year, including holidays.

These new extended hours provide better ways of delivering primary care matters because emergency

departments across Canada are under growing strain of an aging population.

At Concordia Hospital, the Extended Hours Primary Care Clinic is helping lead this effort. Located in room M-127-A through the Concordia Hospital's main entrance, the clinic provides timely care when your family doctor may not be available. Patients can walk in, but it's best to book your same-day appointment online at myrightcare.ca.

These clinics are staffed by skilled health-care professionals and offer services similar to a family doctor's office, treating infections, minor injuries, chronic conditions and more. They also provide vaccinations, when available, and on-site bloodwork, making care more convenient and comprehensive.

* (14:00)

By ensuring patients are seen in the right place at the right time, we're reducing pressure on emergency departments and improving wait times for everyone. We're rebuilding health care with practical solutions, better access and a system that gets patients better service with quicker results and better health outcomes.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

First-Time Home Buyers Request to Eliminate Land Transfer Tax

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): You know, the NDP never met a tax that they didn't like and that they didn't hike. They reinstated the gas tax and they've jacked up income and education property taxes on Manitoba families.

This morning, our PC team put forward a common sense resolution calling on this government to eliminate the land transfer tax for first-time home buyers. Homeownership, as we all know, is a dream of many young Manitobans, and the land transfer tax is a massive barrier to buying that first home.

The problem is, as the NDP made clear this morning, they don't support giving Manitoba families a break.

The question is: Why not?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, Manitobans know that the team they can trust to make their lives more affordable and lower their tax is on this side of the House; it's an NDP government that's doing that for Manitobans.

Honourable Speaker, the best Finance Minister in all of Canada happens to sit to my right and happens to have brought forward an incredible budget bill that's going to make life more affordable for Manitobans.

Members on that side of the House, including the MLA for Borderland, have a decision to make. Are they going to make life more expensive for Manitobans by getting in the way, or are they going to get out of the way and support that bill today?

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

Mr. Guenter: You know, the NDP are masters of disguise. They try to take credit for tax cuts that were passed by the previous PC government, all while finding creative ways of jacking up your taxes. When we call them out, they find other people to blame. Even the City of Winnipeg is done with their blame games.

But the real question is: Why do they not support removing barriers to the dream of homeownership for young Manitobans? Why don't they support eliminating the land transfer tax for first-time Manitoba home buyers?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, part of the affordability challenges that we're facing nationally as Canadians, not just in Manitoba, is because of the Donald Trump imposed tariffs.

The member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) is somebody who openly talked about how he would welcome—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —us becoming the 51st state. Honourable Speaker, Manitobans can't trust anything he has to say about making their lives more affordable.

On this side of the House, we've condemned those tariffs and we've taken steps to make life more affordable.

They need to support our BITSA bill today and start making sure that they're doing something different than they've done the last many years and make life more affordable for Manitobans across the province.

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

Mr. Guenter: Well, they're just making it up again.

But maybe the reason the NDP is so insistent on charging the land transfer tax on first-time and low-income Manitoba home buyers is because it was the NDP who brought it in. In fact, Manitoba is the only Prairie province to impose a land transfer tax, and it's the NDP that are keeping it in place today.

This tax adds thousands of dollars to the cost of two-bedroom starter homes, and at a time when Manitobans are being priced out of the housing market, why does this Premier (Mr. Kinew) refuse to support real tax relief?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, our Finance Minister has brought forward the single greatest affordability measure on tax rebates for property that we've seen in Manitoba—a \$1,700 tax rebate for Manitobans. That's going to make sure that more Manitobans have the ability to do more with their dollar in their household. He's also brought forward measures to make renters' lives more affordable in Manitoba.

On that side of the House, they made life more expensive for renters, more expensive for homeowners, more expensive for everybody across the board. They need to get on side with Manitobans, support our tax measures today.

International Investment Projects Provincial Comparison

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, yesterday morning, Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism admitted what Manitobans already know: Manitoba's falling behind in attracting investment and jobs.

Last year, Manitoba secured only six international investment projects—only six—while Alberta and BC both attracted 68; Saskatchewan, 13; and Ontario, a staggering 278. Their own officials warned Manitoba is becoming out of sight for investors.

So my question, Honourable Speaker: Why has this government allowed Manitoba to fall so far behind in attracting investment?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, what that member needs to be concerned about is attracting members to their PC caucus. They're losing MLAs faster than they're going to be able to gain them.

On this side of the House, Honourable Speaker, we are focused on moving Manitoba in the right direction. We are working with partners across the country. We're working with our federal partners to bring forward

what is going to be a generational investment in Churchill. The Port of Churchill is an investment for not only Manitoba, but for the entire country.

But, Honourable Speaker, that member has a choice to make today. He can either get on side with Manitobans and support our bill that's going to make life more affordable, or he can stay on that side of the House and make life more expensive for Manitobans across the province.

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

Attracting Investment to Manitoba Regulatory and Approval Timelines

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, every day, more and more Manitobans are talking about this NDP's failure. And yesterday at the Winnipeg investment forum, business leaders said investors are asking Manitoba basic questions about servicing, approvals, rezoning and timelines, and Manitoba still cannot give any clear answers. Their own officials admitted that if investors do not get answers quickly, they're simply going to go elsewhere.

Why has this government failed to create a competitive and predictable business environment right here in Manitoba?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, that member is just wrong.

Our minister of business, mining, jobs—mining, trade and job creation is doing a phenomenal job. He's doing an incredible job working with industry, working with businesses to grow opportunities in Manitoba. His track record is clear, it is phenomenal, it is moving Manitoba in a great direction.

Their track record is also clear and it's terrible; it's a bad one for Manitobans. He can take a step in a better direction by supporting our measures to make life more affordable for Manitobans and business owners today. Is he going to do that, yes or no?

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

Economic Growth Plan Request to Develop

Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye): Honourable Speaker, unfortunately, the minister is saying that the Winnipeg Economic Development & Tourism board is also wrong. But other provinces are aggressively competing for investment and streamlining approvals,

international business development networks and long-term economic strategies.

Meanwhile, Manitoba's exports are down a staggering 27.2 per cent, and that's just in one year. Along with that, investment is lagging and economic growth continues to trail all of the rest of the country.

When will this government finally implement a real economic growth plan instead of simply watching Manitoba fall further and further behind?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Deputy Premier): Honourable Speaker, I'd say that 36,000 jobs is pretty good growth. Here in Manitoba, we are leading the country in job growth. We have the lowest unemployment in Canada.

Honourable Speaker, the failed former PCs, they scaled back our province's presence around the world, closing offices in Washington, in Mexico, in South America, in Europe. We are doing the work to clean up their mess and make—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara:—sure our province is the best it can possibly be, but we're also doing the work of making life more affordable.

That member has a choice. Is he going to vote to support Manitobans having better affordability, or is he going to vote for what they did for seven and half years and that's make life more—less affordable for Manitobans, yes or no?

Diagnostic Imaging Services Wait Times Across the Province

Mrs. Kathleen Cook (Roblin): Wait times for critical diagnostic tests have soared under this NDP government's watch. In the last year alone, wait times for a CT scan have jumped by 44 per cent at Concordia Hospital, 90 per cent at St. Boniface, 216 per cent at HSC and 318 per cent at the Grace Hospital. Yes, wait times for a CT scan at the Grace have more than quadrupled in the last year under the NDP, soaring from 11 weeks one year ago to 46 weeks today. That's nearly a one-year wait for a CT scan.

* (14:10)

Why is it that, under the NDP, wait times for critical diagnostic tests continue to get so much worse?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I actually had a meeting earlier this week with the leads for diagnostic services at Shared Health—*[interjection]*—and it was really interesting. I'm happy to provide some information.

If the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth) wants to continue to heckle so that I can't be heard, he's welcome to. *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: As I was saying, Honourable Speaker, and what was made very clear was that, after seven and a half years of divesting and non-investing and cutting diagnostic services, there's a lot of work our government has to do. But I'm happy to share that we are doing more diagnostic tests now in Manitoba than we ever have before—ever before in this province.

We know there's a lot more work to do. We're hiring and training the folks we need to do it. We're going to keep that work going for Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Cook: These are all wait times that have risen in the last year. There is simply no credible way for this NDP minister to blame the previous government for it. Ultrasound wait times are now skyrocketing right across the province.

In Brandon, they're up 69 per cent since last year, to 22 weeks; Dauphin, up 43 per cent in a year; Neepawa, up 142 per cent now, at 29 weeks; Boundary Trails, up 112 per cent since last year; Steinbach, up 118 per cent, now sitting at 24 weeks.

Why are ultrasound wait times throughout rural Manitoba soaring under the NDP? *[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I had a meeting earlier this week with a doctor—a radiologist, actually, out in Dauphin, who thanked me for sitting down and having a conversation with her to understand what more we can do to support them having—getting their patients more access to care in her region. And she said to me something that I thought was really interesting, that never before had a Health minister responded to her request for a meeting. Seven and a half years.

The previous PC government not only cut the services her patients counted on; they wouldn't even bother to sit down and have a conversation with her.

Honourable Speaker, what are we doing? We're fixing the damage they did. We're cleaning the mess that they made. And we're moving health care in a better direction for all Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Cook: This minister can have all the meetings they want; it's not making a dent in wait times.

Winnipeg ultrasound wait times are somehow even worse than they are in rural Manitoba. At Concordia, the wait time has more than tripled to 20 weeks. Wait times at the Grace are two and a half times longer than they were a year ago, now 31 weeks. HSC has more than doubled—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Cook: —soaring from 11 weeks to 25 weeks. Misericordia is now two and a half times higher, at 28 weeks. And 35 weeks for an ultrasound at St. Boniface, almost quadruple what it was a year ago.

When is this minister going to take action for the nearly 40,000 people now waiting for a CT—or an ultrasound, pardon me—in Manitoba?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, what we're dealing with in Manitoba is the fact that for seven and a half years, Manitobans couldn't get access to a doctor. Manitobans couldn't get access to a doctor to even get the referrals for diagnostics.

Thankfully, we are now leading the country in access to primary care. In just over two and a half years, Manitobans—nine out of 10 can get access to a doctor. And we're also doing the work of making sure we have more diagnostic capacity. We're doing more diagnostic tests than we ever have. But we're also doing the work of developing a strategy to train, retain and recruit the necessary workforce to deliver this care to Manitobans.

That didn't happen for seven and a half years. Cuts have consequences, Honourable Speaker. Shame on them for creating those consequences that Manitobans are still dealing with.

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

The honourable member for Roblin, on a new question.

Mrs. Cook: It is astounding the lengths the NDP will go to in an attempt to dodge responsibility for their own failures. These wait times have doubled, tripled, quadrupled in the last year under an NDP government. A year ago, if you needed a bone density test in Winnipeg, you were waiting for 11 weeks. Today, Manitobans are waiting 26 weeks. This wait time has more than doubled in a year.

Why has the government allowed the wait time for bone density testing to more than double over the last year?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, we're actually doing the work in Manitoba to make sure that if you need this care, there are folks in Manitoba who are being trained, who are being retained and recruited to deliver this care.

I find it fascinating—fascinating—that members opposite refuse to acknowledge (1) how long it takes to train these professionals. Over seven and a half years, we could have had double the workforce if they had bothered to train those folks in those professions. What did they do instead? They cut those training seats. They cut those services.

Cuts have consequences, Honourable Speaker. We're fixing their mess. We're cleaning up the damage that they made in Manitoba. Shame on them.

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

Mrs. Cook: These wait times are double, triple and quadruple what they were under the previous PC government. They're double, triple and quadruple what they were just last year. The wait time for an MRI in Brandon has now soared from 16 weeks to 25 weeks, but if you need an MRI today at the Health Sciences Centre, you'll be waiting an astounding 53 weeks, more than a year. That wait time has more than quadrupled in the last year alone.

There are nearly 22,000 Manitobans waiting for an MRI.

Why is it that under the NDP, they're waiting four times longer now than they were just a year ago?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, under the previous PC government, Manitobans were not able to even—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —get a referral for care.

I don't know if the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Narth), who likes to hear his own voice, continues to heckle, understands what that means. It means that Manitobans couldn't even get a referral for services.

Our government is taking the approach of making sure that those folks who were waiting the longest because they couldn't get access to that care are now finally being seen. We're also doing the work of

making sure that we are training people. We're adding seats so we have more capacity sooner than later, work that also was never done for seven and a half years.

So, Honourable Speaker, I won't take any lessons from the people who cut services, who caused chaos and don't understand—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Cook: Honourable Speaker, the facts don't lie. They're all publicly posted online. These wait times are atrocious, and the fact that they have doubled, tripled and quadrupled in the last year is shocking. But behind every one of these statistics are tens of thousands of Manitobans waiting in pain and uncertainty for the diagnostic test they need before they can get a diagnosis and begin treatment.

Why is it that the longer the NDP are in power, the worse everything seems to get?

MLA Asagwara: Honourable Speaker, I want to take this moment to thank Marlene, who was actually the guest of the member for Roblin a couple of days ago here in the gallery. I had a really wonderful meeting with her after question period about home care.

And what I thought was really unfortunate was that after the PCs realized that there were no cameras that were going to stick around to talk to Marlene, the member for Roblin couldn't be bothered to make sure she had a way to get home.

Honourable Speaker, that is the way—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —the PCs behave on that side of the House. We are focused on taking care of Manitobans, listening to their concerns and addressing their needs in a respectful—[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —and appropriate way. We'll take no lessons from the PCs who continue to take a callous approach to Manitobans.

Your Way Home Strategy Community Safety and Local Impacts

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): Many organizations in West Broadway have expressed concern about increased crime and drug use in the area. West End BIZ has specifically noticed increased property

damage and threatening behaviour in the area since Your Way Home strategy started moving people in.

Unbelievably, the minister's response to CBC, and I quote: For folks to try and paint incidents in any of these communities as if these folks are responsible for what's happening is a disservice.

Honourable Speaker, is the minister suggesting the increase in violent assaults and open drug use in the neighbourhood is just a coincidence?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Manitobans understand that as we stand up the services and supports to ensure that we're getting at the root causes of crime, we're also going to make sure that we get tough on crime. And what that looks like in neighbourhoods throughout our city and across our province is supporting law enforcement in a way that was never done under members opposite.

* (14:20)

This year, we have 36 new officers here in the city of Winnipeg, with 12 more coming to the rest of the province. We're supporting a bail unit, electronic monitoring, of course more funding for DCSP. The supports for those who are victims of crime is stand-stood up under our government in a way that was never done under members opposite. They should be ashamed of themselves for turning a blind eye—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: The minister's comments are reprehensible. Rather than taking community and schools' concerns seriously, they insist the Your Way Home strategy has been successful.

Yet, under their watch, children are forced to watch open drug use and violence just to get to school. Principals are resuscitating community members on the playground, and a high school is adding extra safety patrols every morning. They have the nerve to blame businesses for being fed up with property damage, threats to staff and customers and fires threatening lives and livelihood.

How does this minister expect Manitobans to support her pet project when she blames the community—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

The honourable Minister of Justice. *[interjection]*

Order. Order.

Mr. Wiebe: You know, I mean, members opposite have to answer for their record. And during their time, Winnipeg had the highest homicide rate in the province. It doubled every other city except Edmonton. Robbery was up. Aggravated assault was the second worst in the country.

Year over year over year, crime was going up under their watch. They cut 55 police officers. They did nothing to support those who were suffering from addictions and homelessness. They drove by in their fancy cars and they never even looked at those people in the eye that were struggling on our streets.

We will support them and we're going to support safety in our communities in a way that's never been done—

The Speaker: Honourable member's time has expired.

Stop the clock, please. Stop the clock.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: There's some guests in the gallery that I would like to interrupt proceedings to introduce.

We have seated in the public gallery, from a home school group, 70 grade 8 students under the direction of Heather Wickstrom. And this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (MLA Corbett) and the honourable member for Seine River (MLA Cross).

We welcome you here today.

* * *

The Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a final supplementary question.

MLA Bereza: Manitobans have told us this minister's zero-tolerance policy isn't working. No one cares about a good neighbour policy when legitimate complaints are ignored and concerned citizens are scolded by this minister for being unsupportive of Your Way Home tenants.

If her service partners have, and I quote, not reported any incidents that have raised concerns for the government, then the reported—the reporting is flawed or this NDP government's bar for what is concerning is completely out of touch with reality. Manitobans are worried about their safety, their children, their community and their businesses. If the people starting fires and threatening residents are responsible—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Hon. Bernadette Smith (Minister of Housing, Addictions and Homelessness): What I can say to that member is we take safety and security of all Manitobans—that's our No. 1 priority. Unlike members opposite who cut policing, left people out in encampments, these folks have true wrap-around supports.

I want to uplift N'Dinawemak and all the service providers that are out there that are providing these folks—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —with mental health supports, with meals, with ensuring that they are getting access to treatment and recovery: 26 people in one of our buildings, 16 of them went into treatment and recovery.

Will that member stand with those folks and—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Ms. Smith: —support them in the supports that they're getting, or will they continue to stand against that?

The other thing: supervised consumption sites. They're talking about open consumption? That's why we need it—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Substance Use Challenges in Winnipeg Implications for Student and Staff Safety

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to thank the volunteers and board members from Canadian Parents for French who have joined us today and have had a great day of reaching out to various stakeholders and both sides of the House. So thank you to all of them for attending.

Somebody said just recently, and I quote: Winnipeg's drug crisis is putting staff and students at schools in danger. End quote.

Who said this, Honourable Speaker? This is Winnipeg School Division superintendent, Matt Henderson.

What does the Education Minister have to say about this fiasco under the Kinew government?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, I was just talking about the callous approach of the previous government, and here it is personified in this Chamber in the member opposite.

I cannot believe that he would stand up—he stood idly by while our neighbourhoods became unsafe, our

schools were unsafe, and he washed his hands of the whole affair. Members on the opposite side never took accountability for the issues that they created or that existed in our city and around our schools.

We've taken a different approach. We're meeting these challenges head on. We're making sure that communities are safe but that we're also getting at those root causes to make sure that it's a lasting impact for generations in this province.

This member opposite never took a stand in Cabinet—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

Stop the clock, please. I would ask the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet—he was quoting from something in his last question: was it a public document or private?

Mr. Ewasko: Public. CBC article.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: So, in the lack of response from the Justice Minister, I'd like to ask the Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister: When did they authorize the poster to be hung up in schools inviting youth under the age of 18, without ID, to the NDP's drug injection—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —sites?

Mr. Wiebe: Again, the misinformation continues, the—appealing to the lowest possible, you know, thoughts that go around in their minds. Over in their caucuses, they sit around and they come up with new and innovative ways to punch down at Manitobans who are struggling in our province.

We are taking a different approach. We are taking a harm reduction reproach, but it's also a public safety approach. It's the kind of approach that will make sure that Manitobans and Winnipeggers feel safe, and that includes our partners with Winnipeg School Division, with school divisions across this city. They know that there are solutions that need to be found, and we're going to be the government that finds them.

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

Mr. Ewasko: So, Honourable Speaker, crime is up, drug usage on school sites are up. This minister should be ashamed of himself and should be apologizing to all Manitobans, Honourable Speaker.

Don't take my word for it; here we go. I quote—
[interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —another quote: We've had principals who have had to resuscitate people on playgrounds. We have kids stepping over people. Who said this, Honourable Speaker? Winnipeg School Division superintendent, Matt Henderson.

The more the NDP continue to get up and crow, the worse it's getting, Honourable Speaker.

Can the Minister of Justice please stand up and apologize to all Manitobans, parents, guardians, and students?

Mr. Wiebe: You know, again, the member opposite's so disrespectful to Manitobans, he's so disrespectful to educators; but he's also wrong, Honourable Speaker. The premise of his question is wrong.

Crime is down, Honourable Speaker, down in this city and in this province: 60 per cent down homicides since we took office—60 per cent; it's the lowest level since 2000; crime severity index dropped 4 per cent; 8 per cent down in youth crime; 10 per cent down in reported crimes. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: We are making a difference, Honourable Speaker, and we're doing it in partnership.

Again, they wanted to divide, they wanted to punch down. We're going to work with community, and we're going to work with law enforcement, and we're going to continue to get results.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (14:30)

Assiniboine College in Brandon New Paramedic Training Seats

MLA Shannon Corbett (Transcona): For eight years, communities across Westman saw cuts, shortages and growing pressure on emergency services under the previous failed government. Rural Manitobans deserve to know there will be help when they need it, and that starts with training more front-line professionals close to home. Our government is acting on this, and today, we had an important—important announcement for Westman.

Can Canada's best Minister of Health, Seniors, and Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans more about this exciting announcement?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Transcona for that really wonderful question.

We love paramedics, and after years of neglect under the PCs—[interjection]—that's right, we love paramedics. And after years of neglect under the failed PCs, we are taking real action to rebuild emergency services in the Westman with our amazing Minister of Advanced Education and Training (MLA Cable) leading the way.

Today, we announced that we are creating 32 new primary-care paramedic training seats at Assiniboine College in Brandon. This is just another part of our plan to rebuild rural health care and to ensure families can count on timely care in their communities.

Much done. More to do. Far too much to lose if we ever go back to the failed—

The Speaker: Member's time is expired.

Municipal Infrastructure Projects Request to Remove PST

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Municipalities are trying to build roads, water systems, recreation facilities and critical infrastructure that Manitobans rely on every single day. Yet this government continues to charge PST on those very projects, driving up costs that are ultimately passed on to the local taxpayers through higher property taxes and utility bills. Manitoba families cannot afford governments taxing infrastructure at every step.

Why will the minister not get on board with the PC plan to reduce the P-S-E—PST burden on municipalities and help keep more money in the pockets of Manitobans?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, for years municipalities did not have a partner in this building and now they actually can rely that our government is going to give them the funding supports they need. We've given them a lift three years in a row: 2 per cent.

What did they get out of the members opposite? Zero, year over year over year.

They also had a government that just wasn't an active partner with them in ensuring municipalities had the supports they need to build out that infrastructure, like water infrastructure.

What is our government doing? Honourable Speaker, \$24 million to the Manitoba Water Services

Board. We're doing the work to make sure municipalities have what they need to do the building to support their citizens, something they didn't have for seven and a half years under the members opposite.

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

Mr. King: Every extra dollar municipalities are forced to spend on PST is a dollar that cannot go toward fixing roads, expanding services or keeping property taxes affordable for local families.

Manitobans deserve a government that understands affordability starts with lowering the cost of government itself, not making municipalities pay more and more.

Why is the minister refusing to support measures that would lower municipal costs and provide real affordability relief to Manitoba taxpayers?

MLA Sala: You know, Speaker, it starts with increases to operating grants—2 per cent per year—reliable funding that are allowing municipalities, for the first time in years, to actually plan, to know that they have a reliable partner that will ensure they get the increases in funding they need to invest in infrastructure to support citizens.

Again, seven and a half years—what did they get? They got zeroes under the members opposite. They got more challenge—they fell behind. That's their record.

Will the member stand in the House and speak honestly about the record of his party and recognize this team is doing the work to make sure municipalities can help move Manitobans ahead?

The Speaker: Order, please. Stop the clock.

I would just caution the minister to be careful with the language he's using.

Mr. King: Municipalities are facing rising construction costs, inflation and growing infrastructure demands, yet this government continues to make projects more expensive by applying the PST to municipal infrastructure. The PCs believe government should be helping municipalities stretch every dollar further so communities can build more while taxpayers pay less.

Why will this minister not work with municipalities on a real affordability plan that reduces the PST burden and delivers better value for Manitobans?

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, if the PCs believe that municipalities deserve help, giving them zeroes

for many years in a row is a weird way of showing that. Very strange.

Look, we're investing huge amounts of money to make sure municipalities have the support they need, like the \$24 million into the Manitoba Water Services Board. We're working in partnership with municipalities, like our work to invest \$42 million in critical infrastructure through Manitoba GRO.

Finally, municipalities have a reliable partner. After years of getting zeroes, they're getting the support they need. Our incredible minister who's taking care of municipalities across the province is doing great work. This team is going to keep doing that work every day of making sure municipalities can support their citizens and move Manitoba ahead.

Education Property Tax Rebate Repeal For Cottage Owners and Small Businesses

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): This May long weekend, families across Manitoba are headed to their cottages and wondering how they're going to afford the NDP tax bills. Families like those in Victoria Beach saw increases as high as 27 per cent in a single year because the NDP cancelled their 50 per cent education property tax rebate for cottage owners and small businesses. Many of these are generational cabins and seasonal businesses that families are struggling to keep because of decisions this NDP made.

Why is the NDP continuing to leave out businesses and cottage owners from any rebate, but expect them to bear the brunt of the taxes?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Manitobans across the province are doing better, whether or not they're cottage owners or not, Honourable Speaker. We're ensuring—[interjection] That's right.

Starting with a major middle-class tax cut, again, raising basic personal exemptions, changing the brackets, of course, a fuel tax cut, a permanent 10 per cent cut. We're lowering their education property tax bill. Again, this year we're proposing to raise that to \$1,700. And, of course, we're doing important work to take the PST off food. That is, Honourable Speaker, if the members opposite will support.

When it comes to affordability, they have an important question to answer, and that is: Will they stand up today and actually work to ensure that Manitobans can get those savings on July 1? Will they support the BITSA bill, yes or no?

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

Mrs. Stone: Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are reporting that they're within \$200 of insolvency. Manitobans are not better off under this NDP government. And not only are cottage owners and small business owners affected by these NDP tax hikes, but the local economy is as well.

Because small businesses in cottage country, like in the RMs of Lac du Bonnet, Victoria Beach and Gimli, rely heavily on seasonal cottage owners, seniors and families that come out during those summer months. But because of these NDP tax hikes, fewer people are coming through their doors. Summer youth employment is impacted because the NDP has chosen tax hikes over people. This is the trickle-down effect of NDP economics.

So how can this minister justify forcing families—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, this team is lowering taxes for Manitobans. Education property taxes, reduced. Gas taxes, reduced. We're cutting taxes across the province because we know, after many years, Manitobans did not have a reliable partner in this building when it came to reducing their costs. And finally, they do.

And now, we've brought forward a BITSA bill that's going to help us take the PST off all food and grocery stores in the province. And there is only a very small, teensy, tiny group of people in the whole province who seem to want to stand in the way of that getting in place by July 1.

Will the member opposite, will that entire team, stand up today and finally do something, make some good use of their time in this House, and support—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

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

Mrs. Stone: Property taxes are at historic highs thanks to this NDP government. Utility rates are increasing by 12 per cent over the next few years thanks to this NDP government. Indexation was cancelled thanks to this NDP government, and they haven't increased the basic personal exemption unlike every other province in Canada.

Manitoba is being left behind because this NDP government refused to provide those real tax savings for Manitoba families. So not only have the NDP

hiked taxes on primary homes, they've hiked taxes on cottages and they've hiked taxes on small businesses. That is a triple tax hike for some Manitoba families on property taxes.

How many more layers of tax and property taxation will this NDP accept as they put more—

The Speaker: Member's time has expired.

MLA Sala: Honourable Speaker, if the member opposite and the members all opposite want to help out Manitobans, support the bill. Support BITSA. It's simple.

* (14:40)

We're trying to take the PST all-off all groceries. We're trying to lower education property taxes. We're trying to put more money in the pockets of renters. This BITSA bill does the work of reducing costs for Manitobans.

Will they finally get out of the way and support BITSA, yes or no?

Health Care for the Interlake Region Personal-Care Home for Lac du Bonnet

MLA JD Devgan (McPhillips): Honourable Speaker, under the despotic PC reign, families in the Interlake were forced to deal with fewer local health-care options, whereas our government is rebuilding services closer to home and investing in care communities deserve.

So can the Minister of Health, Seniors, Long-Term Care please tell Manitobans more about the work that is being done to improve access to health care in the Interlake?

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Honourable Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from McPhillips for that really important question.

And you know what, Honourable Speaker? I want to highlight something that the PCs not only promised, but they broke that promise; they cut that service; they did nothing for folks in the Interlake. We are finally building the long-awaited personal-care home in Lac du Bonnet. That's what our government is getting done for Manitobans. People living in the Interlake are going to get that personal-care home. It is state of the art. It is modern. It is being built alongside community.

The members opposite, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) couldn't get it done for seven and a half years. We got it done in two.

**Basic Personal Income Tax
Proposed Indexation and Exemption Increase**

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Our PC team has made it very clear that we're willing to co-operate and work with the NDP government to pass BITSA so long as they provide real tax relief for Manitoba families, to bring Manitoba in line to what other provinces are doing to increase the basic personal exemption and bring back indexation.

The only question: Is the minister and the NDP willing to co-operate with us to make that happen?

Hon. Adrien Sala (Minister of Finance): Honourable Speaker, we are bringing real relief to Manitobans. And again, the only people in the province standing in the way of that are the members opposite.

We have no idea—it doesn't make any sense why they don't want to take the PST off all groceries. We don't understand why they don't want to raise education property tax credits to \$1,700. Why don't they want to see renters have more money in their pockets? It makes no sense.

Although, we know that their record is not focusing on taking care of Manitobans where it counts. What are they getting from this team? A focus—a real focus—on reducing their costs. Manitobans, look to this team, demand from them that they actually get up, do their jobs and support BITSA.

Will they do that today, yes or no?

The Speaker: Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: There's some guests in the gallery I would like to introduce.

We have in the public gallery Peyton Morrow, Karmelle Morrow, Brett Morrow, Richard Tower, Sydney Baskier, Kelly Morrow. And they are the guests of the honourable member for Agassiz (Ms. Byram).

We welcome you all here today.

* * *

The Speaker: And now, as much fun as it was, oral questions—the time has expired.

PETITIONS

New Neepawa Health Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Neepawa Health Centre is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of a CT scanner.

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

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

(4) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive a CT scan is currently seven weeks, and there are over 14,000 patients on the wait-list to receive the diagnostic imaging procedure.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Thank you.

Intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (14:50)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to undertake safety improvements at the intersection of PTH 75 and PR 305 at Ste. Agathe; and

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

And, Honourable Speaker, this petition is signed by Mark Poirier, Gary Van Cheezen [*phonetic*], Jenna Silverstone [*phonetic*] and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the 'legislative' Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to undertake safety improvements at the intersection of PTH 75 and PR 30–305 at Ste. Agathe.

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

This is signed by Todd Skelet [*phonetic*], Matheo Cassagne, Margeausse [*phonetic*] Cassagne and many other Manitobans.

The Speaker: No further petitions? Online.

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

The Speaker: The honourable member for Turtle Mountain, if you've got a headset, you should put it on because we can't hear you.

Mr. Piwniuk: Oh, I do have it. Can you hear it—hear me?

The Speaker: No, still can't. Can't make out what you're saying.

Mr. Piwniuk: Okay. Well, I got in—I got this. Okay. Then I'll pass—I'm going to pass on this one.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

Mr. Richard Perchotte (Selkirk): To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I wish to present the following petition.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

used for disease detection, diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

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

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

Mr. Tyler Blashko, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

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

* (15:00)

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

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

Honourable Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by Rick Rivers, Marcel Lemire, Janet Lemire and many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to support the investment and placement of an MRI machine in the

Portage regional health facility in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

This petition, honourable Deputy Speaker, is been signed by Brian Moring [*phonetic*], Jim Irwin, Evander [*phonetic*] Meer and many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Medical Assistance in Dying

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

(5) The federal government is bound by the chart of rights and freedoms to advance and protect the life, liberty and security of its citizens.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to lobby the federal government to stop the expansion of

medical assistance in dying to those for whom mental illness is the sole condition; and

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

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

MRI Machine for Portage Regional Health Facility

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

* (15:10)

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by Trey King, Sandy Scott, Colton King and many, many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Programs for Adolescents with Disabilities

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

And the reasons for this petition are as follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) The current adolescent-care system, as part of the overall respite and support available to families,

is failing families of children with disabilities, as identified in the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth's Bridging the Gaps report.

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

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

We petition this Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

This petition is signed by Sandra Locostenich [*phonetic*], Christian Browzers [*phonetic*], Richard Zalinsky [*phonetic*] and many other fine Manitobans.

Arlington Bridge

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) On November 21, 2023, the City of Winnipeg—City—closed the Arlington Bridge to all traffic indefinitely.

(2) Over 13,000 vehicles per day cross the Arlington Bridge, which serves a vital link for vehicular and pedestrian traffic between north Winnipeg and downtown.

(3) The current structure has been declared unsafe as it has deteriorated extensively, is now functionally obsolete and is therefore no longer suitable for further life-extension repair.

(4) In 2016, the City initiated a study to explore options to replace the Arlington Bridge, and in 2019, the better bridge for Arlington study presented two options for a replacement structure.

(5) In 2019, the City placed the Arlington Bridge replacement project on its list of unfunded capital projects.

(6) The result of an 850,000 study exploring the feasibility of a comprehensive rehabilitation of the bridge are expected to be presented to the City in November of 2024.

(7) The City undertook extensive public consultation regarding the fate of the Arlington Bridge and found that communities on both sides of the bridge were supportive of a replacement structure being built.

(8) Approximately 13,000 vehicles per day are forced to use alternate routes to travel from north Winnipeg to downtown.

* (15:20)

(9) The Main Street underpass, the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge and the McPhillips Street underpass are overstressed by the increased traffic from the Arlington Bridge closure.

(10) A replacement structure is estimated to cost over \$300 million. This, combined with the unfunded \$912-million waste wander biosolids removal project and the \$2.2-billion combined sewer overflow replacement project, is leaving the City with a massive 'infrastructure' funding deficit.

(11) The Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so it can complete this long overdue, vital transportation link.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier to allocate funding to financially assist the City of Winnipeg in building a new structure to replace the Arlington Bridge.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

This petition is signed by Dylan Bell, Reed Sutherland, Bill Rivers and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Deputy Speaker.

Opposition to Releasing Repeat Offenders

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Ken Rempel, Joanne Atkins, Kila [*phonetic*] Dalrymple and many, many more Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Noel Smith, Natalie Verwey and Brittni Caskey as well as many, many more Manitobans.

Thank you.

Phoenix School

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

* (15:30)

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Provincial Road 210

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by R. Churo, Diane Vivienne, Bonnie Mandziuk and many, many other Manitobans.

New Neepawa Health Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Thanks to the investment made under the previous PC provincial government as part of the clinical and preventative services plan, construction for the new Neepawa Health Centre is well under way. The facility and surrounding community would greatly benefit from added diagnostic machinery and equipment, but specifically the addition of a CT scanner.

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

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

(4) The average wait times for Manitobans to receive a CT scan is currently seven weeks, and there are over 14,000 patients on the wait-list to receive the diagnostic imaging procedure.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

* (15:40)

This petition has been signed by Lori Noonan-Robinson, Dale Noonan, Lois Graham, and many more fine Manitobans.

The Deputy Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

Miigwech.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

The Deputy Speaker: It has been announced that we will resume debate at second reading of Bill 53. The debate is currently on the referral amendment to the main motion moved by the honourable member for Interlake-Gimli (Mr. Johnson), standing in the name of the honourable member for Borderland, who has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): I thank my colleagues. And, you know, as I was saying yesterday, before we got cut off by the clock, that, you know, unfortunately, a half an hour really isn't enough time to debate a \$27-billion budget bill, which is what we are doing. But I am incredibly grateful for my colleagues in this PC team for putting some words on the record and bringing forward the concerns of Manitobans and their constituents.

But it really is disappointing that, again, not a single member of the NDP backbench is getting up to speak on this \$27-billion bill that has to do with—*[interjection]*—or front bench.

Really, no NDP members are getting up—members or ministers—are getting up to speak about a \$27-billion budget that has to do with health care and crime and education and infrastructure and affordability. And, of course, they don't understand it. They don't understand it.

But, you know, you would think, again, as I was saying just yesterday, that with each of us MLAs representing about 25,000 Manitobans, you would

think that they would have heard something from their constituents, because we certainly are, on this side of the House and so we know. In fact, we're actually hearing from their constituents because they're not representing the concerns of their constituents. They're not getting up to talk. They're not getting up to do their jobs and earn their \$112,000 and the ministers certainly aren't.

And as I was saying yesterday, you know, the ministers earn not only \$112,000, but they earn a ministerial supplement. They actually get a bonus. The problem is, is that on every metric, Manitoba is going backwards. Things are getting worse. Whether it's health care or crime or affordability or economic growth, things are not improving. But that doesn't matter; the NDP ministers continue to collect their massive salaries.

But, you know, the least they could do—the least they could do is rise in this House and put a few words on the record about health care, about, you know, crime and infrastructure and education and affordability and economic growth. But they can't do that. And, you know, as I was thinking about it, I think it's pretty apparent why they're not doing that, because this budget bill falls far short.

In fact, many of their political allies and friends—or people you would presume to be allies and friends of this NDP government—were actually quite critical of this budget. And so, you know, that is probably part of the reason why they're not getting up to speak on this. They don't actually want to put their name to this bill. They don't actually want to be held accountable for it because, really, it is not a great budget at all, despite all the hyperbole that we constantly hear, all the incessant back-slapping and over-the-top hyperbole and self-love and self-praise that we hear on a continual basis on that side of the House. I mean, you know, my advice to my son would be to get a wife that loves him like those NDP members love themselves because it's quite something—quite something to watch that and to see that on a daily basis.

You know, but as I said, this is a budget that was roundly criticized in the media by a wide spectrum of Manitobans, by Manitobans from across the spectrum representing a wide range of voices, including those you would think would be political allies and friends of this government.

And, you know, there's Kathy Valentino, who's the Association of Manitoba Municipalities president, who had this to say about this budget: I have mixed reactions—this is, again, her words—I have mixed

reactions and disappointment in the lack of increase in investment for water and waste water infrastructure projects in the province. We've heard loud and clear from municipalities that they are ready to grow. But with no increase in water and waste water infrastructure they won't be able to grow. And, again, that comes straight from Kathy Valentino, the president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Here's Ben Wickstrom, with the Manitoba Association of Crown Attorneys. He says, and I quote: You can hire more police to respond, investigate crime, but if you don't hire more prosecutors, there won't be anyone to prosecute the cases the police are working on.

By the way, we all remember the Premier (Mr. Kinew) in the leaders' debate in the last election. The very first thing he was asked, or the very first thing he said when he was asked, what's the first thing you would do in your 100 days in office, first 100 days in office? What's the very first thing you'll do?

And what he said, I mean, immediately, without batting an eye, he said bail reform. You know, and there hasn't been any bail reform. There has been no—there has been, again—*[interjection]*—yes—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —hyperbole and self-love. I mean, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) loves himself, but the reality is—the reality is there's been no bail reform. There's been no bail reform. There are plenty of people in Manitoba that need to be held to account by the criminal justice system and they are out on bail right now.

And, unfortunately, I don't have the time to go into that but I will say the Minister of Justice, going on three years here—going on three years, and he's got the tough job; he has—and I know the way it works—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —in that caucus. Because I know the way it works—*[interjection]*—yes, I know the way it works. And I feel for the Minister of Justice—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —because the way it works in that system—*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: –and the Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine)–*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I'd ask everyone to come to order, and I would also encourage the member to bring his comments back to BITSA.

Mr. Guenter: See, the way it works in that caucus is the Premier (Mr. Kinew) makes grand claims because he loves the limelight, and then these–*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: –poor NDP ministers have to run out there and try to actually make good–*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: –on those claims.

And so the Premier–*[interjection]*–wow, I think we might hear from the Minister of Families today, and I'm actually looking forward to that. But she says no. She wants to sit in her sedentary position–*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I appreciate the moment of order when I stand, but also I hope that the order continues when I sit. So I'd appreciate it if we give the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) eight minutes and 20 seconds.

Mr. Guenter: Yes, I'd appreciate that. I would appreciate that too.

So the way it works is this: The NDP Premier goes out and makes grand claims about all kinds of things because he loves the limelight. And then these poor ministers have to go out there and they actually have to somehow back up these claims. Like they've actually got to—and we saw that with the—we've seen that time and time and time again.

And so I do feel for these ministers because, you know, it's an interesting state of affairs across the way. But one thing is sure, and they do love themselves. They do love themselves. *[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: It's just disappointing. It's just disappointing–*[interjection]*–you know, actually—but here's why they won't—here's why we don't hear from them: because they're so embarrassed by their own budget.

* (15:50)

They really are. They really are. No one–*[interjection]*

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

I would kindly request that the Minister of Families and Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) come to order.

Mr. Guenter: Oh, yes. Thank you for that, honourable Speaker. So—and I appreciate that very much.

But, you know, it's like the House leader has told this NDP caucus that they should not speak to this budget bill. And—you know, and I think that's really unfortunate because they have every right—just like I do, just like members on this side of the House—they have every right as legislators to stand up and speak to this bill.

But no NDP MLA wants to do that. No minister—NDP minister wants to do that. You know, and they're making piles of money—they're making piles of money—as ministers, right? But they're not doing their jobs. And, in fact, on every single file, according to every single metric, things are getting worse in Manitoba.

The Speaker in the Chair

But I'll continue reading the reaction of Manitobans on the budget. Here's Dr. Nichelle Desilets, who said, and I quote: We are disappointed that the government's budget included no signs of fulfilling their election promise to add 250 team-based providers in physician practices. That's Doctors Manitoba.

Here's Margaret Schroeder, CUPE 204—this is someone that I'm sure the Minister of Justice and Minister of Families knows. But this is what she had to say to the media about their budget: One nurse to 50 patients is unacceptable, but nurses aren't working alone. Health-care aides and dietary aides are doing hands-on patient care every single day and are consistently working short-staffed.

So she certainly isn't talking about this, you know, made up number of 3,400—or whatever it is that it is on any given day—nurses, health-care professionals hired in the system. Nobody knows where they are.

Darlene Jackson of the Manitoba Nurses Union definitely doesn't know and says she has nurses coming to her saying, where are these nurses that the minister—that the government—this NDP government claims they've hired. Nobody knows where they are. It's just a bunch of made up claims again, which is pretty typical.

When it comes to the economy, here's the Canadian Taxpayers Federation: Manitobans haven't

forgotten that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) hiked their income taxes last year with bracket creep while he keeps borrowing more money. The government needs to provide real tax relief instead of painting over tax hikes with inadequate measures that leave taxpayers worse off overall.

Amen. Absolutely.

Some more great quotes. Here's Tyler Slobagian [*phonetic*] with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: Practical measures to support investment and growth for small firms remain absent.

And Chuck Davidson, who was here at the Legislature just the other day. Chuck Davidson, with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce: We were looking for a little bit more, he says. We understand where the government was going in regards to affordability for the average Manitoban. We would have liked to have seen some measures as well for business.

Here's Kyle Ross, Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union president, who said: We've advocated pretty hard for issues and corrections and wildland firefighters. We've seen a sprinkling of that. But, overall, our workers are doing more with less continually, and we're not really seeing any advancement of bringing in people to do this work.

Here's another great quote: Manitobans need and deserve a support on affordability, but it must be delivered in a way that is fair and protects jobs. Manitobans should not be taxed on rotisserie chicken sold in a restaurant if the same product is going to be exempt from PST in a grocery store, said Kelly Higginson, president and CEO of Restaurants Canada. Exempting prepared—he went on to say this: Exempting prepared meals sold at grocery stores from PST, but not those sold at restaurants, will hurt consumers while putting restaurant businesses and their workers at risk.

And, finally, I'll just end with this quote by the Winnipeg mayor, Scott Gillingham, who said he was disappointed in this budget as there was no mention of the North End Sewage Treatment Plant. He said: If we don't get that project built, fully funded and built within the next few years, we're going to have to put a complete stop on all future growth. There will be no more housing developed, there will be no more jobs created because no more businesses will be able to set up shop.

So maybe that's why members of this NDP government, not a single one, has been able to get up and

speak to—has been willing to get up and speak to—their budget, is because it has been roundly criticized across the province, and it is a failure. At a critical time in our provincial history, it completely fails on all fronts.

Health-care wait times are getting longer, the cost of living is rising and the business minister definitely isn't doing his job because just last night, the Winnipeg Free Press came out with an article—and I'm glad that the business minister is here. They—I read this—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Honourable member for Borderland has the floor.

Mr. Guenter: And here's what the Winnipeg Free Press had to say just last night: Seeking fair share of all the wins, Manitoba falls well back of Canadian peers in securing international investment.

I've got 33 seconds left. I don't have enough time to go on and read the article, but I can tell you what, when the Winnipeg Free Press is calling out—[*interjection*]

When the Winnipeg Free Press—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Guenter: —is calling out this NDP government—

The Speaker: The honourable Minister of Families (MLA Fontaine) needs to come to order.

Mr. Guenter: When the Winnipeg Free Press is calling out this NDP government for their failures, you know things have gotten really bad. And so no, I, along with many Manitobans, do not support this NDP budget.

Mr. Derek Johnson (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, is there leave to—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

The honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) needs to come to order.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, is there leave to extend the member for Borderland's (Mr. Guenter) speaking time by five minutes because there was so many interruptions and—[*interjection*]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —so much heckling from the members opposite?

They could take—choose to get up and speak themselves, but they're not. And then they're interrupting members that are trying to put words on the record.

Is there leave to extend the member for Borderland's (Mr. Guenter) speaking time for five minutes?

The Speaker: Is there leave to extend the member from Borderland?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak to this motion before the House. And I want to thank my colleagues on this side of the House for putting the facts on the record that they have been in the last few days about the BITSA bill and affordability—talking about affordability here in this province, that it's just not there. The moment just isn't there in this BITSA bill.

So The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. I want to speak more broadly about the responsibility governments carry when they introduce legislation that will directly shape the economic conditions under which Manitoba families live, they work, they raise their children, invest and attempt to build stable futures for themselves.

The responsibility of government is not merely to act. The responsibility of government is to act prudently, competently, transparently and with a full appreciation of the long-term consequences that legislation can impose upon the public. Governments are entrusted with extraordinary authority over taxation, spending, regulation and, of course, the economic policy. That authority carries with it an equally serious obligation to ensure that legislation is properly scrutinized, carefully debated and thoroughly examined before it becomes law.

When governments begin treating democratic scrutiny as an inconvenience rather than a necessity, mistakes become unavoidable because the safeguards designed to identify weaknesses, contradictions and unintended consequences are deliberately weakened or bypassed altogether.

* (16:00)

So, Honourable Speaker, that concern lies at the very heart of Bill 53. This legislation is not being presented to Manitobans through a careful and transparent process, grounded in openness and democratic accountability. Instead, it's being advanced through an

atmosphere of artificial urgency, unnecessary brinkmanship that this government itself previously condemned when it occupied the opposition benches.

The government has attempted to create the impression that BITSA must pass immediately or affordability relief will somehow disappear from Manitoba families. That narrative has become central to the government's political messaging surrounding this legislation. Manitobans are being told repeatedly that PST-related affordability measures cannot proceed unless this House rushes forward and grants passage to BITSA without the level of scrutiny that legislation of this magnitude properly requires. Honourable Speaker, that argument collapses under even modest examination.

In 2019, while serving as the leader of the opposition, the current Premier, the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), explicitly argued that tax measures could proceed independently of BITSA. Members opposite understood perfectly well at that time that governments possess fiscal and administrative mechanisms allowing taxation changes to proceed pending final legislative completion. They understood that governments are not powerless while legislation remains under debate, and they understood that tax changes do not suddenly become impossible merely because BITSA has not yet passed.

Now, having crossed from opposition into government, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) insists the precise opposite is true. Now, Manitobans are told that PST measures cannot proceed without immediate passage of BITSA. That contradiction matters profoundly, because it goes directly to the credibility of the urgency this government is attempting to manufacture around this legislation. Either the premier was wrong in 2019, or the government is misleading Manitobans here today. The public record cannot sustain both positions simultaneously.

Honourable Speaker, a few members opposite who have backgrounds connected to media and entertainment may already be familiar with a term that rather accurately describes what Manitobans are witnessing from this government, and that term is retconning, which is short for retroactive continuity.

Retconning occurs when previously established facts, narratives or positions are retroactively rewritten in order to support a new storyline. In television or film, writers suddenly alter events audiences clearly remember occurring differently. Characters are rewritten, motivations are changed, previous rules quietly disappear, contradictions are ignored and the

audience is simply expected to accept the revised narrative as though the original version never existed at all.

Honourable Speaker, this government increasingly governs through retconning. The current Premier (Mr. Kinew) once argued that tax measures could proceed independently of BITSA. Now, he argues the opposite. Members opposite once railed endlessly against political interference in MPI and condemned Cabinet involvement in rate setting. Now rates are openly set at Cabinet table, while the government simultaneously attempts to hide behind MPI independence whenever accountability becomes politically inconvenient. When political control is useful, independence disappears. When accountability is demanded, independence suddenly reappears.

The government rewrites its own previous positions depending entirely upon what is politically advantageous in that moment. That is retconning. And it is deeply corrosive to public trust because democratic accountability depends upon consistency, transparency and honesty regarding the positions government take, both in opposition and in office.

Honourable Speaker, the urgency surrounding BITSA is not grounded in legislative necessity; it is grounded in political strategy. If the government generally—genuinely wished to provide meaningful affordability relief to Manitoba families, they could do so immediately by adopting the Progressive Conservative proposal to substantially increase the basic personal amount. That proposal would place up to \$1,535 annually back into the pockets of an individual Manitoban and more than \$3,000 annually back into the pockets of a two-income household.

That is meaningful relief. That is structural relief. It's broad-based relief that families would actually feel every single paycheque. Families could pay rent. Families could buy their groceries. Families could cover child-care costs, and they could manage rising utility bills and transportation expenses, which all Manitobans are experiencing today. Most importantly, Manitobans would retain more of what they themselves earn rather than watching inflation and bracket creep quietly erode their purchasing power year after year.

The government could adopt that proposal tomorrow if affordability were truly its priority. Nothing prevents them from doing this.

Instead, the government has chosen to focus upon selected PST adjustments while simultaneously rejecting

broader structural affordability reform that would materially improve household finances all across the province. That choice reveals a great deal about our government's priorities.

This government prefers targeted political messaging over broad economic reform because selective measures generate cleaner headlines while structural reform requires more serious fiscal discipline and more serious understanding of economic fundamentals.

Honourable Speaker, affordability cannot be separated from economic growth, productivity, investment and competitiveness. This government continues behaving as though affordability can somehow be achieved through isolated interventions while the broader economic fundamentals of the province continue weakening underneath.

Manitoba's real GDP growth remains stalled at just 1.1 per cent, placing this province below the national average and significantly behind Saskatchewan and Alberta. Business investment growth continues to lag, productivity performance remains among the weakest anywhere in Canada and the province has increasingly relied upon public sector job growth while private sector employment has weakened.

These are not isolated statistics or temporary fluctuations; they are serious indicators of an economy that is losing competitiveness and struggling to generate the kind of sustainable growth that raises living standards over the long term. An economy with persistently weak productivity growth becomes steadily less affordable because wages cannot keep pace with the rising cost of living. An economy that fails to attract investment gradually loses competitiveness as business, direct capital, expansion and opportunity towards jurisdictions offer a stronger economic conditions and greater confidence.

An economy increasingly dependent upon public sector expansion rather than productive private-sector growth eventually reaches a point where the growing tax burden required to sustain government spending begins suppressing the very economic activity upon which long-term prosperity depends. That is the trajectory Manitoba is currently following under this NDP government.

* (16:10)

This government continues approaching affordability as though it can somehow be separated from broader economic performance and long-term growth. That assumption is fundamentally flawed because affordability is inseparably connected to productivity,

investment, competitiveness and rising real incomes. Rather than addressing those economic fundamentals, however, this government has chosen to focus on symbolic consumer measures and politically attractive retail announcements designed primarily for headlines and press conferences.

The government speaks repeatedly about removing PST from limited range of prepared grocery products, while Manitobans continue facing dramatically higher costs for housing, transportation, utilities, fuel, insurance and higher property taxes.

Honourable Speaker, a family saving a few dollars each month on selective grocery purchases does not constitute meaningful affordability relief in a province where education property taxes have climbed sharply. Inflation remains among the highest in Canada and working families are already under extraordinary financial strain. This government also removed proper indexation protections from income tax brackets while allowing the basic personal amount to stagnate during a period of elevated inflation. That decision quietly increased taxes on Manitoba workers through bracket creep, as nominal wages rose modestly while tax thresholds remained effectively frozen.

Working Manitobans are therefore paying more in taxes each year despite already struggling with rising living costs. Families may not always use the technical economic terminology such as bracket creep, but they fully understand the practical reality: that they are working harder while retaining less and less of what they earn. That is precisely why the Progressive Conservative proposal to significantly increase the basic personal amount represents a serious and structural affordability measure, while the measures advanced by this government remain largely superficial and insufficient when compared to the economic pressures confronting our Manitoba families today.

But the economic reality that Manitoba families are increasingly confronting today is bleak, Honourable Speaker. Families feel it every time they go to buy their groceries. They feel it when they pay their hydro bills, if they can. They feel it when they renew mortgages or pay their rent, if they can. They feel it when they fill their vehicles with fuel, and they feel it when they attempt to save for retirement or their children's education.

Meanwhile, this government congratulates itself over selective affordability measures worth comparatively little while quietly taking substantially

more back through bracket creep, rising property taxes, fuel costs, utility increases and inflationary spending. The government removed proper indexation protections while inflation surged. That decision quietly increased taxes on Manitoba workers every single year. Families may not always use technical economic terminology, but they understand perfectly well that they are working harder while earning less.

That is why this Legislature has a responsibility to proceed carefully rather than recklessly with legislation touching virtually every aspect of Manitoba's fiscal and economic framework. Governments do not receive credits simply for acting quickly. Governments receive credit when they act competently and responsibly. Rushed legislation is often bad legislation precisely because speed weakens scrutiny. Weak scrutiny allows contradictions to survive unnoticed. Weak scrutiny allows unintended consequences to remain unidentified until after legislation is already enacted. Weak scrutiny allows governments to prioritize political expediency over sound public policy.

That is exactly why democratic institutions contain committees, debate procedures, stakeholder hearings, opposition review and public participation mechanisms in the first place. Those processes are not obstacles to governance, Honourable Speaker; they're safeguards against poor governance. A government confident in the quality of its legislation welcomes scrutiny because scrutiny improves legislation. A government insecure in the quality of its legislation fears scrutiny because scrutiny exposes weaknesses.

Increasingly, this government appears deeply uncomfortable with open examination and prolonged democratic review. We have seen repeated attempts to compress debate. We have seen omnibus-style legislation advanced with limited scrutiny. We have seen committee opportunities restricted and we have seen public participation virtually diminished. And now we're witnessing a deliberate attempt to frame democratic scrutiny itself as somehow threatening affordability relief for Manitobans. That is profoundly unhealthy in a parliamentary democracy.

The Legislature exists to scrutinize legislation, not merely ratify government communication strategies; opposition exists to examine weaknesses and contradictions before flawed legislation becomes law. Committees exist precisely because governments are capable of making mistakes, particularly when legislation is rushed for political purposes.

And I'll just give an example of that, how governments can make mistakes; people make mistakes.

A perfect example is when the NDP government reduced the gas tax. They completely forgot about the farmers and the dyed gas tax that was on it—completely forgot about it.

And—oh—and who brought that to their attention? The opposition; the Progressive Conservatives. So there is a perfect example where we had committee; it brought forward some information that was missed by the government and made some better legislation.

Reality brings us directly to the motion presently before this House, Honourable Speaker. The motion before the House, and I think that it's important to reiterate it to keep this debate grounded,

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

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

That's what we're asking for, Honourable Speaker, is some transparency, some transparency to this bill. Let's hear what Manitobans want. Let's hear what stakeholders want. Let's hear what the restaurant owners have to say. Listening to the public and communicating with the public, to me, would make for better legislation and would make for what Manitobans need and want.

So this is not a stunt or an attempt at delay for its own sake. It is the only responsible course of action available to this Legislature, given the deficiencies surrounding both the substance of the legislation and the manner in which the government is attempting to advance it.

* (16:20)

Referring the subject matter of BITSA to committee would restore precisely the safeguards that this government appears increasingly determined to avoid. It would permit economists, municipalities, taxpayers, businesses, industry groups, labour representatives, public policy experts and ordinary Manitobans to provide meaningful testimony regarding the actual consequences of this legislation. It would allow weaknesses, contradictions, implementation concerns and unintended economic consequences to be identified before they are permanently embedded into provincial law. Most importantly, it would restore seriousness

and transparency to a legislative process that the government has increasingly reduced to political messaging and narrative management.

So when we talk about the PST exemption, we're talking pennies, pennies on the dollar. It's—would we rather save Manitobans \$2 a month or hundreds of dollars a month, Honourable Speaker? It's a meaningful—we need to do something meaningful for Manitobans today. And we need to hear from them.

We need to hear from Manitobans what is going to help them not reach that \$200 insolvency that my good friend and colleague from—the honourable member from Midland talked about earlier today—200 bucks doesn't go very far nowadays; \$200 a month from reaching insolvency. Can you imagine that? Well, there's a lot of people in this province that can tell you about it right now, and we hear from them daily.

So we need this government to put something in this BITSA bill that is meaningful to Manitobans, that they could feel secure that they are going to be able to survive this affordability crisis that we're living through right now in Manitoba. The NDP government needs to wake up from whatever dream of fantasy land they're in thinking that everything's okay, and wake up to the nightmare that most Manitobans are facing here right now with that near \$200 insolvency. And there's not—there's many that have already met that insolvency. Many are out there, we know. They don't have that extra \$200 to even get by to next week.

So the motion before this House is also—only responsible course of action, because the economic conditions confronting Manitoba today are far too serious to tolerate rushed policy making and inadequately examined legislation. Manitoba families are already operating under immense financial pressure.

You know, we talked about affordability for young people to buy new homes. You know, Honourable Speaker, when the Progressive Conservatives were in government, my oldest son was able to purchase a home. And then my second son, before the NDP, when Conservatives were still in power, was able to purchase a home.

I've still got two boys at home because ever since the NDP were elected, there's not a chance that they can go out and put a down payment on a new home now. There's just no tax breaks them—for them to do such a thing. I've got a 22-year-old at home that feels that he's going to be there for a long time because

there's just no hope. There's no hope with this new government moving forward.

Manitoba families are operating under immense financial pressure. Businesses are warning about declining competitiveness and weak investment conditions. Municipalities continue raising concerns regarding infrastructure deficits and insufficient support for growth.

Under those conditions, governments have an even greater responsibility to proceed cautiously because policy mistakes carry heavier consequences during periods of economic fragility. Once flawed legislation is enacted, the costs are not borne by politicians or communications staff. The costs are barn-borne by the workers, the homeowners, the renters, seniors, entrepreneurs, the municipalities and families throughout Manitoba.

Governments, therefore, have an obligation not merely to legislate quickly, but to legislate correctly. By attempting to rush BITSA through under a manufactured sense of urgency while simultaneously contradicting positions previously advanced by the Premier (Mr. Kinew) himself, this government has demonstrated precisely why broader committee review and public examination are necessary before the Legislature proceeds any further.

And now, we talked about the \$100 tax credit going from 16 to 17 hundred dollars. Honourable Speaker, that's not 'til 2028; 2028 is when they will benefit from that, if it's a benefit at all. Now, that's two years from now. We're in 2026. We're facing this crisis-affordability crisis right now, today. So they continue to boast about some tax credit that's not going to help anybody for two years from now.

Finally, Honourable Speaker, supporting this motion is the only responsible course of action because it reasserts the proper relationship between government and the Legislature itself. Governments are accountable to this House; not the other way around. The role of this Legislature is not to facilitate government messaging strategies or assist in managing political narratives; its role is to scrutinize legislation rigorously—and that's what we do here in opposition: identify the weaknesses, honestly—and to protect the public interest through an open democratic examination.

The government may find committee review inconvenient. It may find prolonged debate politically uncomfortable. It may prefer rapid passage because rapid passage minimizes scrutiny, reduces opportunities

for contradictions to be exposed publicly. None of those considerations outweigh the Legislature's responsibility to ensure that legislation is prudent, transparent, coherent and generally in the best interests of Manitobans.

'Referling'—referring Bill 53 to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs would restore openness, it would restore accountability, restore public participation and restore a level of seriousness to this legislative process that the government's current approach has fundamentally lacked.

For those reasons, Honourable Speaker, withdrawing Bill 53 from the Order Paper and referring its subject matter for proper committee examination is not merely justified; it is the only prudent, responsible and democratically defensible course of action available to this Legislature.

I thank you for the opportunity to put some words on the record.

MLA Jeff Bereza (Portage la Prairie): I rise today to speak about the common sense amendments that have been introduced by the member from Interlake-Gimli. Our PC team believes that all Manitobans should have a say, and that's what we need to do.

This debate is about priorities. It's about whether this government truly understands what Manitoba families are facing every single day. And it's about whether this NDP government is prepared to deliver real affordability relief; not headlines, not big showy announcements, not political talking points, not tiny savings that disappear before Manitobans even notice them, but real, meaningful relief that helps working people, seniors, families and young Manitobans build a future right here in our province.

And let's look at this as a way to bring outsiders back to Manitobans. Let's look at this common sense amendment that has been introduced by our PC team. Honourable Speaker, Manitobans are struggling every day. Families are watching every dollar. Groceries cost more. And what does this NDP government want to do? They want to make you more unhealthy by taking tax off a bag of potato chips or a two-litre of Coke.

Utility bills are costing more. Insurance costs more. Mortgage payments and rent are climbing. Parents are having to cut back. Young people are wondering if they will ever, ever be able to afford a home.

* (16:30)

Seniors on fixed incomes are worried about stretching their savings further each month; those same seniors that are living in Manitoba Housing apartments, wanting to get out, feeling like they're trapped in their own homes. And that's no way to feel: trapped in your own home, because you don't feel secure. And we've got an NDP government that will not do anything about that.

Our common sense amendment will help people every day, not just a little bit at a time. And in the middle of all this, what does the NDP government bring forward? A budget implementation bill that offers Manitobans pennies when they need dollars. That is the problem with the current BITSA legislation. The government wants Manitoba to believe they're delivering affordability, but Manitobans know the difference between symbolic gestures and real relief. Our common sense amendment that we have introduced will increase those savings.

The reality is—in this—is the proposed NDP budget will barely, barely move the needle for most families. That is why our Progressive Conservative team has brought forward a common sense amendment to improve legislation, deliver real tax relief for Manitobans so that can go to committee, so all Manitobans can have an opportunity to speak and to see that this PC government—PC team wants to bring you real savings, not take—not putting pennies in your pocket.

If this NDP government truly wants to pass BITSA and claim they're helping Manitobans, then they should significantly increase the basic personal amount for Manitobans. That would represent meaningful affordability relief. That would keep—put real money back in the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. That would help every worker, not just a few, every worker; not just a few seniors, every senior; not just a few families, every family; not just a taxpayer, all taxpayers.

Our amendment lets Manitobans have a say, and that's what's important. And unlike the limited measure in this NDP budget proposal, our amendment would create lasting affordability benefits that Manitobans would actually feel every single month, every single day of the year. Our proposal would put up to \$1,500 per year back in the pockets of individual Manitobans.

Think about the amount of Coke and chips that you would be able to buy with that \$1,500 if that's what you chose to do. But if you chose to have your car fixed, you could use that with your \$1,500. If you chose to go on a vacation, you could do that with

your \$1,500. If you decided that you wanted to re-side your house, you could do that. *[interjection]* If you decided to go—I think the Justice Minister is looking to speak. I don't know why he hasn't taken a chance here, but he seems to want to heckle.

Over \$1,500 annually for a worker trying to keep up with rising costs. As I said, with those common sense amendments and different things that people can buy, they are not stuck in—with the little savings that this NDP government is suggesting. And in a two-income household, that means up to \$3,000 per year.

That is real money; that is real money every day. This is not a symbolic rebate, this is not a temporary political gimmick that we see different times from this NDP side of the House; this is meaningful relief, this is grocery money, this is helping to pay hydro bills, this is helping put skates on kids if they wish, this is helping people play ball if they wish. It lets them make their own choices out there.

That is helping pay children's activities. That is help covering school supplies. That is help paying for fuel. That's paying for fuel every day if anybody wants that. That is to help for seniors trying to stay in their homes. As we know that we've heard, seniors are scared, so that gives them money to help secure their own homes. This is help for families who are being squeezed from every direction.

And, most importantly, Manitobans themselves would decide how best to use this money. Because unlike the NDP, we trust Manitobans to make the proper decisions. We let them make their own decisions. We trust taxpayers. We trust families to know what is best for their own household budgets. Maybe they use it for groceries, as I said. Maybe they use it to pay down debt. Maybe they use it to pay for household goods. This strong amendment, we need to hear from Manitobans. They deserve a chance to speak at committee.

Maybe they put it towards child care. That would be something as well, too. We're in a child-care—we have shortage of child-care spaces. Wouldn't it be nice if people had the opportunity not to have to worry about the child care? Maybe the minister that's talking could have come to the Point Douglas meeting and had some words out there, but they chose not to. Committee was over at 7:30, but they still didn't show up for the people of Point Douglas. We show up every day for them.

Maybe they invest into savings. Maybe they support local business in their communities. That's how

economies grow. Not through bigger government, not through endless bureaucracy, but by letting hard-working Manitobans keep more of the money they earn.

That is the fundamental difference between our Progressive Conservative approach and the approach of this NDP government. They want to put you in handcuffs so that you can save a couple cents on a bag of chips or a few cents on a bottle of Coke, or how about that rotisserie chicken that's full of salt?

We believe taxpayers create prosperity. The NDP believe government create prosperity. We believe affordability starts with lower taxes—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order, please.

There's a couple of members on both sides of this Chamber that are having conversations that are rather loud back and forth across the Chamber. I need to listen to what's being said. If other members don't wish to listen they should at least sit quietly so that I can hear.

MLA Bereza: The NDP believe affordability starts with government announcements. We believe Manitobans know best how to spend their money. The NDP believe government knows best, and Manitobans are seeing the results of that NDP philosophy every single day. Costs continue to rise; our groceries are out of control; our food inflation is like nothing seen in any other part of this country. Families continue to struggle, as we've heard; less than \$200 away from insolvency. Some—under this current NDP government—some people, like my kids, will never be able to afford a house under their continued rising costs and rising red tape.

We want to introduce common—we have introduced a common sense amendment that needs to be taken to committee and let Manitobans have their day so that they can speak on that.

* (16:40)

And Manitobans are seeing the result of the NDP philosophy every single day. Costs continue to rise. Families struggle. Businesses continue to face uncertainty. We heard it today that businesses are moving out of the province. They're running in droves. All's we see going into Ontario and Saskatchewan is Manitoba licence plates, and they're not coming back. And that is a sorry day for us here in Manitoba.

This NDP government wanted to assure us that Richard Madan, the \$500,000 man, was going to contribute to this economy. What has he done for our

economy? He has brought nothing to our economy. This common sense amendment that we are bringing, will make sure that people want to invest in Manitobans. We don't need a Richard Madan; we need a team like this PC government on this side of the aisle.

And economic growth continues to lag behind provinces that are more competitive all around us. We used to laugh about Saskatchewan, and now we are the laughing stock of this country. We cannot get ahead with this NDP government. Anti-business is what we see out of this government every day. And economic growth continues to lag behind the provinces.

Increasing the basic personal amount is not some radical proposal; it's practical. And you know who it's practical for? For every Manitoban. Every Manitoban will be better off with our amendment to this BITSA bill that will save them more money, that—they will have a chance to talk about what they like about the amendment that we're putting forward. It's practical, it's responsible, it's exactly what we need.

Businesses can invest elsewhere, and we're seeing that. We're seeing that in the agriculture industry, where they're moving right out of here. We see that, you know, this government doesn't want to invest in Manitoba. They've invested in one firefighting airplane that's going to cost 35 to 40 million dollars if—if it gets built.

Yet there is a company in Manitoba that is—that has airplanes that—they own the rights to sell these airplanes in Manitoba. These people have a huge amount of people working for them. They won't even look at the alternative to the airplanes that they have. They could have two firefighting airplanes right here today. And they could have eight of them for the price of what they're going to have. *[interjection]*

Again, the minister that didn't attend the meeting in Point Douglas the other night, or the minister that won't stand up for the people in Manitoba Housing apartments is heckling me here. But, again, we're going to continue to talk and give proper relief out there.

We should be creating conditions that attract families, workers, entrepreneurs and invest in Manitoba. But right now, a lot of people are scared. They're scared of what's going on in Manitoba. They're scared of the crime that is going on in Manitoba. They're scared for their parents that can't find a place to live because they're so afraid of drug dealers, people with mental health issues. This government talks about

wrap-around services they're paying for; where are they? They're certainly not in the Manitoba Housing apartments.

Because when people have more disposable income, local economies benefit. Local economies benefit. Communities benefit. Wouldn't it be nice if we saw the City of Winnipeg be able to complete their water and waste water system instead of having to beg or borrow because they can't get an answer from this NDP government. Again, common sense amendment that we want to introduce will give people of Winnipeg, people of all over Manitoba an opportunity to do with their money as they see best fit.

When I look around and we ask who has the most sense to be able to know what they do with their money, it's families. But, again, the only thing they're being offered by this NDP government is pennies. Pennies isn't going to cut it, not in this mess that we're now in because of this NDP government. Over the last two and half years what have they done? There's nothing that they can speak of out there. There's nothing to deliver back to Manitobans. There's nothing for investors to say, I need to come to Manitoba.

That money circulates throughout the economy. Our common-sense amendment—we need—let's—Manitobans have a say at committee, and that's what's important. That money circulates throughout the economy. The nice thing about money is people that have that extra \$1,500 are going to go and buy shoes. They're going to buy shoes. The person that has the shoe store is going to invest back into his store. He's going to look at roofing if he's got to do roofing, if he's got to do painting. Those roofers and painters will be buying products that they need. It's a circular effect.

But if we're just saving money on Coke and chips, I don't know—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

MLA Bereza: —if anybody is going to get the advantage of that.

Meaningful tax relief helps accomplish all of that. This is common sense for Manitobans, and we need to look at that. It creates activity. When we talk about the activity that we need to do for Manitobans, that's just exactly it. They know how to look after their money. They know how to spend their money, but they keep it in circulation.

Pennies don't make a difference here. Real dollars—real dollars—like this amendment that we are introducing here today, real dollars that this amendment

that was introduced by the MLA from Interlake-Gimli is what we need there today. It creates confidence; it creates growth, and unlike government spending programs that often come with layers and layers of administration and bureaucracy, tax relief is efficient.

Let's talk about some of that. Let's look at a developer in Portage la Prairie that wants to build a housing development. Two and a half years been waiting for the Municipal Board to make a decision. Can't even get a hearing. How can we look at these people that want to come to Manitoba to build homes, to build businesses, but they can't even get past the first layer of mess that has been caused through this Municipal Board that nobody can get through?

How can anybody build homes? If we're not building homes we don't have places for people to live. If we don't have places for people to live, there is nowhere for them to buy groceries; there's nowhere to spend their money. When we—*[interjection]* I hear one of the members heckling—

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would once again ask members on both sides to quit hollering back and forth.

MLA Bereza: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

I heard one of the members on the other side heckling about hospitals and things like that. You know, again, when we talk about common sense things to do, we've got a hospital sitting in Portage la Prairie that's empty, that's ready to go; the staff was ready to go, and yet we're still working in a hospital that is infested with black mould, that is infested with cockroaches, that is infested with water damage. Yet, that's all we do.

And one more thing: You know what's missing in the new Portage hospital?

* (16:50)

An Honourable Member: Patients.

MLA Bereza: Patients, and what else is missing?

An Honourable Member: MRI.

MLA Bereza: We're missing an MRI. An MRI that, again, the economy of Manitoba is affected by this. Honourable Speaker, \$5 million has been allocated by the hospital foundation.

And some of you may not realize this, but for two years—and thousands and thousands of Manitobans have heard their voices—for two years, we've been reading out in this House petitions looking for an MRI

in that hospital. And what does this government do? Just like they're doing right now, they're stalling it. No, we don't need it. The people can wait 30 hours.

But think of it when it comes to the economy. If we had an MRI in Portage la Prairie, what's going to happen? People are going to drive to Portage la Prairie. They're going to eat a meal. They're going to buy clothing. They, maybe, are going to come and live there. But not right now because there's not an opportunity—because we need it on the record—this government does not want to open the new hospital in Portage la Prairie, ready to go.

We're paying on a hospital that is sitting empty while we let people work in filth. *[interjection]* We let patients live in filth in that hospital. It lets Manitobans make—why don't you go and have a look at it if the member would like to? It—oh, no, no, no, that's out of the city of Winnipeg. We wouldn't want to leave the Perimeter. It lets Manitobans make decisions themselves.

Our proposal is also fair. It benefits Manitobans broadly, not just a select group like this NDP wants with their BITSA bill, that they're trying to hide a whole bunch of stuff away from Manitobans; not just politically targeted programs, not just temporary measures, but broad-based relief, relief that helps people across this province.

And at a time when affordability is one of the biggest issues facing Manitobans, why? Why would this government try and only affect those people with pennies? They don't need pennies. They need real value, and that's what we want to deliver with this common sense amendment.

That is the question Manitobans are asking: If this NDP government is serious about affordability, why would they refuse to significantly increase the basic personal amount? Can anyone in this House, on that side, answer that question? *[interjection]* Is that a—is that an answer I heard? Was that the answer that said we're scared of what the PCs are offering out there?

I think that's what I heard. They're afraid to give Manitobans real dollars. If this NDP government is serious about affordability, why don't they increase the basic personal amount? Why would they settle for tiny savings when Manitobans need real relief? Why would they continue protecting government revenues instead of protecting families' budgets?

Manitobans remember what happened when the NDP government believes they can take more and more from taxpayers. Do we remember the last time

there was a PST hike? Do we remember? Does anybody over here remember when there was a PST hike? I do.

Manitobans remember what happened when the NDP government believed they can take more and more from taxpayers. Taxpayers are fed up with this government taking money right out of their pocket. They remember broken trust. They remember tax increases. They remember governments that claimed affordability was a priority while families continued struggling. And that's what this NDP government wants to do with their pennies. *[interjection]*

Again, the member that represents Point Douglas, I think she's—I think they've spoke more today than they have to their own constituency in months and months and months.

We want to continue to enter this common sense amendment where Manitobans deserve: the \$1,500 for single-income families, or over \$3,000 for a double-income family. They deserve to be heard, and they can be heard in committee. And today, once again, they're asking whether this government truly understands what people are going through. They don't have a clue. They live in a glass house, because this BITSA legislation does not reflect the urgency of Manitobans. It reflects a government more interested in appearances than outcomes.

They would rather stand in a grocery store with a bag of chips in one hand, a Coca-Cola in another hand and hand over a rotisserie chicken to somebody and say, wow, I just saved myself 67 cents. It reflects government more interested in appearances; more interested in announcements, not affordability; more interested in political messaging than they are in practical relief.

Our Progressive Conservative team has presented a serious and very responsible alternative. We are not simply criticizing; we are offering solutions. We are proposing practical improvements. We are putting forward ideas that would help Manitobans immediately and directly.

Those are things that matter to Manitoba families. Opposition parties should not simply oppose for the sake of opposing. We should present alternatives, and that's what we've done: a common sense alternative. We are saying clearly to this government: If you truly want support for BITSA, then stand up. Step up for Manitobans. Increase the basic personal amount significantly. Deliver meaningful tax relief.

Help working families. Help seniors. Help taxpayers. Help the Manitoba economy grow. Stop stagnating our 'enconomy.'

The reality is this—

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

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I would like to thank the member for Portage la Prairie (MLA Bereza) for that great speech, and for raising the issue of a hospital in Portage la Prairie that sits empty, that has no staff, no patients, nothing in it, and the two members from McPhillips and Waverley sit and heckle the whole time.

They don't have the courage to get up and speak to this legislation. They never speak on the budget. They have nothing to say, but they can heckle and heckle, heckle a member who is defesnding and trying to get a hospital opened up that's been built, while the old hospital has vermin in it, has all kinds of problems with it, and staff are complaining about health issues.

And the two members from McPhillips and Waverley have nothing to say on it, but they sit here and heckle the member from Portage la Prairie the entire time. What a shameful behaviour that is.

The member from Portage la Prairie pointed out that nowhere in this budget is there funding for the hospital in Portage la Prairie. The one that is built brand new by the Progressive Conservative

government, it's got no staff, there's no patients, nothing. They have delayed the opening now indefinitely, while the old hospital needs to be moved over. That new—that old hospital needs to be vacated.

So I would say to the members from McPhillips and Waverley: You know, why don't they have the courage to get up and just speak to this? In fact, the member for Waverley (MLA Pankratz), a firefighter, has a lot of courage. He runs into buildings—*[interjection]*

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: —when other people run outside. But you know what? He doesn't have the courage to get up and speak to this particular piece of legislation in front of us, and they're certainly not speaking to their own budget.

Why is that? Because they really have nothing good to say. And like the member from River Heights who says this is—

The Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 28 minutes remaining.

The hour is 5 o'—*[interjection]*—the Speaker is standing.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 14, 2026

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